



Community members discuss child protection during an IOM awareness session. © IOM 2014 (Photo: Julia Liebisch)

## More than 10 Years Fighting Child Trafficking in Ghana!

Since December 2002, IOM Ghana has been working with the Government of Ghana, communities and local partners to counter the occurrence of human trafficking within the country. The counter-trafficking team focuses on three key principles: **Prevention**, **Protection**, **Prosecution** (Law Enforcement Trainings), with an additional emphasis on **Partnership**. The main activities include direct assistance to children, the sensitization of families and fishermen and capacity building of Ghanaian officials. Direct assistance includes the rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and long-term monitoring of children who worked as bonded labourers in fishing communities.

### About Child Trafficking in Ghana

Reports about children forced to work in the fishing industry in Ghana first surfaced in 2001, and a fact finding mission in 2002 confirmed the existence of an extensive network of child trafficking that existed in the fishing industry. The trafficked children were found to be working under exploitative and hazardous conditions in fishing communities along the Volta Lake.

Through in-depth analysis of the findings of the mission, it was discovered that the causes of child trafficking are often related to poverty and broken homes, whereby parents sell their children to fishermen for a number of

years in return for money (USD 50 - USD 100). Most often, these children are not returned to their families and are kept under bondage, working in deplorable and dangerous conditions. They are often ill-treated, malnourished, and forced to work extremely long hours on the lake without adult supervision.

Furthermore, they are usually denied access to education, health care or leisure activities.

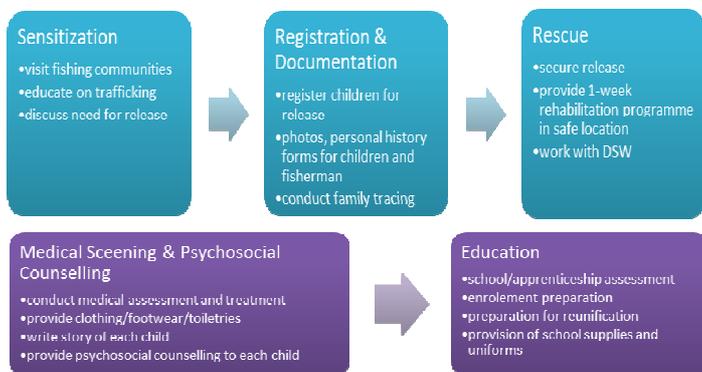
### What We Do

#### Prevention

One of the most effective ways of ensuring that children do not become victims of trafficking is to prevent it from taking place. In this regard, the public has to be made aware of children's rights and of the legal consequences of abusing these rights.

**Activities:** community outreach, role plays, dramas, film shows, legislation education, community development/micro-grant assistance projects.

**Outcome:** **FREE TO BE ME Toolkit**; the development and roll-out of a child protection and child trafficking toolkit in 2013 with additional trainings held through 2014, promoting a community driven approach to preventing trafficking and protecting children



Above: Family tracing in the Volta Region. © IOM 2013

**Protection**

Protecting trafficked children is of paramount importance in combating child trafficking in Ghana. Trafficking is a direct violation of the child’s right to grow up in a family environment and develop to his/her potential. In addition, trafficked children face abuses, including violence and sexual exploitation. Thus, it’s important to protect children by removing them from the exploitative and abusive situations and return them to their home communities and parents/guardians, giving them the opportunity to grow up in a family environment.

**Activities:** The 5 Rs, including: I) Research/Registration, II) Rescue/Release, III) Rehabilitation/Recovery, IV) Return/Reunification, and V) Reintegration

**Outcome:** To date, 732 children have been rescued from the fishing industry

**Prosecution (Law Enforcement Trainings)**

In 2005, the Government of Ghana passed the Human Trafficking Act, allowing for the prosecution of those who engage in this crime. Thus, in collaboration with relevant government institutions such as the Police Service’s Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, the Immigration Service and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, IOM Ghana initiated capacity building activities. These aim to strengthen the capacity of Ghanaian law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions to detect, investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers.

**Activities:** workshops/trainings, provision of equipment, evaluation of investigation and prosecution progress, annual meetings

**Outcome:** 170 law enforcement officials and 25 Parliamentarians trained on the Human Trafficking Act

**Stakeholders and Partners**

To implement counter-trafficking activities, IOM collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders and partners including government agencies such as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Department of Social Welfare, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service. IOM also partners with NGOs, civil society organizations, and community leaders and members.

The IOM Yeji project has received global recognition, including features in the *New York Times* (2006), the *Oprah Winfrey Show* (2007), ABC TV, TV5 in France, and HUTV in Hungary. It led to the formation of youth and children fundraising groups in the US such as “One is Greater than None”, “Kids Helping Kids”, and “Breaking the Chain Through Education”; along with various schools and universities throughout the US and other parts of the world.

IOM was also nominated and short-listed for the 2011 Hilton Humanitarian Prize and was a 2012 recipient of the Dream Project Foundation – “Freedom to Walk” fundraiser to fight trafficking worldwide.

**Way Forward**

We are appealing for funding and partners to support the planned rescue of 20 trafficked children on Lake Volta in 2015. IOM’s rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration assistance will support the child over a period of 2.5 years and includes psycho-social and health promotion, enrolment into school or apprenticeship, and livelihood assistance and training for guardians to ensure they can meet the basic needs of the child.

Further, it is necessary to promote the nationwide implementation of the **FREE TO BE ME** child protection and child trafficking toolkit. The toolkit contains 12 modules that can be fully tailored to the needs of each community and allows for a grassroots approach to addressing child trafficking. Since 2013, approximately 1,000 community members have been educated in 6 communities in the Volta region.

For more information about the upcoming rescue please follow #GhanaChildRescue on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).