



Ghana - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 July 2010

The availability of state protection against parental abuse in Ghana

The March 2010 *United States Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Ghana*, states:

"The government was committed to protecting the rights and welfare of children, although its efforts were constrained by limited financial and logistical resources." (United States Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Ghana*)

This same report also notes:

"The law prohibits defilement, incest, and sexual abuse of minors, but such abuse remained a serious problem. There were frequent reports that male teachers sexually assaulted and harassed female students. Girls often were reluctant to report these incidents to their parents, and social pressure often prevented parents from going to authorities. During the year there continued to be press reports of teachers and headmasters/headmistresses either arrested for sexual harassment of female students or dismissed for ignoring reported problems." (ibid)

The June 2010 *Freedom House Freedom in the World* report states:

"Despite their equal rights under the law, women suffer societal discrimination, especially in rural areas where opportunities for education and wage employment are limited. And although a domestic violence law was passed in 2007, few victims report such crimes because of the persistent stigma attached to them. However, women's enrollment in universities is increasing, and there are a number of high-ranking women in the current government. For the first time, women hold the positions of speaker of Parliament, police inspector general, and attorney general." (Freedom House (24 June 2010) *Freedom in the World 2010 – Ghana*)

A September 2009 *United States Department of Labor* report notes:

"The law prohibits forced child labor, slavery, or servitude. Ritual servitude is illegal in Ghana and is punishable by a minimum of 3 years of imprisonment. The law prohibits persons with custody, charge, or care of a child under 16 years from encouraging or causing that child to become involved in prostitution. It is a misdemeanor to procure females under 21 years, except "known prostitutes," for prostitution. The law also prohibits forced prostitution of children under 18 years." (United States Department of Labor (10 September 2009) *2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Ghana*)

In a section titled 'Violence against women and girls', *Amnesty International* notes:

“Violence against women continued to be widespread, with violence in the family thought to affect one in three women. The impact of the Domestic Violence Act passed in 2007 had yet to be seen.” (Amnesty International (28 May 2009) *Amnesty International Report 2009 – Ghana*)

An April 2010 *Freedom House* report states:

“The constitution protects economic rights, women and children’s rights, and the rights of the disabled. The criminal code addresses rape, defilement, incest, abduction, and forced marriage. However, the Domestic Violence Act is still not properly enforced, and DOVVSU does not receive adequate resources. In addition, women in some areas are still subjected to harmful traditional practices, including infringements on widows’ rights and female genital mutilation (FGM). While FGM has been criminalized and is not as widespread thanks to a multiyear campaign to end the practice, it is still a part of the culture in some communities in northern Ghana. There is little evidence that legal and constitutional protections against the exploitation of children’s labor are being enforced, including with respect to forms of ritual servitude such as trokosi, in which female children are sent to live in “voodoo” shrines.” (Freedom House (7 April 2010) *Countries at the Crossroads 2010 – Ghana*)

In their report 'The World Congress III Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents', the *UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)* state:

“There is significant evidence that sexual exploitation is a problem in Ghana. Records of the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Police Service indicate that every year quite a number of children and adolescents go through series of sexual abuses.” (UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (November 2008) *The World Congress III Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents*)

References

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http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/wcaro_WCIII_good_practice_Ghana.pdf

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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