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WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

WORKERS NEED DURABLE RESPONSES TO MULTIPLE CRISES

In the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Ghana provided grants totalling US\$5 million to 373 small- and medium-sized enterprises through the Ghana Economic Transformation Project to support their recovery from the crisis.

In the longer term, the government introduced a series of initiatives to address the multiple crises facing the country. These include 'YouStart', which aims to create a million jobs for young people through the provision of soft loans for establishing youth-led enterprises; 'Mobilising for a Greener Future', which seeks to restore degraded landscapes, mitigate climate change and promote national awareness of the importance of environmental protection; 'Planting for Food and Jobs', which seeks to boost food security and create jobs through agricultural modernisation; 'One District One Factory' designed to expand the productive capacities of new and existing district enterprises; and the 'National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Project', which aims to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods for illegal miners and people affected by the sanitisation of the mining sector while restoring lands.

Regrettably, there has been limited trade union consultation on and involvement in the implementation of these programmes.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Government of Ghana has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national development planning, notably its long-term national development framework. In addition, its 2026–2029 medium-term development plan prioritises five SDG targets, including target 8.5 – full and productive employment and decent work for all. The National Development Planning Commission leads the integration of SDGs into national development planning and the High-Level Ministerial Committee, the Implementation Coordinating Committee (ICC) and the Technical Committee oversee its implementation.

Trade unions report that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been constrained by the government's focus on post-Covid-19 pandemic economic recovery and the austerity measures introduced under the Extended Credit Facility arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.

Trade unions further report limited interaction between them and state-led SDG implementation structures. While there is a degree of transparency on SDG implementation, this is limited to information dissemination. In addition, a lack of national data limits trade unions' ability to assess progress on some SDGs. Consultation takes place through the CSO platform on SDGs which allows non-state actors to participate as observers in the High-Level Ministerial Committee, the ICC and the Technical Committee. Trade unions report that engagements via the CSO Platform are more effective than the limited direct interaction with the state-led SDG structures. Indeed, trade unions state that they are not consulted on SDG implementation in the framework of social dialogue. While they make individual recommendations to government structures, these are rarely reflected in policy.

TRANSPARENCY



Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



There is informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



There are individual contributions from social partners to the national government



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Ghanaian trade unions call for greater efforts to reach the SDGs objectives in their country.

With regards to **SDG 1** and **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)**, in 2016, 25.2% of the population was living under the international poverty threshold, while the working poverty rate stood at 18.7% in 2024. Trade unions suggest that this is a result of a failure of state institutions to enforce minimum wage legislation. While Ghana is classified as being in the medium human development category, trade unions suggest that substantial income disparities reduce the impact of national economic progress on overall human development outcomes. Indicators on **target 1.3 (social protection systems and measures)** are worrying, showing that in 2022, only 25.2% of the population was effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, with only 15.7% of persons above retirement age receiving a pension – more often men (23.1%) than women (7.8%). With regards to **target 1.a (end poverty in all its dimensions)**, in 2023, spending on essential services as a proportion of GDP stood at only 2.8%. Trade unions report that spending on education specifically has been declining.

On **SDG 5**, there is still a need for improvement to achieve **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)** as in 2009, women spent three times more of their day (15%) than men (5%) on unpaid labour in the household. On **target 5.5 (women's full and effective participation)**, in 2024 only 14.6% of parliamentarians were women, although the proportion of women in managerial roles stood at 46.4% in 2022.

Significant further efforts are needed to reach **SDG 8**. Data on **target 8.3 (support decent job creation)** indicate that in 2015, 67.5% of employment in Ghana was in the informal sector, with more women (70.9%) than men (62.6%) represented there. Furthermore, 67.9% of workers were considered vulnerable in 2023. The gender pay gap remains significant, at 38.4% in 2022, indicating the need for further progress on **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. Unemployment stood at 2.9% in 2022, although it was higher for the 15–to-24-year-old age group (5.2%). Underemployment stood at 7.2% for

men and 7.3% for women in 2022. NEET indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** remained high, standing at 27.6% (26.2% for young men and 29.8% for young women) in 2022. Indicators for **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments)** showed that 1,043 work-related injury cases, including 37 fatalities, were reported in 2022. Out of these, 64% occurred in the private sector, highlighting serious inadequacies in workplace health and safety protocols. In addition, in 2022 the ratio of workers per labour inspector stood at 78,499, nearly eight times over the ILO's recommendation.

Progress remains to be made for Ghana to reach **SDG 10**. On **target 10.4 (adopt policies to achieve greater equality)**, the top 10% of income earners had a 32.2% share of GDP, with the bottom 20% of income earners holding an 4.7% share in 2016. The labour share of GDP stood at 43.8% in 2024. Positive developments are to note on **target 10.7 (facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility)**, as social partners have contributed to the design and implementation of Ghana's labour migration policy.

On **SDG 13** and **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into policies)**, social partners are named as key partners in delivering the National Green Jobs Strategy for 2021–2025. However, trade unions report that their participation in the implementation of the strategy has been sporadic and insufficient.

Further efforts must be made to reach **SDG 16** and **target 16.1 (protect fundamental freedoms)**, as Ghana received a rating of 2 on the ITUC Global Rights Index, indicating repeated violations of trade union rights.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Trade unions call on the Ghanaian government to:

- Restart the Social Partnership Council to provide a platform for social partners to engage on socio-economic policies, including the SDGs.
- Establish a monitoring framework that enables trade unions to track progress in implementing the SDGs.
- Prioritise job creation in national economic planning by incorporating employment targets within fiscal and monetary policies.
- Introduce youth labour market activation policies.
- Provide support and incentives to help workers and businesses in the informal economy transition to the formal sector.
- Establish a functional unemployment benefit scheme, a universal pension scheme and expanded cash transfer programme for extremely poor households.
- Combat workplace sexual discrimination by financing maternity leave through tax revenues.
- Establish social dialogue aiming at putting in place minimum living wages.
- Introduce labour law reforms to strengthen workers' rights and improve working conditions, including those for casual workers.
- Secure adequate resources for public institutions responsible for enforcing labour standards and workers' rights.
- Establish sub-national tripartite dialogue mechanisms to enable effective engagement on regional issues.



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