

Spotlight on Ghana: What Works to Address Modern Slavery

Angharad Smith, Programme Officer - Delta 8.7

29 March 2022

How do you identify best practices to end modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labour child labour in the context of a particular country or industry? Delta 8.7 — a global Knowledge Platform — hosts country policy research workshops focused on that question. In order to identify and scale up action, each Delta 8.7 workshop explores a particular country or a particular sector or issue within a country and brings together policymakers, researchers and members of civil society to discuss “what works” to effectively address modern slavery in that specific context. The workshops are closed-door and conducted under the Chatham House Rule. The fourth Delta 8.7 workshop focused on Ghana.

Focus on Ghana

Over the last year, UN Member States, regional organizations and civil society have been working to raise awareness on the issue of child labour and share best practices in support of the [International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour](#). As this year ended, and at a time when the Ghanaian Government is strengthening its efforts to combat modern slavery through its commitment as a [Pathfinder country](#) and development of a number of new National Plans of Action including for the Elimination of Human Trafficking and Child Labour, this workshop provided an opportune moment to discuss what national policies are needed to accelerate progress towards the elimination of child labour. The main objective of this workshop was to identify challenges, policy priorities and best practices in eliminating child labour in Ghana.

This fourth workshop focused on Ghana, bringing together policymakers from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Immigration Service, IOM, UNODC and UNICEF, as well as members of the private sector, civil society and researchers from Ghana. Delta 8.7 worked with a local convening partner, Free the Slaves West Africa to conduct research and organize the sessions.

Recommendations

Experts identified recommendations to make progress on the following five priorities:

1. The modern slavery-environmental degradation-climate change nexus
2. Child labour in the cocoa industry
3. Child labour in the fishing industry
4. Social protection measures and access to education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic
5. Prevention and rehabilitation

While the subject of child labour has received both international and national attention in Ghana, the problem of child labour persists: gains have been limited in nature, and solutions



unscalable. Participants stressed the importance of implementing innovative measures such as income diversification, wealth management and provision of universal basic income that target structural inequities in the system.

Three broad themes emerged from the workshop which encompass policy recommendations, programme and project proposals as well as questions for further discussion and research. The three themes are:

Survivor support and prevention

Involving survivors and vulnerable communities in research, policymaking, and program design and implementation is critical. Survivors and members of vulnerable communities are best able to identify their needs and often are in possession of creative solutions to reduce their vulnerability. Most importantly, survivor-centric policy and programming ensure that any anti-slavery agenda prioritizes prevention and survivor support rather than reacting *after* exploitation occurs (or reoccurs).

Access to education, specifically full-time schooling, is fundamental to combat child labour. Ghana's educational programme has been instrumental in ensuring children have access to education, coupled with initiatives such as the Free Senior High School Programme, the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Capitation Grants. However, while Ghana has seen an increase in the number of children attending school, it has also seen an increase in the number of children mixing work with school. This perhaps indicates the need for more a more comprehensive public understanding of what constitutes (illegal) child labour and what constitutes (legal) child work outside of school hours, which does not negatively impact on a child's education.

Synergies, areas of alignment and collaboration

In order to more efficiently deploy scarce resources as well as to enhance prevention efforts, policymakers should better coordinate and leverage the lessons learned around distinct forms of modern slavery, such as efforts to combat child labor and the slave labor that affects adults. Government databases currently operate in silos, and despite intents to move to a centralized system, progress has been slow. For instance, COCOBOD is currently implementing a cocoa management information system, encouraging a shift towards the digitization of the cocoa farm which should achieve a full transition from cash to digital payments for all cocoa transactions in Ghana. Participants noted the opportunity to link this system to pre-existing systems such as those developed by UNICEF and World Bank. They stressed the importance of addressing the interoperability of different databases to achieve a more coordinated approach and encouraged the government to accelerate efforts to harmonize existing databases.

Research needs and gaps



Throughout the workshop, several primary research needs were identified to enhance effective policy responses. For instance, the modern slavery-environmental degradation-climate change nexus has been gaining momentum as a research topic, accelerated by the creation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In Ghana, the bidirectional relationship — between environmental harm and modern slavery — can be observed specifically in cocoa, rubber plantations and mining where child labour is prominent. Despite this, participants noted limited understanding on the interconnectivity of this nexus among key stakeholders and cited the need for greater research in this space.

Next steps

As Ghana works towards planning and achieving its commitments as a Pathfinder country, these goals and recommendations should be considered and incorporated into its plan.

This article has been prepared by Angharad Smith as a contribution to Delta 8.7. As provided for in the Terms and Conditions of Use of Delta 8.7, the opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of UNU or its partners.

