



The Kids Voice

& Young Journalist Adventure



STAFF

Co-founder/Executive Director

Philip Appiah

Coordinator

Anabella Corridoni

Writers

Mahua Maharana

Aditi Panda

Claudia Poclaba

Javier Elvira Mathez

Design

Maria Sofia Roan

Maria Agustina Llobera

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Child Abuse

In the last edition we focused on human rights promotion, protection and, also, cases of abuses. In this number we want to talk about the consequences of the lack of human right protection on children, specifically the cases of child abuse.

At the first section we tried to show how the scourge of human trafficking is affecting the child development and how is restricting their rights to attend to school, do not have the duty of work, receive an appropriate medical care and, above all, child trafficking is violating the right of million children to grow up free.

Furthermore, in the section of Child Soldiers we talk about the military use of children across the world and particularly in Africa. This type of child abuse forces children to be part in armed conflicts and puts them away from their families. In this vulnerability situation, the "leader" convinces them that they will not regain their lifes, or the control of them. Finally, we tried to explain the situation of child refugees and the ties with the human trafficking.

I deeply hope that this edition helps to realize the problems related with child abuse in all the world and specifically in Ghana.

We really appreciate your desire to collaborate with the youth in Ghana.

Thank you.

Anabella Corridoni
Youth Magazine Coordinator



WHAT WE

Providing Adolescents and Adults with Jobs for Advancement in the Future (PAAJAF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that focuses on providing: Basic facilities (Food, shelter, clothing), Information (Healthcare, Community building, Job training) and Education for underprivileged children, youth and women. It is a registered NGO with a Certificate of Recognition from the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana – Certificate Number D.S.W./4003 and Register General G21, 781 have affiliation with United Way Ghana, GlobalGiving, Global Health Council and Gift In Kind International

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CHILD ABUSE: A HARD LOOK AT OURSELVES



What constitutes child abuse?

Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child or children. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) define child maltreatment as any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. Child abuse can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with. There are four major categories of child abuse: neglect, physical abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, and CSA (2).

- Neglect: The continuous refusal of a child's basic needs is considered chronic neglect.
- Physical abuse involves physical aggression directed at a child by an adult. The distinction between child discipline and abuse is often poorly defined. Cultural norms that sanction physical punishment are one of the causes of child abuse.
- Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent abuses a child for sexual stimulation.
- Psychological/emotional abuse: Out of all the possible forms of abuse, emotional abuse is the hardest to define. It could include name-calling, ridicule, degradation, destruction of personal belongings, torture or killing of a pet, excessive criticism, inappropriate or excessive demands, withholding communication, and routine labeling or humiliation.

What causes child abuse?

Child abuse is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes. Understanding the causes of abuse is crucial to addressing the problem of child abuse. Parents who physically abuse their spouses are more likely than others to physically abuse their children. However, it is impossible to know whether marital strife is a cause of child abuse, or if both the marital strife and the abuse are caused by tendencies in the abuser. Some of the possible causes may be; children resulting from unintended pregnancies are likely to be abused, children of parents doing substance abuse are often victims, unemployment and financial difficulties of the parents cause child abuse, the 'Cinderella effect' or abuse by non-biological parents is also common.



Mahua Maharana

Mahua attained her Masters in Modern History and Diploma in Social Service and Community Service. She worked as an insurance professional for 22 years and is a Life Associate of the Insurance Institute of India. She is 53 and lives in Bhubaneswar, India

Effects of child abuse

There are strong associations between exposure to child abuse in all its forms and higher rates of many chronic conditions. The strongest evidence comes from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) series of studies which show correlations between exposure to abuse or neglect and higher rates in adulthood of chronic conditions, high-risk health behaviors and shortened lifespan. A recent publication, Hidden Costs in Health Care: The Economic Impact of Violence and Abuse, makes the case that such exposure represents a serious and costly public-health issue that should be addressed by the healthcare system.

It has been identified that CSA is a risk factor for the development of substance-related problems during adolescence and adulthood. The early experiences of child abuse can trigger the development of an internalizing disorder, such as anxiety and depression. Child abuse can also cause problems with the neurodevelopment of a child. The abused children may often develop deficits with language, deregulation of mood, behaviour and also social/emotional disturbances.

The effects of child abuse vary, depending on the type of abuse.

- Children who have such history are more prone to developing psychiatric problem or a disorganized attachment style.
- Victims of childhood abuse, it is claimed, also suffer from different types of physical health problems later in life. Some reportedly suffer from some type of chronic head, abdominal, pelvic, or muscular pain with no identifiable reason.
- Even though some of the childhood abuse victims know or believe that their abuse is, or can be, the cause of different health problems in their adult life, for the great majority their abuse was not directly associated with those problems.
- It has been found that childhood emotional and sexual abuse were strongly related to adult depressive symptoms, while exposure to verbal abuse and witnessing of domestic violence had a moderately strong association, and physical abuse a moderate one.
- For depression, experiencing more than two kinds of abuse exerted synergistically stronger symptoms.
- The immediate physical effects of abuse or neglect can be relatively minor or severe, or even death. In some cases the physical effects are temporary but there can be several long-term effects.
- Several studies have shown a relationship between various forms of household dysfunction (including childhood abuse) and poor health (Flaherty et al., 2006; Felitti, 2002).
- Adults who experienced abuse or neglect during childhood are more likely to suffer from physical ailments such as allergies, arthritis, asthma, bronchitis, high blood pressure, and ulcers (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007).
- However, there are some children who are raised in child abuse, but who manage to do unexpectedly well later in life regarding the preconditions. Such children have been termed dandelion children, as inspired from the way that dandelions seem to prosper irrespective of soil, sun, drought, or rain.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

In fact, in most cases CSA is given more importance than the other kinds of abuse. Sexual abuse of children is an extreme form of gender based violence that reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and harmful traditional practices. Any one of these abuses lead to deep psychological scars, damage the health of women and girls in general, including their reproductive and sexual health and in some instances, results in death. In regard to policies, many countries in Africa cannot claim any credit as they hardly exist.

The global prevalence (3) of CSA has been estimated at 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males, according to a 2009 study published in Clinical Psychology Review that examined 65 studies from 22 countries. Using the available data, the highest prevalence rate of CSA geographically was found in Africa (34.4%), primarily because of high rates in South Africa; Europe showed the lowest prevalence rate (9.2%); America and Asia had prevalence rates between 10.1% and 23.9%. Most sexual abuse offenders are acquainted with their victims; approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, fathers, uncles or cousins; around 60% are other acquaintances such as 'friends' of the family, babysitters, or neighbors; strangers are the offenders in approximately 10% of CSA cases. Most CSA is committed by men; studies show that women commit 14% to 40% of offenses reported against boys and 6% of offenses reported against girls. Some offenders who sexually abuse prepubescent children are pedophiles, and others are not. Offenders are more likely to be relatives or acquaintances of their victim than strangers. A 2006–2007 Idaho study of 430 cases found that 82% of juvenile sex offenders were known to the victims (acquaintances 46% or relatives 36%).

In traditional African society, CSA was unheard of. It may, however, have been happening but the society at large had created a system where children were protected through many avenues, ranging from stringent taboos centered on relationships and living arrangements. However, this is not the case today and the society has been invaded with all sorts of challenges. These challenges include broken families, unemployment, overcrowding, abject poverty, pornography, HIV/AIDS with its accompanied miseries, state of norm, drug and alcohol abuse, conflicts and civil strife, exploitation of information technologies, among others.

The African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Children Against Neglect (ANPPCAN) in September 2007 organized and held the First International Conference in Africa on CSA in Kenya. This conference brought together delegates from Africa and the rest of the world to deliberate on the several sub-themes on CSA including existing knowledge on CSA, prevention of CSA, different forms of CSA, international experiences in treatment, prevention and interventions, role of policy and legislation in the fight against CSA and the role of the media in the fight against CSA. Discussions also touched on the best practices in the treatment of CSA, trafficking and sexual violence against children, how to form partnerships in the fight against

child abuse and the role the community can play in the fight against CSA.

During the conference several startling observations were made. These included:

- Globally, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact.
- Of all reported forms of child abuse in Africa a significant number have been sexual abuse cases.
- Somewhere in Africa, 45% of children diagnosed as having been abused had been sexually abused.
- In a certain community in Eastern Africa, 49% of sexually active primary school girls had been coerced into having sex.
- Yet even these statistics represent a great under-estimation given the gross under-reporting and the ever changing nature of CSA.

The most striking thing is that five years after the report on violence against children and the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children CSA has remained almost a normal occurrence, with hardly any systems in place in many African countries to respond to the vice. Children continue to be abused sexually in total silence.

Sexual violence and abuse occur in many different forms and may happen anywhere: at home, in school, at work, in the community, institutional care, vocational training centers as well as in cyberspace. In many countries in Africa, information technology is advancing and is putting large numbers of children at risk, as there is ample pornography in the internet. Children with computers and mobile phones, cannot only access pornographic sites with ease, but they are being lured through this technology into sexual exploitation.

Studies show that girls experience higher rates of sexual violence than boys; although in the recent past the number of boys is increasing. This reinforces male dominance and impedes female empowerment. According to UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report, 2011, evidence from 11 developing countries show a broad spread of experience of sexual or physical violence against females aged 15–19, reaching a height of 65 per cent in Uganda. The widespread acceptance of sexual violence as a normal feature of life, particularly by children, is a grave cause for concern.

A study conducted by CRRECENT

A study (4) on CSA in schools was initiated and sponsored by Plan Ghana, as part of Plan International's global campaign dubbed, "Learn Without Fear" to create safer school environment for children. Plan Ghana sanctioned the study after recognizing that, there could be significant CSA in Ghana. CSA does not only interfere with the child's education and development but is also illegal and contravenes International and Ghanaian Laws. Against this background that Plan Ghana engaged Child Research and Resource Centre (CRRECENT) to empirically;

- Identify the type and forms of CSA cases in the study areas;
- Determine the causes of CSA in schools in the study areas
- Find out how CSA cases are handled in the study areas; and
- Generate suggestions on how effectively the problem of CSA in school can be addressed

CRRECENT conducted an explorative and descriptive study, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods in investigating CSA in schools in the Awutu-Senya, Effutu and Upper Manya Krobo districts of Ghana. A total of 304 children in the primary, Junior high and Senior high schools from the named districts were interviewed using interview schedule. Qualitative information was collected from 30 teachers, 21 parents and nine other Key Informants from the districts under study. Focus Group discussions with 47 Senior high school children were also conducted to enhance the quantitative data. Data obtained was scientifically analysed using SPSS to generate results which were consequently interpreted based on the study objectives.

The study found out that both contact and non contact forms of CSA was prevalent in the study areas. About 14% of school children, mostly 15 and 14 year olds had been sexually abused. The main perpetrators of CSA included: classmates (89%), teachers (21%) and relatives (13%).

Majority (41%) of the victims of sexual abuse were living with both parents. The common types of CSA identified were:

- Giving sexual messages (48%);
- Request for sexual favours (46%);
- Unwelcomed sexual advances or attacks (43%);
- Fondled, touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way (42%);
- Shown or given sexual photographs (35%);
- Sexually motivated physical contact (26%) and
- Actual sex (15%)

Girls (55%) were found to be more vulnerable to sexual abuse than boys (45%).

Major causes of CSA in schools were found (in order of importance) to be – household poverty, sexual pleasure, lack of parental care and control and peer influence. Only 30% of the victims told someone about the abuse. Most of them told their friends (45%), parents (20%), relatives (12%) and teachers (7%) about the incident. In most cases either nothing was done to perpetrator (38%) or the perpetrator was warned not to do that again (28%). CSA in schools was found to be negatively affecting children's participation in school activities; they are unable to concentrate in class.

Institutions identified by respondents as providing services to victims of sexual abuse were as follows: schools, parents, police, traditional authorities and health centres. Most of these institutions lack the knowledge and resources to prevent and address the problem.

The study recommends the following:

- Sensitization of both children and adults of the effects of sexual abuse;
- Advocacy campaigns for the enforcement of legislations against sexual abuse;
- Alleviating household poverty for parents to earn enough income and provide their children's needs;
- Scaling up school guidance and counseling services to help prevent and address CSA in schools; and
- Resourcing institutions mandated to address sexual abuse cases to effectively perform their duties.

The reality is that by and large policies and laws relating to children are not implemented in many countries in Africa, posing problems in child protection efforts.

The prevalence of CSA in Africa is compounded by the virgin cleansing myth that sexual intercourse with a virgin will cure a man of HIV or AIDS. The myth is prevalent can be found in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nigeria and is being blamed for the high rate of sexual abuse against young children. South Africa has some of the highest incidences of child and baby rape in the world. Eastern Cape social worker Edith Kriel notes that "child abusers are often relatives of their victims – even their fathers and providers". (5)

The impact of sexual abuse on children is devastating and requires skilled manpower to respond appropriately so as to yield results to the victim. This is a huge omission in Africa where the children who have been extremely violated end up with unskilled service providers who have no knowledge of sexual abuse and its impact. This is double tragedy to sexually abused children in the continent. One hears of cases where perpetrators negotiate out of court settlements with parents of the victims, leaving the victims with no recourse. In some cases the legislative systems are so defective that they favour the perpetrators than the victims. Yet in some cases, services responding to sexual abuse cases are highly centralized and difficult to access given the distances involved.

The First Sexual Abuse Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007 drew up several recommendations that touched on the types and modes of interventions, the need for coherence between research, policy and practice, empowering of children, fostering links with the media, domestication of relevant instruments, and enactment of appropriate legislations, enforcement of regulatory provisions governing child care institutions, support to families to protect their children among others. (6)

Mrs. Aisha Sitsofe Agbana at the Domestic Violence and Victims Supports Unit (DOVVSU) Division of the Ghana Police Service revealed some startling facts at a programme organized by Resource Link Foundation, a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) as part of the commemoration of World Day against Child Labour. According to her:

- About 91.8% of victims of sexual abuse in Junior High Schools (JHS) are between 15 and 18.
- A sizeable proportion of 31.8% of the children indicated that they knew of cases of sexual abuse in their schools which took place mainly outside the school premises
- Those acts that took place on the premises of the school occurred in the classroom (16.9%), in the teacher's room (1.5%) and at the garage (0.7%).
- The main perpetrators of the act were given as boy/girl friends, representing 38.9%, school and playmates represents 16.4%, neighbors represents 14.9% while teachers represents 9.7%.
- The punishment meted out to the perpetrators but majority of 50.5% were of the view that practically nothing was done to punish the perpetrators, which she said was because nothing was done to deter the perpetrators from committing another sexual offence (31.5%).
- The issues she said, was kept secret, and handled quietly at home represented (14.0%) and the perpetrator left either unpunished or absconded also represents (11.6%).
- Only 15.7% indicated that the perpetrator was handed over to the law enforcement agencies. (7)

Other forms of child abuse

Ghana is a developing country. But there is a feeling that Ghana has done little to protect the rights of children and that child abuse. For example, child slavery has become part of Ghana's culture and socio-economic life style.

The welfare of the child within the family and the state's responsibility towards the child has become the subject of growing concern in recent times. Even though this problem is far from new, it was just recently acknowledged that something needs to be done about it immediately. The issues affecting children and their rights are numerous and varied and derived from a wide range of sources including abuse and slavery. According to Ghana's Constitution, the child within the Ghanaian family has specific rights such as care, maintenance, succession, etc. Some of these rights are customary in origin and some have been granted by statute. There also are duties inherent in the enforcement of those rights. The child thus has a duty to provide services to support parents in old age, and to assist with the funeral arrangements of their parents. A parent also has a legally-recognized right to inflict moderate and reasonable punishment on a child for the purpose of correcting a child or punishing an offense. It is surprising that the criminal code of Ghana justifies the use of force against a child less than sixteen years of age, provided such force used is reasonable under the circumstances, and is used solely for the purposes of correction.

Despite the fact that Ghana is a signatory to the UN convention and the O.A.U Charter on the Rights of the Child, children are subjected to several forms of abuse.

Available statistics indicate that thirty-nine percent (39%) of children in Ghana are engaged in economic activity, with over 1,031,220 out of the number under 13 years of age (8) . In the urban areas children from low income households contribute to family income through a wide range of commercial activities such as hawking, head portering, shoe-shining, petty trading etc. The Ghanaian media abounds with cases and instances of child abuse ranging from abandonment, rape, and assault to ritual murder, and the situation is worse for children who are not under care, especially street children.

Moreover child prostitution, although illegal, exists. According to one report, there are approximately 125 brothels in Accra alone in which young girls are forced into prostitution.

Fostering and informal adoption of children aged 8 upward is common in Ghana. The majority of these children are girls who end up as maids and are made to work around the clock. 80% of these girls were between age 10 and 14 years, and have little or no time to play or interact with others . They are also denied education and subjected to hunger, even though in most cases these young girls prepare the meals.

Although, the Constitution prohibits slavery, it exists on a limited scale. Trokosi, a traditional practice, is a system in which a young girl, usually under the age of 10, is made a slave to a fetish shrine for offenses allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family. In rare instances, boys are offered.

This system is particularly prevalent in the Volta region of Ghana. The girl is enslaved by the fetish priest and they are subjected to forced labour and sexual abuse, often bearing the priests' children. Even after release, a woman's obligations to the shrine are life long and a replacement is expected when she dies. It is estimated that some 4,500 girls are caught up in this system.

Another area of concern is that the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of the child in the Ghanaian family is abused, and trampled upon, thus silencing children's voices in the family and community as a whole.

The issue of witchcraft has been in the history of mankind for a very long time. It is still very rife in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa. This problem persists unabated in Northern Ghana. The plight of children in the witches camps of Northern Ghana calls for urgent action to redress the situation.

One basic characteristic that one can also identify with the witches camps is the inextricable link with the fate of children from the witches' families who are censored to stay with those witches perpetually to take care of them. The negative effects that impact on the children include rights abuse, denial of right to education, curtailment of their right to freedom, psychological trauma, engaging in hard labour and becoming subject to societal mockery and discrimination. This contradicts Children's Rights as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

Article 28 (a) of the Constitution states: Every child has the right to the same measure of special care, assistance and maintenance as is necessary for its development from its natural parents. On education, article 25 (1) of the same Constitution states, persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities with a view to achieving the full realization of that right to all forms of education. These children and the women had to undergo this trial by ordeal in the name of culture and tradition.

Article 26 (2) of the Constitution spells out clearly that, customary practices, which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person, are prohibited, and it is strange that despite these constitutional provisions, nothing has been done over the years to reverse this trend. Educational facilities are lacking in the witches' camps. No provision of social amenities such as good drinking water, health facilities, poor environmental sanitation and no food supplement for their healthy growth (10).

The majority of working children is unpaid and can be found on family farms and family enterprises. While traditionally, working on the family farm was seen as a means of training for adulthood, deteriorating economic conditions have led to an increase in the number of children working on a regular basis to earn a living for themselves or supplement family income. These children either forgo an education or combine work and school.

Deteriorating economic conditions in rural areas and conflicts in northern regions of the country have led to increased migration of children into urban areas, particularly Accra (11). This migration has reportedly led to an increase in the numbers of street children and working children in urban areas. In August 2000, Ghana's Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare reported that out of 800,000 children working countrywide, 18,000 children were working in Accra. Seventy percent of these urban working children are estimated to receive no schooling, while 21 percent complete only their primary education.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) report that children as young as 7 years old work as trolley and head porters, domestic servants, street vendors, rock breakers in quarries, small scale miners, farmers and fishermen. In May 2000, the acting executive director of the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) expressed concern about the increasing use of child labor in inland fishing enterprises, especially in villages around the Volta Lake and the Volta River. Newspapers have reported that 10 to 12 year old boys often work for fisherman in exchange for a yearly payment to their families. This practice was found to be rampant in 156 fishing villages along the Afram River and in settlements along the Volta Lake in the Afram Plains. Small children are used to dive down to the riverbeds for oysters, and there have been a number of reports of children drowning.

What is being done?

A great deal of work has begun in recent years. Young people are raising consciousness through awareness campaigns and education, and are actively exercising and defending their own rights even under adverse conditions. Various human rights organizations have been formed and are helping in the fight for preservation and enforcement, and the Ghanaian government has gone even further, enacting legislation, creating mechanisms and also putting into place a range of creative measures such as the Children's Bill and MOWAC to ensure the protection and realization of the rights of those under the age of 18.

Nevertheless, as the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "The principle of 'all children, all rights' is still much too far from being a reality". Human rights will continue to be abused unless something is done to protect those who are most vulnerable. Right now Ghana is moving from a state of protectionism to modernity. Ghana is answering a call for a new dawn in achieving a long-lasting effect with the enactment of legislation and policies. It has also made available provisions for free basic education and the introduction of the capitation grant to sustain and aid the deprived or families who can not afford to bare full cost of education.

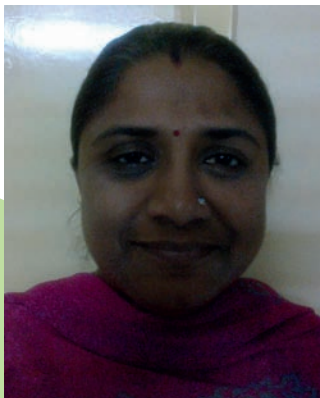
In conclusion it can be said that this is a challenge, and challenge is what makes it real. It is our effort, my effort, your effort and that of us all together that will make a difference. Let us hope that we will all come together as one to forge a common charter to fight this cause in our quest to sustain and promote development advancement.

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COMBATING CHILD LABOUR IN GHANA

Introduction



Aditi Panda

Researcher, freelance writer, trainer and counselor
mother, wife. Staying at Bhubaneswar, India.

Child trafficking has been termed as the 'Mother' of the worst forms of child labor. It is estimated that 900,000 people are trafficked internationally every year. Child prostitution, slavery practices, particularly in the fishing industry, child domestic servitude, exploitation of children in mines and customary servitude are the other forms of child abuse which is equally heinous.

Prominent but common forms of child labor were identified as street hawking, drug peddling, herding of livestock, physically challenged children forced to begging and snaking (a method whereby armed robbers and thieves engage young children to pass through small inlets into their areas of operation). As per a National Child Survey by the Ghana Statistical Service supported by the ILO and IPEC out of an estimated population of about 6.4 million children between the ages of five and seven, about 2.5 million were engaged in economic activities. About 88 per cent are into unpaid family businesses and apprenticeships, while 5.9 per cent are self-employed due to poverty, exploitation by adults and children's own choice as a result of ignorance and lack of proper guidance. Ghana recognizes the enormous socio-economic impact of child labor on the individual child as well as the families, the communities and the nation as a whole. Frustration and attempt to survive may become a social menace by indirectly getting embroiled in armed robberies, drug use and prostitution. This directly results in the loss of valuable human resources who often become a social menace and the nation has to spend huge money to combat this social insecurity and problem.

Child labor can be defined as any work that is harmful and detrimental to the full and holistic development of a child. This includes any kind of work, which by its nature and intensity is harmful to the welfare of a child and removes children from school or interferes with schooling. Work that denies children education and work that affects them negatively at the physical, psychological, emotional and moral levels is also violating the basic fundamental right of the child. It must, however, be noted that not all work is harmful to children and some are indeed beneficial to their development. For example from a young age, children run errands, help around households or assist on farms and in family businesses. As they grow older they take on light jobs or learn valuable traditional trades. This is therefore acceptable as child work under (Section 90 (1) of the Children's Act 1998 ACT 560). The situation is permissible only if does not become a barrier between the child and his mental, physical, emotional and psychological development

In rural areas of Ghana, children work in commercial agriculture including cocoa farms. Children, including girls, are also engaged in quarrying and small-scale mining activities, including extraction, transportation, and processing. The fishing industry on Lake Volta employs many children in hazardous work, such as deep sea diving and casting and drawing nets. Girls work in domestic service for fishermen in the Lake Volta area of Yeji. In urban areas, children work in the informal economy such as transportation, restaurant work, street vending, and petty trading. Many girls work as head porters in urban areas such as Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi. These girls often live on the streets and are especially vulnerable to being exploited in prostitution. Children in Ghana are also engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, especially in the tourist destinations of Elmina and Cape Coast.

Ghana is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking and for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Ghanaian children are trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Equatorial Guinea for labor exploitation. Children from Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria are trafficked to Ghana for forced labor in domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation. Children are also trafficked to Ghana from Burkina Faso. The internal trafficking of children is also a problem. Within Ghana, children are trafficked for forced labor in fishing, agriculture, mining, quarrying, and working as porters, street vending, truck pushing, domestic service, and commercial sexual exploitation.

The IOM estimates that thousands of children have been trafficked internally to work in the fishing villages surrounding Lake Volta. The common cultural practice of "adoption," whereby impoverished parents send their children to live with more affluent relatives and family friends, has contributed to the problem of child trafficking in Ghana.

Nature of Child labor



A major problem that is affecting our society and the world today is child labor. Child labor can be seen as children below the working age being forced or compelled due to circumstances to work at the expense of enjoying basic privileges such as education, good health and protection.

Child labor in present times has increased tremendously in the developing countries including Ghana. Even the developed countries are not left out of this problem. They have their fair share of it. Most of these victims of child labor in the Ghanaian society end up as hawkers, workers in sand weaning sites and stone quarries which are very prominent in or near the city of Accra and other parts of the country, like in quarries around Achimota and Kwabenya and many other products or items one can think of especially on the street of Accra where one can see a lot of children trading in all kinds of items including sugarcane, plantain chips, cold water in polythene bags and other items which they did not produce themselves.

Parents have a major role to play in ensuring proper upbringing of their wards and also to provide them adequate shelter, clothing and food. However due to financial constraint, parents send their wards to sell on the street in order to bring money home but the section 91 of the children's act states that, the minimum age for a person to work in a hazardous condition is 18 years. Hazardous work according to the act is work which poses some danger to the health, safety and morals of a person. It is very disheartening to see children of school going age selling all kinds of items often under the scorching sun and in the rain. These children who are sent to the street to sell become victims of sexual harassment, rape and drug abuse and some are even knocked by careless drivers.

Single-parenthood as a result of death or divorce compels some unfortunate children to end up in child labor to earn some income for themselves and the whole family at times. A single parent who cannot afford to cater for a child or children advises his/her child to find any kind of job to keep him or her going since that can be the only way out for survival. Irresponsible parent-hood is another common factor that leads to children taking to odd jobs in the communities.

General economic hardships also see parents sending their wards or children to the streets to earn for their daily bread as they themselves cannot cope with these difficult economic situations. This is a common feature seen in almost every community or street in Ghana. One interesting factor due to such economic hardships is that some parents leave home so early and come so late that these children may not even see them for their needs especially money for food simply because they cannot afford or they don't have the money at all. This often results in child delinquency leading to the problem of child labor because the child simply has to survive by finding him/her a job to do.

Abbreviations:

ILO: International Labor Organization
IPEC: International Programme on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour
MMYE: Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment
GPRS: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
NSPS: National Social Protection Strategy


Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Ghanaian law sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years, and at 13 years for light work. Light work is defined as work that is not harmful to the health or development of a child and does not affect the child's attendance or ability to benefit from school. The law stipulates that children 15 years and older, or children who have completed basic education, can work as apprentices if the craftsman who will provide food, training, and a safe and healthy work environment. Children under 18 years may not engage in night work between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. The law prohibits persons less than 18 years from engaging in hazardous labor, which includes work in mines or quarries, at sea, in bars, hotels, or places of entertainment, in manufacturing that involves chemicals, in places that operate machinery; or in any job that involves carrying heavy load. Employers who violate any of the above provisions regulating children's employment, with the exception of those related to apprenticeships, are subject to a fine and/or 2 years of imprisonment. Employers who operate in the formal sector must keep a register with the authentic dates of birth or apparent ages of the children they employ and failure to keep this register is punishable and fined.

Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor

Working children, 5-14 years (%)	24.2
Working boys, 5-14 years (%)	24.5
Working girls, 5-14 years (%)	24
<i>Working children by sector, 5-14 years (%)</i>	
– Agriculture	71
– Manufacturing	5.8
– Services	22.6
– Other	0.6
Minimum age for work	15
Compulsory education age:	14
Free public education:	yes*
Gross primary enrollment rate (%), 2006:	92
Net primary enrollment rate (%), 2006:	64
School attendance, children 5-14 years (%), 2000:	80
Survival rate to grade 5 (%), 2002:	63
ILO-IPEC participating country:	yes*

* Must pay for miscellaneous school expenses.



Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Ghana has made different policies and framed laws to combat this menace. The law prohibits forced or bonded labor. Ritual servitude is illegal in Ghana and is punishable by 3 years of imprisonment. The law prohibits persons with custody, charge, or care of a child less than 16 years from encouraging or causing that child to become involved in prostitution. It is a misdemeanor to procure women less than 21 years, except "known prostitutes," for prostitution. Sexual relations with a girl under 14 years is against the law and is punishable by imprisonment of 1 to 10 years. The law also prohibits forced child prostitution. Ghanaian law contains specific provisions against trafficking of persons, providing another person for trafficking, and using a trafficked person. Each of these offenses carries a penalty of at least 5 years of imprisonment. The law mandates that police officers respond to all requests for assistance from trafficking and offer protection to persons who report cases of alleged trafficking, even if such a person is not the victim. The law provides for the rescue, temporary shelter and care, counseling, family tracing, and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking; it also establishes a Human Trafficking Fund to assist victims. The law also prohibits children from transporting illicit drugs. The minimum age for military recruitment is 18 years, and there is no conscription.

The Inspectorate of the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment (MMYE) is responsible for enforcing child labor laws and providing employers with information about child labor laws. District labor officers and other district officials are responsible for conducting annual workplace inspections and investigating allegations of violations. The Government received four cases of child labor violations in 2007, but made no prosecutions. Inspections were limited mainly to the formal sector, although most working children are found in the informal sector. According to the U.S. Department of State, enforcement of child labor laws in Ghana was inconsistent and ineffective.

The Ghana Police Service investigated eight cases of child trafficking between January and September of 2007. The Government's first conviction under the 2005 Human Trafficking Act was obtained in 2007. In another case, a father was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for attempting to traffic his son out of the country. An investigation by Interpol is still ongoing in the case of a group of children who were trafficked to Guinea, in which one child died. In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Children issued a press statement indicating that the Government will be stepping up its efforts to enforce this trafficking law. The Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit of the police is responsible for enforcing anti-trafficking laws. The Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment's Department of Social Welfare is responsible for providing assistance to victims of trafficking.

The Government of Ghana included child labor as a problem to be addressed in its Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2006 through 2009 (GPRS II)(7) indicating that priority will be given to special programs to combat the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking. The Government of Ghana, included child labor concerns in the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) that it developed in 2007 as part of GPRS II. The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty, a cash transfer program for families, is one component of the NSPS, and it includes child labor as one of the selection criteria for families to receive assistance. The Government's National Policy Guidelines on Orphans and Other Children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS includes children engaged in the worst forms of child labor and street children as target groups.

Conclusion

The Government of Ghana included child labor as a problem to be addressed in its Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2006 through 2009 (GPRS II)(7) indicating that priority will be given to special programs to combat the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking. The Government of Ghana, included child labor concerns in the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) that it developed in 2007 as part of GPRS II. The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty, a cash transfer program for families, is one component of the NSPS, and it includes child labor as one of the selection criteria for families to receive assistance. The Government's National Policy Guidelines on Orphans and Other Children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS includes children engaged in the worst forms of child labor and street children as target groups.

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ZERO UNDER 18

Claudia Poclaba



Claudia Poclaba, twenty-one years old student of Governance and International Relationships at UADE University, Argentina. Also volunteer of the Red Cross Argentina since 2009.

The military use of children is not only a problem of a few groups of countries but a widespread phenomenon.

Last February, UNICEF informed that there are at least 300 thousand child soldiers around the world, and the third part of them are from Africa. (2) Because of several issues, which involve from a political crisis to cultural conflicts, thousands of children are being used in different kinds of armed conflicts.

In order to understand these numbers, I think it is necessary to start with a definition. As regards the term 'soldier', consideration will be given here to 'a person who serves in an army'. (3) Hence, emphasis will be placed on the act of serve, which can be either voluntary or in fulfillment with a mandatory military service. But mandatory military service doesn't mean the absence of a legal framework that protects the member of the army of a country. This will be a key element of our definition, one that differentiates it from those existing in the reality, which sometimes can be the extreme opposite. This is the case of child soldiers, who are victims of kidnapping or have been recruited by force, and others are forced to join because of poverty, abuse and discrimination, or seeking revenge for violence made against them or their families. (4) According to this report of the UNICEF, there are more possibilities for children to become soldiers if they are separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education. Sometimes, they may join armed groups because it is the only way they get a food diary and ensure their survival. In any case, we will totally misunderstand the entire situation if we fail to assess if there is or has been "voluntary" participation in acts of war, not realizing that these children respond to multiple set of economic, cultural, social and political factors. (5)

What has the International society to say about it?

Although this is not a new topic, the development of the situation has been increasing (see the numbers above). This explain why 30 armed conflicts around the world include child soldiers.

Despite the progress made during the last ten years in global campaigns to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, they are still being exploited in the war and sent to the front line. That is why, The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)⁽⁶⁾, came into force on February 2002. The OPAC reinforces the legal protection of children and helps to prevent their use in armed conflict. To date, the OPAC has been ratified by 134 countries. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Optional Protocol's adoption, was launched its 2-year global campaign called "Zero under 18" to promote the universal ratification.⁽⁷⁾ One of the main objectives of the campaign was to encourage all States to rise the age of voluntary recruitment to a minimum of 18. Unfortunately, up to date there are 49 States who have signed but not ratified the Optional Protocol or even have not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol at all. This is such a shame, considering that the States where the military use of children is an issue are part of the 49 ones.

In any case, the international society has failed to promote the adoption and effective implementation of relevant national legislation in this matter.

Fortunately, the new methods of communications such as social websites (Youtube, Faebook, Twitter), have increase the attention on this issues by different types of campaigns. One of them is the "KONY 2012" video made by the San Diego-based organization Invisible Children, and because of its publicity millions of people are suddenly interested in humanitarian crises in Central Africa. As Anne Richard ⁽⁸⁾ said: "This is great news, but the challenge now is to translate that concern into constructive activism"⁽⁹⁾, the truth is that unless international policy makers agree to cooperate with national policy makers of the most affected countries in order to end with this situation nothing will change. Moreover, nothing will change if multiple factors, which generate this kind of situation, are still part of the reality of some countries.

Africa didn't invent the modern under-age soldier. As I explain this is a widespread historical problem, though we cannot deny the third part of child soldiers around the world are from Africa. According to the UNICEF⁽¹⁰⁾, the country with the largest number of child soldiers is the Democratic Republic of Congo and the continuity of the armed conflict is a guarantee that children will continue to be recruited. Apparently, 1,900 children were mobilized in the country. Other cases such as, The Central African Republic mobilized over 2,200 children and in Chad 360 were mobilized.⁽¹¹⁾ Children have been being used in different armed conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo, Sudan, etc. During the civil war in Sierra Leone, children fight for both the rebels and the pro-government local militia⁽¹²⁾. Because of the decline of one-party regimes in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the first half of the 1990s and a weak but recognizable liberalizing trend, several local conflicts were established. ⁽¹³⁾

In the year 2007 in Somalia, more than 1,000 people have been killed in Mogadishu, in a civil war compounded by warlords who command armies of teenagers. The war traces to 1991, when the central government was brought down by clans fighting over old grievances. Soon it became a contest among the warlords for control of airports, seaports and access to international aid. There is a kind of similar situation in Congo; a civil war that started a decade ago is now a diverse fight in which only one of the players is the government. The rest are rebel fighting among themselves for a share of the timber, copper, gold, diamonds and other resources. All sides, according to a report issued on April 2007 by Human Rights Watch, rely on child soldiers. ⁽¹⁴⁾

By abducting their soldiers young, commanders ensure that they have pliant, easily malleable underlings. , this is the case for example of LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) in Uganda's northern war. During 19 years of struggle, it is estimated that between 20,000 and 25,000 children have been abducted, 12,000 since 2002. ⁽¹⁵⁾

There are a lot of similar cases, though as I said before international law prohibits it in reality girls and boys illegally and under force, participate in combat where frequently they are injured or killed. Others are used as spies, messengers, porters, servants or to lay or clear landmines. Girls are at particular risk of rape and other sexual abuse. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Above all, we have to think about the future consequences of this war methods. If we think about future development depends on next generations, what we can expect of these children future, who are robbed of their childhood and exposed to terrible dangers and to psychological and physical suffering. Most of them will die and the others will have to live with the memory of being a child soldier and maybe injured.

Although these techniques are not justified at all, we have to remember that in countries such as Nigeria and Congo, people suffer many problems (some local communities have no drinking water, electricity, etc) and sometimes the government doesn't respond to them. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Using the measure of people living on \$1.25 a day or less, the World Bank estimates that the percentage of poor Africans fell from 58 percent in 1999 to 47.5 percent in 2008 and 44 percent in 2011. When this happens I think is hard to say that violence is not the solution. Fortunately, there are many peaceful movements around these countries and many people who committed their life to promote change.

In 2005 the government of Ghana reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that the minimum age for voluntary enlistment into the army was 18, that there was no conscription and that by law under-18s were not allowed to join the armed forces.⁽¹⁸⁾ However, Ghana is one of the States that have not ratified the Optional Protocol (OPAC).

Regional conflicts and its effects (for example: refugees), poverty (though thanks to Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, poverty reduced from 39% to 28.5% during the period 2003 to 2005, and now is around 28.5%⁽¹⁹⁾) are some of the factors that increase violence, and in Ghana they are also the reason of child labour in the country, around 20 percent of the nation's children are engaged in labour.

Nowadays world economic crisis also affect any kind of aid by international organizations. In March, the Accra office of the International Organisation for Migration announced the lack of funding to continue with their work to rescue children. ⁽²⁰⁾

At 2007 there was a ministerial meeting in Paris, Ghana and 58 other states endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. ⁽²¹⁾

In the Upper East region of Ghana, there is a town called Bawku and a repeated conflict. And according to some news it is said that child fighters are been recruited ⁽²²⁾. Again, multi factorials causes end up with the same result: military use of children. Although the State is trying to fight it, with different actions such as when The International Youth Fellowship (IYF) launched its 2012 World Youth Camp in Accra, with a call on the youth to stay clear from acts that might lead to violence and conflicts during the coming elections. I think it is a long track, and measures must be made.

Conclusion

During this article, I tried to investigate about child soldiers and specially the African and Ghana's cases. However, I end up realising, that this complicated method is not only a problem of a few undeveloped countries but also a worldwide spread problem. Not only because the military use of children is not something that happens just in Africa, but also because the reasons why this terrible thing is still a reality is our responsibility. The international society, national governments and citizens around the world must pay attention to this problem, but instead of seen it as a far away issue, we must ask to ourselves what can we do for the future of this children.

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REFUGEE CHILDREN, BETWEEN THE NEED & THE ABSENCE OF LAW

Human Rights is not a difficult concept to define, however difficult to maintain and keep. Children are the most affected by their absence. In the 2011 UNICEF Annual Report has been highlighted as humanitarian emergencies, violent conflicts, threats to peace and economic turmoil has had its echo on children and their development. These events have caused an impact on the infrastructure and facilities of the states, hindering the compliance of the rights of children exposed in the Convention on the Rights of Children. Furthermore, these scenarios of vulnerability have driven groups of individuals into a state of uncertainty product of a state of danger. The figure of the refugee personifies this situation.

In the 1951, the United Nations "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", with the 1967 Protocol, became a key legal document in the comprehensive and international codification of refugee status. It defined the figure of the refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states. This definition stated refugee as individuals who flee their homes with fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Therefore, Refugees are tied to the social, cultural and political conflicts and their outcome. These conflicts influence government's institutions causing them to lose monopoly on violence and the aptitude, in terms of institutional structure, to satisfy the basic needs and rights of their citizens. With the purpose to escape the growing dangers, thousands of individuals leave their homes and becoming refugees. Children are the most vulnerable to both the violence and the perils of the power gap left by their local governments. Separation of their family is a common result of the massive displacement, which places children in a state of greater vulnerability to risks such child labor, trafficking, lose of identity, forced recruitment, etc.

Although based in the Convention of Refugee it can be stated the difference between the Refugees, who flee to a neighbor country due to prosecutions of different origin, a Internally displaced person, someone who has left her or his home in fear of persecution, but has not crossed an international border and an Asylum seeker, that is someone who fled from his country seeking refugee status because of political reason, it also can be stated that the refugee category can also stand during a trans-national conflict such as wide spread famine. The reason behind this is that during times of hunger a hostile environment can settle and create disputes between political or ethnic groups.

It is in this void of power where the international community has assumed responsibility for the welfare of children. In the survey undertaken by the United Nation's refugee agency, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in the beginning of 2011, the number of refugees stood at 10.5 millions. Conflicts of different nature cause a rupture in the cornerstones of nations resulting in massive mobilization to other countries. The presence of clashes and the figure of refugees is a dilemma that affects the modern scene of Africa.

Javier Elvira Mathez



1991, Tarragona, Spain. Member of the NGOs of "Techo para mi País Argentina" and "Greenpeace Argentina". Student of Sociology and International Relations at the Universidad del Salvador, Argentina. Nowadays, residing in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Refugees in the modern scene of Africa

Since late 2010, North Africa has been wrapped in waves of social movements and uprisings ignited by the figure of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia and protests in Western Sahara held in November 2010. A spring with winds of change that has lasted 24 months and has spread to eight African countries with varying effects, but temporarily jeopardizing the capacity of the state in its conception as a sovereign. That is, to offer an infrastructure for the realization of basic needs. According to UNHCR these waves of political turmoil provoked, in the first half of 2011, the displacement of 900,000 who fled from Libya to neighboring countries. Armed conflicts have also increased in the western and central regions of Africa. The Western Africa is in recovery from post-election conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. It has resulted in the displacement of over 500,000 and 200,000 Ivoirians seek refuge in neighboring countries including Ghana and Liberia. Violence in the center region of Africa is reflected the clashes of political end in the east and northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This scene has caused the decrease of social services to a minimum or the null condition affecting the majority population of the country and caused the mobilization of 107,000 refugees. Of these total, 17,000 refugees have crossed into the Central African Republic, of whom at least 60 per cent are children.

Furthermore, the increase in political violence on the border between the newly formed state of South Sudan has originated a critical refugee situation. The separation and creation of the 193 state of United Nations of South Sudan in the referendum of 2011 has left the new country faced with a border dispute with Sudan. Large numbers of Sudanese still cross into South Sudan, in particular into Upper Nile. This event has led to the number of 300,000 individuals who have fled from war and famine to the refugee camps such as Jeddah or Jamama in South Sudan. Also a total of 36,500 refugees have arrived in Ethiopia. Intensive military operations and Inter-communal violence in South Sudan leave children susceptible to violations of their rights.

The depletion of food stocks in the region has been a reason behind the displacement of refugees and a critical element for the state of vulnerability of children aged less than five years. Due to the clashes which emerge between local factions, government and groups of individuals, famine is one of the principal causes mobilization. An example has been the growing movement of refugees product from the food scarcity and the shadow of famine which has echoed in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel belt, reflected in the dire situation in these regions. The scene of the Sahel food crisis, has affected over 15.6 million people along the eight affected countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Senegal) taking into account the UNICEF, Over 1 million children in Central and West Africa are facing a nutrition crisis in the first quarter of 2012. This conflict has caused a considerable increase in the number of people mobilized. Furthermore, the drought-related needs in the Horn of Africa has been estimated to reach 7.5 million with 1.46 million of displaced people.

These events of recent years on the African scene have caused the incremental growth of the number of Refugees in the center, north and west regions. In these moments of transition, mobilization and relocation of individuals, is should be aware of the underlying dangers that exist, in particular against children and their rights. Refugees under the age of 18 years suffer situations of heightened risk and of increased vulnerability. There is a constant threat of the violation of the rights systematic abuse. The critical rights, such as protection and assistance, are missing at a time when these rights are most in need.

The dangers ahead of refugee children and the role of International Law

The figure of the refugee has a strong connotation on children. State institutions that helped secure children from psychological and physical harm and allow their growth are broken. Schools, hospitals and other state provided services which influenced in their development have taken a step back for the limited capacities offered by the refugee camps. These, in general, have a scarce supply of medicine as of water and food because of the constant growing population of refugees. In this environment, Children, which may or may not have fled with their family, are more vulnerable to ensure their basic needs.

Moreover, in the report created by UNHCR, with the interest of knowing the effects of Refugee status on children, it was highlighted key issues among refugee children and their stay in refugee camps. It was stated the danger which children are faced with. Although these are not a common factor in all camps, they are possible risks when there is an absence of safekeeping. This investigation was carried out with refugee and returnee children in Southern Africa from 2005-2007. The main issues where the discrimination by local residents (directed especially at girls), forced marriages, substance abuse by adults, violence and sexual assault of adults towards children, and forced tasks assigned to children.

These issues are also present, in a mayor degree, outside the refugee camps. Without the legal framework of both the government of origin and far from the custody of the refugee camps they are exposed to all types of violations such as human trafficking, physical violence, both sexual and psychological abuse, military attacks, forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, forced labor, denial of education and identity. Due to the fact of the of cross-border nature concerning the conflicts and refugees, the issues, both political and social, have trans-national repercussions in which different groups and factions, from within and outside the region, influence and participate.

These groups can be of different origin, such as military or of economic interest, with different objectives, as sexual exploitation, armed forces, etc. They are responsible to lay hold of the multitude of refugee children, unprotected and vulnerable, and force them in illegal activities.

Forced recruitment of children as soldiers is one of the most dangerous uses in human exploitation. Child Soldiers are defined as anyone under 18 years who is part of any regular or irregular armed force or armed group, (Includes Children recruited for engaging in sexual activities and / or marriage required). It is estimated the presence of near 100,000 child soldiers in the African continent (300,000 worldwide). According to the "Cape Town Principles", the possibility of recruitment and treatment of children as prisoners of war are potential outcomes at the crossroads of armed conflicts in the absence of a state protective guarantor of basic rights. Additionally, in the annual Report of this year made by the Secretary General on children and armed conflict, it details the presence over a dozen factions which still carry on recruiting children (Factions which act in eight African countries. Seven of the them listed part of the persistent perpetrators)

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The last global report published by the coalition of Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008 marks that the decline in the number of children as soldiers is not due to the implementation of initiatives and programs to end the conscription of child soldiers, but due to a decrease conflict. This means that as long as there are armed conflicts, of political or ethnic nature, there is an increased risk of the presence of child soldiers.

In this void left by the absence of states or the gap between what governments say and what they do, international law is the main protagonist. The behavior of combatants to civilians during periods of armed conflict was stipulated in the articles of the Geneva Convention of 1949, and their Additional Protocols of 1977, to ensure that conflicts inflict minimal damage to human suffering. Also, two legal instruments stand in the protection of children, being both the "Convention on the Rights of Children" and the protocol "On the Involvement of children in armed conflict" of the named Convention. In the first, Children's rights were enshrined in the legal instrument of the Convention on the Rights of the Child written in the framework of UNICEF as part of the resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989. A legal binding instrument with the aim, throughout 54 articles and two optional protocols, of the integral development of the human rights of children. The second resolution, protocol "On the Involvement of children in armed conflict", which prohibits the participation in armed conflict of children under 18.

These elements of international law allow for the creation of a legal framework to end impunity for crimes, such as forced recruitment, and for conceiving demobilization and reintegration programs designed particularly for children such as those led by UNICEF. In addition, the progress in the formation of this international frame was stated in the recent resolution, on March 10 of this year, of the International Criminal Court to sentence Thomas Lubanga Dyilo guilty of war crimes by recruiting and enlisting children under 15 during the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This judgment was the first sentence which deals with a case involving the rights of children and based on the optional Protocol of children in armed conflicts of Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Forced recruitment is just one of the facets of human trafficking that can affect children in state of mobilization. There may be also the present danger of child labor, sexual abuse and prostitution. These illegal activities affect not only refugees but children belonging to the countries that host refugee camps. International organizations, such as UNICEF and UNHCR, have a vital role in order to prevent the entry of unprotected children in human trafficking for purposes of exploitation. With the creation of multilateral agreements, as the case of the "Conference on Trafficking against Children" by ECOWAS, and also with the ratification of bilateral treats, has laid the groundwork to strengthen the existing structure of protection of children in the region. The trans-national character of the refugees as well as the activity of human trafficking makes it necessary for mutual collaboration between countries to tackle exploitation and human trafficking. However, despite the existence of this legal framework at present this activity is still a factor of the violation of the rights of children.

On the issue of child labor, children who have been displaced from their country of origin and separated from their families are exposed to increased risk of exploitation and abuse in activities such as agriculture, mining industry, etc. Forced labor may be present in the country where refugees are displaced and may be responsible for absorbing the figure of the refugee child as the last does not have a legal shield, and are therefore exposed to possible exploitation.

Data obtained through the research done by UNICEF's "State of the World's Children" in 2011, underlines that 29% of the total children aged 5-14 years, belonging to the central and sub-Saharan regions of Africa, are undertaking some kind of labor postponing all activity related to education, such as school. It should be noted that child labor is one of the principal causes of the delay and obstruction of a proper education. Because of this, this activity has a long-term impact on the potential development children as individuals.

In the perspective of Ghana

The impact of conflicts and mobilization of refugees in neighboring countries have different levels. Ghana is an example of a country which characterizes the modern scenario of refugees in Africa, the struggle against the presence of illegal activities and presence International law.

Due to the post-election conflict in Ivory Coast, there has been the presence of Ivorians refugees. It has also previously been the residence Liberian refugees since 1990, product of the seven years of civil war with the figure of Charles Taylor, as well as from Togo since 2005 due, also, by reason of the political struggles after the April elections of that year. According to UNHCR, it is estimated there are now 30,000 refugees, 18,000 Ivorians, who are scattered in camps set up by this organization of the United Nations and the Ghanaian authorities. Most refugees are women and children fleeing from the violence of the soldiers and the possible famine caused by the shortage of food and water supplies.

Ghana is an example of the cross-border nature of both the disputes as the mobilization of refugees and, besides, the new concern over the rights for displaced children whose liability has fallen on local government. Children who are refugees in Ghana face the challenges and risks mentioned before of discrimination, psychological and physical harm, violence, abuse and exploitation. Both the refugee camps as the state which shelter the children are not found completely secure from violations of their rights. In the example of Ghana, based in the analysis of "Integrated Regional Information Networks of, 2011, it emphasizes that, despite the progress, there is still a strong presence of child labor in the country, in the cocoa fields. Investigation complemented by UNICEF statistics on Ghana, noting 30% of children participate in some way of domestic labor. These investigations can be supplemented with information on the 2010 findings of the analysis of the "Worst Forms of Child Labor - Ghana" by United States Department. The date stressed that there is a presence of up to 43.5% of children in the country that participate in child labor (agriculture, cocoa fields, and fishing.). It also emphasizes the presence of child trafficking in Ghana despite the progress against this activity.

Ghana is an example of how the legal framework influences the rights of the displaced individuals. The country has taken the initiative and has implemented policies to halt these activities. An example is the ratification of the Declaration of Joint Action to Support Implementation of the Harkin-Engel protocol and also the adoption of the "National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor." A frame with has the aim of significantly reducing child labor by 2015. In the same way, the government has strengthened the legal system to stop the human trafficking system by means of the establishment of regional units devoted to human-traffic control.

Therefore the dangers for refugees balance in the legal system which surrounds them. Furthermore, in Ghana the protagonism of International Law is also present. Due to the dual responsibility of the government for the rights of the local population as the refugees, within the scope of the refugee camps, it is necessary to coordinate with the humanitarian organizations to conform a joint strategy to the goal of the integration and care of the human rights in these settlements.

In the refugee camps, programs of local origin were established with support from international organizations. UNICEF and UNHCR are the crucial organizations which emerged as partners, in 1996, on the basis of the "Memorandum of Understanding" on issues as assistance to unaccompanied children, gender issues, psychological needs, repatriation, health and education. In the Action for Children (AHI) for 2012 budget of UNICEF. It states a number of interventions seeking to satisfy the needs of the refugees terms of food, education and family hygiene. UNHCR, with the presence of UNICEF AHI plan, promotes educational programs are created aimed at eliminating the gap of time lost in the educational development as result of the forced mobilization. A collaboration with the objective to enhance the capacity of both in delivering assistance to both local and refugees populations.

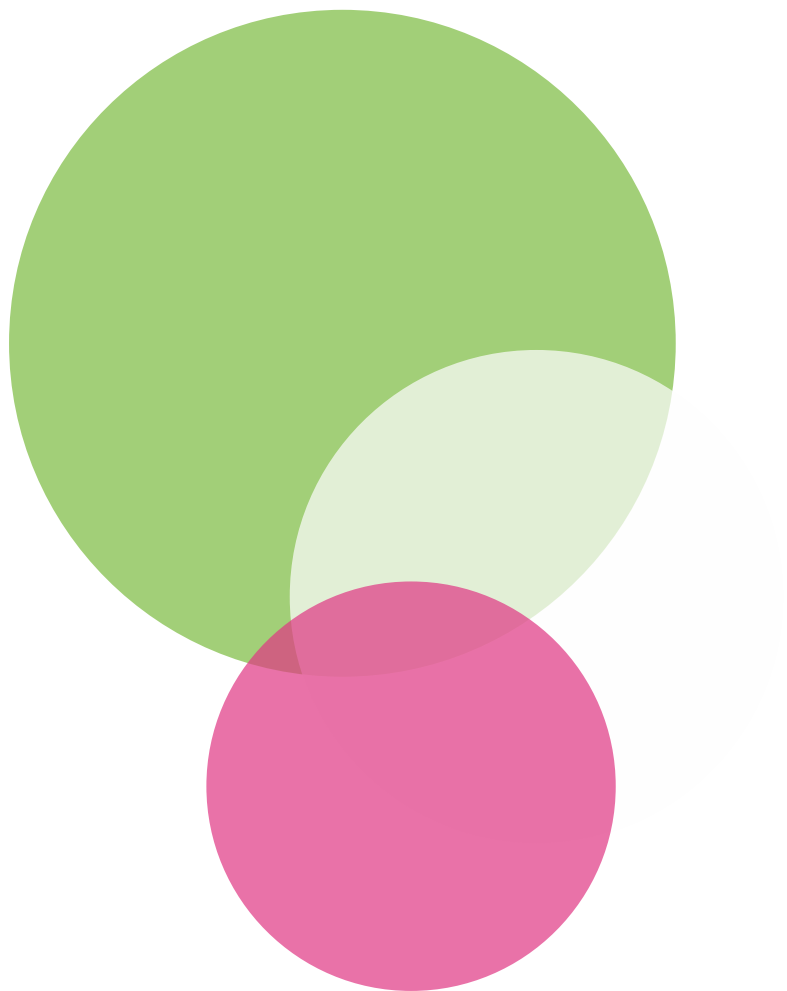
Conclusions

The figures of refugees should be understood much more than just numbers, but rather as children and families whose futures remains uncertain

Children Refugees are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation, abuse, trafficking and forced recruitment of armed forces. However, migration to another country is not a symbol of security. The violation of human rights may also be present in countries to which the masses have mobilized, as in the case of the presence of child labor and trafficking in Ghana, or the possible gap of power in refugee settlements.

However, by means of international organizations, including UNICEF and UNHCR, and from international law based on both the "Convention on the Rights of Children", the "Convention of the Status of Refugees" and the optional protocols created against military recruitment, trafficking and child labor enables the creation of an international legal framework to safeguard the rights of children. These agencies make possible the ratification of treaties, both bilateral and multilateral, and the cooperation with local authorities to establish comprehensive strategies, including repatriation, local integration and resettlement

This framework is necessary to offer protection and assistance that can safeguard the specific situation of the refugee. That is, of an individual who lies between the absence of jurisprudence of their country of origin and shortcomings of the jurisprudence of the receiving country. This state confers great relevance and concern when one is aware that is occupied by children.



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