



Together for our children: an exploration of religious leaders engagement in child protection in Yeji of Ghana

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Abstract

It is reported that ninety-four percent of children experience some form of abuse in Ghana. Where child abuse exists, an appropriate response is child protection. Yeji is a predominantly fishing community in the Volta Region of Ghana. Available data indicates there is high prevalence of child trafficking, child labour, exploitation and abuse of Children in Yeji. Children are trafficked from other parts of the country to Yeji, where they engage in fishing on the Volta Lake. Over the last decade, both Governmental and Non- Governmental Organizations(NGOs) have initiated several efforts to rescue children from the hazardous fishing conditions in Yeji. In spite of these efforts, available data suggest that child trafficking and labour is on the increase in the area. In Ghana, there religious pluralism, where Christian, Muslim and Traditional religious groups co-exist peacefully, and their leaders play significant roles in communities. The paper explores the perspectives of religious leaders on child abuse and analyses efforts by religious leaders, including inter-religious engagements for child protection in Yeji. This is against the background that historically, child protection efforts begun with faith communities before the involvement of state agencies and civil society groups. The paper posits that inter-religious engagements for child protection could contribute significantly to prevention of child abuse in Yeji.

Keywords: child abuse ; child protection; faith community; fishing community; inter-religious engagement