



USAID ANTI-CHILD LABOR STRATEGY FINDS SUCCESS IN COASTAL FISHING COMMUNITIES

“I want to go to school so that I can become a big man in the future”



Photo Credit: Nii Odenkey Abbey, SFMP

Joseph Kwesi Arthur, a victim of child labor, Biriwa, Central region

“Thanks to USAID for educating me about the impact of Child labour and its dangers. Now I have brought my son home.

- Ama Awoye, Kwesi’s mother

Joseph Kwesi Arthur, a 12-year old boy from Biriwa, a fishing community in the Central Region, is one of the latest Ghanaian children to be rescued from child labor. Joseph was sent away by his parents in 2017 at the age of 10 to stay with relatives due to the economic hardship facing his parents. Joseph’s parents depend on fishing for their livelihood, economic income and food security. Like many other fishing communities in the region, Biriwa is confronting the continued dwindling of small pelagic fish supply, sardinella, small mackerel, and anchovies, often referred to as ‘the people’s fish’ due to overfishing and other poor management practices.

Available data from the Fisheries Commission indicates that approximately 50% of animal protein uptake nationally is from fish. This puts many families and households in the Central Region, known for its dependence on fishing at increased risk to participate in child labor and trafficking due to declining catches. As Joseph’s mother Ama Awoye lamented, “We can’t even provide daily meals for our family. It sometimes drives me to tears.” She adds, “In the past, when we used to get enough fish, our lives were not like this, but now sometimes we have to beg for food.”

As stocks continue to decline, Joseph’s family experience reflects the problems and dangers confronting families and their children in fishing communities throughout the Central Region. Because of dwindling fish catches families are compelled to send away their children because they are no longer able to care for them.

The USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development over the last four years to develop a national strategy on anti-child labor and trafficking for the fisheries sector. With SFMP support, 240 anti-child labor advocates were trained and now are active across 14 coastal communities in the Central Region, a major source-area of trafficked children.

Through the USAID and Ghana government supported implementation of the anti-child labor and trafficking strategy, Ama became aware of how some children sent away are often exposed to life-threatening dangers. She then decided to go for Joseph who is living with a relative in Cote d’voire “When I watched the video from SFMP and I saw how some children are mistreated, I got scared for my son and decided to go for him” said Ama. When Ama got to Cote d’voire she found her son working on fish boats with other children under tedious conditions. She then talked to the boat owner who agreed to allow her to bring her son back home.

Through implementation of the Anti-Child Labor Strategy, people like Ama are increasingly aware of the dangers of child labor. New child protection committees are being set up all through the Central Region, and coastal districts are budgeting resources to fund more activities to combat child labor and trafficking into their medium term development plans. “Thanks to USAID, once I knew about the dangers of child labor, I went to find my son,” said Ama. Now that Ama was able to bring Joseph home, he now has started school with the support of some community members. “I want to go to school so that I can become a big man in the future” he said, already dreaming about his future.