

GNAT CELEBRATES WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IN ACCRA

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) celebrated this year's World Day against Child Labour on the compound of the Ablekuma South Sub-Metro Ghana Education Service offices in Accra. It was on the theme, 'Quality education: the right response to child labour'. June 12 every year has been set aside by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as World Day against Child Labour. The day is used to sensitize all stakeholders on things they can do to eradicate the menace.

School children went on a route march through some of the principal streets of Mamprobi, with placards, some of which read, 'All children in school not at work; For quality education, children need the necessary books, equipment and other education materials; Free compulsory education is crucial to reducing child labour; and Deplorable classroom conditions do not promote quality education. Joining the school children to celebrate the occasion were, Directors, Deputy Directors of education, other senior members of the GES, GNAT, TEWU, Assemblymen and women as well as some parents of the school children and some members of the general public.

In a keynote address, Dr Philip Amoo, an Occupational Health Consultant at the University of Ghana Medical School noted that, keeping children from school can be considered as hazardous since education is an essential part of children's development. He said work can interfere with education since it absorbs so much time that school attendance is impossible, adding that 'it often leaves children so exhausted that they lack the energy to attend school'. Dr. Amoo defined 'child labour' as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity, thereby creating an environment that is harmful to their physical and mental development. The Medical doctor who is also a Child Labour Expert, advised parents to place their children's education above their immediate material needs since quality children grow up to build a strong nation.

The Accra Metropolitan Director OF Education, Nii Okainja Dinsey, said education seeks to train children to enable them fit into society. The lack of it, he maintained, breeds social misfits who grow up to become a nuisance to society. He identified parental irresponsibility at the top of the list of factors that militate against a child's quest for quality education. Noting that poverty is closely associated with child labour, Nii Okainja Dinsey called on the government to consider

the provision of adequate books , equipment and contemporary education materials in a congenial learning environment to go a long way to empower children to escape from poverty.

On her part Mrs. Irene Duncan-Adanusa, General Secretary of GNAT emphasized the need for quality public education, saying that, it is the Association's belief that, 'good quality education motivates children'.

'GNAT also believes that children who receive quality education are more empowered to escape from poverty and, as adults, are more likely to send their children to school' , she stressed. The General Secretary trumpeted GNAT's belief that the state must continue to provide quality public basic education, 'and this must also be compulsory', she concluded.

Earlier in her welcome address, the Deputy Director of Ablekuma South Sob-Metro schools, Mr. Kwesi Asante condemned the behaviour of some of the residents of the areas where schools are cited in his jurisdiction. He mentioned the destruction they cause to school property by turning such compounds into football parks, adding that, teaching is sometimes interrupted because footballers want classes to end early so they can play. He advised parents to educate their wards to desist from such practice as it hampered the education of children in the area.

A sketch by the school children drummed home a point to the parents who had gathered at the function – that education should be their priority to ensure a better future for their children and the nation as a whole.

STORY: PETER KORDA

COMMONWEALTH TEACHER RECRUITMENT PROTOCOL

What is the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol? It is a document adopted at Stoke Rochford Hall in the United Kingdom in September 2004 which aims to balance the rights of teachers to migrate internationally against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems. This protocol is intended to facilitate the international migration of skilled professionals between **recruiting** and **source** countries. A recruiting country is that country seeking to recruit, or succeeds in recruiting teachers from other countries, whereas a source country is the country from which teachers are recruited for service abroad. Governments of both source and recruiting countries, represented by Ministers of Education and their senior officials, as well as representatives from civil society, engaged in frank and open dialogue to understand and reconcile differences and arrived at a morally binding consensus. It is expected that the protocol will bring positive and sustainable development of all partner countries.

Education Ministers are conscious of potential opportunities for countries that are available through a structured and well managed programme of teacher exchanges and of trade and skills. It is acknowledged that, recruited teacher mobility has great value. It can benefit individual teachers in their professional development as well as strengthen and enrich education systems. It is generally agreed that, the recruitment of teachers must not be to the detriment of national education systems.

PURPOSE OF THE PROTOCOL

The protocol aims at balancing the rights of teachers to migrate internationally, on a temporary or permanent basis, against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems. It is also to prevent the exploitation of the scarce human resources of poor countries. The protocol seeks to

safeguard the rights of recruited teachers and the conditions relating to their service in the recruiting country. In so doing, it seeks to promote the positive benefits which international teacher migration can bring and facilitate the sharing of common wealth of human resources that reside within the Commonwealth.

WHAT CAN A TEACHER EXPECT WHEN HE GOES TO TEACH IN ANOTHER COUNTRY?

You should expect:

- To enjoy employment conditions not less favourable than nationals of similar status and job position.
- That your recruitment will be free from unfair discrimination and any dishonest or misleading information, especially with regard to gender exploitation.
- To receive an orientation and induction to your new school and its environment including cultural familiarization.
- To benefit from specific professional development opportunities or experiences and to be assisted to achieve fully qualified status in accordance with any domestic requirements of the recruiting country.

In light of the above benefits to derive from the commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol, Teaching service Commissions and Teachers' Organisations of West African Commonwealth Countries held a meeting at the Alisa Hotel at North Ridge in Accra from June 2-5, 2008 to identify and share common issues in relation to the quality and status of teachers in West Africa. The meeting arrived at a consensus to:

- Extend knowledge about the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (CTRP) to teachers and education authorities and how it may be implemented in the regional context in source and recruiting countries.
- Address the issue of recognition and transferability of Teacher qualifications and professional registration in West African countries.

STORY: PETER KORDA