



CHILDREN'S VOICE

A Summary Report on
Focus Group Discussions held to solicit the views
of Children on reducing violence against Children
with focus on sexual exploitation

August 2016



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Executive Summary

Focus group discussions were held with school and out of school children in Kumasi metropolis and Asokore Mampong municipality to solicit their views and experiences to be included in the awareness raising messages. This was part of the implementation of Reducing Violence against Children project. Three hundred and forty five (345) children between the ages of ten (10) and seventeen (17) participated in the discussions.

Sixteen (16) point views were captured after the focus group discussions and were included in the messages to raise awareness on violence against children. Some of the views are summarized as follows;

- Physical, sexual, economic and psychological violence against children should stop
- Perpetrators of violence against children must be punished to deter others from abusing children
- Government and Civil Society Organizations should collaborate to prevent violence against children

There would be a continuous engagement of children for their participation and views on the prevention and protection of violence against children in DCI-Ghana's project areas.



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SUMMARY REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS HELD TO SOLICIT THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN ON REDUCING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN WITH FOCUS ON SEXUAL

1.0 Introduction

All children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence being physical, sexual, psychological, and economic and neglect. The rights of children are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Ghana is a signatory and other laws of Ghana such as the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732), Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694), Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (ACT 653), etc. The most recent document on the rights and welfare of children in Ghana is the Child and Family Welfare Policy. In spite of the Conventions and Acts protecting children in Ghana, children still face various forms of violence in their homes, schools, communities and the streets in the country.

As part of the efforts to protect children from all forms of abuses, DCI-Ghana implemented the Reducing Violence against Children project with focus on sexual exploitation in Kumasi metropolis and Asokore Mampong municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana. For the voice of children to be heard on violence against them, DCI-Ghana organized focus group discussions for children to solicit their views and experiences on violence for inclusion in the awareness raising messages in the project. The focus of the discussion was the perception of the children on violence, prevention and protection measures on violence against them.

This report covers discussions held with three hundred and forty-five (345) in and out of school children at the onset of the project.

2.0 Focus Group Discussions

Three hundred and forty-five (345) children participated in the focus group discussions. These discussions were meant to solicit the views of children to be included in awareness raising messages in the campaign to reduce violence against children, with special focus on sexual exploitation. These children between the ages of ten (10) and seventeen (17) were selected

from Tafo, Kaase, Sawaba, Akwatia Line, Asebi, Boubai, Moshie Zongo, Akorem and Sepe communities. Out of school children were selected randomly at lorry parks, markets and recreational centers, whilst the school children were selected from the Child Right Clubs existing the schools within the fore mentioned communities.

Out of every 10 children whose views were solicited, 6 were females whilst the remaining 4 were males. This was because the project emphasized on sexual exploitation of children of which females are usually victims. The field staff of DCI-Ghana facilitated the discussions and took notes on the views and experiences expressed by the children. Consent was sought from the families of children whose families could immediately be traced, teachers and focal persons of children of the child rights clubs, and next friends in the case of the out of school children in the streets whose families could not immediately be traced. Efforts were made to present the views and experiences expressed by the children without focusing on how they expressed the views and experiences.

3.0 Views and Experiences on Violence

Some of the views and experiences on the various forms of violence shared by the children in their schools, homes and communities are presented in this section.

“I leave home early in the morning to sell vegetables for my step mother before going to school and after school. I get home very late every day. This makes me sleep in class and I can't concentrate.” (Girl age 11, Adukrom)

“I went out to sell sachet water for my mother one day. Unfortunately, I fell down and burst the water. My mother told me that I should come home with either the water or the money.” (Girl, age 11, Asebi)

“My mother does not work. Instead, she sends me to sell pastries every day. That is what our family depends on for survival. I do not go to school because I am the breadwinner of the family.” (Girl age 14, Tafo)

“My father is the caretaker of my guardian's cocoa farm. My guardian

brought me to Kumasi to give me a better education. When I told my guardian that I wanted to go back to my family she says she has spent too much money on me and so I should sell water to pay for the money spent.” (Boy age 10, Ashtown)

“Our teachers beat us with canes if we make any mistake. We understand that our teacher needs to correct us when we go wayward, but flogging us is very painful.” (School children, Kumasi Metropolis)

“My mother smears grinded ginger and pepper on my private parts and eyes when I err.” (Girl age 8, Sokoban)

“I once went out with my friends to play and I came home late. My grandfather went out and bought a new blade and sliced me deeply from my feet to my buttocks. He said that will prevent me from going out.” (Boy age 14, Sawaba.)

“When we do wrong things the Mallams in our community beat us mercilessly. We don't feel happy living in the community.” (Boy age 10, New Zongo)

“When we score low marks in school our teachers insult us and our parents.” (School children, Kumasi Metropolis)

“My mother always invokes curses on me when she is angry. She always tells me I will never succeed in life.” (Girl age 13, Sepe)

“My father always insults me when he has grudges with my mother.” (Boy age 14, Boubai)

“My mother sends me out of the house when I do something wrong”. (Girl age 13, Asokore Mampong)

“I feel so embarrassed to be in school. My parents didn't send me to school early. I'm 15 years old now in class one.” (Girl age 15, Asebi)

“When I was in primary one, one of the seniors in Junior High School used to bully me. I wanted to stop school because of that.”

(Girl age 10, Akwatia line)

“One man always sends me to buy food for him. Always, when I bring the food he tells me to send it into his room.” *(Girl age 12, Adukrom)*

“We want to further our education but our parents and guardians want us to marry because they say it's our religion.” *(School children, New Zongo)*

“My mother told me I've taken her money and reported me to my dad. My father didn't ask me how true it was. [Instead], he pulled my hands and dips it into fire.” *(Boy age 7, Nimamoke)*

“I don't know who my father is. I stay with my mum. She gave me to a man who is a vulgarizer and has been sleeping with me. [In exchange], my mother always takes money from the man. I got pregnant and I told my mum. My mum informed the man and they gave me drug to abort it.” *(Girl age 15, Ashtown)*

“My mother told me I should prepare because my father has arranged for a marriage ceremony between a man in his late 50s from Niger and myself in four days' time.” *(Girl age 13, Sepe)*

4.0 Suggestions for Prevention and Protection of Violence against Children

After sharing their experiences, the children provided the following viewpoints to be included in the awareness raising messages to reduce violence against children:

- Parents and guardians should stop exploiting children for economic gains. We sell for our parents and guardians the whole day which, without rest, makes us tired. We are also scared to tell them even when we are sick.
- Parents and guardians must be educated on the importance of formal education. Most of our parents do not know the importance of education, and they have planned to stop us from continuing our education after basic level.
- Adults should stop bullying and sexually harassing children.
- Parents and guardians should stop punishments that send children out of the home or send them to bed starving.

- Older school colleagues should stop bullying the younger colleagues.
- Teachers should minimize excessive flogging and touching on certain parts of the children's body
- Parents and guardians should stop introducing children to early marriages.
- Girls should be sent to school at the early stages rather than sending them in their teen age to avoid humiliation for them.
- Parents should provide basic needs for their children. This will prevent us from joining bad company or entering into relationships in exchange for money.
- Parents should avoid encouraging children to enter into relationships for money.
- Children prefer to stay with their biological parents.
- Men and boys should stop luring girls with money to have relationship with them.
- Fathers should put a stop to punishing children for the wrong doings of their mothers.
- Due to the harsh treatment parents and guardians give to us, we are often scared to tell our parents many of the challenges we are facing.
- The government should enforce laws on violence against children. For instance, perpetrators should be punished to deter others from abusing children.
- The government and NGOs and churches should team up to embark on programmes to prevent violence against children.

5.0 Conclusion

It was confirmed that children face diverse forms of violence in every setting they find themselves in. Incorporating these views during awareness raising would help reduce violence against children. Children would be continued to be engaged to dialogue on issues of violence against children for sustainable prevention and protection programmes and measures.



No girl should be sexually abused



Girls should have equal access to education



No child should be introduced to early marriage



Avoid child trafficking

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