

## PREVENTING MODERN SLAVERY IN GHANA: A CASE FOR A DISTRICT MODERN SLAVERY LEAGUE TABLE IN GHANA

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### Abstract

*The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana under Article 36 mandates governments to take all necessary action to ensure freedoms, happiness and welfare of Ghanaians. In pursuit of this constitutional provision, the state has equally enacted several laws and policies to promote sustainable development, social inclusion and to safeguard the rights and freedoms of citizens. The Ghana Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) is the parent law that protects the rights of children. There is also the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651) which protects the rights of workers. The Domestic Violence Act, 2007, (Act 732) protects the rights of women, children, and men against violence in domestic relationships, whilst the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694) and the Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act, 2009 (Act 784) prescribe appropriate punitive punishment for persons who traffic persons. Despite all these laws, the 2021 population and housing census statistics in Ghana revealed that 230,000 (3.2%) children within the age group of 5-14 years were engaged in economic activities. This revelation therefore motivated the researcher to find out the reasons for the rise in the incidence of modern slavery cases in Ghana and what ought to be done to stem the situation. The researcher therefore sampled four regions, eight districts and twenty-five communities in Ghana where modern slavery incidences are endemic and collected data from household members and key informants from media houses, CSOs and government institutions. The findings established that knowledge of household members of modern slavery was generally high. As high as 79% had knowledge of child labour, 71% had knowledge of forced marriage, 68% forced labour, 40% sexual abuse, 36% unfair contracts and 32% domestic servitude. The finding also identified poverty as the main reason why people engage in modern slavery. The study also found out that 80% of the agribusinesses in the study area were not registered under fair trade and therefore did not operate under fair trade principles and standards. The study therefore concluded on a note to state and non-state organisations to increase awareness raising activities on modern slavery campaigns, improve targeting of livelihood empowerment programmes for the low-income households and for the National Development Planning Commission to introduce an annual district Modern Slavery District League Table to monitor and rank the performance of districts based on agreed anti-modern slavery indicators.*

**Key Words:** Modern Slavery, Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking, Unfair Contracts

### Introduction

A growing phenomenon which has confronted the comity of nations is the rising incidents of modern slavery. These take various forms including trafficking in persons, child labour, forced labour and unfair contractual arrangements in most agrarian economies. Slavery is associated with power relation and is usually manifested when one person controls the behaviour and decisions of another person. Related concepts are forced labour, which encompasses work or services that people do involuntarily or under threats of denial of privileges; trafficking in persons, where persons are

promised juicy working conditions or blackmailed to leaving their places of residence to live and work in other places often under deplorable conditions; bonded labour, which is demanded in repayment of a debt or loan; child marriages which involves, forcing girls under 18 years to marry under duress, to serve the sexual pleasure of older people and also person domestic duties and organ trafficking which involves organ removal, though not prevalent but is practiced in the black market ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)).

According to the ILO (2017), there were 40 million people in modern slavery. This included: 25 million people in forced labour and 15 million

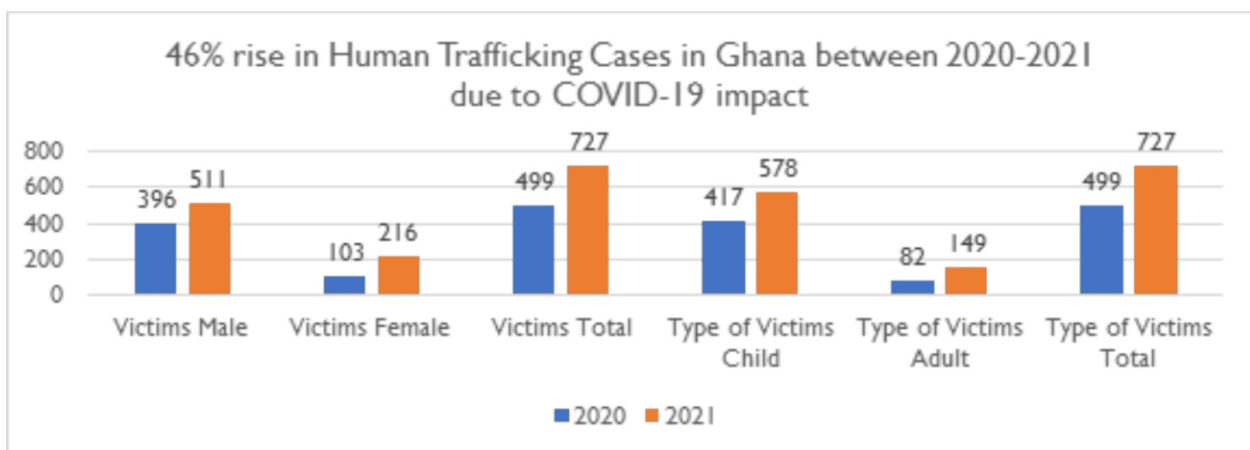
people in forced marriage, with one in four (25%) victims of modern slavery being children. Women and girls accounted for 71% of modern slavery victims, with debt bondage affecting half (50%) of all victims of forced labour imposed by private actors. In the same report, the ILO indicated that in the past five years (2012-2016), 89 million people experienced some form of modern slavery for periods of time ranging from a few days to the whole five years. This is certainly a wake-up call to the global community, which, through the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has committed to ending modern slavery and human trafficking by the year 2025.

Besides Ghana putting in measures to achieve the United Nations target of ending modern slavery by 2025, the country has passed other pieces of legislation to ensure perpetrators are adequately punished. These include clear provisions in the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, the Children's Act, 1998, (Act 560) and Labour Act, 2003, (Act 651) against modern slavery. These existing national laws are further strengthened by specific ILO Conventions such as Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), the

Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) and others ratified by Ghana. Despite these initiatives, the subject of modern slavery remains a complex social issue globally and in Ghana. This is because there are many actors involve in the recruitment, transportation and accommodation of the victims. The nature and severity of modern slavery also varies and the push and pull factors vary from community to community. This research therefore seeks to contribute to the understanding of this important human rights issue.

### Statement of the problem

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana under Article 16(I) is specifically against persons being in slavery and servitude. Yet, there are several children and adults under modern slavery conditions. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021) close to 230,000 (3.2%) children (5-14 years) are engaged in economic activity with a substantially higher proportion in rural areas (5.7%) compared to urban (1.0%). Reports from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection for the period 2020-2021 as shown in Figure 1 show a 46% increase in human trafficking cases, with 80% of the cases being children and 20% adults.



Source: Human Trafficking Secretariat, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2021

### Figure 1: Human trafficking cases for 2020-2021

Despite national, sub-regional and global efforts to prevent human trafficking, this form of modern slavery continues to persist. Ghana has become a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. Most trafficked children have been made to work in the fishing sector especially in riverine communities, engage in street hawking, begging on

the streets in cities, engage in artisanal gold mining, quarrying, herding of cattle and sheep and as labour in the agriculture sector. The girls and young women are trafficked to transact sexual services in the Middle East countries and internally in oil and mineral rich communities. The underlying drivers of trafficking as reported by stakeholders are economic pressures on families now worsened in recent times by the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for cheap

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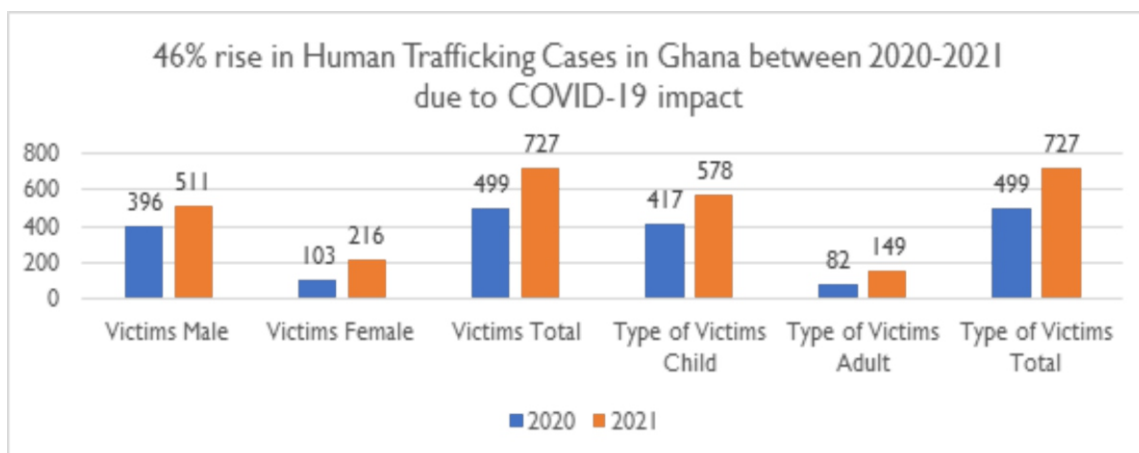
According to the ILO (2017), there were 40 million people in modern slavery. This included: 25 million people in forced labour and 15 million people in forced marriage, with one in four (25%) victims of modern slavery being children. Women and girls accounted for 71% of modern slavery victims, with debt bondage affecting half (50%) of all victims of forced labour imposed by private actors. In the same report, the ILO indicated that in the past five years (2012-2016), 89 million people experienced some form of modern slavery for periods of time ranging from a few days to the whole five years. This is certainly a wake-up call to the global community, which, through the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has committed to ending modern slavery and human

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labour in the mining and quarrying, fishing and crop sub-sectors, cultural practices of allowing children and young adults to live with relations and demand for sexual services in oil and mining rich communities.

The popular US Department of State, 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report ranked Ghana as Tier 2. It noted the country has made some progress in prosecuting some labour traffickers and opening a child trafficking shelter, but shelter capacity generally remain insufficiency.

This study therefore seeks to find out the knowledge level of the respondents of modern slavery, the causes of modern slavery, behaviours of agribusinesses that perpetuate modern slavery, whether CSOs are interested and have the capacity to support the advocacy against modern slavery and what the state is doing to combat modern slavery in Ghana.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. To assess the knowledge level of household members on modern slavery in the selected districts.
2. To determine the causes of modern slavery among households in the selected districts.
3. To identify the common forms of modern slavery practices in the agribusiness sector in the selected districts.
4. To establish whether NGOs are involved and have the capacity to contribute to the advocacy against modern slavery in the selected districts.
5. To identify key state interventions aimed at combatting modern slavery for monitoring.

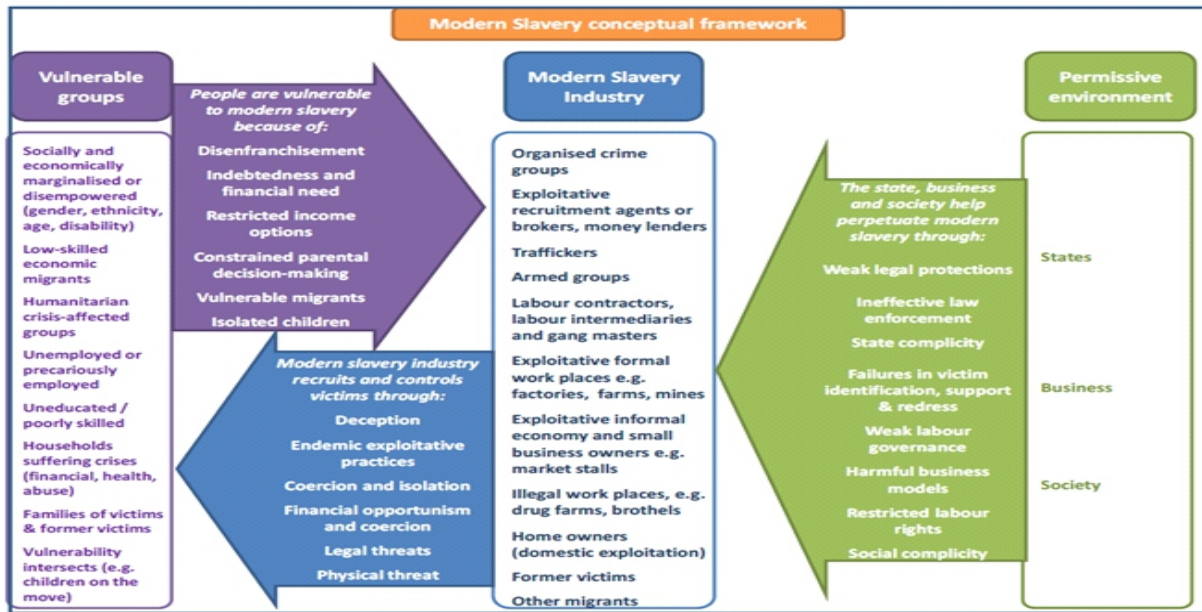
### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions.

1. What forms of modern slavery are you aware of in your community?
2. What compel people to engage in modern slavery in your community?
3. How do agribusinesses abuse the rights of workers in your community?
4. Are there NGOs actively campaigning against modern slavery in your community?
5. What is being done at your local government level to combat modern slavery?

### **Conceptual Framework**

An important piece of research like combatting modern slavery in Ghana needs to be grounded on a framework. This provides guidance to the study and ensures important dimensions of the subject matter under investigation are considered and addressed. Given that vulnerability is an underlying driver of the various forms of modern slavery, the DFID, (2018) Modern Slavery Conceptual Framework provided guidance for the study. The framework as shown in Figure 2 shows the categories of vulnerable groups that are likely to experience modern slavery. It further provides the reasons for their vulnerability and how the modern slavery industry is organized. The framework also explains how gaps from the state, business and society could fuel modern slavery. This framework therefore guided the development of the quantitative and qualitative data collection tools that were used to collect and analyse the data from the various categories of the respondents.



Source: DFID, (2018) *Modern slavery and womens economic empowerment: discussion document (publishing.service.gov.uk)*

Figure 2: Study Conceptual Framework

**Methodology**

The research took advantage of the scope of the Action Aid Ghana Combatting Modern Slavery Project which was launched in January 2021 in

Ghana. The scope of this project is four regions, twelve districts and one hundred communities. The researcher therefore sampled eight out of the twelve districts and twenty five out of the hundred communities for the research using multi-stage sampling techniques. The list of sample districts per region and communities are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sample districts and communities**

Region	Sampled districts	Sampled communities
Northern	Nanumba South	Kpayansi, Aprusaya, Egambodo, Nlendo, Danado, Kabreya & Maagido
	Kpandai	Ketejeli, Nkanchina no. 2 , Lonto & Kumdi
Upper West	Sissala East	Chinchang, Bugubelle, Challu, Vamboi, Nanchalla, Nankpawie, Sakai & Nabugubelle
	Lawra	Berwong, Naburnye, Methow, Baapare & Bagri
Oti	Nkwanta South	Kenjinta, Ofoso South, Ofoso North, Abotareye, Tutukpene, Asuogyaye & Kecheibi
	Kadjebi	Todome, Koru, Atta kofi, Akum, Asuboe & Ampeyo
Bono East	Jaman North	Nwamsua, Morle, Duadasuo 1, Seketia, Febi & Suma Ahenkro
	Tain	Drobo, Nsuhunu, Degedege, Kwame Tenten, Njau Hiamankyene & Hani

The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination technique was used to determine the sample sizes for the various categories of respondents using the formular  $s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$ .

The respondents included 202 female headed households, 429 household members (men, women, and children), 184 employees and employers from agribusinesses and

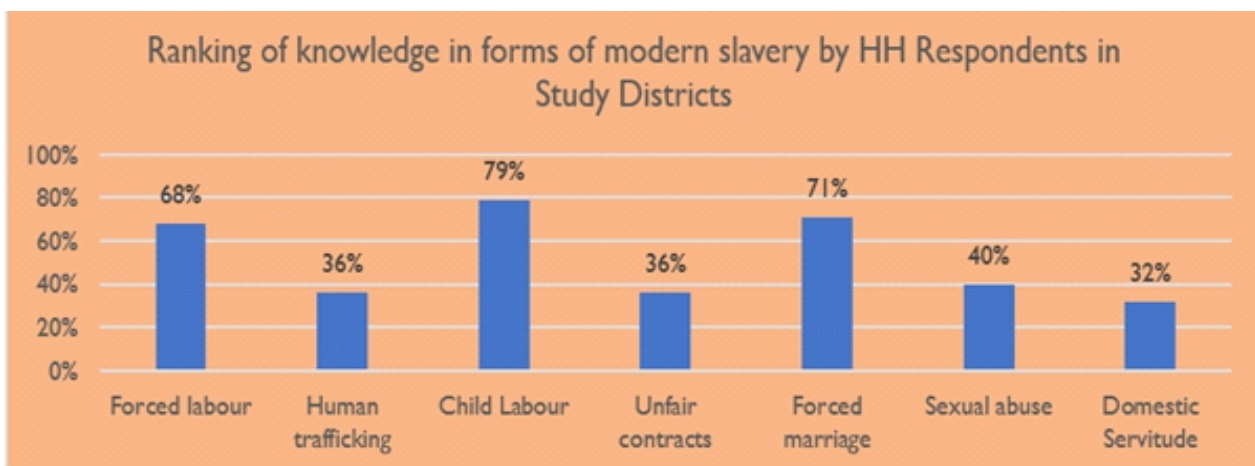
135 staff from government, CSOs and media agencies. Therefore, a total of 950 respondents were included in the research. With the help of eight trained research assistants, the researcher was able to collect data through survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews for analysis. The data collection tools used included questionnaires with both open and close-ended questions, and interviews guides.

## Results and Discussion

### Knowledge of household members of forms of modern slavery

Being aware and knowledgeable of a law is a good starting point to respecting that law. The study therefore sought to establish the percentage of the household respondents who had knowledge of the various forms of modern slavery. The findings as

shown in Figure 3 show that generally the knowledge level of the household members in the study districts on the various forms of modern slavery is appreciably satisfactory. For instance, 79% of them had knowledge of child labour, 71% of them were knowledgeable in forced marriage, 68% in forced labour, 40% in sexual abuse, 36% in unfair contracts and 32% in domestic servitude. The respondents mentioned aggregators purchasing their produce with adjusted weighing scales, spraying of cocoa and maize fields of agro-companies without the full complement of personal protective equipment and staying on as casual workers for long periods without permanent contracts as some of the unfair practices meted out to them by agribusiness companies that they worked for.



Source: Field Study, 2022

### Figure 3: Ranking for knowledge of modern slavery forms by Household respondents

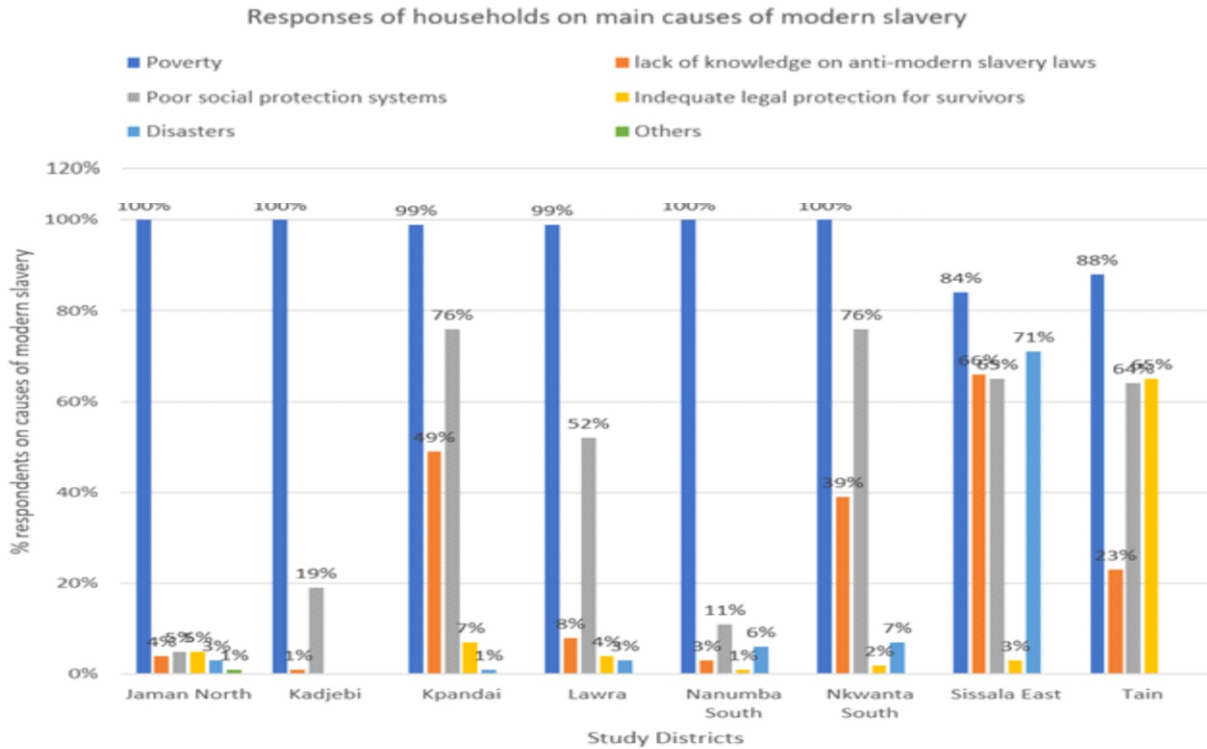
The findings show that domestic servitude which was ranked 32% was the least known form of modern slavery. This was because in the view of the respondents it is an accepted cultural practice for girls and women to be engaged in unpaid care work for their relatives and so did not see it as a form of modern slavery within their cultural milieu.

### Knowledge of causes of modern slavery by household members

The study sought to establish the reasons why people engage in the various forms of modern slavery despite the existence of laws prohibiting such practices. The findings, as shown in Figure 4, show that in all the eight districts sampled, poverty was cited as the leading cause of modern slavery. In four of the districts, Jaman North, Kadjebi, Nanumba South, and Nkwanta South 10 out of 10 respondents

indicated poverty as the main cause. In the case of the remaining four district which are Kpandai, Lawra, Sissala East and Tain 8 out of 10 respondents equally cited poverty as the main reason why people are forced into modern slavery practices. Some few quotes captured in relation to poverty and modern slavery are indicated below:

- I. "If you have nothing to eat and someone says let your child, come, and support me on my farm or store for some money, why will I refuse. If we survive, I can let that child go and let a trade rather than saying he or she should be in school with an empty stomach and no decent foot ware" FGD, Kadjebi.
- ii. "In the communities they tell us every day, bad work is better than no work". KII, Accra.
- iii. "At my age, I feel bad that my parents still take care of me including my dignity kids". FGD, Tain.



Source: Field Research, 2022

Figure 4: Causes of modern slavery by Household Respondents

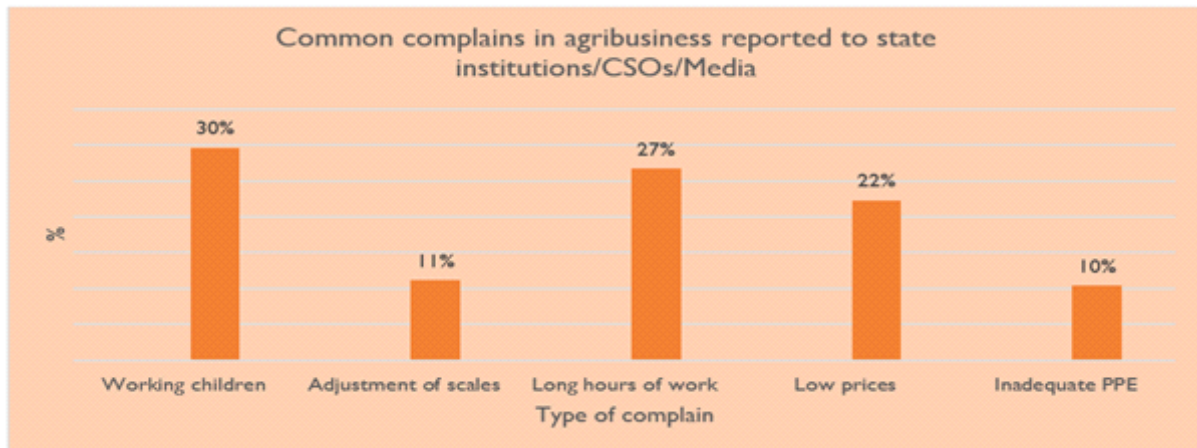


Figure 5: Ranking of causes of modern slavery in combatting modern slavery districts

Besides poverty, the respondents mentioned the lack of knowledge of anti-modern slavery laws (23%) and limited coverage of social protection programmes (15%) and inadequate legal protection for women and children (13%) who are victims of modern slavery as other reasons why modern slavery incidences keep on rising in Ghana as shown in Figure 5. The issues raised by the respondents with regards to legal protection for victims of modern slavery related to limited access to pro bono legal services since Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and Legal Aid institutions are not currently available in all districts in Ghana.

**Common complains in agribusinesses related to modern slavery in study districts**

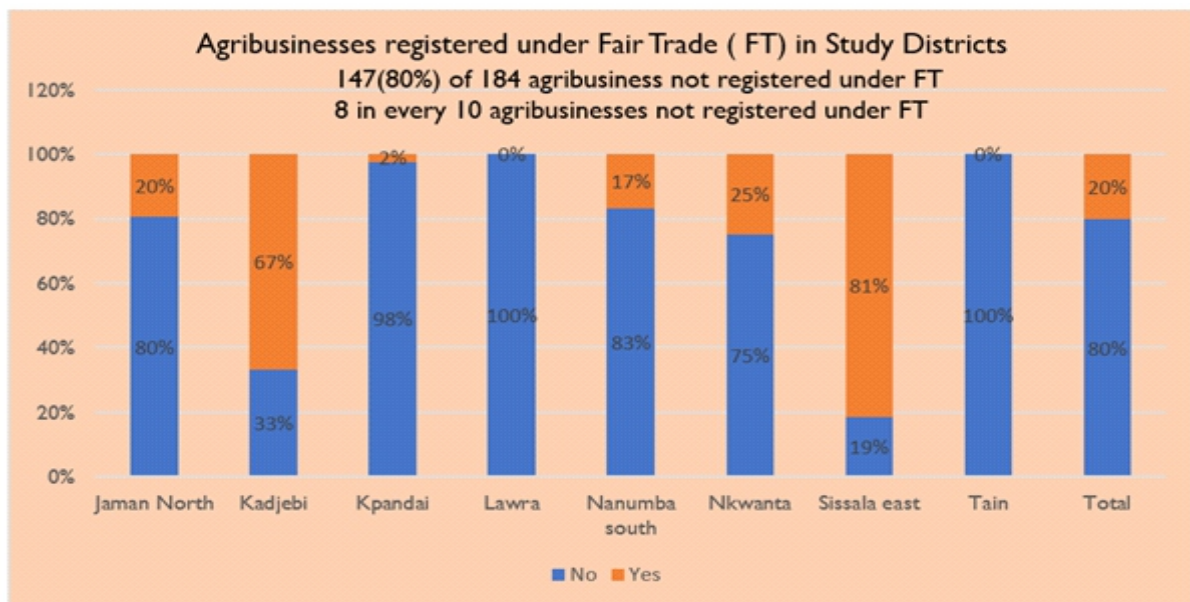
Some of the agribusiness value chains in the study districts included cashew value chains in the Tain and Jaman North districts, shea value chains in the Nanumba South and Kpandai districts, shea and maize value chains in the Lawra and Sissila East districts and Cocoa and fishing value chains in Kadjebi and Nkwanta South districts. The findings from the study showed that the key complains from farmers involved in the agribusiness sector to state, CSOs and media institutions included the use of children in agribusinesses (30%) and long working hours (27%) as shown in Figure 6. These findings clearly show that some agribusinesses violated the children's Act of Ghana and UNCRC.



### Registration of Agribusinesses under Fair Trade (FT)

The Labour Act, 2003 advocates for fair relations between employees and employers. In the agriculture sector, Fair trade principles are encouraged because they protect the wellbeing farmers, aggregators, casual workers, input dealers, agro-processors, consumers and all the actors in the value the various agro value chains. The findings as shown in Figure 7, show that 80% of the agribusinesses were not registered. In the

dividual districts Tain and Kpandai districts, 100% and 98% of the agribusinesses were not registered under FT respectively. In the Sissala East district however, majority 81% of the agribusinesses were registered under FT. The low registration implies that they are not obliged to strictly comply with social, environmental, and economic standards as is the case of FT organisations which is a requirement for their licensing and re-licensing.



**Figure 7: Agribusiness registered under fair trade**

Findings on NGOs advocating against modern slavery and their capacity

The findings showed that there were several CSOs at both the national and district levels undertaking the following activities related to the fight against modern slavery:

- Raising awareness in communities on the rights and freedoms of citizens.
- Reporting human rights violations such as child labour, human trafficking etc.
- Embarking of anti-modern slavery campaigns-matches, press statements.
- Protecting vulnerable populations and providing psychosocial services to victims.
- Advocating for institutional and legal reforms where needed.



- f) Building the capacity of law enforcement agencies. Some of the active national and local CSOs are indicated in Table 2.
- g) Conducting research on modern slavery.

**Table 2: National and Districts CSOs involve in combatting modern slavery in Ghana**

National Level	Study Districts
ActionAid Ghana	ActionAid Ghana
International Justice Mission	Songtaba
Child Rights International	Savanna Signatures
Rainforest Alliance	Activista Ghana
The <b>Network for Women’s Rights</b> in Ghana (NETRIGHT)	RAINS
Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana	AG-CARE
World Vision Ghana	NORSAC
Plan Ghana	SODIA
Children Believe	Free the Slaves
Right to Play	Plan Ghana
Challenging Heights	Free the Slaves
African Centre for Human Development	World Vision
The Ark Foundation	SEND Foundation
CARITAS Ghana	Friends of the Nation
Free the Slaves	Grameen Foundation
APPLE	Sissala Youth Forum
Rescue Foundation Ghana	
SEND Foundation	
STAR Ghana Foundation	
Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana	
Millennium Child Support Group	
Third World Network-Africa	

The findings showed that both the national and local level NGOs needed partnerships to help them leverage each other's skills and to complement their efforts for optimum results. Whilst some level of coordination and collaboration is happening at the national level, it is not the case with the NGOs at the district level. Facilitating coalitions of CSOs on modern slavery at the district level will be a worthwhile enterprise.

**Findings on Local level actions to prevent modern slavery in Ghana**

- The government of Ghana through its various Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assemblies and Ministries, Departments and Agencies are implementing several policies and strategies to combat modern slavery in Ghana. These include the following.

- The Back-to-School Campaign led by the Ministry of Education. This policy allows teenage mothers to return to school after giving birth to acquire a skill. This reduces their vulnerability to traffickers.

- The Free Senior High School Programme by the Ministry of Education. Currently 1,261,495 students are benefitting from the programme. This is to ensure access to secondary education for adolescents from low-income households.
- Expansion of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This includes upgrading 34 National Vocational Training Institute centres, retooling of TVET Institutes, and establishing 10 State-of-the-Art TVET

Institutes. TVET will also benefit from the Free Senior High School Programme. This will equip the youth with skills for industry and to reduce their vulnerability to being trafficked to Europe and Middle East countries.

- Expansion of Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). LEAP cash grants are paid to 344,023 households. 76% of the LEAP beneficiaries are also registered to benefit from the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). This will reduce the vulnerability of the poor and extremely poor households.
- Opening of 32 new CHRAJ district offices in 2022. This will improve access to justice for the vulnerable through the country.

The above initiatives need to be monitored by both CSOs and state institutions to ensure they contribute positively to the fight against modern slavery in Ghana.

### Conclusion

It is observed from this study that cases of modern slavery in the form of human trafficking, child labour, unfair contracts and domestic servitude still occur in Ghana. Ghana is still both a transit and destination point for human trafficking. The many institutions involved in combatting modern slavery lack the needed resources to efficiently implement their mandates. It is therefore hoped that the recommendations tabled in this article will contribute to combatting modern slavery in Ghana.

### Recommendations

#### *Develop District Modern Slavery League Table*

To motivate local leaders and politicians to commit to the campaign against modern slavery, it is recommended that the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana be ranked annually based on their performance in combatting modern slavery. This will be based on an agreed criteria agreed with National Development Planning Commission like that of the District League Table initiated by UNICEF. Key areas could include % decrease in teenage pregnancies, % increases in girls going back to school after delivery, % of TVET graduates, % decrease in child labour cases, % decrease in human trafficking in persons cases, % decrease in forced labour cases, % decrease in worst form of child labour cases, % increase in fair trade agribusinesses, % increase in number of districts with shelters for survivors etc. This will improve accountability in the advocacy against modern

slavery in Ghana.

#### *Target low-income households with productive inclusion programmes*

The major driver of modern slavery as revealed by the research is poverty. It is therefore recommended that the state and non-state actors should target vulnerable households in modern slavery endemic communities with sustainable livelihoods development programmes. This should be preceded by a community livelihood assessment to determine the profitable, socially, and environmentally sustainable livelihoods to support.

#### *Increase awareness raising campaigns in the study districts*

The research established the need to increase awareness raising campaigns in the various communities. Therefore NGOs and public institutions involved in combatting modern slavery should embark on continuous public education and awareness raising in both rural and targeted urban communities in the study districts focusing on the modus operandi of human traffickers and the risk associated with irregular migration, child labour, forced labour and unfair contracts. There should be well-coordinated information campaigns in the local languages targeting community chiefs, queen mothers, youth, school children and agribusinesses. These campaigns will help them to understand the driving forces and risks behind modern slavery whilst highlighting the safe and orderly pathways to emigration and providing alternatives to migration.

#### *Advocate for legal reforms of outmoded modern slavery laws*

The current Children Act and Domestic Violence Act need to be revised in the light of current developments. It is therefore recommended that CSOs involved in modern slavery should commission a review of these laws related to modern slavery and submit a memorandum to the ministries leading the review of these pieces of legislation. This will be a good contribution to the modern slavery legal framework review process in Ghana.

#### *Support Agribusinesses to be Fair Trade certified*

Given that very few agribusinesses are certified by Fair Trade in the study districts, it is recommended that CSOs interested in combatting modern slavery should collaborate with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Fair-Trade Ghana to assist some of the agribusinesses to be licensed. This will improve their compliance to Fair Trade Standards and

prevent modern slavery practices in the study communities.

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