
The national legal framework for protection of children’s rights in Ghana encompasses the Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653) specifically to protect children within the juvenile system; the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Act, 1998 (Act 554), the Human Trafficking Act 2005, (Act 694), the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) and the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 Act 715. To enhance engagement with community and other key actors, the government has developed a communication for development tool kit (C4D), to support the implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Policy, the Justice for Children Policy and other legal and policy framework supporting Ghana’s child protection programmes.

Prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly affecting girls and young women remains high. More than half of VAC cases reported to the DOVVSU in 2013 was defilement. According to DCI-Ghana’s 2016 study, child respondents had experienced at least one forms of sexual violence. 39.4% has suffered indecent assault, 17.9% defilement, 8% rape and 5.4% had experienced incest.

Currently, there is an estimated of 1.9 million children engaged in labour - 21.8% of the children population in Ghana - and child trafficking is an acute problem with no evidence of being reduced despite Government and civil society efforts in recent years to address these problems.

Parliament in response to public out cry against the practice, enacted the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 1998, (Act 554) and criminalized all customary practices of servitude and ritual enslavement such as Trokosi making it an offence punishable by a minimum of three (3) years in jail. There has also been an increase in governmental efforts to address the issue of Trokosi. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also working with communities to provide development infrastructure such as schools and boreholes while encouraging shrine priests to accept livestock or monetary donations, instead of young virgin girls, from families seeking to appease the gods.

### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK


The national legal framework for protection of children’s rights in Ghana encompasses the Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653) – specifically to protect children within the juvenile system; the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Act, 1998 (Act 554), the Human Trafficking Act 2005, (Act 694), the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) and the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 Act 715. To enhance engagement with community and other key actors, the government has developed a communication for development tool kit (C4D), to support the implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Policy, the Justice for Children Policy and other legal and policy framework supporting Ghana’s child protection programmes.

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<th>CHALLENGES</th>
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<td>1. Inadequate programme intervention</td>
<td>1. Due to the growing challenges related to accessibility to services for children victims of violence, there is a high number of children that do not receive the services they are entitled to. In addition, a high number of children continue to suffer abuse, violence and exploitation within most of communities in Ghana since there is a lack of prevention mechanisms.</td>
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2. **Weak Child protection system**

Child protection systems and services are inadequate in the communities, where there is no coordination between the formal and informal systems. Victims of violence or exploitation do not have immediate access to these services. Underreporting and stigma associated with sexual violence are fuelled by ignorance, cost, inadequate facilities and resources as well as delayed prosecution.

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. In addition, investigation procedures and subsequent prosecution of offenders remain a major challenge, leading to a high rate of impunity.

3. **Child labour issues**

Child labour remains a challenge despite its prohibition in the Children’s Act 1998, (Act 560). The development of children in street situation, including ‘kayayie’ is hampered as they are denied of their rights to education, health and shelter, among others.

Considering 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.

4. **Trokosi**

Trokosi, a practice where young girls are sent to fetish shrines to live and atone for the crimes of their family members persists partly due to lack of enforcement of legislation especially arrest and prosecution.

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These young girls suffer a lot of abuses in these shrines including child labour and sexual violence. Some end up as child brides of the priests. Failure to arrest and prosecute offenders continues to be a major setback in the efforts to stop the practice.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Allocate adequate financial and human resources to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Department of Children, Department of Social Welfare, Child Labour Unit, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the police, to effectively implement the Child and Family Welfare Policy and the Justice for Children Policy, among others.

2. 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.

3. Take practical measures to ensure access to justice for all victims of violence, including by ensuring that victims do not bear the costs of medical examination, and allocate sufficient resources to the Police and Justice Department to enable investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders.

4. Enforce legislation on Trokosi, arrest and prosecute offenders.

**ABOUT THIS FACT SHEET**

This information sheet was coordinated by child rights partners including Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC), Defence for Children, Ghana, Plan International Ghana and Ghana Human Rights NGOs Forum.

**REFERENCES:**