



International Organization for Migration

the migration agency

NEWSLETTER

## COMBATING CHILD TRAFFICKING FREEING THE FISHING CHILDREN OF GHANA

Issue 2

April 2007

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an international intergovernmental organization established in 1951 that supports humane and orderly migration for all. The causes and phenomenon of human trafficking are rooted in poverty, lack of opportunities, gender discrimination, social and political violence, and demand for services. In many cases, the trafficker is a known and trusted person - a neighbor, an employer, even a relative. Human trafficking often begins with a false promise of an opportunity. Victims are promised good jobs, and then are forced into dangerous, illegal or abusive work. IOM has been working with governments and communities for over a decade to address this challenge. Since January 2000, indicate that IOM offices have provided direct assistance to more than 14,000 victims of trafficking.

### Counter-Trafficking in Ghana, West Africa

IOM's ongoing Trafficked Children Project in Ghana began in October 2002 with the support of the US State Department, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). IOM has recently seen an increase in the number of private donations received for this project. A great deal has been achieved due to this ongoing support.



*A 2003 photo shows the condition of the children.*

Awareness-raising, sensitization, and consensus-building on the issue of child trafficking for labor exploitation in the fishing communities was one of the first activities carried out by IOM. The IOM team described the dangers inherent in forcing children to engage in hazardous labor under harsh conditions. The aim was to make the fishermen in fishing villages around Lake Volta understand the exploitation resulting from their actions. Although they expressed some initial skepticism and even hostility, by the end of the first quarter some progress had been made in bringing the issue to the forefront of discussions among the fishermen.

IOM's work continued with the identification, registration, and comprehensive documentation of the information provided by the fishermen and children they harbored. During the first phase of this work, 290 fishermen and 1,002 trafficked children were registered by engaging in focus group discussions, administering three-page questionnaires, and conducting in-depth interviews.

The next step was assessing the needs of the parents. This included determining the level of micro-credit assistance necessary to take better care of their children. IOM made it clear that the assistance was to be used for the benefit of the children—to cater to their nutritional, medical, and other essential needs. Skills training workshops were organized in order to identify potential ways in which the parents could expand their existing trades or establish small-scale enterprises.

#### Lake Volta and its Fishing Communities

Created by the construction of the Akosombo dam in the early 1960s, Lake Volta is one of the world's largest artificial lakes. A number of fishermen who have depended on the bounties of the lake for many years report that fish stocks are decreasing, making it difficult to survive on fishing alone. Other work is scarce in a country where unemployment is widespread and approximately 40 percent of the population live below the poverty line.

The depletion of stocks is the first reason why children are needed as workers in the fishing industry. Children represent cheap labor, and their small, nimble fingers are useful in releasing the fish from the ever smaller nets.



## Rescuing the Children

Since 2002, IOM has rescued 612 children; 578 have already been rehabilitated, reunited with their families and reintegrated into school and the community. At the end of April, 25 more children will complete this process. They are all attending school or in vocational training programs. IOM and its partners continue to monitor their progress while providing psychosocial counseling. But there are hundreds of children under similar conditions.

The rescued children receive medical examinations, which have confirmed that many suffer from malaria and gastrointestinal diseases.

### Valentine's Day Celebration

Staff of IOM's Counter-Trafficking Unit in Ghana celebrated Valentine's Day with the rescued children. Candies, chocolate and biscuits were offered to the children and staff of the Rehabilitation Center, where they are receiving a comprehensive rehabilitation before their reunification with family members.

"The day was unique for almost all of the children, as they could not believe they mattered so much to people they never knew before their rescue. For a number of them it was the first time someone gave them a gift," explained Eric Peasah, Manager of this IOM project in Ghana.



It was a moment of joy for them when they sang songs and recited poems they were taught at the rehabilitation center. They were applauded along with their counselors for the great transformation in the short period since their rescue. Though not all are able to write, they all managed a word or two in English. These once timid children are now assertive and confident. The memories of the ordeal they experienced seem to be behind them.

*Children participate in a Valentine's celebration at the rehabilitation center. IOM 2007*

### Children Helping Children

The fishing children of Ghana were featured in the New York Times and on the Oprah show. This generated tremendous public support. Some of the most inspiring stories are of children in the US and Canada that want to help children in Ghana.

Tyler Page is a fourth grade boy from California determined to raise \$50,000 through a project he calls "Kids Helping Kids With Nothing". He plans to do this through a series of fundraising events in his community, so far they have raised more than \$2,000.

Aidan Nerman, only 11 years old, lost his mother Guylaine to cancer two years ago and established a memorial skate boarding event "Feast On Your Life." After seeing the situation for the fishing children in Ghana, Aidan dedicated part of "Feast On Your Life II" to the IOM project and raised enough money to support one child for a year.

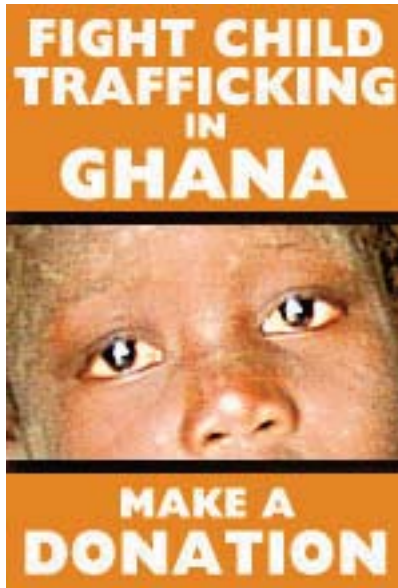


*Tyler Page, second from left, and his friends raise money selling ice cream. Photo Laura Page.*

These are just two examples of the tremendous impact children can have on other children.

"In order to provide more assistance and long-term care to the 587 trafficked children whom we've rescued, rehabilitated, and reintegrated over the last three years, there is the need for caring individuals to support them from afar. This will bring hope for a promising future to these children and prevent them from being re-trafficked in the future," said Joseph Rispoli, Head, Technical Cooperation, IOM Ghana

## How You Can Help in the Fight Against Human Trafficking



We welcome the opportunity to let you know how you can get involved in the international effort to counter trafficking in persons.

For a minimum of USD 20 per month for at least one year, a sponsor could support a specific child based on his or her profile. Such sponsorship would enable IOM and its governmental and non-governmental partners to provide assistance to each selected child on a continuous basis, which would protect the child from being re-trafficked.

The key objectives of the Sponsor a Trafficked Child Project are:

- \* To provide long-term support to trafficked children in their communities of origin
- \* To provide continuous rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to the children
- \* To provide follow-up assistance based on each sponsored child's individual needs
- \* To ensure that the results and achievements obtained through the Trafficked Children Project are made sustainable
- \* To reduce the children's vulnerability to being re-trafficked following the period of IOM sponsorship.

### Concrete Benefits

The health of each sponsored child improves from extra medical assistance  
 Each child performs better in school by working closely with his or her tutor  
 Each child makes a smoother transition into his or her community through participation in more activities with peers  
 The specific individual needs of each sponsored child are assessed and met through targeted assistance  
 The child cannot be re-trafficked during the period of sponsorship due to extensive monitoring missions and inclusion of the child into a mentoring and tutoring program.

Please visit our website to find additional information about the issue of human trafficking and our program in Ghana <http://www.iom.int>

In the U.S. tax deductible donations may be made by check or money order payable to: U.S. Association for International Migration (USAIM); the 501 C3 partner of IOM in the United States. To donate to USAIM online: [www.usaformigrants.org](http://www.usaformigrants.org)

This US\$ Amount	Will pay for
\$5	Food, lodging, and other vital expenses for 1 child for 1 day while in initial rehabilitation (approx. 2.5 months)
\$20 a month	Minimum amount to adopt a child
\$40	Uniform and school supplies for 1 child
\$230	1 fishing net so that the fishermen do not use children
\$250	Micro-credit assistance to parents so that they can set up a small-scale business
\$400 to \$600	Salary of 1 child counsellor for 1 month
\$2,100	1 fish pond for a group of 4 fishermen to farm fish so that they will not need to rely on child labour
\$4,256	Rescue, rehabilitation, reunification and reintegration of 1 child for 2.5 years



Mark (far right) and his siblings receive clothing and toys sent from overseas. IOM 2007

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