



Child Rights in Mining

Pilot Project Results & Lessons Learned
Obuasi, Ghana | March 2014

Gold mining is one of Ghana's major industries, and gold exports provide the country's economy with one of its top sources of export income. However, at many mining sites children are exploited as workers.

From November 2011 through April 2013, Free the Slaves, Participatory Development Associates and Social Support Foundation collaborated in the implementation of a pilot project aiming to improve respect for children's rights in and around gold mines in Ghana. The project was carried out in 10 unlicensed, informal, small-scale and artisanal gold mining communities. The main purpose was to create an environment in which children would be protected from sexual exploitation and violence, child slavery, the worst forms of child labor and other abuse.

The Ghana Child Rights in Mining Project intended to address the lack of awareness and protection of child rights, which manifests in the widespread incidence of hazardous child labor and sexual violence against children in these areas. The project hypothesized that parents lack knowledge about their roles and responsibilities in promoting child rights and that there is a general lack of awareness regarding government resources to address child abuse.

Key Pilot Project Results: Improved Attitudes and Positive Action

- ✓ **Suitable Work:** Percentage of participants who could identify suitable work for children rose from 5 percent at baseline to 93 percent at pilot project completion.
- ✓ **Child Impacts:** Percentage of participants who could identify impacts on children of hazardous work rose from 4 percent at baseline to 79 percent at pilot project completion.
- ✓ **Child Behavior:** Percentage of participants who could recognize behavioral patterns of girls who have suffered sexual abuse rose from 11 percent at baseline to 75 percent at pilot project completion.
- ✓ **Government Assistance:** Percentage of participants who had knowledge of government agencies to contact in cases of child exploitation rose from 25 percent at baseline to 61 percent at pilot project completion.
- ✓ **Child Protection:** Percentage of all participants at pilot project completion who had taken appropriate action to protect children: 25 percent. Percentage of participants who are parents who had taken action to protect their own children at pilot project completion: 71 percent.



While Ghanaian human rights groups have been concerned for many years about the enslavement and exploitation of children linked with so-called *galamsey* mining sites, very little research has been carried out in this area. The research for this project documented sexual slavery among girls and found many children in the worst forms of child labor; boys as young as 12 were working with dangerous chemicals to extract gold dust from ore and girls as young as 10 were prostituted in mining camps and pushed into sexual relationships with older men.

The child rights project team began by conducting qualitative, participatory research into modern forms of slavery, including child sex trafficking and the related and overlapping problem of hazardous child labor, to understand the dynamics of exploitation and abuse of children in the 10 communities. The research was designed primarily to understand the narratives of exploited and enslaved children in order to guide programs that strengthen community-based protection and prevention.



Using narrative pedagogy methods, the project developed and printed illustrated booklets around the themes of parenting, child labor and sexual abuse in informal mining communities. These themes were drawn from real narratives found through the research. The booklets were used with more than 350 participants within 25 learning groups led by trained community facilitators. For four months, the groups met weekly or biweekly to discuss the illustrated stories, and how to take up ways to protect children and reduce sexual violence and child labor.

Based on the success of this pilot project, Free the Slaves endorses the evaluators' recommendation of a continuation and scale-up of the Child Rights in Mining Program in Ghana.

Key Lessons Learned: Root Causes, Improving Capacity, Conducting Field Operations, Community Ownership

- ✓ **Root Causes:** Recognizing poverty as a root cause of child labor, slavery and exploitation, it will be important to include links to sustainable livelihood projects, vocational training and educational assistance in a program scale-up design.
- ✓ **Improving Capacity:** Capacity building for local government officials to carry out their child protection duties, enhanced training for community members on advocacy, and awareness raising on child exploitation issues within mining areas through various media outlets will also be important for a successful scale-up.
- ✓ **Field Operations:** The learning group methodology was shown to work best in cohesive, rural communities rather than in urban settings. Five to six months should be allowed to translate themes and narratives drawn from formative research into effective illustrated stories. Modest stipends should be provided to facilitators during the learning group implementation, and adequate time should be allowed for training facilitators on challenging topics.
- ✓ **Community Ownership:** To encourage maximum reach and sustainable community ownership, project development and learning group activities should include a diverse range of community members (avoiding a leaders-only or women-only focus, for example). Learning group activities should be followed-up with action planning, which should include engaging community members in advocacy activities to promote child protection and child rights.

See the full report: www.freetheslaves.net/Ghana