



**Submission by Edmund Rice International  
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<b>Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of GHANA</b>
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Edmund Rice International (ERI), established in 2007, is a faith-based Non-government Organisation (NGO), in partnership with Franciscans International. Representing a network promoting and protecting human rights in 34 countries, ERI has offices in Geneva and New York. Priority issues for ERI are: the Rights of the Child, the Universal Right to Education, and Ecological Sustainability.

### **Introduction**

The government of Ghana has accepted 80% of the recommendations received in the first cycle of the UPR, in 2008, but much remains to be done to protect and promote the rights of children in Ghana.

The information in this report is based on observations and field experience of educators and administrators in various parts of rural Ghana.

### **The Right to Equal Protection of the Law, without Discrimination VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

1. In Ghana, most vulnerable children are from poor backgrounds. Children with disabilities are also in this category, as well as girls, and children living in rural and remote areas.

#### **Children without Family**

2. In Ghana, children without family are the most discriminated against in many ways, especially in the traditional homes today. They are the ones to follow the extended family's cattle. They drop out from school to do all the odd jobs of the family. Local estimates, in some rural areas, suggest that 20% of children fall into this category.

### **Recommendation**

**1. That the Ghana Government protects the rights of its most vulnerable children, by establishing programmes to ensure their full participation in education and employment.**

## **Children with Disabilities**

3. Although they are 10% of the child population, children with disabilities are discriminated against because of their condition or situation. In Ghana, the blind and the physically challenged are discriminated against when it comes to employment. Some kings and rulers are not even supposed to see and shake hands with the blind. There was a graduation ceremony sometime last year in one of the public universities in Ghana where some blind students who attained first class honours were not allowed to shake hands with the guest of honour, who is the chancellor and a king of one of the cities in Ghana.

## **Recommendations**

**2. That the Ghana Government ratifies the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and harmonise its legislation with the requirements of this Convention.**

**3. That the Ghana Government run a public education and awareness campaign to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, especially where their rights are not acknowledged due to cultural traditions or prejudices.**

## **Right to Education ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

4. Primary education is free in Ghana. There is a programme known as FCUBE which means Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education in Ghana. This makes it mandatory for parents to enrol their children of school-going age to school. This is to ensure that they continue to Junior High school (JHS).

5. School attendance rate is high in Ghana. Almost every child of school-going age is in school. This is probably because of the feeding programme instituted by NGOs in some schools, bicycles provided by UNICEF to girls, and food from the World Food Programme (WFP) to boost girl child education, especially in poor and remote areas.

6. Repetition rates are low in Ghana. The policies of the Ghana Education Service do not create a room for repetition children in schools. On the other hand, private schools and some Catholic institutions make sure children pass and do not just push them through. So they alone offer the chance for repetition, but only in a few cases.

7. Drop-out rates are a concern in Ghana. Pupils may leave school early due to family problems such as taking care of animals, or because the child is without one or both parents and has to do jobs back at home.

8. Children in Ghana have access to education but the access is not equal. The children of well to do families attend the good schools (private) which are fee-paying, and the less wealthy or underprivileged ones (70% of Ghana's children) attend the public schools. So there is not equal access to quality education for all in Ghana as far as money is concerned.

9. The northern part of Ghana is less developed in both natural resources and human resources. Therefore, teachers and other workers refuse postings to that part of the country. Though there are many schools, the human resources are lacking. The gap is wide between the South and North of Ghana, in both quality of education and access to educational resources. One estimate puts the gap as: northern children achieve 30% less than southern children.

### **Recommendation**

**4. That the Ghana Government adopt policies to ensure that all children achieve their full potential at school, irrespective of their socio-economic background.**

**5. That the Ghana Government develop programmes to close the gaps in educational resources and educational achievement between children from north and south of Ghana.**

### **Right to Work ACCESS TO LABOUR MARKET**

10. The youth in Ghana do not have the same opportunities on the labour market, with youth unemployment running at 40%, much higher than adult levels. In Ghana, it is whom you know, the kind of background you come from, that influences your access to employment. The disadvantaged ones are those from poor homes. If your father or mother has never worked in a certain institution before, you can easily fail to obtain work there. This does not have anything to do with educational level. You can find someone with a lower education level working in an institution, whereas someone with a higher qualification cannot get work there.

### **Recommendation**

**6. That the Ghana Government ensure equal access to employment for all its citizens, especially youth, by legislating for employment policies that provide equal opportunities, and monitoring how well employers implement them.**

### **Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

11. Children are victims of both economic and sexual exploitation in the streets. Due to poverty, some children fall into the hands of business people who use their services to their advantage. Children are made to sell water or bread, or wash plates, among other duties. This exploitation is common at the shores of the lakes, where children are used to remove nets in deep waters for fishermen. In some rural areas, this exploitation can affect 30% of children.

Sexual exploitation occurs to some extent, by a few, due to poverty and poor parental care. The Ghana Government has since engaged in the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) in Ghana to curb child exploitation and youth unemployment.

## **Recommendation**

**7. That the Ghana Government establish a Task Force to work closely with the police in bringing to justice those who exploit children and to report to the Government on progress in reducing child exploitation.**

**8. That the Ghana Government address the underlying issues of poverty and child abuse and neglect, which lead to exploitation of vulnerable children, with the aim of reducing such exploitation.**

## **Right to Health CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH**

12. Drug and alcohol addiction among adolescents in Ghana is increasing. One estimate is that 40% of youth may be abusing alcohol or other drugs. Of late, the youth have taken to drugs and alcohol as a sort of fashion. The youth use drugs for studies, as a way of making themselves high to perform in music and drama, among others.

13. One easily finds adolescents going for drinking, spinning or expedition. This misuse of drugs and alcohol lands many of the adolescents in psychiatric care. There are increasing cases of kidney problems reported among young people, and increased driving accidents.

14. As for youth suicide, it was not associated with adolescents or young people in Ghana. But there have been a few cases of late. There were two cases in Ghana from the Ashanti Region. A young girl hanged herself due to her boyfriend's promiscuous or unfaithful behaviour. The second case was a senior High School girl with health problems; she had been ridiculed by her peers and colleagues, coupled with insults from her mother, and this led to her hanging herself.

## **Recommendation**

**9. That the Ghana Government promote health education programmes targeting children and youth, with a focus on healthy lifestyles, reducing drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide prevention.**