

Children Hidden in Plain Sight:

A report on the State of Child Labour in the Fishing Industry of Lake Volta (Ghana)



A Challenging Heights

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About Challenging Heights

Challenging Heights is a survivor-led organization established in Ghana in the year 2005 by a survivor of human trafficking. The organization has been addressing human trafficking, and child labor issues since its inception, through rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children. Challenging Heights also implement women livelihood programs, as well as supporting young people to acquire vocational and employable skills. So far over 1,700 children have been rescued from slavery, over 4,000 women supported, over 4,000 young persons supported through vocational training, and thousands of vulnerable children have been supported and prevented from child labor. The organization also carries out research, and advocacy, helping to address systemic challenges confronting children.

Executive Summary

Child Labour is a widespread problem in various sectors of Ghana's economy. Especially in the fishing industry, child labour is common, and children are involved in hazardous tasks that are detrimental to their physical or psychological well-being and their formal education. This report focused on data collection in various fishing communities around Lake Volta to find out the numbers of child labourers involved in the fishing industries, their gender and age distribution and work tasks and how they are treated by their superiors. The findings of this study are alarming, because the number of child labourers around Lake Volta are much higher than previously assumed. We will show in this report that around 60% of the children interviewed are child laborers, performing tasks such as diving and disentangling nets or processing fish. It was previously assumed that most child laborers in the fishing industry are boys and that more girls are employed in domestic workspaces. This report, however, will show that the gender distribution is not as rigid and that roughly 60% of the child laborers are male and 40% female.

The following report will analyze the history of child right activism and legislation in Ghana, the different causes and effects of child labour and the existing literature on the issue. Finally, we will bring in our new observations from the field study on Lake Volta and compare our results with past studies.

List of Abbreviations

Acha	Action on Children’s Harmful World in African Agriculture
CH	Challenging Heights
IJM	International Justice Mission
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILO-IPEC	ILO – International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NPA	National Plan of Action
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Section 1.0 Introduction

Child labour remains a widespread problem in Ghana today with over two million children involved in the various economic sectors of the country.¹ Fishing, hawking, begging, mining, quarrying, herding and agricultural work are some of the economic activities children are forced into.² An estimated 21.8% of the children are child labourers in Ghana according to a recent study by Adonteng-Kissi (2018).³ As stated in a report of the National Plan of Action (NPA) to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2017), the absolute numbers of child labourers are approximately 1.9 million children.⁴ The fishing industry, an economic sector classified as one of the most hazardous by International Labor Organization (ILO), has a significantly high number of child labourers. This has been concluded in a USAID report (2014) on the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP)⁵ and will be confirmed by this report. In honor of this year's World Day Against Child Labor, Challenging Heights has conducted field research on Lake Volta aimed at identifying and estimating the proportion of children in child labour situation. Evaluating child labour in the fishing industries is important because the subject has been understudied in the past even though children were subject to hazardous working conditions. Significantly, important national documents like the 2021 Population and Housing Census have failed to clearly capture the estimated number of children in child labour. Until today there have been some data collections carried out on Lake Volta, but the data remained scarce, and the present report seeks to expand on it to give more insight about the different work tasks, working conditions, abuse, age and gender distributions of child labourers. To expand the research on this matter is urgent because children are the most abused and exploited group among African migrants not only across borders but also within.⁶

The report analyses data collected from the Krachi East and West Municipalities, the Kpando District, the Pru District and Buipe Districts. Fishing related child labour can be much more prevalent in certain areas of the country. As per the data collected, around 60% of the children in these particular areas were involved in some forms of child labour, making it three times more than in the rest of the country (21.8%). Even though there have been legal actions against child labour in the past by the Ghanaian government, child labour remains widespread, especially in the fishing industries. In order to combat child labour, the Ghanaian government legal framework to protect children's rights in 2000 and introduced the National Plan of Action against child labour for the first time in 2009. The second phase of the NPA started in 2017 but until today the numbers of child labourers remain high. We understand the third phase, NPA 3 is currently being developed by the Government of Ghana.

¹ Jayaram, Veena; Edwards, Carly: Challenging Heights Study on Children without Parental Care, 2021, p. 7.

² National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana, p. 1, hereafter NPAHTG.

³ Adonteng-Kissi, Obed: Parental Perceptions of Child Labour and Human Rights: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Ghana, in: Child Abuse & Neglect 84, 2018, p.35.

⁴ National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, hereafter NPAWFCH, p. 17.

⁵ USAID Report: Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). Child Labour Literature Review and Scoping Study Report (2014)

⁶ Dottridge, Mike: Types of Forced Labour and Slavery-Like Abuse Occurring in Africa Today: A Preliminary Classification, in: Cahiers d'Études Africaines 45 (179/180), 2005, p. 702f.

The structure of this report will be as follows: First, it is crucial to explain the differences between child work and child labour and to elucidate the concept of the "worst forms of child labor" according to international and national standards. After, the history of the child right legislation in Ghana will be explained in order to make clear what the current legal framework is and how it was implemented. Also, the overview over the literature on the historical and present state of child labour in Ghana will provide contextual information necessary to understand the current state of child labour in the country.

It will be crucial to first describe the phenomenon of child labour in Ghana in general before addressing the specific area of interest for this report, which is child labour in Ghana's fishing industry. We hope to contribute with new data to the ongoing body of research for future interventions in child labour in the fishing industries. Eventually, the report will list opportunities gathered from the literature and internal consultations to address challenges of child labour for state and non-state actors.

1.1 Study Methodology

The study was conducted using an exploratory survey design methodology. The choice of an exploratory design was informed by the purpose of the study which sought to explore the peculiar issue of child labour among a cross section of the population (Asenahabi, 2019). This involved the use of mixed methods, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to have a broader understanding (ibid) of the issue of child labour in the Volta Lake area of Ghana.

Data for the survey was collected through face-to-face interviews with children 5-17 years in the Volta Lake area, using a semi-structured questionnaire. This tool contained both closed and opened ended questions to solicit the views of children especially relating to the work they perform on daily basis. The face-to-face interview was preferred because it allowed the researchers to probe further, where information provided was inadequate or unclear. It also allowed for an on-the spot physical assessment of the child relating to exposure to abuse, physical injury and abuse. In addition, children who may need immediate support from Challenging Heights could be identified.

The interviewers were assigned in groups across the eight community clusters (one community cluster is made up of one major community with several adjoining communities), and each team was given two weeks to conduct their interviews. The survey tool was pre-tested in selected communities in Winneba to ensure that the questions were clear enough for the understanding of children and, address context specific issues. The collated data was coded and entered into the MS-Excel application. The data was cleaned for accuracy and consistency, including following up with the interviewers for clarification where necessary. However, where data did not show consistency or was not accurate enough, they were excluded from the final analysis.

In terms of sampling and sample selection, the survey targeted 5000 children living in the Volta Lake area of Ghana. However, within the two weeks period of data collection, a total of 3038 children were reached and interviewed by the researchers. Following the cleaning process, 39 incomplete and inaccurate data were removed. Overall, 2999 children across 8 community clusters in 5 districts around the Volta Lake of Ghana were randomly selected and interviewed. All the children interviewed were aged between 5-17 years. The children were sampled randomly, thus, all children 5-17 years living in the Volta Lake area were targeted for sampling. There was also an element of snowballing, where the researchers were directed to houses and locations where other children could be found within the clusters. The sample of

2009 is generally representative of the population of children living in Volta Lake based on the sampling Table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

After the data collection and data entry into Excel, we analyzed the data for our study. The major aspects that we focused on were the number of child labourers among the children interviewed, their age and gender distribution and what work they did. Further we evaluated how many of them were subjects of abuse and how many went to school apart from working in hazardous tasks. Initially we sought to analyze the working hours per week as well, but as we discovered in the dataset, the numbers were often not indicated, they were unclear and unlikely to be true and sometimes overlapped with the hours that the same children indicated to spend at school. Consequently, we decided not to consider the working hours as the data seemed to be largely flawed. Eventually, this discovery will help us for our future studies to come up with more precise questions in order to gather more valuable data.

Section 2.0 Work, Fosterage, Labour-Terms and Definitions

Child Work and Child Labour

As per the scholarly literature and international standards set by organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, there is a difference between *child work* and *child labour*. *Child work* is often seen in a positive light, whereas *child labour* is regarded as harmful. But there are different perceptions about where the line between beneficial (and non-hazardous) work and harmful work lies, as Hindman (2015) claims in his edited book on child labour.⁷ For example, the historian Colin Heywood claims that *child labour* often refers to an “onerous and exploitative form of employment” while *child work* is a “satisfying and dignified contribution to the family economy.”⁸ G.K. Lieten (2015) defines *child work* as a broad term encompassing many definitions of “any type of physical (or mental) engagement”, whereas *child labour* is defined as work that “interferes with the normative development of children as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and that transgresses the ILO conventions on this issue.”⁹ These two approaches show us that different definitions focus either on the economic aspect that defines child labour as compared to work tasks done at home or on the fact whether the work tasks are hazardous or not and interfere with children’s development.

This report uses the definition of *child labour* applied by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF. Most definitions of child labour in the academic literature are reflected by these two organizations. A UNICEF report (2003) cited by Adonteng-Kissi (2018) defines *child labour* as hazardous tasks performed by children that affect their health and environment. The ILO has defined *child labour* according to the age of the concerned children: Children between 5 and 9 years that are “engaged in economic activities” and children between 10 and 14 years engaged in economic activities that surpass a 14 hours per week maximum of work are regarded by the ILO as *child labourers*. In contrast to child labour, *child work* refers to children between 10 and 14 years old who perform economic tasks that are within the 14 hour per week limit.¹⁰ The age groups have the maximum age of 15, because the ILO Convention No. 183 defines that a person over the age of 15 can be “economically active”.¹¹ However, work that affects the children’s health and mental well-being is always regarded as child labour, also for children between the age of 15 and 17, as long as it is “mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful” or interferes with their education.¹² The problematic aspects of hazardous child labour according to the ILO is that it is detrimental and exploitative to children's health and development.¹³ The Children’s Act of 1998 in Ghana reflects those definitions as well and defines child labour as any kind of exploitative labour children are engaged in. Labour counts as exploitative if the work is detrimental to a child’s health, education or development.¹⁴ This report relies also on the definitions used by the

⁷ Hindman, Hugh (Ed.): *The World of Child Labor. A Historical and Regional Survey*, New York 2015,, p. xxvii.

⁸ Heywood, in: Hindman, p. 18.

⁹ Lieten, in: Hindman, p. 30.

¹⁰ Adonteng-Kissi, p. 34.

¹¹ Basu, Kaushik: *Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards*, in: *Journal of Economic Literature* 37 (3), 1999, p. 1084.

¹² <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

¹³ Hamenoo, Emma Seyram; Dwomoh, Emmanuel Aprakru; Daku-Gyeke, Mavis: *Child Labour in Ghana: Implications for Children's Education and Health*, in: *Children and Youth Review* 93, 2018, p. 248.

¹⁴ *Children’s Act*, p. 27.

National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana which was published by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). The NPA definition relied on UNICEF and ILO standards, which were cited in an NPA report:

“work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, dignity, and that which is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that deprives them of the opportunity to attend school, makes them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work (Source: ILO).”¹⁵

According to the ILO, child labour describes any work that "impairs children's wellbeing or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods."¹⁶ Mostly child labourers are physically, socially, mentally, psychologically or spiritually damaged because of their working conditions.¹⁷ Some scholars use different definitions of child labour, for example Afriyie et al. define child labour in the case of a 5-17 year old as work that deprives the child of "the fundamental right to education" and work that requires "more than 32 hour a week in hazardous labour conditions."¹⁸ This is different from the ILO standards because every work that is either harmful to children's mental, physical or moral state or prevents them from going to school is regarded by the ILO as child labour, no matter the working hours.¹⁹ Adonteng-Kissi (2018) adds another parameter to the definition of child labour by distinguishing it from domestic work. For him, child labour refers to work where children are economically exploited. However, especially in artisanal fishing industry, the distinguishing line between child work and child labour is not always clear.²⁰ As will be showed later in this report, the distinction of work that is visible in public and the work that is carried out in domestic spaces is also made by organizations as the ILO and it has effects on the gender distribution, because mostly girls work behind closed doors and are not registered as child labourers. A recent study conducted by Challenging Heights (2021), under the auspices of Anti-Slavery International, found that the majority (70%) of child domestic workers surveyed across two districts in Ghana are females. It is crucial to further differentiate child labour from child fostering or fosterage, as will be explained below.

Worst Forms of Child Labour

Child labour itself is not a homogenous category. Most organizations and scholars speak of an extreme form of child labour, a sub-category that includes the "worst forms of child labor".²¹ The NPA categorized child labour into different categories according to ILO standards and summarized that 14.2% of child labourers in Ghana are engaged in the "worst forms of child labor". This category entails, according to ILO Article 3 of the C182, "Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999", all forms of slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, compulsory labour, prostitution, use of children for pornography and drug trafficking. In general, the "worst forms" of child labour comprise all "work which, by its nature or the circumstances in

¹⁵ NPAEHTG, p. ix.

¹⁶ USAID, p. 3.

¹⁷ USAID, p. 3.

¹⁸ Afriyie, Lucy Twumwaa; Saeed, Bashiru; Alhassan, Abukari: Determinants of Child Labour Practices in Ghana, in: Journal of Public Health: From Theory to Practice 27, 2019, p. 212.

¹⁹ <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

²⁰ Adonteng-Kissi, p. 35.

²¹ Emerson, in: Hindman, p. 3.

which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children."²² Even though the National Plan of Action summarized that 14.2% of the Ghanaian children were engaged in the "worst forms of child labour" according to their data from 2013, they do not explain further which activities, in particular, are contained in this percentage and to what share.

One of the blind spots when examining child labour in the fishing industry has been the work that is not directly associated with fishing. Especially girls are more often working in the household and doing domestic work instead of working on the shore or the water.²³ One shortcoming of the ILO definitions of child labour is that domestic work is categorically excluded from child labour. This applies even if domestic works goes against educational opportunities of the children. As Iversen (2006) observed, this made it "hard to shed meaningful light on the work-related barriers to girls' school attendance in fishing communities."²⁴ Dottridge (2005) also explains that child labour in domestic spheres was usually treated differently than labour that occurs outside the home and this is an obstacle for the evaluation, especially of women and child labour behind closed doors.²⁵ The evaluation of girls' involvement in child labour is thus a crucial aspect to include in future studies in order to get the full picture of child labour in the fishing industry.

Child Fosterage

"Fosterage" serves today as a cultural legitimation for the exploitation of children and to convince parents to give their children to child traffickers or more generally into child labor.²⁶ The fostering of a child has a long history in most West African societies and is normally neither exploitative nor illegal. But human traffickers often use these arrangements in the sense of an "exploitation of custom and tradition" and convince the parents of children with such traditional arrangements because "trafficking thrives better on willingness."²⁷ Apart from these cultural misleading motivations, the parents of children might send them into child labour because of economic reasons. Mostly the concerned families are poor and subject to uneven development. In such areas of structural unemployment and poverty, "a better life is not signaled by education and training but by the lure of a wage."²⁸ Poverty as a driving force for child labour will be explained later in this report.

Especially poorer families could often provide better opportunities to their children when it comes to education or apprenticeships by giving them to better-off foster parents. As Gage writes, "fosterage is often perceived as a mechanism for enabling children whose parents lack economic resources to make more successful the transitions into young adulthood than would otherwise be the case."²⁹ Child fosterage in this sense is a form of an apprenticeship

²² ILO: C182 – Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, Article 3.

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182

²³ Iversen, Vegard: Children's World in Fisheries: A Cause for Alarm? Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme, p. 3.

²⁴ Iversen, p. 3.

²⁵ Dottridge, p. 708.

²⁶ Manzo, Kate: Exploiting West Africa's Children: Trafficking, Slavery and Uneven Development, in: Area, 37 (4), 2005, p. 397f.

²⁷ Manzo, p. 397f.

²⁸ Manzo, p. 398.

²⁹ Gage, Anastasia: The Interrelationship between Fosterage, Schooling, and Children's Labor Force Participation in Ghana, in: Population Research and Policy Review 24 (5), 2005, p. 459.

and not only important for learning practical skills but for "educational advancement" of children. Especially in rural areas, where educational opportunities as well as jobs are limited, fosterage is a means to promote children's social mobility because they are often given to relatives or other patrons who are in better economic situations than the biological parents. The foster parents can often provide better educational opportunities and finance schooling or provide job opportunities.³⁰ Bledsoe (1993) supports the interpretation that child fostering can provide more opportunities of social mobility³¹ and Klomegah (2000) even claims that fosterage improves children's education and that women that foster their children normally enjoyed higher education than those who do not.³² There are two different types of child fostering in Ghana: *Alliance or apprentice fostering* refers to fosterage by non-relatives that educate or train children in trades or other skills. This kind of fosterage can be called "alliance" fostering, because it is mostly a means to strengthen social, economic and political ties with friends and non-relatives. *Domestic fostering* refers to children, mostly girls, who are sent into other households to learn and perform domestic tasks.³³

The problem is that nowadays fostering is used by fishermen who promise parents that they teach the children their trade. The USAID wrote in 2014 that for around 50 US dollars, parents give their children away and mostly they do not know that the children have to "spend their day jumping into frigid, parasite-infested waters at dawn seven days a week to catch fish and untangle nets for ten to twelve-hour stretches. Young girls are tasked with cleaning, smoking, and selling the fish and are also employed as domestic servants."³⁴ According to the UN Trafficking Protocol, fraud and deception are amongst the ways to bring children into child labour³⁵ and the use of fosterage as a convincement can be seen as falling into this category.

In general, it is important to not confuse any instance of child work with child labour and especially cases of fostering as a form of responsible upbringing with child labour. Especially because fostering can be beneficial when it is not corrupted to legitimate child labour. As Iversen (2006) claims:

*"While it is important to highlight and urgently address instances of the worst forms of child labour such as the case of the young boys working on Lake Volta, it is also important to avoid stigmatizing the fisheries related work that boys and girls in artisanal fishing communities are involved in and may learn and acquire important skills from."*³⁶

The understanding of child fosterage is important because of two reasons: First, we can understand how parents are convinced to give their children into child labour and as a consequence we can inform them about the misleading arguments of child traffickers. Second, it is important to understand child fosterage in order to make a distinction between beneficial forms of apprenticeship and upbringing versus hazardous and exploitative child labour. The knowledge about how parents are deceived and why they send their children into

³⁰ Gage, p. 432.

³¹ Bledsoe 1993, cited in Gage, p. 432

³² Klomegah, Roger: Child Fostering and Fertility: Some Evidence From Ghana, in: Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 31 (1), 2000, p. 110.

³³ Klomegah, citing Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, p. 108.

³⁴ USAID, p. 5.

³⁵ Dottridge, p. 709.

³⁶ Iversen, p. 15.

child labour is crucial when it comes to the discussions about policies and other measures to curb child labour.

Section 3.0 Historical background of Child Labour

With the colonization of Africa in the nineteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade was replaced by the trade in products like palm oil, palm kernels, cocoa etc. During this period, the number of slaves within Ghana increased dramatically as they were not deported anymore and this meant that "slaves became the largest component of the labour force in West Africa."³⁷ Even though Christian missions like the Basel Mission said to "free" slaves in Ghana, they had to subsequently work off their debts for this new found "freedom" and were thus in another economic dependency.³⁸ Especially children were taken into mission schools when adults left the mission, making the children a crucial component of the Basel Mission's labour force. They had to do a lot of different kinds of domestic and agricultural labour, and they were introduced into the cash crop cultivation of coffee and cocoa.³⁹ The missions also introduced gendered division of labour as boys were going to mission schools and girls mostly learned to do domestic or field work such as milling, baking, tailoring, weaving, needlework, and household tasks such as cleaning and cooking.⁴⁰

The Basel Mission also used some forms of child labour in Ghana and introduced a stricter division of gendered labour. In the late 19th century, the mission freed child slaves just so that they could become part of the labour force for the mission helping in "mission construction, maintenance, agriculture, and the production of trade commodities."⁴¹

When the colonial administration introduced wage labour, women and children remained to be often in unfree labour conditions. The Great Depression resulted in a greater demand for cheap labour and after 1930, coerced labour in the colony continued.⁴²

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a child slave was often called "pawn" or "bonded person" in order to make child labour legally accepted. Sometimes child labour or child slavery was also obscured as adoption.⁴³ Pawnship in West Africa often worked similar to slavery, but the creditor did not own the pawn as a person but was just entitled to his or her workforce.⁴⁴ As Lovejoy and Falola (2003) write, pawns were usually children or teenagers.⁴⁵ Thus, this form of labour could probably be regarded as the predecessor of today's child labour. Pawning oneself or a family member was especially widespread among the poor, which is another similarity to today's child labour.⁴⁶

"The selection of the individual to pawn suggests a link between labor mobilization, social stratification, and gender. Pawns were a source of labor; they were required to work for the creditor, performing specific tasks depending upon the nature of the contract that had

³⁷ Koonar, Catherine: "Christianity, Commerce and Civilization": Child Labor and the Basel Mission in Colonial Ghana, 1855-1914, in: International Labor and Working-Class History 86, 2014, p. 74.

³⁸ Koonar, p. 76.

³⁹ Koonar, p. 79ff.

⁴⁰ Koonar, p. 82f.

⁴¹ Koonar, p. 72.

⁴² Lawrance, Benjamin: From Child Labor "Problem" to Human Trafficking "Crisis": Child Advocacy and Anti-Trafficking Legislation in Ghana, in: International Labor and Working-Class History 78, 2010, p. 67f.

⁴³ Lawrance, p. 67f.

⁴⁴ Lovejoy, Paul; Falola, Toyin (Ed.): Pawnship, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa, Trenton 2003, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Lovejoy/Falola, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Lovejoy/Falola, p. 6.

been reached at the time of the loan or at some subsequent date when repayment of the loan was in arrears."⁴⁷

Even though child labourers are today not officially declared as “pawns”, there are some similarities when it comes to child trafficking: The impoverished parents often receive some sort of financial help by traffickers and in exchange, the children have to work off this debt.

In the 1980s child labour flourished more and more as there were cuts in government expenditure on education and parents had to bear most of the school fees for their children. Gage (2005) reports that between 1980 and 1988 the school enrollment rates of children went down from 80% to 68% and even though there was a relief in the 1990s, the numbers remained below those of 1980. Further, the economic hardships resulting from the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) during those times made children working alongside school, a necessity for many poor families.⁴⁸

In summary, literature on the history of child labour in Africa is scarce and a lot of research in this field has to be done. As Koonar writes, most African labour history contribution concentrated on the topics of African worker proletarianization and not on the role of children in the work force.⁴⁹

Section 4.0 Child Rights Legislation in Ghana

Children's rights as the rights of a particular age group were adopted into the international law in 1990 when the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified by the United Nations. Before that, the ILO declared the age of 15 as the universal minimum working age of children in 1973. At the same time, the ILO also recognized that the minimum age might differ among countries depending on "the age of completion of compulsory schooling; [the] level of national development; and the nature of work."⁵⁰ However, even though international organizations such as the ILO or UNICEF focus on the problems of child labour, the "circumstances in which children are regarded as victims of unacceptable exploitation are even less well defined". One of the shortcomings is, as explained above, that those legislations often do not address carefully enough what happens inside the home.⁵¹ When child labour was increasing instead of declining in the 1990s, more actions had to be taken and the UN (1999) and the ILO (2000) decided to ban the "worst forms of child labour" described above.⁵²

The history of formal children's rights legislation in Ghana was affected by and part of this international movement. It began with the 1992 constitution that gave children rights as a distinct group to cater for their welfare and development. In 1998 under the Children's Act (Act 560), children's protection was adopted into the legislation and in 2005 under the Human Trafficking Act 694, human trafficking act was declared illegal in Ghana.⁵³ The 1990s were

⁴⁷ Lovejoy/Falola, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Gage, p. 432f.

⁴⁹ Koonar, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Manzo, p. 395.

⁵¹ Dottridge, p. 708.

⁵² Dottridge, p. 709.

⁵³ Adonteng-Kissi, p. 35.

especially important for African child right legislations: The ILO and other organizations formulated clearer definitions about child labour and African countries signed international conventions such as the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. During this time, child labour was re-conceptualized and its "worst forms" were formulated. This was a shift from the earlier model that saw any economic engagement of children as taking away their youth and education. The new model left behind rigid Western distinctions between childhood and adulthood and therefore refused to let Western countries "with their superior and economic power" dominate the discourse on child labour. After 1990, according to the new model, child right advocates distinguished child work in Africa from the Western perception of childhood and went against any Eurocentric or imperial argumentation in the child rights discourse. This new wave of child rights protection argued that the work of children should be distinguished and not every form of work is necessarily negative.⁵⁴ Thus there is a difference between child work and child labour as explained above and according to these definitions domestic labour is often not included when it comes to child labour.

The 1998 Children's Act is the "major legislation protecting the rights of children in Ghana."⁵⁵ The legal text says that

"No person shall deprive a child access to education, immunisation, adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his development [...and] No person shall subject a child to exploitative labour."⁵⁶

However, in spite of the legal measurements that were implemented in Ghana in 1998 and 2005 to make child labour a criminal offence, there are still 21.8% of children between the age of five and seventeen engaged in child labour. The Ghanaian government formulated the first legal framework concerning child labour in 2000 and in 2009 it introduced the National Plan of Action (NPA) to prevent child labour. The NAP initiated the Ghana Child Labour Monitoring System that aimed at controlling workplaces in order to assure that children are not part of the work force. The NPA also included the Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines for Child Labour Elimination in Ghana in order to combat the worst forms of child labour.⁵⁷

"The passage of the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) and the ratification of the ILO Convention on Rights of the child (1990) which prohibits the labour or economic activity that jeopardizes the physical and mental well-being of the child has yielded very little results in terms of eliminating the child labour problem in Ghana."⁵⁸

The second stage of the NPA was introduced in 2017 as it is described in the National Plan of Action Phase II (NPA2) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (2017-2021). In the same year, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection released a

⁵⁴ Lawrance, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Laird, Siobhan: The 1998 Children's Act: Problems of Enforcement in Ghana, in: The British Journal of Social Work, 32 (7), 2002, p. 894.

⁵⁶ The Children's Act, cited in: Laird, p. 895.

⁵⁷ Lambon-Quayefio, Monica;/Owoo, Nkechi Srodah: Child Labour, Future Earnings and Occupation Choice: Evidence from Ghana, in: International Journal of Social Economics, 45 (12), 2018, p. 1591.

⁵⁸ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1592.

report on the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana. Other organizations such as the UNICEF, the ILO, ACHA (Action on Children's Harmful World in African Agriculture), Challenging Heights and the IJM (International Justice Mission) have also raised awareness and attempted to combat child labour and child trafficking in Ghana.

Ghana was celebrated as successful case of fighting child labour and trafficking in 2002 and 2003 and the country received a lot of funding and showed efforts in trafficking surveillance and criminalization. However, the country experienced afterwards, a rather "regressive trajectory" in the fight against child labour and trafficking. Ghana was placed into the Tier Two Watch List by the United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (OMCTP). This category was newly created in order to demote countries that did not maintain or execute policies against trafficking that were already in place.⁵⁹

One of the main problems in Ghana is that although the government has passed laws and legislations in order to fight child labour and child trafficking nationally, and has signed international accords, the "specific manifestation of children's harmful work in the fishing industry is not recognized: neither the Fisheries Act (Act 625, 2002) nor the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Strategy (2008) specifically mention it."⁶⁰ It is thus most important to contribute to the application of legal frameworks in place in the fishing industry by pointing out shortcomings and provide strategies to improve the security of children's rights.

The most recent national documents such as the 2021 Population and Housing Census showed that children are involved in many work tasks, but it did not call it "child labour". An example is the Volume 3E of the General Report about economic activity in Ghana. The "economically active population" consists of all economically active people over the age of 5 years that were "employed or unemployed seven days preceding the Census Night." The overall economically active population is 11.5 million, among which approximately 10 million were employed and 1.5 million unemployed. The numbers about children involved in economic activities in the General Report are significantly lower than in any other studies. According to the report, only 3.2% of the children between 5 and 14 years old are economically active. Among the different regions, the Oti region has the highest amount of children in the labour force, where 20.8% of all children are economically active. Not only are these numbers significantly different from any other study carried out about child work and child labour in Ghana, the "economically active" children are also not mentioned as "child labourers" in the Report. Therefore, the report is not addressing the problem of child labour.⁶¹ Thus there is not sufficient attention towards child labour in the most recent national census reports.

Today, there are different institutions in Ghana focusing on combating child labour in the country. One of them is the Child Labour Unit of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. Another institution is the Human Trafficking Secretariat of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. The goal of this agency is to work towards the prevention and combatting of human trafficking in Ghana. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social

⁵⁹ Lawrance, p. 63.

⁶⁰ Bellwood-Howard, Imogen; Abubakari, Abdulai: Children's Harmful Work in Ghana's Lake Volta Fisheries. Acha (Action on Children's Harmful Work in African Agriculture) Working Papers 5, 2020, p. 19.

⁶¹ 2021 Population and Housing Census General Report Vol 3E, p. 27ff.

Protection is responsible for the development of the National Plan of Action and thus seeks to monitor, investigate and prosecute child trafficking cases and engages in rescue and rehabilitation missions.⁶² The third agency in place is the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service, which was established in March 2008 as a sub-section of the Criminal Investigation Department. It collaborates with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, the Department of Social Welfare, the Ghana Immigration Service and non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, the ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Challenging Heights and other NGOs. The goal of this unit is primarily to arrest and prosecute offenders of the Human Trafficking Act (2005).⁶³

⁶² [https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/about/agencies-secretariats/#:~:text=Human%20Trafficking%20Secretariat%20\(HT\),-The%20secretariat%20is&text=\(Act%20694\).-The%20overall%20goal%20of%20the%20Human%20Trafficking%20Secretariat%20\(HTS\)%20is,environment%20to%20accelerate%20national%20development](https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/about/agencies-secretariats/#:~:text=Human%20Trafficking%20Secretariat%20(HT),-The%20secretariat%20is&text=(Act%20694).-The%20overall%20goal%20of%20the%20Human%20Trafficking%20Secretariat%20(HTS)%20is,environment%20to%20accelerate%20national%20development).

⁶³ <https://police.gov.gh/en/index.php/anti-human-trafficking-unit-ahtu/>

Section 5.0 State of Research on Child Labour and Trafficking

Child Labour/Trafficking in General

Important theoretical reflections on the definitions of child labour and trafficking were made by Huijsmans and Baker (2012) and White (2005). Huijsmans and Baker (2012) have contributed important considerations to the debate about child labour and child trafficking in their publication *Child Trafficking: 'Worst Form' of Child Labour, or Worst Approach to Young Migrants?* (2012). In this contribution, the two authors argue that the discourse about human trafficking was successful in raising public awareness, however clearer definitions of these terms are needed.⁶⁴ In the late 1990s and early 2000s the literature on children's rights and their violations boomed. Studies of West African children were carried out by Robson (2004, 2005) and children in sub-Saharan Africa by Bass (2004).⁶⁵ Dottridge is another author that wrote about child labour and child slavery in West Africa (2005) in which he explained different forms of forced labour and child abuse.

An overview of human trafficking can be found in Vlachova's *Trafficking in Humans* (2005). Other authors have concentrated more on the direct relationship between child trafficking and child labour such as Benjamin Lawrance in *From Child Labour 'Problem' to Human Trafficking 'Crisis'* (2010).

Child Labour in Ghana

A lot of the literature dealing with child labour in Ghana focuses on the North of the country, such as van Hear's (1982) *Child Labour and the Development of Capitalist Agriculture in Ghana* (1982) or Gavin Hilson's *Child Labour in African Artisanal Mining Communities: Experiences from Northern Ghana* (2010). Other contributions to this debate focus on different economic sectors where child labour is employed, such as Lambon-Quayefio and Owoo's *Child labour, future earnings and occupation choice* (2018), in which child labour in the agricultural sector is treated. The paper emphasizes that "children who are exposed to early labour market experiences are disproportionately higher in the agricultural sector."⁶⁶

A large share of the publications on child labour has dealt with the cocoa farming industry. We suspect that had to do with the publicity of child labour on cocoa plantations internationally, whereas the fishing industry came into the media only recently. Lambon-Quayefio and Owoo (2018) for example pointed out that especially the cocoa farms of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire were an economic sector where child labour was prevalent. In 2010, there were about 1.8 million children employed on the cocoa farms of Ghana.⁶⁷

Many publications have also dealt with the economics of child labour. Ranjan Ray has focused in *The Determinants of Child Labour and Child Schooling* (2018) on the interactions between child labour and schooling in Ghana with a specific focus on the effects of poverty on economic decision-making of families.⁶⁸ Another publication that dealt with the economy of

⁶⁴ Huijsmans, Roy; Baker, Simon: *Child Trafficking: 'Worst Form' of Child Labour, or Worst Approach to Young Migrants?*, in: *Development and Change* 43 (4), 2012, p. 921.

⁶⁵ Manzo, p. 394.

⁶⁶ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1596.

⁶⁷ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1590

⁶⁸ Ray, Ranjan: *The Determinants of Child Labour and Child Schooling in Ghana*, in: *Journal of African Economies* 11 (4), p. 561.

family households and child labour was Koomson and Asongu's *Relative Contribution of Child Labour to Household Farm and Non-Farm Income in Ghana* (2016).

Child labour in the fishing industry was for long a blind spot of most of these investigations, and a detailed assessment of this economic sector is dramatically urgent. Whereas there is a considerable amount of academic literature on child labour in cocoa farming and in Northern Ghana, they rarely deal with child labour on and around Lake Volta or the maritime regions. Most of the publications available came from NGOs such as Challenging Heights, *Action on Children's Harmful Work in African Agriculture* (ACHA, 2020) or the *International Justice Mission* (IJM, 2021) and from journalistic reports from the CBS News⁶⁹ or CNN.⁷⁰ In academia and media there were both an awareness of child labour and child trafficking and the dismissal of it in the past. Manzo (2005) explains that not only are there charitable undertakings in the news coverage, but some people call it a "media hype" that is exaggerated.⁷¹ Nonetheless, is an urgent task to further research on the mechanisms of child trafficking and child labour in the Lake Volta and maritime regions of Ghana.

Whereas child labour in Ghana has generally gained a lot of attention in academics and also by UN organizations and NGOs, child labour in the fishing industry remained largely neglected. The USAID published a literature review on the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) in 2014 and mentioned in their review that information on Ghana's fisheries, especially those at Lake Volta, is scarce and disaggregated.⁷² According to Iversen (2006) "children's economic activities and child labour in fisheries has received what may best be described as selective and tentative attention, leaving the impression that fisheries-related work often is hazardous."⁷³

⁶⁹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ghana-lake-volta-child-slavery/>

⁷⁰ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/03/opinions/lisa-kristine-lake-volta-spc-intl/index.html>

⁷¹ Manzo, p. 393.

⁷² USAID, p. 3.

⁷³ Iversen, p. 3.

Section 6.0 Child Labour in Ghana

6.1 Child Labour in General

As explained above, about every fifth child in Ghana is a child labourer. At the same time, 14.2% of the children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, like hazardous work.⁷⁴ Child labour is not evenly distributed in rural and urban areas, Lambon-Quayefio and Owoo (2018) estimate that in urban areas 17% of the children are engaged in child labour whereas in rural areas the number goes up to 37%. The Regions with the highest child labourer percentages are the Upper East Region (45%) and the Brong-Ahafo Region (42%). Among the child labourers, 37% are Akan, 43% are from Northern Ghana, 12% Ewes, 6% Gas and 2% from other ethnic groups.⁷⁵ There are also variations when it comes to the age of children: around 44% of them are between 15 and 17 years old, and only 10% are between 5 and 7 years.⁷⁶ As indicated above, the NPA report of 2017 showed that 28.5% of Ghanaian children are child workers, with 21.8% classified as child labourers and 14.2% are engaged in hazardous child labour.⁷⁷

When it comes to the gender distribution among child laborers, Dessy and Pallage suggest that globally girls are mostly found in diverse forms of prostitution and pornographic industries and boys are prevalent in military activities, drug-trafficking, mining and fishing. This publication does not deal with a specific area⁷⁸ and as we will see when analyzing the data for this report, the gender distributions are not as clear on Lake Volta as elsewhere.

In 2003, the Ghana Child Labour Survey showed that 62.5% of child workers were in the cocoa farming business.⁷⁹ This was not just a phenomenon of the early 2000s in Ghana but also in the Côte d'Ivoire, as Schrage and Ewing (2005) explained.⁸⁰ The cocoa industry and child labour have been well-researched in the past. Our field data will provide new evidence on the work child labourers do in the fishing industry in Ghana, how they are treated, what the gendered labour divisions are and how child labour relates to schooling in among different age groups.

What could not be covered in our data collection are the causes of child labour. However, there has been a vivid academic discussion about different possible causes of child labour in the past.

6.2 Causes of Child Labour

The NAP lists poverty and other economic factors as the main causes responsible for child labour. Some children for example move to cities because their parents cannot provide for

⁷⁴ NPAEFCH, p. 16.

⁷⁵ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1597.

⁷⁶ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1593.

⁷⁷ NPAEFCLG, p. 17.

⁷⁸ Dessy, Sylvain; Pallage, Stéphanie: A Theory of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, in: *The Economic Journal*, 115 (500), 2005, p. 70.

⁷⁹ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1591.

⁸⁰ Schrage, Elliot; Ewing, Anthony: The Cocoa Industry and Child Labour, in: *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, No. 18, 2005, pp. 99-112.

them.⁸¹ Other social factors contributing to child labour besides economic inequalities are peer influence (peers coming from the cities have more money and clothing), ethnic violence (e.g. between the Dagombas and Kokombas in 1994), "traditional practices" [sic] (child domestic workers), child abuse and violence at home (children flee from their homes), sickness or death of the parent(s).⁸² Hamenoo et al. (2018) argue that children engage in child labour because of three major reasons: poverty, the absence of parents because of death, divorce or separation and "poor enforcement of educational and child labour laws."⁸³ Even though children are enrolled in school, they are driven into child labour because of poverty. Hamenoo et al. argue that in the Pokuase district children are hawking on the street because there are not enough funds for clothes, food or school material otherwise. The absence of parents can have similar effects and leave children in poverty when other family members (can) give the affected child insufficient care.⁸⁴

Dottridge (2001) also pointed out that poverty is the root cause of exploitation and of human trafficking since the traffickers promise economically weak families that their children "will be placed in good positions, where they will be taught useful skills and earn money which they will send home. In reality, children often find themselves working in harsh conditions for no money. Isolated from their family, community and culture, they are under the trafficker's and employer's complete control, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation."⁸⁵ Similarly, Dessy and Pallage (2005) cite various publications that suggest that parental choices for child labour often would not have been made if poverty was not the main cause.⁸⁶ Manzo agrees as well that poverty is the main cause of the problems, but she emphasizes the aspects of "inequality and uneven development".⁸⁷

The report of the NPA, the "National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana" (2017), confirms these observations and explains that the "demand for cheap labour, sexual services and certain criminal activities are among the root causes of trafficking, while poverty, the absence of economic opportunities, and social attitudes and norms are other contributing factors."⁸⁸

Ray shows as well that child labour is closely linked to the economy referring to ILO studies showing that the numbers of child labourers drop in areas with economic growth.⁸⁹ He claims that the determinants of child labour are different in rural and urban areas. Whereas in urban and semi-urban areas poverty is not a key push-factor into child labour, it is in rural areas. Education is the key to combating child labour in these areas, as Ray points out:

"Improvements in the 'quality of schooling' in the neighbourhood and increased education levels of the adult female in the household are likely to prove effective in curbing child labour. The trade off between child labour and child schooling is seen most clearly in this

⁸¹ NAPEWFCL, p. 17.

⁸² NAPEWFCL, p. 18.

⁸³ Hamenoo et al., p. 250f.

⁸⁴ Hamenoo et al., p. 250f.

⁸⁵ Dottridge, Mike: Child Slavery in West Africa, in: International Union Rights, 8 (2), 2001, p. 22.

⁸⁶ Dessy/Pallage, p. 70.

⁸⁷ Manzo, p. 393.

⁸⁸ NPAHTG, p. 1.

⁸⁹ Ray, p. 564.

study. Improved school attendance rates, via enrolment subsidy or other targeted interventions, provide one of the most effective strategies in reducing child labour."⁹⁰

Koomson and Asongu (2016) confirm that child labourers are a significant contribution to the household income of a lot of families especially in the agricultural sector. Because such families often cannot survive without sending their children into child labour, Koomson and Asongu suggest that government policies should be to "provide adequate remuneration for workers and lobby/bargain for comprehensive prices for agricultural products [...] so that poor families do not diversify their income portfolios having children in mind."⁹¹

Another cause of child labour that has been relatively new and that will be an issue especially in the future is migration and slavery due to climate change. Anti-Slavery International and the International Institute for Environment and Development have released a report in 2021 in which they showed that extreme weather conditions resulted in food shortages especially for societies already stricken by poverty. The report authored by Bharadwaj, Bishop, Hazra, Pufaa and Annan (2021) found anecdotal evidence of climate change as a driver of modern slavery in Ghana, including the trafficking of children from coastal fishing communities to the in-land Volta Lake area, and also from Northern to Southern Ghana, especially females, to work as head porters in the major cities.

Anti-Slavery International also supports the view that poverty is a main cause of modern slavery and child labour and therefore extreme weather and its effects on food systems are highly problematic.⁹² The Cancún Adaptation Framework (CAF) has established a distinction between three kinds of climate change based human movements: migration, displacement and planned relocation.⁹³ Not only do people have to leave their homes and migrate because of climate change, their poverty and vulnerability is also often exploited by others leading to modern-day slavery.⁹⁴ One of the present environmental dangers in Ghana comes from drought, especially in the northern regions of the country. The droughts cause migration waves from north to south which are often accompanied by labour and sexual exploitation.⁹⁵ A lot of people in these migration streams end up in the major cities but also on cocoa plantation and in mines. Especially girls and young women suffer under the effects of climate change in the north: "Climate change is making them more vulnerable, as families are selling their children into marriage and to labour agents as coping strategies."⁹⁶ Climate change not only has an effect on child labour or migration and trafficking but also on the fishing industry in Ghana in general. Especially the coastal communities are and will be affected by rising sea levels which result in coastal erosion that occur along the Bight of Benin between Cape St. Paul (Ghana) and the Nun outlet of the river Niger in Nigeria. Because of the flooding of coastal zones, the Ghanaian government introduced different measures in the 1990s such as

⁹⁰ Ray, p. 578f.

⁹¹ Koomson, Isaac; Asongu, Simplicie: Relative Contribution of Child Labour to Household Farm and Non-Farm Income in Ghana: Simulation with Child's Education, in: African Development Review, 28 (1), 2016, p. 113.

⁹² Bharadwaj, Ritu; Bishop, Danielle; Hazra, Somnath; Pufaa, Enock; Annan, James Kofi: Climate-Induced Migration and Modern Slavery. A Toolkit for Policy-Makers, Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development, September 2021, p. 14.

⁹³ Baradwaj et al., p. 15.

⁹⁴ Baradwaj et al., p. 17.

⁹⁵ Baradwaj et al., p. 22.

⁹⁶ Baradwaj et al., p. 23.

the Coastal Zone Management Indicative Plan (1990), the National Environmental Action Plan (1994) and the Draft Integrated Coastal Zone Plan (1998).⁹⁷ Also, the oil platforms that were established since 2010 raise problems for fishing communities, because the well-lit vessels attract the fishes and therefore lead them away from the shore.⁹⁸

Not only rising sea levels but also overfishing especially in coastal areas is a huge problem for the fishing communities. Because Ghana's marine waters are plundered and not enough fish is available for the fishers to catch, they trade iced fish with trawlermen out at sea. The illegal practice called "saiko" began when large industrial trawlers in Ghana's waters sold their by-catch that was not profitable on international markets to local fishers. After a while, they saw the profitability in selling those fishes to coastal communities and aimed at catching those smaller fishes. The business of "saiko" endangers Ghana's marine ecosystem because of the tremendous amounts of fishes these trawlers catch. An article by the "oceanographic" published in 2020 estimates that within five years, "Ghana's small pelagic fishery could collapse (...) unless urgent and drastic interventions are made."⁹⁹

Canagarajah and Nielsen (1999) suggest that decisions when it comes to child labour should not only be done in economic analysis, but should also include sociology and anthropology. In Ghana, studies have shown that there are also religious differences when it comes to sending children into child labour. Protestant households are more likely to send their children to school than those who practice traditional religions, in between are children from Muslim and Catholic or other Christian households.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, most researchers today share the opinion that the major cause of child labour is poverty as the USAID report (2014) summarizes in its literature review:

*"In trying to stem endemic poverty, many families in coastal fishing communities participate actively, or are swindled into trafficking children. (...) From here, they are trafficked to work often in other coastal fishing communities, or even outside Ghana. But most often, the Lake Volta freshwater inland area is the destination."*¹⁰¹

6.3 Educational Implications of Child Labour

Hamenoo (2018) has showed that children's educational performance is deeply affected by child labour. For example, children's education suffered when they were selling goods on the Pokuase highway. Also, in cases where children had to work after school, they ended up not having enough time to study at home or sleep enough to be rested in class. In some cases, children drop out of school due to being late.¹⁰² Citing an ILO report of 2002, Odonkor (2007) confirms that child labour "affects children's commitment to education in terms of school

⁹⁷ Prosper, Evadzi; Scheffran, Jürgen; Zorita, Eduardo; Hünicke, Birgit: Awareness of Sea-Level Response under Climate Change on the Coast of Ghana, in: Journal of Coastal Conservation 22(1), 2018, p. 184.

⁹⁸ Benkenstein, Alex: Oil and Fisheries in Ghana: Prospects for a Socio-Ecological Compact, in: South African Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper, 2016, p. 18.

⁹⁹ <https://www.oceanographicmagazine.com/features/ghanaian-saiko/>

¹⁰⁰ Canagarajah, Sudharshan; Nielsen, Helena Skyt: Child Labor and Schooling in Africa: A Comparative Study, SP Discussion Paper No. 9916, July 1999, p. 19f.

¹⁰¹ USAID, p. 6.

¹⁰² Hamenoo et al., p. 251f.

attendance, enrolment and performance."¹⁰³ The connection of child labour and absence from school can be seen in the report of the NAP in 2017:

*"Over 60% of the children not attending school are engaged in child labour, (35.4%) or its worst forms/hazardous work (28.3%). Meanwhile, as the gross and net enrolment ratios continued their increasing trends over the past five years, completion rates in basic education decreased for both primary and JHS in the 2013\2014 school years, jerking a four-year increasing trend between 2009 and 2013."*¹⁰⁴

According to the ILO, 70% of child labour occurs in the rural areas of "development countries" and mostly children just go to school part-time because of the work they have to do.¹⁰⁵ All the literature dealing with child labour in Ghana stresses the aspect of education not only as an aspect in children's development that suffers under child labour but also as a tool to fight child labour.

*"Either school attendance is forgone in favor of work, or learning is inefficient, either because the children are not allowed to spend time doing their homework or because they are unable to pay proper attention in school because of fatigue."*¹⁰⁶

According to Canagarajah and Nielsen (1999) there are different hypotheses on the relation between child labour and education: The *poverty hypothesis* claims that poverty is the main drive to send children into child labour instead of schools and that children's education suffers majorly under the economic situation of the family. Other hypotheses see the problems rather in the costs of transportation to send children to school or the costs that rise with the quality of schools. Child labour and a poor school system both influence each other negatively. As Bonnet (1993) showed, a poor education system can be the explanation for widespread child labour, because parents do not expect the children to learn a lot in formal education. Therefore, they often prefer work experience over schooling for their children.¹⁰⁷

6.4 Health and Psychological Implications

Child labourers often have to work long hours, carry heavy loads or use dangerous tools and they are exposed to toxic chemicals. Thus, child labour has severe impacts on the children's health. In addition to the physical impact of work, child workers are often victims of verbal, physical and sexual abuse. The results are moral, physical and psychological damage that are often irreparable.¹⁰⁸ Child labour also affects the children's health as the work is often hazardous and/or dangerous. In the study of Hamenoo et al. (2018), this refers to the selling activities on highways where children carry great weights while hawking, but health implications can also be seen in lake districts and marine districts of this study. Hamenoo et

¹⁰³ Odonkor 2007, cited in: Hamenoo et al., p. 248.

¹⁰⁴ NAPEWFCL, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Hamenoo et al., p. 248.

¹⁰⁶ Canagarajah/Nielsen, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Canagarajah/Nielsen, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ NPAEFWCL, p. 19.

al. (2018) list skin rashes, coughs and joint aches as among the health implications for children hawking on the streets.¹⁰⁹

Child labour in Ghana can be found predominantly in the three sectors of agriculture, fishing and mining. Apart from these economic branches, children are also employed as domestic servants, as head porters (*kayaye*), as hawkers or fare collectors. Apart from the condition of child labour in the fishing industries in Ghana that will be described below, children also work on cocoa farms and in the commercial sex industry and are often malnourished, suffer from ill-health, are often targets of physical abuse and cannot access medical care when in need.¹¹⁰

There are until today almost no real studies about the psychological effects of child labour on the affected children, neither in Ghana in general nor in the Lake Volta region in particular. This is an important field of study that should be assessed.

6.5 Economic Implications

Poverty is not only a cause of child labour but it is an effect thereof. Thus, child labour “perpetuates intergenerational socio-economic vulnerabilities on communities, families and individuals.”¹¹¹ Baland and Robinson (2000) cited by Dessy and Pallage support this view by declaring the two activities of child labour and human capital as substitutes: “the more child labour children perform, the lower their human capital, hence earning potential, as adults.”¹¹² Lambon-Quayefio and Owoo (2018) agree with these detrimental economic implications of child labour. Child labour does not just deprive children of their childhood and dignity, it has negative effects on their economic well-being in later stages of their lives. In their calculations, Lambon-Quayefio and Owoo (2018) came to the conclusion that “people who are associated with early labour market entry are 1.353, 2.374 and 1.289 times more likely to work in low-skilled, agricultural and semi-skilled occupations, respectively, compared to being in technical and professional occupations.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Hamenoo et al., p. 252.

¹¹⁰ USAID, p. 5f.

¹¹¹ NAPEWFCL, p. 19.

¹¹² Dessy/Pallage, p. 69.

¹¹³ Lambon-Quayefio/Owoo, p. 1603.

Picture: Children Working on Lake Volta during school hours. Photo taken by Challenging Heights, 2022.



Section 7.0 Child Labour on Lake Volta

7.1 Past Studies and Data Collections on Lake Volta

Child labour in the fishing industry is listed among the worst forms of child labour by Dessy and Pallage (2005) together with drug-trafficking, prostitution and pornographic activities. All of such activities cause severe physical and psychological stress and since 1999 the ILO pursues to ban such forms of labour.¹¹⁴ Thus, it is crucial to have a closer look at the fishing industry around Lake Volta and the child labour therein.

The Lake Volta was created as a water reservoir as a result of the Akosombo Dam construction in the 1960s and it is one of the largest artificial lakes in the world.¹¹⁵ The lake's size is 3,275 square miles and reaches from the Akosombo Dam 250 miles up north. The construction of the Akosombo dam began in 1961 and was finished in 1965. As a result of the construction of the reservoir, eighty thousand Ghanaians were displaced and new fishing communities were created.¹¹⁶ In the 1950s, Tongu fishers lived at the dam site and migrated annually from the Lower Volta to the northern parts of the stream. In total, there were around six thousand fishing communities in the dry seasons and half of that amount during the annual flood period. The annual catch during this time was around 8,000 pounds of fish.¹¹⁷ With the creation of the Lake Volta, the Tongu started to permanently settle where they have migrated to before every year.¹¹⁸

These numbers increased drastically with the construction of the dam, which turned the whole area and the new Lake Volta into a booming site of inland fishing. In 1964 the catches were around 3,000 metric tons, in 1969 they reached 69'000 before they stabilized around 40'000 metric tons of fish. This "explosion of the fish population was typical for new reservoirs."¹¹⁹ At the end of the 1960s, over twenty thousand fishers were in the fishing communities around the lake using 12,500 canoes. The total population in the fishing communities was around sixty thousand people.¹²⁰ The fish that is caught on the lake often belongs to the Tilapia species, which is widely consumed in Ghana and therefore a lot of people might contribute to the problem of child labour and child trafficking without knowing.¹²¹ The artisanal fleet of approximately twelve thousand canoes populate Ghana's waters and they catch around 70% of the fishes caught in the country. Fish is not only fundamentally important as one of the major sources of proteins for the Ghanaian population but fishing is also the center of a network of jobs: In the fishing communities, there are fishers, boat builders, traders, etc.¹²² Fishes have an important position in Ghana's cuisine, making

¹¹⁴ Dessy/Pallage, p. 68f.

¹¹⁵ USAID, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Miescher, Stephan: Ghana's Akosombo Dam, Volta Lake Fisheries & Climate Change, in: Daedalus 150 (4), 2021, p. 125.

¹¹⁷ Miescher, p. 127.

¹¹⁸ Miescher, p. 132.

¹¹⁹ Miescher, p. 131.

¹²⁰ Miescher, p. 132.

¹²¹ USAID, p. 4.

¹²² Benkenstein, p. 5.

out 60% of animal protein consumed in the country. Local consumption of fish makes out three quarters of the entire fish production.¹²³

Even though there are not many specific numbers on the children working on Lake Volta available, some can be drawn from an ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) survey that was carried out in 2013. According to the ILO survey, 52% of the child labourers worked in their home communities and the rest came from other areas in Ghana. From the 48% coming from other areas in Ghana, 75% lived with at least one parent that also moved to the communities. 17% of the children lived with other family members and 8 per cent with employers or non-family members. Acha also reports that 65% of the child labourers worked in other communities than their parental community, but most of them live with family members.¹²⁴

A survey of the NGO IJM in 2013 came up with even more alarming numbers. According to the survey, 57.6% of the children working on southern Lake Volta were trafficked.¹²⁵ These numbers correlate with a study carried out by Singleton et al. in 2016 which also focused on the southern parts of Lake Volta, and which estimated that almost 60% of child labourers in this area were trafficked.¹²⁶ Other NGOs have before already reported that Lake Volta was a main destination for child trafficking.¹²⁷ A report by the USAID (2014) also confirms that child labourers in villages around Lake Volta often do not come from the same communities. Child labour in the fishing industry involves a lot of migration from poor communities in larger cities such as Elmina, Moree, Apam, Senya or Winneba to impoverished fishing villages.¹²⁸ Agyeman et al. (2021) confirm these observations and claim that due to low living standards coupled with high cost of living in Winneba, the town is one of the epicenters of child trafficking and child labour.¹²⁹ Besides the Atlantic coast, Lake Volta is another area with a lot of fishing communities. In this area, according to a report of Acha in 2020, child labourers are mostly trafficked children that entered this work supply chain because of poverty.¹³⁰

The ILO-IPEC showed in 2003 that the gender and age distribution of the child workers in the fishing industry in whole Ghana was as follows: 25 per cent of the children were between five and nine years, 40 percent were between nine and 14 years and 34 per cent between 15 and 17 years. Of all these child labourers, 87 per cent were boys.¹³¹ According to the IJM the majority of child workers on Lake Volta were 10 years old or younger and almost all of the children (99.6%) on southern Lake Volta were boys.¹³² The right gender distribution remains to be unclear and we suspect that there might be differences in the two studies, one including child labourers in the households of the fishing communities (mostly girls) and the other one

¹²³ Benkenstein, p. 11.

¹²⁴ Benkenstein, p. 9.

¹²⁵ International Justice Mission (IJM) Report: Child Trafficking into Forced Labor on Lake Volta, Ghana. A Mixed-Methods Assessment, 2021, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari,, p. 9.

¹²⁷ IJM Report, p. 14.

¹²⁸ USAID, p. 4.

¹²⁹ Agyeman, Edmond Akwasi; Tamania, Emmanuel M.J., Bingab, Bernard B.B.: Dimensions of University Goernandce and Community Relations in Ghana, in: Africa Development 46 (1), 2021, p. 53.

¹³⁰ Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari, p. 4.

¹³¹ Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari, p. 9.

¹³² IJM Report, p. 40f.

focusing solely on the boats on Lake Volta. The numbers that the ILO provides for Lake Volta significantly differ from the numbers of age groups of child labourers for the rest of Ghana mentioned above.

The estimation that more boys are involved than girls in the fishing industry can however be confirmed by the number of rescued children by Challenging Heights: In 2019, 59 children were rescued among which were 48 boys and 11 girls.¹³³ In 2020, 70 children were rescued, consisting of 14 girls and 56 boys.¹³⁴ Because there are more boys on the fishing boats than girls, the latter have been largely neglected in the literature on child labour in fishing industries. Nevertheless, girls often carried out work not only when it comes to selling the fishes but also in household tasks in the fishing communities and sometimes, they also did what is normally considered "boys' tasks".¹³⁵ It is crucial that this research will make clear which tasks are normally understood to be "boy's task" and which are seen as "girl's tasks". In the past, the studies have not paid equal attention to both spheres of work. One explanation could be that the work on the fishing boats is mostly visible and other tasks happen behind closed doors. Boys and girls should get equal attention in this research and their different working conditions have to be explained in detail.

Children can find themselves in various working arrangements ranging from living with their parents to working for another family or community member, for a foster carer or with strangers and the children end up in these arrangements in various ways like autonomous decisions, decisions made by their parents, decisions of relatives after sickness or death of their parents or because of kidnapping.¹³⁶

The International Justice Mission (IJM) reports that during an ILO study in 2013 at least one out of five children interviewed had cuts and bruises that came most likely from violence and abuse through their employers. Such hazards are commonplace when it comes to trafficked children in the area.¹³⁷ The numbers are even higher according to a report by the USAID in 2014, which said that 35% of the interviewed trafficked boys in a past study had sores and scares from physical abuse by their employers. Apart from abuse, the tasks the children do are highly detrimental to their health. One of the major dangers of child labour in the fishing industry is drowning, for example when the boat capsizes or when children have to dive in order to free an entangled net underwater.¹³⁸

¹³³ Challenging Heights Annual Report 2019

¹³⁴ Challenging Heights Annual Report 2020.

¹³⁵ Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari, p. 13.

¹³⁶ Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari, p. 11f.

¹³⁷ IJM Report, p. 15.

¹³⁸ USAID, p. 9.



Figure 1: A photo evidence of a child labourer showing the effects of work on his fingers and nails. Photo taken by Challenging Heights in 2022.

The implications on school education mentioned above are also on Lake Volta a major problem of child labour. According to an ILO-IPEC survey of 2013, 90 employers said that 75% of child workers were also in school. From the parents that were interviewed, 53% said that their children dropped out and 34% of them saw the drop-out connected to "fishing-related reasons".¹³⁹

In contrast to the clear numbers provided by IJM and other NGOs, the Acha report stresses still that the information available today about child labour on Lake Volta is incomplete. For example, according to Acha, whereas some children in the fishing industry have been trafficked, "it is hard to say precisely what proportion, because others work with parents, neighbors, strangers or foster carers under a range of different terms and conditions."¹⁴⁰

7.2 New Data from the Lake Volta Area

The present data collection focused on five districts along the Volta Lake, including the Krachi East and West Municipalities in the Oti Region, and also in Kpando in the Volta Region, Buipe and Pru districts. The clusters examined are the following: Dzilakope, Kponfri, Anlokope, Obimpeh, Yayokope, Israel, Cannan and Somekope. The data collectors were professional and pupil¹⁴¹ teachers from the area recruited by Challenging Heights. In some communities where it was difficult to get a professional or pupil teacher, the research team resorted to the services of the Local Assembly Members and Unit Committee Members with appreciable level of education. This was also the case in communities where the team had difficulties on obtaining confirmation from the community members because they were seen as intruders. The data collectors went through training before being sent to the field. This included training on the research tool and its administration, the conceptualization of some key concepts and terminologies in order to translate them into the local language. The findings of the data collections are the following.

¹³⁹ USAID, p. 19.

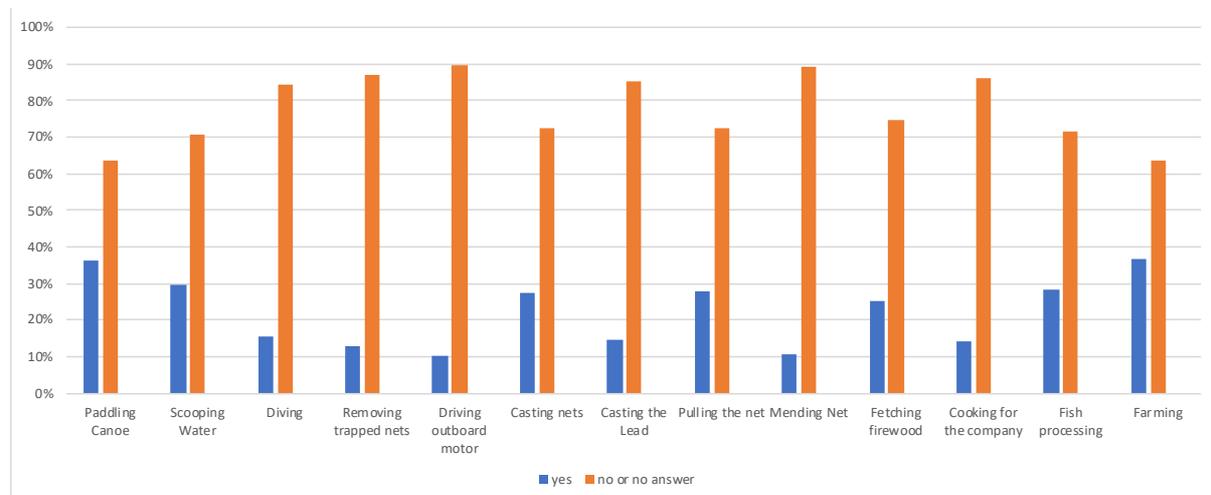
¹⁴⁰ USAID, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Mostly SHS graduates engaged to teach at the basic level due to the lack of teachers in deprived areas

Overall, 2999 children were interviewed for the present study. Among them there were 1732 male and 1250 females. In order to compare the data with studies and categorization by the ILO and UNICEF, the children were divided into the following age groups: (1) 5 to 9 years, (2) 10 to 14 years and (3) 15-17 years. In the first age group, 510 out of 1086 children were in child labour, which is a share of 47%. With increasing age, the percentages become higher: Among the 1163 children between the age of 10 and 14, 798 (69%) were in child labour and among the 413 children interviewed between 15 and 17 years of age, 317 (77%) were in child labour. All in all, around 60% of the children interviewed were child labourers. This number is significantly higher than the numbers available from previous studies, showing that on Lake Volta child labour is widespread. The criteria for a child to count as a child labourer in this study is not based on the number of hours worked, because of the data set not being consistent, most likely as a result of the children’s lack of understanding of the concept of time. Most of the time, the hours overlapped with the school hours for the same child, or they reached up to 18 or 20 hours a day which made it hard to believe that the child actually works in such schedules. Often it also seems that “am” and “pm” was not used right by the data collectors when they were capturing the data and we assume that most children also do not have a profound understanding of time. Instead, we looked at the work that the children were doing.

A child counted as a child labourer in this study when he or she was engaged in hazardous tasks – this allowed us to capture child labour among all age groups, since, as we have seen before by ILO standards, hazardous work always counts as child labour, no matter the weekly working hours. Children that did work that endangered their physical or mental well-being such as working on the lake without security and doing work such as paddling, diving or removing trapped nets all counted as child labourers in this study. Also, work such as fish processing is dangerous for the children because it exposes them to great amounts of smoke for long hours as well as using sharp objects (knives). All of the children counting as child labourers were doing one of the tasks showed in the following table, which indicates the percentages of how many child labourers did the particular tasks:

Figure 2: Percentage of Hazardous work among Child Labourers



There are also differences among male and female child labourers when it comes to the tasks they had to do. Among male child labourers, tasks such as paddling canoes (46%), scooping water on the lake (32%) and casting (35%) and pulling nets (33%) were especially high, whereas female child labourers had higher percentages when it comes to fetching firewood (34%), cooking for the company (23%) or fish processing (35%).

Figure 3: Tasks performed by male child labourers

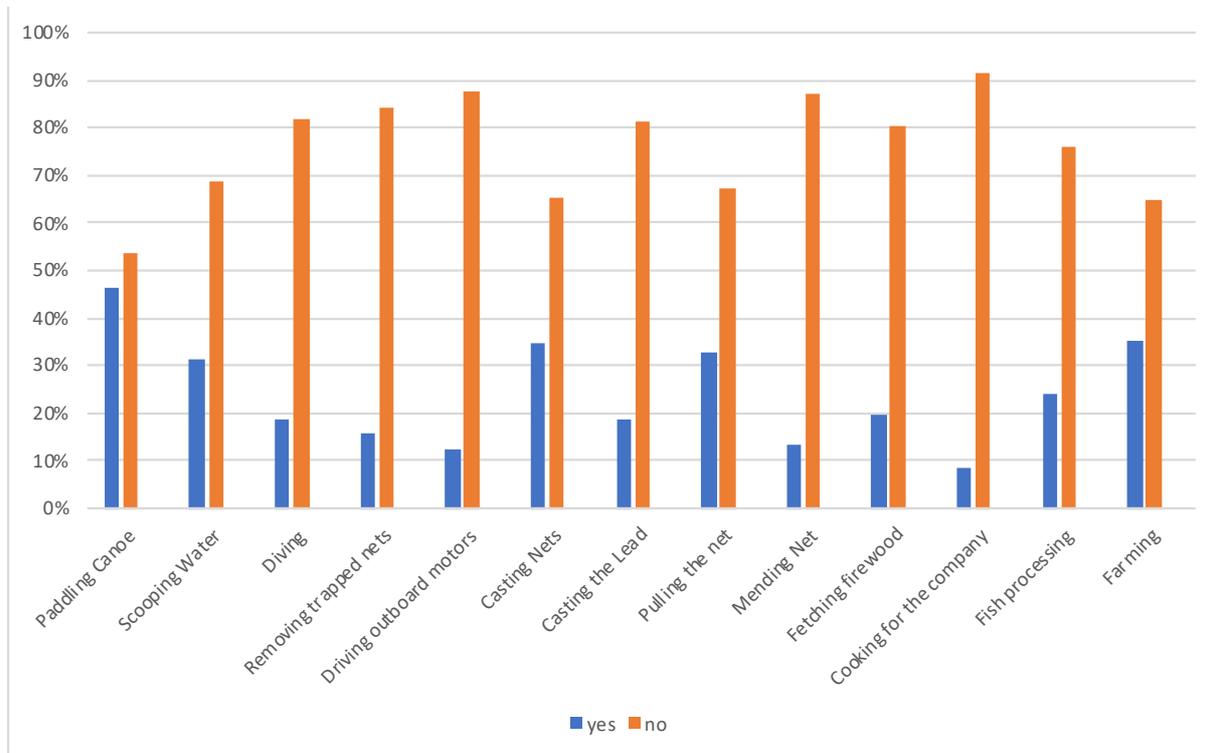
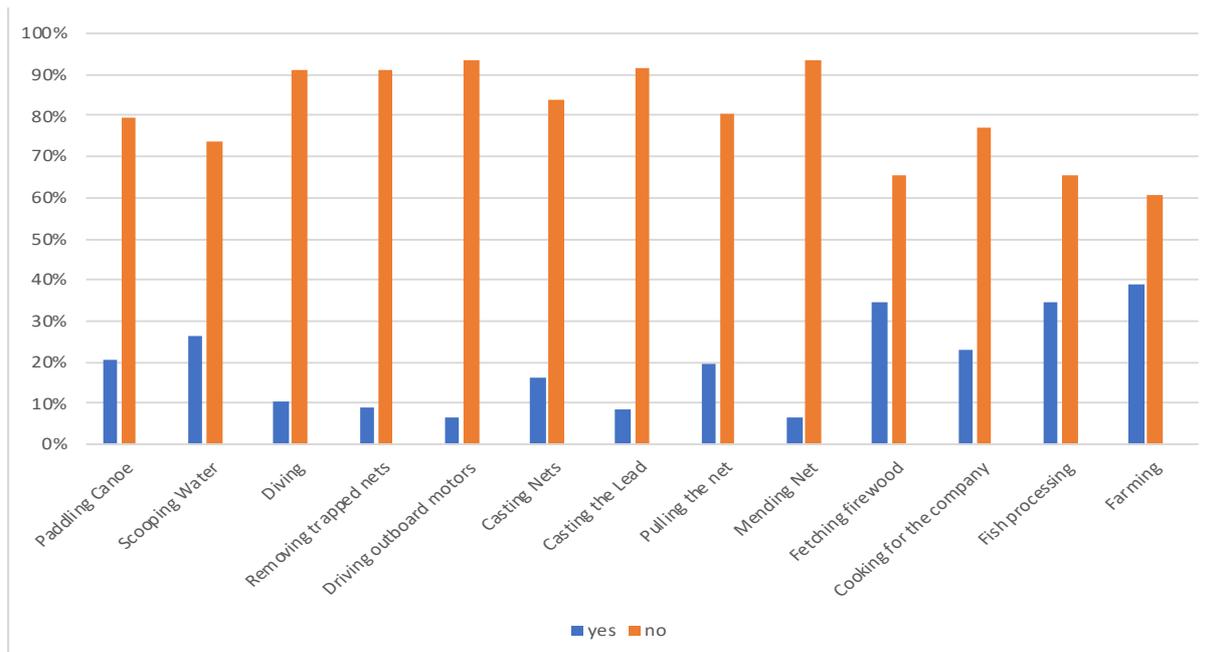


Figure 4: Tasks performed by female child labourers



The two tables show that the differences between male and female children are not as clear as they were in past studies. Even though there are some gendered divisions of labour, a lot of children were doing tasks regardless of their gender. Also, the overall share of male and female labourers is not as imbalanced as past studies have showed: 61% of the child labourers were male and 39% were female. This stands in contrast with numbers provided by the ILO mentioned above, which indicated that 87% of the child labourers in Ghana's fisheries were boys¹⁴² and the study by the IJM which even claims that 99.6% of the child labourers were boys.¹⁴³ One possibility for the new data in our study is that not only child labourers on the lake were interviewed but also children who normally do not work so much in public. With the different categories of labour such as cooking and fish processing, which might happen mostly behind closed doors, we saw that more female children are in child labour than have been previously assumed. Another reason could be the area of study: It could be that the division of labour is not as clear as in other economic branches or in other fishing regions.

The tasks also differ when comparing different age groups. Among the 5 to 9-year-old child labourers, tasks such as scooping water (32%), fish processing (30%) and farming (42%) are especially high while other tasks that come with more responsibility and danger such as removing trapped nets (8%), driving outboard motors (8%), diving (14%) and mending nets (9%) are comparatively low. This changes with the age group of 10 to 14 year old child labourers, who predominantly paddle canoes (37%), cast nets (30%) and pull them back (29%), farm (36%) or fetch firewood (28%). The oldest age group of 15 to 17 year old children have the roles that require the most responsibility and which are more dangerous than others. They are often paddling canoes (42%), pull nets (32%) and process fish (30%) but also the most dangerous tasks such as diving (15%) or removing trapped nets (17%) are considerably carried out more often by this age group than by others. The three tables below give a detailed oversight of the tasks carried out by the three age groups.

¹⁴² Bellwood-Howard/Abubakari, p. 9.

¹⁴³ IJM Report, p. 40f.

Figure 5: Tasks performed by child labourers 5-9 years old

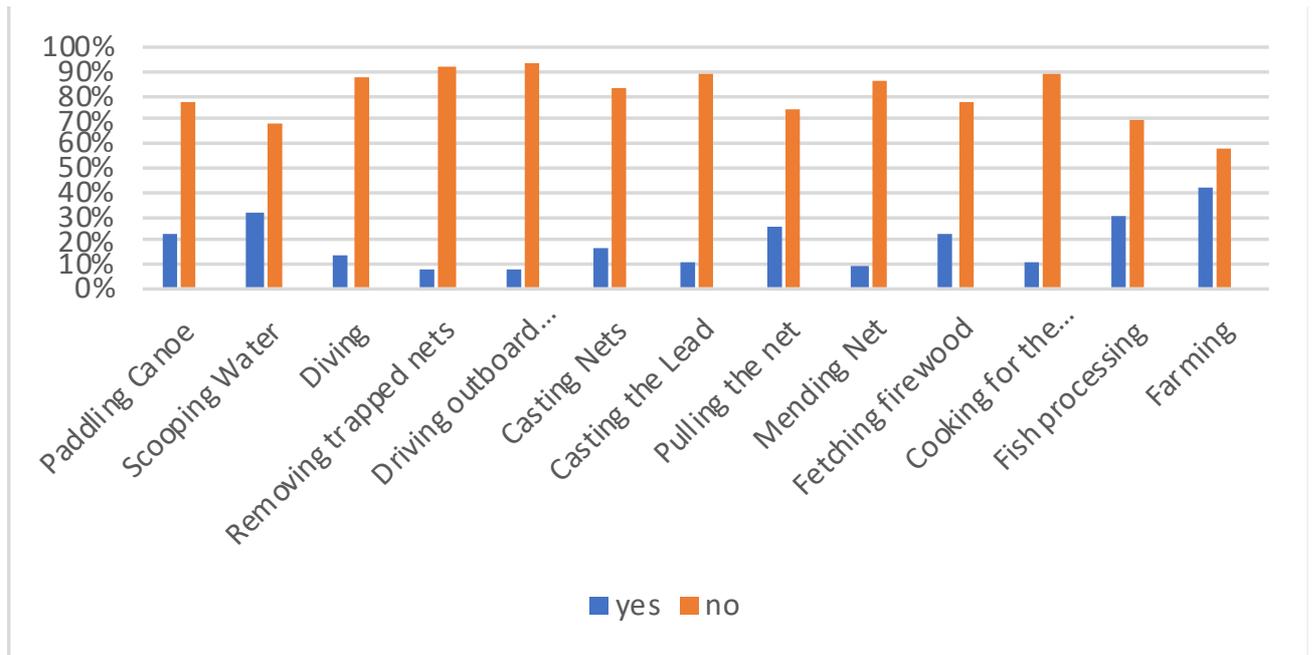


Figure 6: Tasks performed by child labourers 10-14 years old

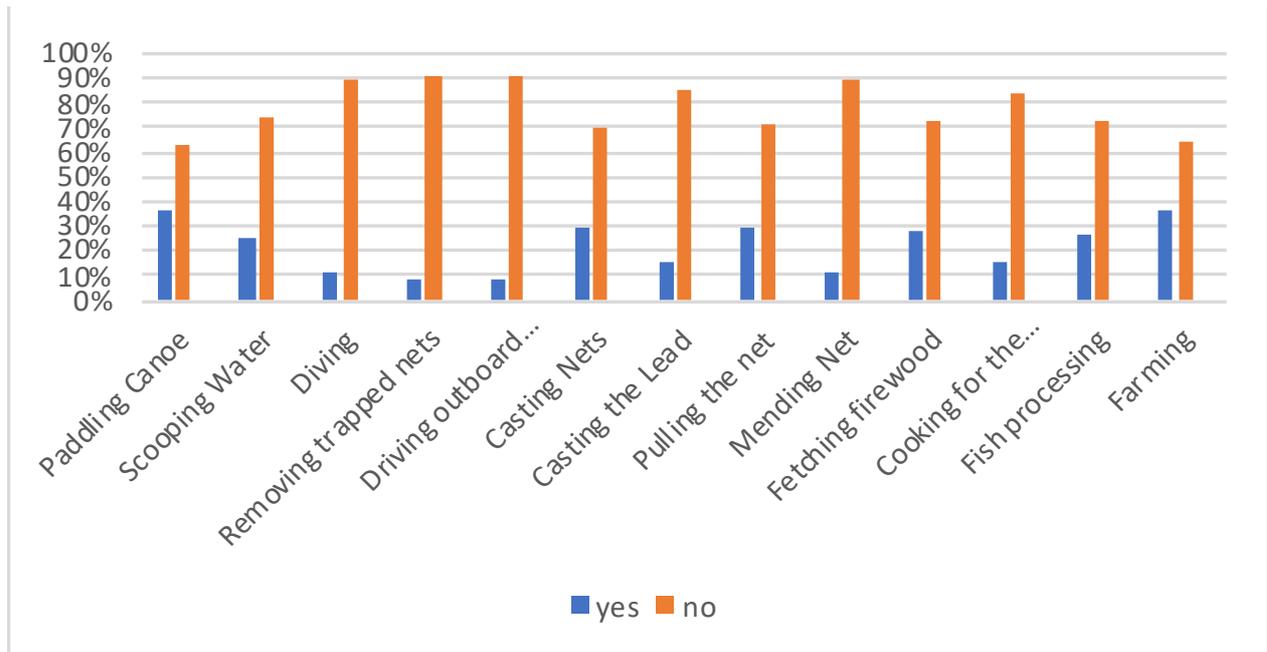
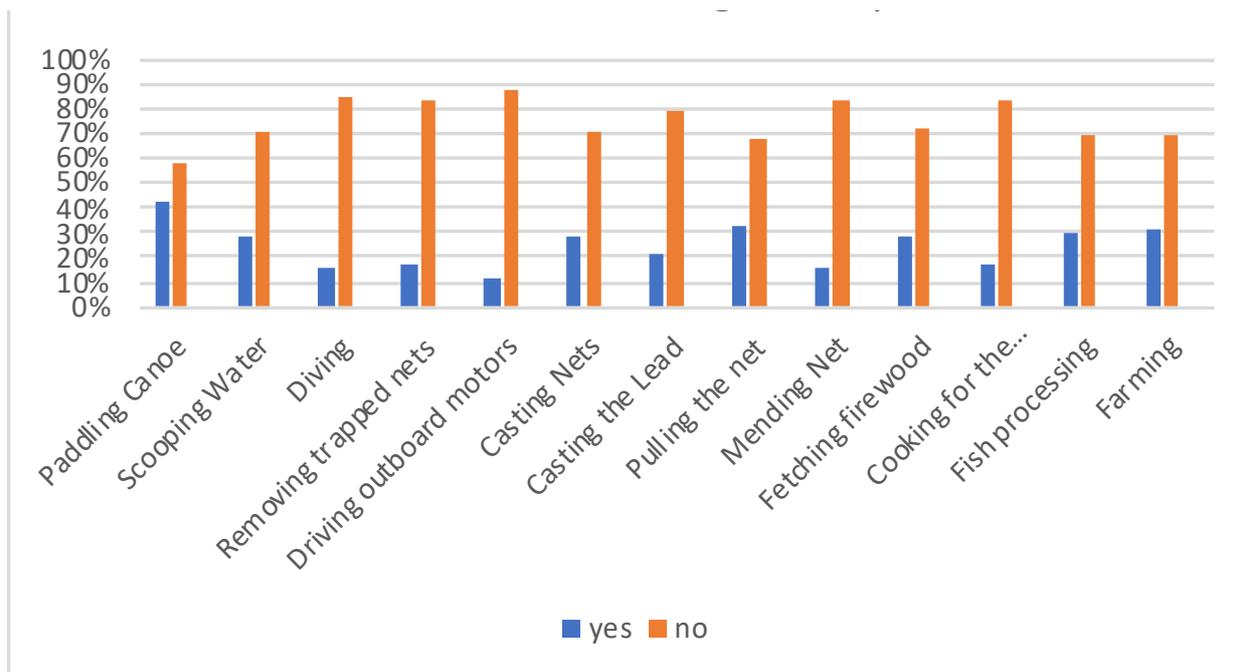


Figure 7: Tasks performed by child labourers 15-17 years old



Conclusively it can be said that responsibility rises with the age groups, but that does not mean that younger age groups are doing less hazardous work. The processing of fish for example is widespread in all age groups and the smoke the children inhale in this task is detrimental to their health. Not only the tasks themselves have damaging effects on the children, but the child labourers are also often subject to abuse.

Figure 8: Physically abused fishing child labourer rescued by Challenging Heights.

Among the 1794 children characterized as child labourers, 1389 said that they were beaten (77%) and 730 showed signs of abuse (41%). In the following table, other signs of diseases, hard work or abuse are indicated, however, some of the data such as numbers of children suffering under PTSD probably needs further research by professional psychologists. The data collectors did not have the qualifications to assess medical or mental issues in detail.

Figure 9: Photo evidence of the physical abuse on a child labourer. Photo taken by Challenging Heights in 2022.



Figure 10: Physical abuse/diseases among child labourers

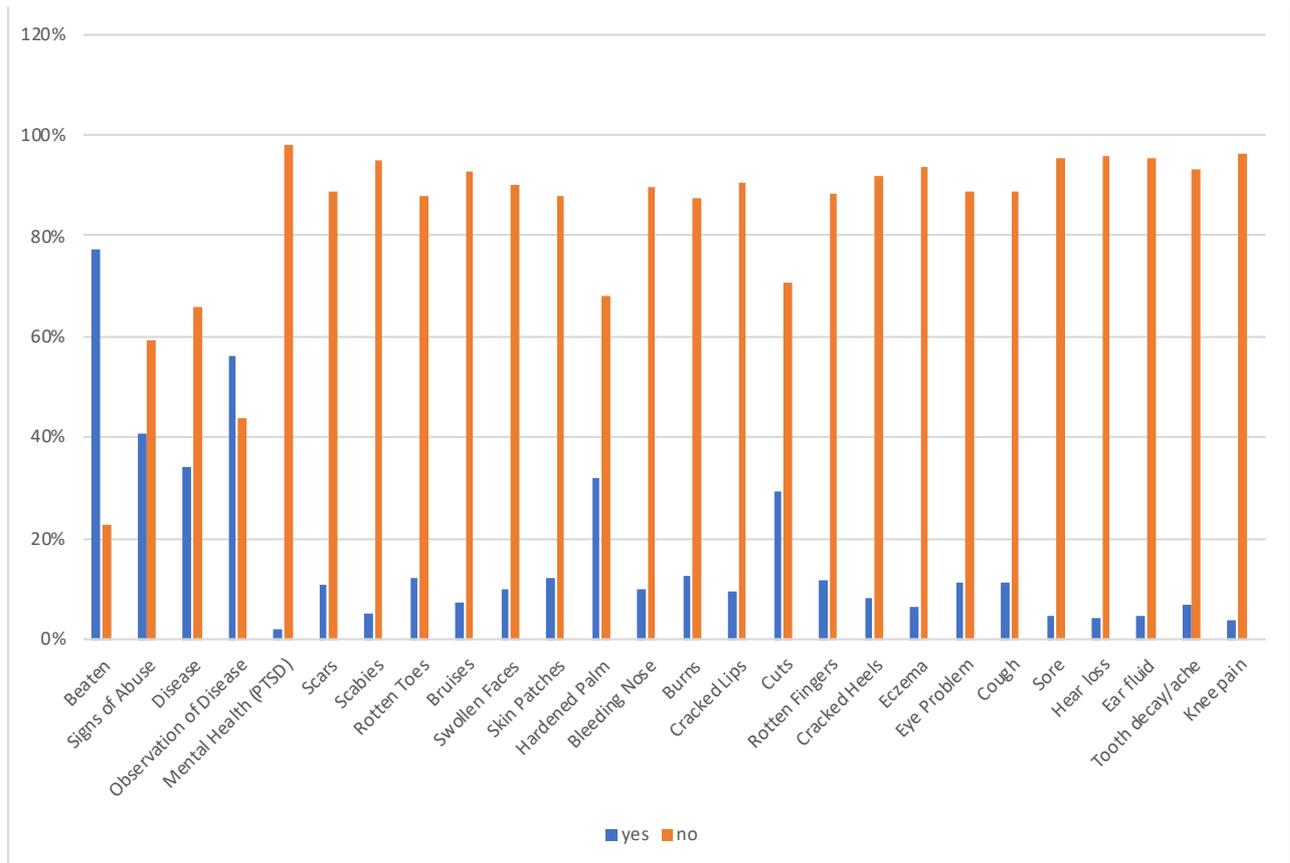


Figure 11: Physically abused child labourer on Lake Volta rescued by Challenging Heights in 2022.



As has been indicated in the existing literature, child labour often deprives children of formal education. Among all children (2999) interviewed for this study, 1696 (57%) were in school, whereas the number of children in school among child labourers (1794) was 779 (43%). Among the non-child labourers interviewed (1205), 917 (76%) were in school. These numbers can be compared with the nation-wide enrollment rates that the UNESCO has published. In 2020, the primary school enrollment rate was at 82.4% and the secondary school enrollment rate at 62%.¹⁴⁴ The numbers confirm that the widespread child labour on Lake Volta is responsible for a much lower school enrollment rate when compared to nation-wide data.

¹⁴⁴ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/gh>

Figure 12: Child labourers on the line of duty during school hours on Lake Volta captured by Challenging Heights.



The IJM 2013 research showed that 57.6% of all children working on Lake Volta were trafficked. Other research put the figure of the percentage of trafficked children lower. This brings contestation in the percentages of trafficked child labourers. This research was severely constrained for several reasons in obtaining quality data on the proportion of the contribution of child labour to child trafficking on Lake Volta. It is our view that the contribution of child labour to child trafficking should properly sufficiently be investigated and is therefore a subject matter in subsequent research by Challenging Heights.

A last important observation from the data can be made about the local perception of child labour. Even though the children were doing all the tasks mentioned above and qualified as child labourers, the local data collectors did not register this as child labour in their own evaluation. Coming from the same community, it shows that also among teachers – most of the data collectors were teachers – de facto child labour is often not perceived as such. According to the questionnaires, the data collectors categorized only 1090 children as child labourers versus our own evaluation of 1794 child labourers that resulted from the tasks the children were doing. This shows that the data collectors themselves – who came from the same districts – often did not regard the work that the children were doing, even though it was detrimental to the children's health, as child labour.

Section 8.0 Discussion

The data shows that child labour on Lake Volta is higher than previously assumed. Also, the gendered division that has been reported in the past by scholars and activists is not as clear when looking at the data. There are some tasks that are predominantly carried out by either boys or girls, but the roles are not rigid. Also, the data shows a deep insight in the different tasks that the child labourers face in their work and how the tasks change with the respective age groups. Even though older children tend to do more dangerous work, hazardous tasks can be found in every age group.

The increased numbers of child labour could also be connected to the impacts of COVID-19, as both the ILO and UNICEF indicated that the global pandemic resulted in higher numbers of child labourers. A UNICEF article that was published in June 2021, the organization warned that 9 million additional children were at risk of becoming child labourers as a consequence of the pandemic. This comes in addition to already increasing numbers of child labour in sub-Saharan Africa due to “population growth, recurrent crises, extreme poverty, and inadequate social protection measures” that caused 16.6 million additional children ending up in child labour in the four preceding years. The pandemic was especially harmful for the children because of the economic implications that made them work longer working hours or made the working conditions more dangerous. Many families relied increasingly on child labour because of widespread rising unemployment rates.¹⁴⁵

A more detailed statement on the trafficking of children on Lake Volta will be released in a future report by Challenging Heights. The data collection for the present report was interrupted because of the trafficking of children being a delicate topic and many enumerators were chased out of villages when they raised questions about the issue. The upcoming report on child trafficking – “Children Lost in Plain Sight” – will be based on data that was gathered during past rescue missions of Challenging Heights and new primary data that will be collected for the report itself.

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-labour-rises-160-million-first-increase-two-decades>

Section 9.0 Measures against Child Labour

1. Basu describes three different interventions to end child labour: the *intra-national*, the *supranational* and the *extra-national* approach. The *intra-national* interventions are national laws to control or ban child labour but also literacy programs or legal actions such as compulsory education are intra-national political measurements. NGOs often contribute to such intra-national programs as well. The *supranational* interventions come from international organizations like the ILO or UNICEF that urge countries to ratify their declarations. *Extra-national* actions are interventions of one country in another country. One example that Basu lists is the disallowance of products that were created with child labour in other countries by the U.S.¹⁴⁶ Challenging Heights is urging all actors to act now, to urgently address the plights of all children affected by child labour on Lake Volta fishing industry in Ghana.
2. Because of the widespread misuse of fosterage as a conveyance for parents to send their children into child labour, one of the key policy recommendations has to be connected to public education in general and education of the parents in the most affected regions of the country in particular – in both the source and destination communities. It is a central problem that a lot of parents, according to past studies and the literature on child labour, do not know what their children must do in their work environments.
3. There is urgent need for affected children to be removed from child labour situations, and place them in safe spaces such as schools, vocational and skills education, and any other developmental programs that will guarantee their safety, and their future.
4. Since poverty – and COVID-19 made the economic situation of most households worse – is a main cause of child labour, policies should aim at making the economic situations for the families better. A key approach might be to create relief funds for parents so that they are not forced to send their children into child labour.

¹⁴⁶ Basu, p. 1091f.

5. The USAID report (2014) brought up two approaches to curbing child labour, the *right-based approach* and the *participatory approach*. The rights-based approach is to educate communities about the legal frameworks in place in the country when it comes to child labour and to urge them to obey these laws. The participatory approach works by empowering individuals or families or communities so that they are stakeholders of child rights protection in their own area and contribute to the elimination of the problem.¹⁴⁷

Section 10 Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations of Challenging Heights following this report are the following.

1. The organization urges governmental institutions to both address the problems of child labour in the country officially instead of reporting on children in working conditions as neutral as in the 2021 Population and Housing Census Report. It is crucial first step in curbing child labour to call out the problem unanimously.
2. Further, there are laws in place that prohibit child labour, however, these are not always implemented effectively and thus child labour is widespread in many regions of the country. The enforcement of the law from the side of the government would tremendously help in curbing child labour.
3. In line with this year's theme of "universal social protection to end child labour" we ask the government of Ghana to ensure proper targeting and effective implementation of social intervention especially the livelihoods empowerment against poverty (LEAP) programme to include the poor and marginalized populations who are often the frontline victims of trafficking and the use of children in hazardous economic activities.
4. Funding of state agencies particularly, the Department of Social Welfare, the Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service and the Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat should be increased to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in prevention, rescue, rehabilitation of trafficking victims, as well as the prosecution of traffickers.
5. Apart from governmental actors, Challenging Heights recommends that non-governmental actors also dedicate their efforts to educating the public and to find out in detail what the reasons behind child labour is so that the problem can be addressed in the most effective ways. In general, it makes sense to pursue a mix between the above mentioned right-based approach and the participatory approach, which means that not only governmental and non-governmental should fight against child labour separately but especially together with local stakeholders that have a certain standing and reputation in a community with a lot of child labourers.

¹⁴⁷ USAID, p. 13.

Section 11 Limitations of the study

The data evaluation from the field provided insights that can serve as a comparison to existing literature, but the data collection also faced some challenges and restrictions. Initially it was one of the goals of the study to figure out how many hours the children normally work per day, however the data that was collected in this regard was inconsistent. Some of the children were reported to do no child labour at all and they were said to be in school, but at the same time working almost 18 hours a day. It will be important in the future to invest more time in the training of the data collectors so that they fill out the questionnaires in a logical way. Also, the data collectors came from the same area as the interviewed children. This could mean that some of the data was biased. It could be more beneficial in future data collections to employ interviewers from outside and train them accordingly to capture the data. However, an important aspect remains that the data collectors can speak the local language in order to avoid misunderstandings when gathering the data.

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