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ORGANISED LABOUR'S VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER ON THE SINGLE SPINE PAY POLICY

At its meeting held on the 13th of January 2010 at the GNAT Hall, representatives of Organised Labour deliberated on the Government of Ghana's White Paper on the Single Spine Pay Policy (SSPP) which was issued in November 2009.

Organised Labour Groups represented at the meeting include the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and its affiliate Unions in the Public Service – the Health Services Workers' Union (HSWU), General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU), Construction and Building Materials Workers' Union (CBMWU), Public Utility Workers Union (PUWU), Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (TEWU), Public Services Workers' Union (PSWU), Local Government Workers' Union (LGWU) and Timber & Wood Workers' Union (TWU). The Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL), the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and the Polytechnic Teachers Associa-

tion of Ghana (POTAG) were also represented. The others were: the Ghana Medical Association (GMA), the Federation of University Senior Staff Association

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of Ghana (FUSSAG), the Judicial Service Staff Association of Ghana (JUSSAG) and the Polytechnic Administrators' Association of Ghana (PAAG).

The following emerged out of the deliberations as Organised Labour's views on the Government White Paper on the Single Spine Pay Policy.

1. Delays in the implementation of the Policy

At the Consultative Forum held at GIMPA in May 2009, stakeholders agreed on a Road Map for the implementation of the Single Spine Pay Policy (SSPP). Specifically, it was agreed that the Government White Paper would be issued by the end of August 2009 and that the implementation of the Single Spine Salary Structure will commence in January 2010. The White Paper was not issued until November 2009. Consequently, Government unilaterally extended the period for the implementation of the SSSS from January to July 2010.

The delay in the issuance of the White Paper has had negative effects on the Road Map agreed at the above-mentioned forum. Organised Labour would like to advise Government and the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) to avoid such unilateral decisions on issues relating to the Single Spine Pay Policy. Fur-

ther delays in the implementation of the new pay policy should be avoided at all cost.

Organised Labour recognises the need to address technical difficulties associated with the implementation of the new pay policy. But we would like to caution that Organised Labour will not accept any further delay because any further delay in the implementation of the SSPP can disturb the industrial peace we are currently enjoying in the country.

Organised Labour notes that the **effective date** for the implementation of the Single Spine Salary Structure remains **1st July 2010**.

We would like to assure Government that Organised Labour will continue to cooperate with the FWSC to ensure that the new salary structure is fully implemented by JULY 2010.

2. Coverage of the SSPP

On coverage of the SSPP, the representatives of Organised Labour Groups present at the meeting made the following conclusions:

Organised Labour Groups endorse the position that all public service organisations listed under Article 190 of the 1992 Constitution should be covered by the SSPP.

However, we would like to reiterate our position that public service workers and their Unions will accept the new pay policy and the Single Spine Salary Structure

(SSSS) only if the structure ensures fairness, transparency, consistency and logic in the administration of public service pay. Otherwise the SSPP will suffer the fate of the Ghana Universal Salary Structure.

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3. Institutional Framework for the implementation of the SSPP

On institutional framework for the implementation of the SSPP, the meeting agreed on the following:

The role of the FWSC, the National Labour Commission (NLC) and the Controller and Accountant General's Department (CAGD) are critical for the successful implementation of the new pay policy. We are therefore concerned about the apparent weaknesses of these institutions particularly in terms of human and financial resources.

Organised labour Groups also note in particular that the National Labour Commission and CAGD have not been fully involved in the process leading to the implementation of the SSPP. We urge Government to provide the necessary resources to improve the capacity of these institutions to implement the SSPP.

4 Negotiations

The representatives of the Organised Labour Groups which were present at the meeting also deliberated on the negotiations that must take place for the effective implementation of SSPP. The following are the views that emerged:

One of the crucial aspects of the new pay policy is the negotiation of the Base Pay and Pay Point Relativities on the SSSS as well as the standardisation of the Categories 2 and 3 allowances.

Given the importance of these aspects of the new pay policy, it is absolutely necessary that the

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FWSC work towards opening negotiations immediately in order to avoid further delays.

5. Performance Management and Productivity

Organised Labour recognises the importance of productivity in the new pay policy. However, it is important that all stakeholders agree on productivity indicators that will be the basis for assessing the performance of individuals and/or groups in the public service.

Therefore Organised Labour will not accept the situation where Government uses low productivity as basis for denying public service workers improved remuneration when there are no clear indicators for measuring productivity in the Service.

6. Allowances

Organised Labour endorses the standardisation of categories 2 and 3 allowances. We would like

to advise Government and other stakeholders that we should be guided by the principles of equity and consistency in the negotiation and standardisation of these allowances. We should work together to eliminate all inequities in all forms of benefits/allowances in the public service.

7. Market Premiums and Inducements

On market premium and inducements, the meeting concluded that Organised Labour endorses the decisions to use market premiums to attract and retain essential skills in the public service. However, there is the need for clear eligibility criteria and procedures for identifying jobs that deserve market premiums.

8. Public Education

The process leading to the implementation of the SSPP started as far back as 2006. It was expected that during this period public service workers would be fully educated on the new policy. We note with regret that the majority of public service workers across the ten regions of the country do not have adequate information on the new pay policy.

Since the success or failure of the new pay policy depends to a very large extent on the acceptability of the policy among public service workers and their unions we urge Government to provide resources to the FWSC to embark on intensive public education on

the new pay policy without further delay.

9. Salary Review for 2010

On salary review for 2010, the meeting agreed that pending the implementation of the new salary structure in July 2010 and taking into account the high cost of living, Organised Labour will submit proposals to Government for a review of public service salaries for 2010.

To ensure transparency we demand that Organised Labour be fully involved in the identification of eligible jobs and the subsequent determination of the premium.

THE EXPORT-LED GROWTH INDUSTRIALISATION STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS

By Kwabena Nyarko Otoo, Director, Labour Research and Policy Institute, Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC)



Kwabena Nyarko Otoo

As the global economy teeters on the brink of depression and global credit dries up leading to collapse of consumption in major export destination countries, the export-led growth strategy that has been promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the past two and half decades has been called into question. One of the most profound impacts of the raging global financial and economic crisis is the slowdown in global trade. In February 2009, *The Economist* indicated that the financial crisis had produced a “manufacturing crisis”, with the strongest declines in industrial production occurring in export-based economies.

China, suffered its worst export declines in over a decade as a result of the crisis. Japan, another export-based economy was also hard hit as its exports declined and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell at an annualised rate of 13 percent. World trade is projected to decline from 4.8 percent in 2008 to 1.9 percent on account of slowdown in global demand. Indeed world trade has been one of the foremost casualties of the present crisis. By the close of 2009, world trade had contracted by about 12 percentage points (WTO, 2010), representing the steepest decline in world trade since the end of the Second World War.

The dwindling global export and hence trade is partly the result of rising protectionism as countries raise both tariff and non-tariff barriers (NTB) to shield their economies from job losses and also fend off potential balance of payment crisis. The year 2009 began with the general expectation that countries around the world would erect protectionist walls as part of their policy toolkit to deal with fallouts of the crisis. In line with this general expectation the world trading sys-

tem witnessed some instances of increased tariffs and domestic subsidies, new tariff measures and increasing levels of anti-dumping measures and actions. A shining example is the ‘buy made in America’ clause in the Obama Stimulus package which, obliges American firms that re-

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ceive stimulus money to spend a designated proportion on products/services produced in America. However, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) estimate that the actual level of protectionism was far lesser than what had been anticipated (Pascal Lamy, 2010).

The main explanation for the sharp decline in world trade, according to the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, has been the simultaneous reduction in aggregate demand across all major world economies. How did this happen? The collapse of housing prices in the United States in 2008 which led to large-scale default rates among beneficiaries of the now infamous sub-prime mortgage loans almost wiped out the capital base of banks and other financial institutions in the US. By mid 2008, it was estimated that as much as US\$435 billion was lost by major banks and financial institutions. And just through October 2008, large financial institutions had reportedly lost almost US\$700 billion in bad loans. That figure excludes losses in hedge funds, pension funds and other highly complex and leveraged funding arrangements.

These monumental and simultaneous losses by all the major banks in the United States led to widespread panic first among the finance institutions and then the investing public. The collapse of the 158-year Wall Street investment bank, Lehman Brothers on 15th September, 2008 with a total debt portfolio of US\$600 billion was an important watershed in

the sequence of events leading up to the crisis. Following the collapse of Lehman Brothers, said to be the biggest corporate bankruptcy in the History of the US, the credit market squirmed and credit availability was tightened. The banks and the other financial institutions had no additional money to lend either to themselves or to their customers.

To make a bad situation worse, real wages (incomes) in the US as in most parts of the world had stagnated over the course of the last two decades. Given this stagnation, there should have been a natural decline in what people could buy and consume with what they earned. But that was not the case. People did consume and they did so, on a mass scale, far in excess of what they earned. This was made possible by the availability of cheap credit. In essence, availability of cheap credit – the credit card phenomenon – enabled people to consume far in excess of what their disposable income would allow.

In the late 1990s up to 2007, the share of personal consumption in the GDP of the US increased from about 66 percent to 72 percent. At the same time, the trade deficit of the US increased from about 1.3 percent in the 1990s to an average of 4.8 percent of GDP in the 2000s. This meant that the US was consuming more than it was producing. The excess spending and the subsequent consumption binge were made possible by borrowing against houses. The collapse of housing prices in 2008 meant an end to the consumption binge and the

rude awakening that the richest country on earth was living beyond its means.

But it also meant a lot for the rest of humanity. Over the last three decades, the global economy had relied on ever-increasing consumption to grow. In the US, for example, growth of output tracks very closely growth of consumption. In other words, a 4 percent growth of personal consumption will most likely produced real GDP growth of about 4 percent. Much of global consumption emanate from the US. With prolong stagnation of their incomes, Americans managed not only to maintain but equally importantly increased their consumption by borrowing and behaving as if their incomes were growing.

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The low interest rate regime of the US government coupled with lax regulation of the financial system facilitated this casino prosperity. But the cheap money in the US which fed into this unsustainable consumption by Americans was also a response to a 'global saving glut' emanating in East Asia and the Middle East. In 2006, America's current account deficit consumed about 70 percent of the global surplus. This means that America was basically borrowing from the rest of the world to consume the products/services the rest of the world produced.

Optimistic of the infinite appetite of the American consumer, the world, set-up and retooled its production systems to meet the taste of American consumer. Today, a disproportionate amount of global production systems have been linked directly to the infinite gluttony of the American consumer – the export-led prescription of the IMF and the World Bank. Therefore, when the US consumption collapsed the world stared into the abyss; global export decreased leading to mass lay-offs and redundancies.

Structural Adjustment and the Export-led Growth Strategy

The slowdown in global consumption and growth is projected to have the most significant impact on the economy of developing countries par-

ticularly in Africa. The impact of the crisis on Africa showcases the bankruptcy of the neo-liberal

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project foisted on the continent through Structural Adjustments. The fundamental premise of structural adjustments was that debt-ridden African countries will grow their economies and improve their competitiveness through investments targeted at export-oriented industries (Jauch, 2009). Inherent in that premise was the fundamental condition that debtor countries needed to repay their debts which are denominated in foreign currencies, especially the US dollar.

To achieve this, countries in Africa were ushered into a regime of economic policies which were geared almost exclusively towards increasing the lev-

els of their exports. The result was dramatic shift in production from meeting local needs towards export-oriented industries. All the countries that pursued structural adjustments under the tutelage of the IMF and the World Bank followed or were made to follow this path. Production systems were modified in ways that allow countries to produce what they do not need themselves. For what they need, the centrepiece of the structural adjustment programme – trade liberalisation – ensured that there was steady flow of imports

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of all kinds of consumer goods at prices that remove all incentives for local production of these products.

For the past three decades, African economies have been hooked on exports. Export-led industrialisation has become the cornerstone of the national drive for development in almost all the countries. The perceive wisdom is that the only way to industrialise and develop is to increase the level of exports and it has become almost heretical to argue otherwise.

As the global economy teeters on the brink of depression and global credit dries up leading to collapse of consumption in our export destination countries, Africa stares into the void. And the projections continue to be bleak regardless of the method one uses. To start with, the export-orientation project has raised the trade share of GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa to levels that make the region highly vulnerable to even minor declines in export. The share of trade in the continent's GDP moved from 51.9 percent in 1990 to 71.7 percent in 2006. This means that Africa is much more deeply integrated into the global economy than the apostles of neo-liberalism would have us believe.

Given this level of global integration, any drop in global consumption and hence demand, however small it may be, is likely to have devastating impact on

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growth and livelihoods of populations that have for the past three decades been made to survive on export. Economic growth rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected at 1.7 percent for 2009. This compares with growth rates of 6.9 percent in 2007 and 5.5 percent in 2008. The slowdown in economic growth will surely impact on employment and poverty levels on the continent.

According to Chen and Ravallion, the current crisis will add 7 million more to the population of Africans living on less than US\$1.25 a day in 2009 and a further 3 million in 2010. This means, ten million more Africans would be classified as poor by the close of 2010.

Ghana and the Export-led Growth Strategy

Ghana is one of the countries in Africa that pursued the neo-liberal project of the IMF and the World Bank religiously and to its logical conclusion. In the last three decades, the country has pursued ultra outward trade policy that recognises export as central to economic growth and prosperity. On the import side, sweeping liberalisation of imports of cheap consumer products was identified by architects of structural adjustments as extremely necessary on one hand for raising consumer welfare and on the other for providing the competition and impetus for domestic industry to be productive and competitive.

Policymakers in Ghana have tended to be persuaded by this textbook logic of economic thinking to the extent that all regulatory and institutional barriers to trade have been removed and tariff walls have been brought down. National policies have significantly been altered in the past two and half decades to attract investments in export processing industries. With the current downturn in global demand, particularly in countries that have been traditional destinations for Ghana's export, the country is likely to face considerable difficulties in the years ahead.

Already, exports data in 2009 showed that while overall exports revenue increased, it did so,

on account of a recovery in commodity prices in the second half of the year. In 2009, provisional estimates from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning showed export earnings of US\$4,229.7 million representing 3.8 percent increase over the 2008 level. The increase was mainly on account of higher price of Cocoa and gold for the 2009 fiscal year. The price of cocoa, on the world market increased, by over 30 percent in 2009. However, the total volume of cocoa export declined by 16.6 percent to 382,422 tonnes in 2009 from 458,426 tonnes in 2008. The increase in revenue from gold is also the result of increases in gold price in the past year. The volume of gold export actually remained flat between 2008 and 2009. This clearly demonstrates that demand for Ghana's export has been subdued by the crisis. Further analysis would show that the current hikes in the world market prices of cocoa, gold and other primary products cannot be sustained into the future. The continued depreciation in the value of the dollar is linked to the upsurge in world market price of commodities. In addition, the rising prices are themselves the result of speculation by profit-hungry corporations who speculate on the prices of these products and in the process drive up their prices.

Available data from the Timber and Woodworkers Union (TWU) of the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) show that more than one thousand workers have lost their jobs in the Timber Industry.

Most of the companies in the timber industry are export-oriented, exporting between 85 to 90 percent of their products. With the dwindling fortunes of construction industry in much of the developed world where majority of Ghana's timber is destined, these companies are no longer receiving orders from their clients. Some of the timber companies have stockpiles of veneer and other timber products that they cannot export.

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Time to Rethink the Export-Led Growth Strategy

In the day's immediately preceding independence, Ghana like most developing countries adopted Import Substitution In-

dustrialisation (ISI) as the quickest route to industrialisation and to catch up with the rest of the developed world. Import Substitution Industrialisation entailed supporting domestic industry to produce products that replaced imported products. A major component of the strategy is the erection of tariff walls to protect infant domestic industry from competition. Protectionism under import substitution was passive in the sense that government shield domestic industry from competition and then goes to sleep as opposed to active protectionism under which government works with firms to build their competencies and lowers tariff barriers over time.

While the strategy entailed no explicit ban on export, the resulting over-valuation of the domestic currency taxes and penalises exports. Exports falls and foreign exchange becomes scarce making it difficult for firms to import much needed raw materials and spare parts. By the close of the 1970s, the import substitution industrialisation seemed to have failed and it was said to have contributed to the economic decline that characterised economies of countries that pursued the strategy.

To correct the anomaly, the structural adjustment measures recommended out-oriented policies that recognise the centrality of

the exports in the efforts to re-suscitate the ailing economies and build viable industries. After more than two and half decades of extensive liberalisation of trade supported by adoption of generous investment incentives that target FDI into Export Processing Zones (EPZ), another jury is out there: Growth impacts of the reforms have been slug-

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gish, exports diversification has failed to occur, increasing export revenues have been achieved only through increased export volumes and intermittent commodity price hikes. The initial expectation that industry (manufacturing) will lead economic recovery is now a disillusioned expectation.

The fierce competition unleashed by the rapid and unbridled liberalisation of imports meant that domestic firms that have just been rescued from a package of onerous state regulations and were in the formative process of retooling could not keep pace with the competition. Saddled with a plethora of domestic constraints such as unreliable infrastructure and usurious interest rates among others, the competition they faced was not only unfair but equally importantly was bound to stop the recovery process. The result is that many otherwise profitable firms went under. Those that survived either combined manufacturing with importation of some of the products they set out to produce or abandoned manufacturing altogether.

The proponents of the export-led growth theory have often invoked the success of the South East Asian countries in turning round their economies to buttress their assertions. But in East Asia, just like in all successful economies, a lot more happened than just the supposedly out-oriented policies they adopted. Indeed, building successful and globally competitive companies

require more than tinkering with trade policy. In South East Asia, companies built their export successes on the back of resounding successes in the domestic markets. In the case of Ghana we had sought to build global competitive firms when in our backyard, such companies are losing grounds. The companies that were most likely to succeed in exports were those that performed well in their domestic markets.

Structural Adjustments and the trade reforms it initiated had been premised on the notion that export performance would be determined solely by removing exchange rate distortions and swinging trade policy from the import substitution extreme to the other extreme of export orientation which also involves sweeping import liberalisation. That, once trade barriers are torn apart and external competition is introduced, inefficient firms will be shed and new and vibrant ones would sprang up to fill the vacuum. The reality, however, was that large number of firms went under but no new ones emerged to take their place. It is doubtful whether firms that collapsed were entirely inefficient; they collapse probably also because of the fierce and largely unfair competition with matured firms which are also beneficiaries of massive subsidies.

Ghana has stuck with the neo-liberal export orientation philosophy despite its limitations. With the market fundamentalism that underpins the philosophy, the

state (government) has retreated and abdicated its core responsibilities to the market forces that have proven ruthless and accountable. In the process, small but promising domestic enterprises have been starved of the critical national support that all successful enterprises have received on their way to becoming global giants. This has resulted in a situation where as a country we have made at best, marginal gains in exports. In exchange for those gains, highly subsidised manufactures from countries that saw the indispensability of state support to domestic enterprises have taken over the domestic market.

The global economic crisis and the slump in world trade it has caused, offers unique opportunity for sober reflection. It is now evidently clear that those countries that have run large current account deficits and which have been traditional destinations for Ghana's exports have very little scope to take in more of our exports. The consensus is that those countries must begin to save and rein in their deficits. The clarion call is for countries to generate growth by stimulating their own domestic consumption rather than rely on consumption of other countries. The US Treasury Secretary, Timothy Geithner in a speech in New Delhi, called on developing countries to reduce their reliance on export-led growth. He said:

"A critical challenge that we face is, as the US moves away from a system where the world is relying on the US consumption financed by borrowing, we move to an economy (in the US) that is saving

The hands-off approach of government as, recommended by the IMF and the World Bank, left domestic firms that were emerging from decades of decline in the jungle of unfair competition

more and investing more – we want to see broader reforms and changes outside the US".....[it is] "in the interest of the world that there is stronger domestic demand worldwide, ... so that the world emerges at a stronger, more balanced and sustainable pace"

Conclusion

Ghana currently enjoys one of the most robust domestic demand levels in the world. The rising import bills as, shown by the record level current account deficits at the end of 2008 is a demonstration of the strong demand. But domestic demand has fed largely into rising imports. This is because the outward oriented export-led growth strategy adopted as part of Structural Adjustment also entailed sweeping import

liberalisation. The hands-off approach of government as, recommended by the IMF and the World Bank, left domestic firms that were emerging from decades of decline in the jungle of unfair competition. Domestic firms have been out-competed and many have folded up. Imports of basic materials have thus taken over the domestic market.

On the surface, it would appear that dealing with the growing deficits would require dampening domestic demand. But it will be a bad policy to do that. It is imperative that national policies are marshalled to harness the benefits of domestic consumption. Why dampen domestic demand when other economies are struggling to stimulate their domestic demand? What we need to do as a country is divert domestic demand away from imported products to domestic ones. To achieve that, domestic products must be available at not only reasonable prices but also in good quality. Making domestic products available also require that we actively support domestic enterprises and for a time shield them away from unsustainable competition. We are not by this proposal seeking to downplay the importance of exports in the development dynamics, far from that. We are only saying that first thing first: we cannot seek to build globally competitive enterprises that can capture significant slice of the global market when those firms are uncompetitive in their own domestic backyard.

THE FARMERS OF ACCRA: THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF OPEN SPACE VEGETABLE FARMERS IN ACCRA

By Prince Asafu-Adjaye

Researcher: Labour Research and Policy Institute, Ghana Trades Union Congress



Prince Asafu-Adjaye

Introduction

Agriculture is the mainstay of Ghana's economy. From 2004 to 2007, the agriculture sector contributed an average of 39.3 percent to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (ISSER, 2008). Recent estimates put the share of the agriculture sector in total employment in Ghana at 55.8 percent (GSS, 2008). In Ghana, agriculture is essentially a rural activity. It is estimated that the sector accounts for 75.3 percent of employment in the rural areas of the country (GSS 2008).

In the urban areas of Ghana, the agriculture sector employs about 19 percent of the working age population (GSS 2008). This notwithstanding, urban farming has assumed some importance in the urban informal economy of Ghana. In Accra for instance, urban farming is said to account for about 90 percent of the city's fresh vegetables (Fellmann et al 2005). Available statistics show that there are about one thousand (1,000) vegetable cultivators in Accra (Obuobie et al 2006).

Urban agriculture has been defined as "the cultivation of crops at both the subsistence and com-

mercial levels and keeping of livestock in open spaces in urban areas" (Tavera 1996:181). According to Cockram and Feldman (1996:202) urban agriculture refers to "cultivating plant, raising animals and fish and growing fungi within a greater metropolitan area or urban centre".

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Definitions of urban farming often specify the location (urban or peri-urban sites), activity (cultivation of crops and rearing of animals) and purpose (production for sale or for consumption).

Urban farming can be categorized into two based on the proximity of the farm to the farmer. These categories are household or enclosed gardening and open-space farming-

While the former takes place in and around homes of farmers, the latter takes place on lands along drains, road sides, abandoned waste dumps, around public buildings, wetlands etc (Danso et al 2003). In Ghana, the upper class dominates household or enclosed urban gardening while the lower class dominates open space urban farming (Obosu-Mensah 1999).

Although farm sites in Accra and other urban areas of Ghana are not uncommon, urban farming has not been recognized and given the deserved attention. It is against this background that this paper draws on secondary data to highlight vegetable cultivation in Accra. Specifically, the paper traces the history of urban farming in Ghana and discusses the characteristics of Accra's vegetable cultivators. In addition, the challenges confronting the vegetable growers in Accra are also discussed.

The data source for this paper is a research conducted at four (4) different farm sites in Accra. Twenty-four (24) respondents, consisting of six (6) from each of the four (4) farm sites were interviewed. References are also made to published works on urban farming in Ghana.

The Trajectory of Urban Farming in Ghana

Urban farming has a long history and predates colonialism. At the beginning of the colonial era,

urban farming was encouraged. However, the activity (urban farming) was banned when the colonialists opened up the hinterland to facilitate transfer of food to the coast (Obosu-Mensah 1999). The ban on urban farming was based on the fact that in the estimation of the colonial administrators, the activity compromised town and city health and also detracted the local people from taking up formal employment (ibid). At that time, the concern of the colonialists was to attract and in some cases conscript local labour to facilitate their exploitative and administrative missions.

The ruling class at independence was accustomed to western lifestyle and therefore did not support urban agriculture for reasons similar to those of the colonialists.

After independence, the fortunes of urban farming did not see any significantly change. The ruling class at independence was accustomed to western lifestyle and therefore did not support urban agriculture for reasons similar to those of the colonialists. In some cases, town/city council officials supervised the destruction of growing crops and some urban farmers were even prosecuted in

the courts for endangering city health (Obosu-Mensah 1999). The immediate post-Nkrumah era did improve the fortunes of urban agriculture. However, during the NLC/Busia era (1966-1972) the status of urban farming remained unchanged.

The "golden age" of urban farming came during the Acheampong regime (1972-1979). Obosu-Mensah (1999) mentioned that in an attempt to deal with the harsh economic conditions caused by the lack of international aid, including food aid to Ghana at a time when the country was experiencing food shortages

due to drought, the Acheampong regime launched the Operation Feed Yourself (OFY). Although the OFY was not launched specifically for urban agriculture, it offered urban residents the opportunity to cultivate urban

lands devoid of any fear of crops destruction by city authorities (ibid). Hence the OFY provided an impetus for an unprecedented growth in urban farming in Ghana.

During the PNDC era (1981 - 2000), urban farmers experienced an increase in their costs of production. The number of urban farmers also increased. In the 1980s, Ghana's economy

faced enormous challenges. In attempts at dealing with the ailing economy, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government adopted the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank supported Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). According to Ewusi (1987) the recovery programme involved policy framework which resulted in among others; exchange rate adjustment and trade liberalization, reduction and in some cases withdrawal of subsidies (commonly on food, agriculture inputs, and energy). The recovery programme also aimed at the management of public expenditure under which interventions such as reduction of government deficits (through increasing public revenue), improving performance of public enterprises and rationalization of staffing in the public sector were pursued (ibid). It is estimated that about 15 percent of public sector jobs were lost due to the retrenchment exercise (Darkwah 2005).

Programmes and policies such as the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) which were aimed at dealing with the effects of the recovery programme did not achieve the desired objectives. Consequently majority of the retrenched public sector workers remained in the urban centres and engaged in informal economic activities including urban farming (Obosu-Mensah 1999). Hence the growth in

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urban farming in the 1980s and 1990s to some extent can be explained as an unintended consequence of the ERP. Realizing the importance of urban farming in meeting the food security needs of urban residents, the activity increasingly gained some official tolerance. Even *“at one stage, the president of the country [president Rawlings] personally intervened on behalf of some urban farmers, who were threatened by the Department of Parks and Gardens with eviction from the land they were cultivating”* (Obosu-Mensah 1999:66).

Urban farming did not see any significant changes under the Kufuor era (2001-2008). Urban farmers continued to cultivate urban lands without much fear of hostilities from city authorities. However, concerns were raised about the activities of urban farmers, especially the use of pol-

luted water for irrigation which compromises food safety (Adjaye-Gbewonyo 2008).

Open-space Vegetable Cultivators of Accra

Open-space vegetable farmers of Accra are mostly males, have low formal education and lack other employable skills. In addition, majority of them are within the working age population cohort and conduct their activities under the influence of kinship and other social networks.

Gender and Open-space Vegetable Farming in Accra

In Ghana, the proportions of males and females who are employed in the agricultural sector are 59.1 percent and 52.7 percent respectively (GSS 2008). However, in terms of output, a report by Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA, 2001), estimates that women’s output constitutes 70 percent of subsistence crops production and their labour accounts for as much as 90 percent of marketing of farm produce.

This notwithstanding, research has shown that females are significantly under-represented in urban farming in Ghana (Obosu-Mensah 1999, Danso et al 2003 and Drechsel et al 2004). Findings from the four (4) selected farm sites for this paper also in-

dicate that females are under-represented in open-space vegetable farming in Accra. Two (2) of the farm sites had no female farmers. At the other two (2) farm sites where females were involved in cultivating vegetables, while one (1) farm site had a single female farmer, the other had about 10 percent of the farmers been females.

The under-representation of females in urban farming has been explained in various ways. Drechsel et al. (2004) argue that women are incapable of competing with men for land. The bias against women in the allocation of institutional support has also been identified as one of the factors that explain the limited involvement of women in urban farming (MOFA 2001). In addition, women are customarily expected to work on the farms of their husbands and this limits their involvement in urban farming especially when their husbands are not urban farmers.

The above reasons notwithstanding, findings from the four (4) farm sites selected for this study revealed a socio-cultural explanations for the limited involvement of women in urban vegetable cultivation in Accra. At the selected farm sites, norms of gender division of labour of majority of the male farmers do not necessarily required women to labour on the farms of their husbands. In the words of a respondent:

“it is not our custom [for a woman to work on her husband’s farm] and if I do

that she would leave me and I don’t want her to leave me”.

Another farmer also argued that: *“...in our town, we don’t marry our wives to come and weed. No, you married her so you should take care of her. If you see them [women] going to the farm, they are growing groundnuts for themselves, if not, going to a man’s farm? No”.*

The most visible role that women play at the selected farms is carting of farm produce from the farm gates to the market centres of Accra

The most visible role that women play at the selected farms is carting of farm produce from the farm gates to the market centres of Accra. This role is consistent with the traditional role of Ghanaian women in the marketing of farm produce.

The Ages of Open-space Vegetable Farmers in Accra

Findings from the four (4) se-

lected farm sites show that overwhelming majority (95.84%) of the vegetable farmers are within the working age population cohort (15 – 64 years). In addition, the vegetable farmers are mostly young people; about 54 percent of them are between the ages of 15–34 years. About 4 percent of the farmers are between 65 and 74 years. This is significant given that vegetable farming as practised by the urban farmers at the selected farm sites is a laborious activity and this may compromise the health of the aged. For the aged, lack of or inadequate pension often forced them into urban farming. A 70 year old respondent stated that:

“at first I was a watchman and I went on retirement in 1997....Every month, I get [the pension pay] ₵350 [GH₵35], which is not enough to pay rent, pay children’s school fees as well as Arabic school fees? You would pay light bill and give your wife chop money”

Formal Educational Attainment of Open-space Vegetable Farmers in Accra

Formal educational attainment among the farmers at the four (4) selected open space urban farm sites is low. About 92 percent of the respondents have up to basic education. As many as about 42 percent of the respondents have no formal education. In addition to low formal education attainment, they also lack other em-

ployable skills that would enable them take up non-farm jobs.

Economic Activities of Open-space Vegetable Farmers in Accra

For majority of the respondents, cultivating vegetables is their sole economic activity in Accra. About 62.5 percent of the respondents are full time urban farmers. For the other respondents (37.5%), urban farming is a means of supplementing their low incomes from their first jobs

About 62.5 percent of the respondents are full time urban farmers. For the other respondents (37.5%), urban farming is a means of supplementing their low incomes from their first jobs as cleaners, watchmen and others.

as cleaners, watchmen and others. They therefore cultivate vegetables as a second job. In the words of one respondent:

"I am [working] at the polyclinic, I am a laundry man. I go to the polyclinic at 8:30, so I come here [his farm] in the morning. After 2:00pm, I also come here [his farm]..... I have a wife

and children, how can I eat? I would pay light [bill] and everything. When I am sick, my child is sick, it is money that we shall spend".

Kinship Relations and Social Networks in Open-space Vegetable Farm Sites in Accra

Kinship relations and social ties continue to influence the organization of socio-economic activities in Ghana. Vegetable cultivation at the selected farm sites is dominated by people connected by ethnic, consanguineous, neighbourhood and other social networks. These connections construct the organization of work at the farm sites by determining conditions for entry and continuous cultivation. In the words of a respondent:

"when I came here, I met my uncle and he was working. He was doing this same work but he was not very strong and he couldn't do it bigger.....I was looking for a job and he told me that if I do this, I can get something to eat that is why I joined"

The value of these connections is reinforced by the role they play in mediating peace and harmony at farms site. The absence of land and other related disputes at the selected farm sites is to a large extent explained by ethnic, consanguineous and other social networks that prevail at the farm sites. A respondent mentioned that:

"we are all brothers. For us in our hometown, we don't fight over land. If you want to bring a dispute on any land, we shall leave it for you".

Farmers' Associations

Farmers' association are almost non-existent at the selected farm sites and at the farm site where there is an association, it is almost defunct. This is not because the farmers are not unaware of the benefits of having functioning associations. A respondent indicated that:

"we don't have any association. We are now planning to form one and if the association stands, we shall go to government that they have given us the land to farm on but we don't have inputs and we don't have water and if it doesn't rain, we don't get water to water our crops. So he should come and do something for us so that, even if it is a machine we can buy and use it to pump the water and that can help us".

The only farm site with a farmers' association is the site where two of the farmers have secondary education. What therefore appears to account for absence of farmers' associations at the other farm sites is level of education. Farmers with very low formal education may have limited organizational capacity to organize in an urban environment given the

complexities of organizing urban associations.

Challenges of Open-space Vegetable Cultivators

The urban vegetable farmers of Accra are faced with a myriad of challenges that negatively affect their activities. The challenges range from problems with land resources and inputs to the marketing of produce.

Access to Land and Land Control

Access to and control of land is critical in vegetable cultivation in Accra. The selected farm sites for this paper are mostly vacant public lands along major roads, under high-tension electric lines, in front of public institutions and

In terms of tenureship, neither do the open-space vegetable farmers own the land they farm on nor do they have proper time-defined land rent agreement with the legitimate land owners.

undeveloped lands belonging to public organizations. In terms of

tenureship, neither do the open-space vegetable farmers own the land they farm on nor do they have proper time-defined land rent agreement with the legitimate land owners. In the words of a respondent:

“they [land owners] told me that they don’t want thieves and someone who would fight. So if I know I can quietly work here then I should go ahead.....and they don’t [didn’t] take anything from us, they say that anytime they want their land and they come, [we should vacate] and we said we agree”

Consequently, evictions and destruction of growing crops by land owners are not uncommon in open-space vegetable cultivation in Accra. An urban vegetable farmer lamented that:

“sometimes some of them [officials of land owning institution] would come and bring trouble. The last time I cultivated onions and some of them came and destroyed everything. They said we don’t cultivate on [this] land. They destroyed everything”.

Also, the lack of proper tenancy agreements for cultivated lands affects the kinds of crops cultivated and long term investments on the land. This was articulated by one farmer in the following words:

“you see when you sleep on someone’s mat, you are

sleeping on the floor. If you go to borrow someone’s mat to sleep on, you are sleeping on the floor. Don’t think you have a mat, you are sleeping on the floor. And cocoa too, if I grow cocoa, the land is not mine, and if they tell me that they want their land, these ones [pointing to his crops] whatever I shall uproot them for does not matter to you.

In some instances, land owners are specific about the kinds of crops that can be cultivated on their lands. This is expressed by a farmer as:

“they tell [told] me they don’t want the thing [crops] to grow up, if I do like [do] that, they would come and spoil [destroy] it. If you plant corn or okro plenty [a lot] like this they don’t want it because it [they] grow up”

Beyond tenancy problems, there is stiff competition between urban farmers and developers for urban/periurban lands in Accra. And in such competition, the latter prevails. According to Maxwell and Armar-Klemesu (2000), housing is fast taking over land for agricultural use at a rate of 2600 hectares per year in periurban Accra.

Irrigation

Ghana’s agriculture is predominantly rain-fed. Therefore in times of prolonged drought, agricultural output is severely affected and this has implications

for the nation's food security. At the four (4) selected farm sites, vegetable cultivation is constrained by limited access to water especially during the dry

Ghana's agriculture is predominantly rain-fed. Therefore in times of prolonged drought, agricultural output is severely affected and this has implications for the nation's food security

season. Other alternative water sources are mostly polluted. A worried farmer indicated that:

"we have this water problem, you know we don't have potable water for irrigation because.....it [the stream we have being using] has been polluted.

In dealing with the challenge of water scarcity, some farmers, as was observed during visits to the farm sites use gray water for irrigation. Obosu-Mensah (1999) also indicates that it is not rare to find urban farmers irrigating their crops with water from drains. The use of gray water for irrigation compromises the safety of the vegetables produced by urban farmers.

Marketing

Another important challenge facing open-space urban vegetable farmers is marketing of produce. Produce are mostly sold on credit to market women and in most cases, return for investment is lost. Respondents at the selected farm sites were unanimous in voicing the problems with marketing of their farm produce. This is evident in the plea of a frustrated urban farmer:

"the only thing that I can add is that if you have any help, assist us in the marketing. It is really disturbing us, I for one, I have a lot of money with people but I know I cannot get it. If you can assist us in marketing"

HIV/AIDS IS REAL
AVOID CASUAL SEX OR
USE CONDOM

Incidence of Pest and Disease, Theft and Rising cost of Inputs

Other challenges encountered by the open-space urban vegetable farmers at the farm sites visited include the incidence of pests and diseases, the rising cost of inputs as well as in some instances minor theft. These challenges increase the production costs of urban farmers who at the same time face higher risk of investment because their activities significantly depend on unpredictable weather conditions.

Conclusions

Urban farming in Accra plays an important role in Accra's informal economy. The activities of urban farmers supply significant proportion of the city's fresh vegetables. Also, urban farming provides employment and incomes for some residents of Accra. Open space vegetable cultivation is therefore a coping mechanism for the poor and vulnerable. In addition, open space urban farming in Accra serves to put undeveloped lands to economic use. This notwithstanding, open space vegetable cultivation in Accra has largely escaped the at-

tention of policymakers in Ghana. Consequently, the needs and challenges of Accra's vegetable cultivators are mostly overlooked. However, given the important role that urban farming plays in employment, income security and food supply, policymakers must devote some attention to address the needs and challenges of Accra's open space urban farmers.

DECENT WORK

Decent Work refers to opportunities for women and men to obtain work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent work has four essential features:

- Fundamental principles and rights at work and International Labour Standards
- Employment and income opportunities
- Social protection and social security
- Social dialogue and tripartism

These goals hold for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal employment; in wage employment or those working on their own account; in the fields, factories and offices; in the homes or in the communities

Is Domestic Work Synonymous with Slavery in Ghana?

By Clara Osei-Boateng, Researcher, Labour Research and Policy Institute, Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC)



Clara Osei-Boateng

Introduction

In everyday conversation about domestic workers, quite commonly between two women, statements such as “*don’t give him/her too many opportunities*” or “*send him/her away if him/she looks attractive*” are among the few cautions given to friends and family. The reflections of such cautions are observed in the treatment of domestic workers in many homes. Domestic workers are the first to wake up but last to retire to bed; they clean the sofa and the dining tables but are forbidden to use them. Who then is a domestic worker and what are the rights and privileges?

A domestic worker is a person

performing household chores in any private home or domestic setting. It also includes informal work such as selling goods in the market undertaken by the person who also performs household chores in the private home of his/her employer. A domestic worker can be a house help, cleaner, laundry man/woman, security personnel, driver, gardener, cook, and nanny or child minder among others.

Housework is one of the oldest and most fundamental duties performed by majority of women because women are traditionally considered as nurturers of the family. For centuries, housework has been informal, unregulated, unpaid or undervalued, unprotected and unrecognized.

In modern Ghana, domestic workers enable economically active people and their families to participate in the labour market. The domestic worker is usually a young rural migrant from poor background. A substantial number of children are also engaged in domestic work. The child domestic worker is sometimes misconstrued as fostered to have opportunity for better life. However most of these children rarely

have access to basic needs including education.

This article is based on findings of a recent study on the situation of domestic workers in Ghana. This year, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is set to begin deliberations towards formulating a comprehensive Convention(s)/recommendation(s) to regulate domestic



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work. It is hoped that information contained in the study will go a long way in providing the impetus for the long-awaited convention on domestic work and influence the content of the proposed convention.

Contributions of Domestic Workers to the Ghanaian Economy

In the latest round of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS5) conducted in 2005/2006, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) estimated that 70 percent of the adult population aged between 15 and 64 years are economically active (GLSS5, 2008). Over 80 percent of the employed in Ghana is concentrated in the informal economy. The informal sector consists of a host of activities that includes self-employment and wage employment of which domestic work forms part.

Estimates from the GSS (2008) indicate that domestic work employs about 0.2 percent of Ghanaians between the ages of 15-64 years. Domestic workers are predominantly women and young rural migrants. While 0.2 percent of the working females are engaged as domestic workers, the proportion of males who are employed as domestic workers is 0.1 percent.

In spite of its potential for employment, domestic work like most informal sector jobs escapes the attention of policy

makers and advocates of decent work.



The study revealed that expatriate employers usually comply with the legal provisions than their Ghanaian counterparts.



Wages and Working Conditions of Domestic Workers

Employment Relations

Ghana's labour Law (Act 651, 2003) requires that employment relationships are formalized with the signing of a written contract between employers and employees. Section 12 of the Labour law requires that *"the employment of a worker by an employer for a period of six months or more or for a number of working days equivalent to six months or more within a year shall be secured by a written contract of employment"*. The contract of employment stipulates the rights and obligations of the employer and the employee.

Domestic workers who are recruited through private recruit-

ment agencies in Ghana usually have written contract of employment. The contract may either be signed between the domestic worker and the employer or between the recruitment agency (on behalf of the worker) and the employer. Domestic workers who participated in the study noted that:

"Usually, recruitment agencies have standard written agreement detailing the contractual terms, which employers are made to sign. Employers who terminate contracts unlawfully are made to compensate employees appropriately".

There is laxity at the Public Recruitment Centre of the Ghana Labour Department in enforcing the provisions for employment contract. This has led to a situation where employers (especially Ghanaian employers) prefer to recruit from the public centre rather than through the private recruitment agencies.

Another common form of recruitment is through friends and relatives. Written contracts are usually not signed when family or friends refer domestic workers. Verbal agreement is usually established but these are difficult to monitor and enforce.

The nature of employer-employee relationship in the domestic work situation is determined by the mode of recruitment. A private agency may terminate its involvement after completing the employment arrangement. This is usually

done after a lump sum fee is charged either to the substantive employer or employee for services rendered.

“The nature of domestic work is such that you cannot have a defined role. Domestic workers can be given any task at any time to do. You are the first to wake up (sometimes at 4 am) but the last to go to bed (usually after 10 pm). The child minder is up whenever the baby cries. You only have break when there’s nothing to do”.

However, some agencies remain the employer under the arrangement. In such circumstances, the domestic worker is an employee of the recruitment agency and he/she is contracted out to a client. The recruitment agency receives monthly wage from the client and pays the domestic worker a portion of the amount. At the public recruitment centre (as also in the case of family/friend referrals), the officer (person) who witness the initial process of engagement may

only become the mediator when disputes arise. Domestic workers usually consider the client (often the woman) as the employer regardless of who pays the wages.

Hours of Work

Sections 33 and 34 of Ghana’s labour law, Act 651(2003) provides minimum working hours of forty (40) per week. This translates into 8 hours of work per day. Any extra hours worked must be paid for as overtime. The law provides for every worker thirty (30) minutes break in between continuous work. However, section 44 exempt domestic workers in private homes from provisions of sections 33 and 34.

Domestic workers involved in the study stated that they do not have fixed working hours or defined responsibilities. A domestic worker indicated that:

“The nature of domestic work is such that you cannot have a defined role. Domestic workers can be given any task at any time to do. You are the first to wake up (sometimes at 4 am) but the last to go to bed (usually after 10 pm). The child minder is up whenever the baby cries. You only have break when there’s nothing to do”.

The law also provides for daily rest of not less than 12 hours. In addition workers are entitled to rest period of 48 consecutive hours in every seven days. However, domestic workers involved in the study stated that in principle they are entitled to one day-off per week but most employers fail to grant this. Where employ-

ers comply, they (employers) choose days that they would not need the services of the domestic worker. For some domestic workers, jobs left undone during their rest periods await their return, thus, increasing their workload on the next working day. Organizations promoting the rights of domestic workers believe the exceptional provisions on domestic workers under the labour law are discriminatory.

Domestic workers involved in the study displayed little knowledge of their rights under the labour law. They frequently described employers who comply with contractual agreements as the “good employers” and the worker as “lucky workers”. The phrase “if you’re lucky to have a good employer” run through all the discussions. Workers appeared not to know their rights and therefore rely on the goodwill of employers. Although most workers

Workers (especially young females) face sexual harassment usually from the males in the household, especially from the husbands of their employers.

have suffered and continue to suffer unfair labour practices including violence, none has reported such abuses because they do not know where to get help.

The frustration of the domestic workers was summed up by one of them in these words:

"If you are not happy with your employer, you can only be patient until you receive your monthly wage and pack out of the house".

Some employers terminate employment contract unlawfully and without compensation. Workers (especially young females) face sexual harassment usually from the males in the household, especially from the husbands of their employers.

Wages of Domestic Workers in Ghana

Like most other workers in Ghana, domestic workers in Ghana also earn low wages. The study revealed that domestic workers earn between GH¢80 (US\$57) and GH¢100 (US\$71) per month. This is above the monthly minimum wage for 2009 which was GH¢71.55 or US\$51.00. Determination of wages depends on the mode of recruitment. Private recruitment agencies negotiate for wages on behalf of workers. At the Public Recruitment Centre, however, workers negotiate their wages with their employers themselves. When domestic workers negotiate for wages themselves, they are usually compelled by economic circumstances to accept lower wages of about GH¢50 (\$36) or less. A domestic worker stated that:

"Many people take up domestic work as a means to raise income to meet urgent needs. Under such

circumstances, they are compelled to accept any wage".

The 2009 monthly minimum wage in Ghana is GH¢71.55 (US\$51). Most domestic workers earn a little above the minimum wage. However, all domestic workers who participated in this study were unaware of the current minimum wage. When they were informed of the current minimum wage, most respondents said it was inadequate.

A 35 year old respondent indicated she sleeps in a kiosk and compelled to bath in the open at dawn and in the night by the road side.

They stated that they are likely to reject it if it was offered to them, unless they are in desperate need for income.

Non-wage Benefits

The Labour laws of Ghana require employers to provide some statutory benefits to employees. These include social security contribution, paid sick leave, paid maternity leave and paid annual leave. In addition, most workers

and their unions have through collective bargaining secured other benefits such as free/subsidized transport, meals, accommodation among others.

Domestic workers involved in the study indicated that they do not receive any of the statutory benefits. They hinted that few domestic workers (usually with expatriate employers) have social security benefits. Some employers provide medical care to cover common illness such as headache, malaria or fever. However, the worker is likely to be sacked if the illness prolongs. It was also stated that most employers would terminate contract of employment when the female domestic worker becomes pregnant.

All the domestic workers who participated in the study have free accommodation from their employers. The nature of the accommodation varies from employer to employer. Some domestic workers lived in the boys' quarters or in the same apartment as their employers with adequate facilities. However, others sleep in poorly ventilated rooms or store rooms without toilet facilities. A 35 year old respondent indicated she sleeps in a kiosk and compelled to bath in the open at dawn and in the night by the road side. A domestic worker mentioned that:

"If you are lucky to get a good employer, you may have more privileges than what was initially agreed upon. Some employers provide even toiletries to the worker".

Domestic workers involved in the study indicated that employers usually “promise” three meals per day during negotiations but many fail to provide them. Few employers provide workers three meals per day. Some employers do not give domestic workers meals break and rest periods. In such situations, the domestic worker may have to eat alongside work or wait until all jobs are completed before they can eat. A domestic worker stated that:

“Some employers do not want to see the worker sitting for one minute, even to eat”.

Organisations Supporting Domestic Workers: LAWA and ICU

The Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) Ghana Alumnae Incorporated is a gender advocacy non-governmental organization that works to promote the rights of domestic workers in Ghana. LAWA began its project on domestic workers in 2003 under a donor funded project. As part of the project, LAWA in collaboration with the Attorney General’s Department proposed and submitted regulations on domestic work in Ghana to Parliament.

LAWA also organized groups of domestic workers mostly in urban centres such as Kumasi, Accra and Ho. It developed training manuals and offered training programmes to members of or-

ganized groups of domestic workers under a donor-funded project. However, LAWA’s organizing activities on domestic workers have stalled since the closure of the project in 2006. This has led to loss of membership of the domestic workers’ association.

Domestic workers are frequently humiliated, a situation that has affected their self-esteem. They do not know their rights and thus vulnerable to exploitation.

An officer at LAWA indicated that the organization continues to provide legal services on gratis to domestic workers when disputes arise between workers and their employers. The officer stated that LAWA has been able to help

some workers to get compensation where employers terminated their contracts unlawfully.

The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (ICU) like LAWA began organizing domestic workers under a donor funded project. An official of ICU stated that Section 80 of the Labour Act which stipulates that two or more persons employed in the same undertaken can form or join a trade union has negative implications for organizing and unionizing domestic workers. The respondent argued that since individual domestic workers have individual employers, it is difficult for them to have a union. As a result of this legal constraint, the ICU could not secure collective bargaining certificate from the Chief Labour Officer for the domestic workers it organized.

The ICU developed three types of contracts for the domestic workers it organised. The union noted that the contracts led to some workers losing their jobs while others secured good bargain under the contract. Currently ICU has lost membership of the domestic workers’ associations except for those in Kumasi.

Officials of both LAWA and ICU indicated that organizations working with domestic workers would require support to embark on public education in particular, for domestic workers. Most domestic workers have basic education or no education and thus vulnerable to exploitation by employers.

Conclusion

The importance of domestic workers to the economy is not disputed. However, many are yet to realize that domestic workers like other workers are covered not just by the provisions of the labour law but also all the others laws in Ghana including the National Constitution and they deserve to be treated fairly. The unfair labour practices against domestic workers continue, partly as a result of 'discriminatory' clauses in the Labour Act and the general laxity in enforcement of the provisions under the Act. Domestic workers are frequently

humiliated, a situation that has affected their self-esteem. They do not know their rights and thus vulnerable to exploitation. Children in disguise of fosterage are used for domestic work. These children are usually denied their rights to education and abused physically, emotionally as well as sexually. The need to protect the rights of domestic workers has not caught the attention of many human rights advocates. The Labour Department is grossly under-resourced; both human and material resources to enable it carry through effectively its functions.

Projects on domestic workers

have stalled when donor funds run out, a demonstration of lack of commitment or poor project planning. Regulations on domestic work developed by LAWA Ghana Alumnae Incorporated are yet to receive the attention of the legislature for adoption. It is hoped that sooner than later, the Ghanaian society would recognize the need to protect the rights of domestic workers like all workers in Ghana. Trade unions must take the challenge to organize domestic workers and promote their rights like the many other workers under their umbrella.

