



Children, some as young as 4 years of age, continue to be sent to work in fishing communities where they do dangerous work, are deprived of an education and are not paid. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Gulnara Shahinian, urged the Government of Ghana to consolidate the important steps it has taken with strong and sustainable implementation strategies with measurable impact on groups at risk as well as victims of slavery.

“Further progress on eradicating the various forms of modern day slavery and exploitation in Ghana can only be achieved by addressing the root causes sustaining these practices, including poverty, regional disparities and the lack of access to livelihoods, education and health,” the expert said.

A human rights-based approach is essential to do this. “During my visit, I have seen that child labour, including in its worst forms continues to thrive in some communities.” she noted. Ms. Shahinian hailed the steps taken by some of these fishing communities to ban child labour in their villages and to extend their child protection work to neighboring areas.

Children also work in hazardous and slavery conditions in the artisan mining sector, and in the cocoa sector - though the latter has seen significant improvements. “I had the opportunity to speak to girls engaged in survival and commercial sex in Accra and Kayayees in the market who sleep in the open in appalling conditions with very young children and are regularly exposed to

rape, exploitation and abuse, the the Special Rapporteur said. “These women and girls, as well as the children who accompany them are vulnerable to become victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced and bonded labour and other forms of slavery. In addition to poverty, some are fleeing from early and forced marriages.”

Domestic servitude, often involving young children is another form of contemporary slavery which is believed to be rampant and must be studied and addressed. Equally there is a need to understand better the dynamics of forced labour and other forms of slavery along the person's life cycle and pay greater attention to the situation of adults, on which there is too little effort and information. The independent expert noted that many of these situations of exploitation increasingly occur in the context of the large waves of internal migration from poor rural areas to urban centres.

“The importance of education was stressed by everyone I encountered on this visit,” Ms. Shahinian noted. “Communities explained how critical education was to keep children out of child labour, while mothers working in terrible condition in the streets or in markets explained their objective was to earn money to send their children to school. Effective access to basic services such as primary education, adequate housing and health continue to be a challenge for many, despite favorable legislation.”

“Using a human rights-based approach can empower all stakeholders, including Government, and affected communities to address these rights as well as other socio-economic rights from the point of view of good governance and accountability,” she underscored.

During her nine-day mission, The Special Rapporteur visited various fishing communities in the lake Volta region, a rehabilitation centre, outdoor markets and other areas in Accra. She met with Government representatives, law enforcement agencies, victims, traditional community chiefs, teachers, members of community child protection committees, and international and civil society organisations. Ms. Shahinian will present the findings of the visit to the Human Rights Council in September 2014.

"It is vital that we give special consideration to ending modern-day slavery and servitude which affects the poorest, most socially excluded groups – including migrants, women, discriminated ethnic groups, minorities and indigenous peoples," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message for the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, observed annually on 2 December.

Today, 21 million women, men and children are trapped in slavery all over the world, according to the UN International Labour Organization ( [ILO](#) )