

**PROVERBIAL SAYINGS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
COLLECTED IN NORTHERN GHANA
BY PAORP-VWC**



Translation Into:

KONKOMBA

N-YATANŊAAK AAH BŊLIIN KINŊ BIYAABŊ TIN KAAH
PAORP-VWC GMANN KINYAN NNE LIPAL AAH
PIPIL GHANANI

BASSARI

NBIYAAMU BATŊL LANKPANŊI BŊTI TIN
NPEE NYIKIRILI LIN SI KI TII KINYIBŊNTIŊINEE
(PAORP-VWC)
ŊMA DŊ LIPAALBU GANA TINKINEE

DAGBANI

YELOX'ŊAHA LAHABAYA LAXIMBU ZAN
JENDI BIHI TALAHI BIeHIGU ZALIKPANA
GHNANA TUDU YAXILI ZANŊI
PAORP-VWC

**Proverbial Sayings on Children's rights
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Acknowledgements

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Specially Dedicated To:

Mr. Horst Buchmann of blessed memory
Popularly known in PAORP-VWC as “*Father of All African Children*”

About PAORP-VWC & KiRA

Pan African Organisation for Research and Protection of Violence on Women and Children (PAORP-VWC) is a Non-Governmental Human Rights and Development Organisation that has been operating in Ghana since 2008 as well as in Cameroun since 2010. It is officially registered in both countries as a non-profit organisation.

In Ghana, PAORP-VWC is currently active in five districts in the Northern Region: Tolon, Kumbungu, Gushegu, Zabzugu and Tatala/Sanguli. The organisation works in all domains where discrimination and abuse of the rights of women and children is taking place. To combat this societal ill, PAORP-VWC indulges itself in a series of research and facts-finding missions to be able to identify principal causes of violence, abuses and discrimination militating against women and children. Our main intervention areas include: promotion and protection of women's and Children's rights, minimizing child trafficking, fighting to end child early and forced marriage, promoting child education, women empowerment, peace building, prevention of violence extremism and entrepreneurial skills development towards a more sustainable livelihood for our target beneficiaries.

PAORP-VWC collaborates with numerous stakeholders and state actors at all levels of intervention such as the Department of Social Welfare, Ghana Immigration Services, Ghana Police Service, Municipal Assemblies, religious leaders, traditional and opinion leaders and others.

Kinderrechte Afrika e. V. (KiRA) which means "Children's rights Africa" in German, was founded in 1995 in Lahr, Germany. This non-profit organization works in African countries (currently in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Togo) with and for children who are deprived of their basic rights and whose dignity is violated, following the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

KiRA is managed by active members with long experience in Africa, as well as expertise in development cooperation and management.

KiRA's mission is to contribute to the development of a 'protective environment' that promotes and guarantees the basic rights of all children - particularly in Africa - to a full, decent and dignified life:

- Children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, exclusion, neglect and arbitrariness.
- Every child has equal rights, opportunities and prospects.
- The dignity of children is respected, children grow up free and in peace (preferably within their families), integrated and active in community and social life.

Thus, KiRA aims at the holistic development of children and young people, at enabling them to deal with the challenges of the future and to take on responsibilities in their families, social communities and societies. In order to make an effective and sustainable contribution, KiRA acts in a credible way through actions that are concretely oriented towards children, political authorities and civil society.

I. Why this collection?

This collection of proverbs was compiled by PAORP-VWC staff as part of a Children's rights project aiming at the 'Promotion of protection against child trafficking and child, early and forced marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana', co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Kinderrechte Afrika e. V. (KiRA).

In the work to promote Children's rights, it was found that those are often an abstract concept for many people in northern Ghana. Misunderstandings and/or misinterpretations occur, often due to non-contextualized explanations and poor translations, leading to refusal or dismissal of Children's rights issues.

In contrast, however, it was noted that almost every community has a way of expressing and passing across deep messages, carrying meanings that are not literal from the expressions by using proverbs and/or stories. Simply put, these are short insightful traditional sentences which people often quote that express perceived truths based on common sense or experience and further give advice about life. Especially proverbs partly describe traditional rules of conduct or conduct recommendations, some of which promote or are in accordance with Children's rights.

Consequently, these proverbs can be used as a common basis and starting point for the promotion of Children's rights issues and help to create a better understanding of Children's rights themselves. So the present collection of proverbs uses already existing knowledge and wisdom in the communities of Northern Ghana and links it to some important Children's rights. Thus, a collection of proverbs/idioms related to those rights was realized, that can serve as practical tool for any literate person of the State or Civil Society who wants to promote them, especially in rural communities. This collection can even be used as school material to sensitise children about their rights in elementary schools. In addition, it also aids in cultural preservation.

II. How to use this collection?

You want to encourage parents to register their children after birth? You want to get the community to actively engage in protecting children from harmful traditional practices such as child marriage or child trafficking? You want to talk to children about their rights or to adults about Children's rights? This collection may help to address these issues in a way appropriate to the cultural context of the interlocutors, no matter if it is for an information event, an awareness-raising campaign or a face-to-face conversation.

In this collection, 9 Children's rights are briefly explained and proverbs listed for each to promote its implementation. Following the steps below can ease understanding of Children's rights and create more openness to these specific issues.



- First choose the child right you want to address with the target group.
- Then identify the proverbs listed for the selected child right and use one or more as:
 - entry points to start a sensitization / awareness raising activity or
 - subject of discussion to talk about different aspects of the child right concerned or
 - reference to illustrate the respective child right or to give a concrete example of their everyday life.
- At the end, encourage the audience to share their opinions, views and experiences regarding the respective child right, try to find more suitable proverbs together and identify possible behaviours / habits which help to better respect this specific right in the future.

This collection is also available in three (3) local Ghanaian languages (Konkomba, Basari and Dagbani) widely spoken in the Northern Region of Ghana. Thus a wider audience and therefore a higher acceptance of Children's rights, in particular in rural areas, can be reached.

III. Proverbial sayings with corresponding children's rights

On the following pages, 9 important Children's rights with their legal basis in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)¹ and The Ghana Children's Act (ACT 560)² are listed.

These are fundamental rights of children. They are acquired with birth and can't neither be sold nor exchanged nor withdrawn.

In order to better understand the content and meaning of these Children's rights, each is briefly explained . Furthermore, proverbs collected in Northern Ghana which promote behaviours that support the understanding and application of these Children's rights are listed respectively  below the explanation of each right.

Some of the proverbs listed below a specific Children's right can also be attributed to one or more of the others. So the attribution of the proverbs are not to be seen as exclusive but as one possible option.

¹ Regional norm ratified by Ghana in 2005.

² National norm enacted in 1998, amended in 2016.

1. The right to non-discrimination

Art. 3 ACRWC / Art. 3 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

Every child is precious and has to be cared for and protected. This applies regardless of race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, origin, disability, or other status of the child. The diversity of children should be accepted and supported by all, as within each child lies a unique potential.

However, as children in virtually all societies have less power than adults, they are exposed to a greater risk of being discriminated.



Corresponding proverbs

Show no discrimination against children, even when challenges befall us.

Every child possesses special gift from God to release these beholds their parents true love.

No matter how and what a child is or looks, their rights are their rights.

Joy and sorrow are like rain; it falls on everyone's roof.

All fingers are not the same.

A black hen can lay white eggs too.

Repeat the continuous love for one's child to attract same for your child.

2. The best interest of the child (Welfare principle)

Art. 4 (1) ACRWC / Art. 2 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

This principle puts the child and its well-being first. It emphasises that the focus of any court, person, institution or other body in all actions and in any matter concerning the child must lie on determining which services and orders will best serve the respective child in the particular circumstance. In this process the perspective of every child, according to their age and maturity, shall be taken seriously and evaluated. What will be best for the child has to get priority in any decision making, especially in case of divergent interests. Therefore, the best interest of the child should be prioritized by all and at all levels.



Corresponding proverbs

Laughter and joy of children is true complement of our creator.

Negotiate good deeds for our children, so to smile another day.

When children sing and dance the world is happy.

Don't underestimate the cry of children.

Several misunderstanding may occur, yet the future and safety depends on our patience.

Sacrifice to sing a lovely lullaby for the baby to sleep, so you can enjoy your night sleep.

Never trade with the future of your children.

3. The right to have an opinion (Respect of the views of the child)

Art. 4 (2) ACRWC / Art. 11 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

Children have a freedom of speech. Regardless of their age, they should be given the opportunity by adults, communities and States to form an opinion without being manipulated, to express their views freely and to be heard. Furthermore, their views and opinions should be taken seriously according to their age and maturity. This means, they have to be involved in any decisions concerning them and their opinions must be considered.



Corresponding proverbs

Observe and respect their tender age minds determine their future.

Children rich in mind but helpless in action.

Listen to your child before sunset.

Do not think this child is mad, reason out first what he has said.

A wolf does not cry in the midnight for nothing, but sends out a sign of warning to its parents to seek tomorrow's security and safety.

A child's voice is the voice of God.

Open up to a child, and he/she can be better hope ahead.

4. The right to life, survival and development

Art. 5 ACRWC / Art. 6 (2) Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

From the moment of birth, all children must have the chance to live and the possibility to grow and to become adults. Therefore, every child needs to be nourished and provided with medical care, shelter and love. No matter whether the child is wanted and/or has physical or mental particularities, it should not be rejected, hurt or even killed. Parents have to ensure under all circumstances, if necessary with support of the State, that the child is protected and can develop under favourable conditions. Governments must even guarantee a protection for all children, regardless of their social or ethnic origins



Corresponding proverbs

A womb is a creative home of a baby, hence, should be respected and preserved.

Our children are like the stars in the sky.

Without children, tomorrow is nothing.

The hope of this world lies in the hands of the children.

When the sun is rising, it should be rising with us and our children.

Give all to God, ask for best of gift so he blesses you with children.

He who knows the real meaning of life appreciates it only when the child is born.

No family is complete without the cry of a child.

The disciples of a good family are its children.

5. The right to parental care and guidance and to a family

Art. 20 together with art. 19 (1) and 18 (1) ACRWC / Art. 5 and 6 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

Every child must be given the chance to grow up in a supportive, caring and nurturing environment. Normally, the best place for this is the family. Therefore, no child can be separated against his will from his parents, as long as its well-being and development are not concerned. The poverty of the family never justifies a separation of the child from it. In fact, the State must do everything so that the family can take care of the child, and if it cannot, it must help it to do so. But taking care of a child and ensuring its growth and development is not an option but a duty for parents, also known as parental responsibility. Together they must not only feed, clothe and educate the child, but also love and protect it. In doing so, they must consider the best interests and the well-being of the child.



Corresponding proverbs

The children shall remember you better based on your positive relationship with them.

We help-hands to get children from drowning, not pointing at their errors.

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

Brave children were born heroes but remaining depends on parents.

Religions provide protection for our children, parent and society must accomplish it.

Challenge a child with better care and reap a successful future.

Tell the children the truth, then they replicate its tomorrow.

Prevent a child from weeping by sharing your cooks with him/her.

Charity begins at home, but start perfectly with children.

Children are the next step to Gods angels and can attract his favour.

6. The right to name and nationality (birth registration)

Art. 6 ACRWC / Art. 4 and 6 (4) Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

From birth, parents (legal tutors) have the duty to give the child a name and a first name and to register it so that the child has an identity officially recognised by the state and the society. In the process, the child receives a paper called a birth certificate which allows to easily obtain a citizenship, identity card and passport later. Therefore, it also gives the child the ability to enjoy all of its other rights, for example an education, healthcare or non-discrimination, but creates obligations too. Complementary it gives a judicial protection. The child must know its parents.



Corresponding proverbs

If a seed is precious to you, then give it a mark, so that no matter how it is mixed up among others you will always single it out.

The mark of the father will always be on the son.

If you don't know where you come from then you are lost.

Your mother tongue is your origin.

Your culture is your identity.

Wherever you go, remember where your navel is buried.

Your dressing code determines your origin and identity.

A goat can't be hidden among sheep.

No matter how you clean the leopard spots, it will still be visible in the days ahead.

A lion cannot give birth to a goat.

7. The right to education

Art. 11 ACRWC / Art. 8 (1) Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

Every child, rich or poor, should be able and be allowed to go to school. This applies to both girls and boys and especially to children with disabilities. It's important to learn to write, read and do maths, because this directly enables the child to take charge of his/her own life in the future. Education also puts a child in a position to better understand and claim his/her rights as he/she grows into adulthood. Generally, children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible and learn a profession. It's the States obligation to offer free and public basic education. School measures to discipline a child should always respect his/her rights and dignity.



Corresponding proverbs

The future is brighter through education.

A properly trained child brings honour and pride to their family.

Carefully format a child's mind by granting him/her wisdom to live with.

Inter- generational success of a family depends solely on a well-trained child.

The child with grandparents has a gift of wisdom and wild ideas.

Posterity lies in the hands of children so give them good education.

Teach a child that the sky is the limits for learning and hard work.

Show the children the turn on the path for a leading way.

A poor man's future changes when the children see the "4" corners of a classroom, not trees on farm.

Spread wise saying about children to challenge for a positive future.

Teach your child your traditional anthem to be proud of his/her origin.

A fight for our children shall provide a joy when we are gone.

I sacrifice for my child so he/she leads a great nation when I am dead but not forgotten.

That which is practiced in youth will be pursued in old age.

The little child who runs after a clever puppy shall grow to know peace, love and patience.

8. The right to social activities, leisure and recreation

Art. 12 ACRWC / Art. 9 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

Every child must be able to rest and to have fun to regenerate and gather new strength. Childhood is the age of play which is neither useless nor reserved for rich people. It is essential for the health, well-being and growth of all children. Participation in social and cultural activities gives children the opportunity to identify with their community and society and last but not least to develop their identity. If children do not have age-appropriate recreational activities, this can lead to physical and psychological problems and have an impact on their health and development. Social activities, leisure and recreation are necessary for children to develop into fulfilled and creative adults.



Corresponding proverbs

Children should do things that pertain to children and not things that pertain to adults.

Spiders have lessons for kids to learn and reveal wisdom.

To understand the pain of a child needs keeping them together away from loneliness.

Train a child to perfectly ride a horse and he will conquer enemies.

Dancing under the moon light brings out the spirit of love among children in the future.

Dancing kokoriko dance encourages the spirit of love among children.

Only play can bring out a child's talents.

9. The right to protection against any form of violence, including harmful social and cultural practices, and exploitative labour

Art. 15, 16, 21 ACRWC / Art. 12, 13, 14 Ghana Children's Act



Explanation of meaning

No child has to endure neglect, exploitation and/or any kind of violence, be it physical, emotional or sexual. Harmful social and cultural practices such as child marriage are also a form of violence. Furthermore, no one may force a child to perform a work that endangers the health, education or development of the child. All children have to be protected against such acts be it within the family, school, community etc. by parents, other family members, the community and the State. Any kind of violence, exploitation and/or neglect can have long-lasting negative effects on children such as physical, psychological, cognitive and behavioural impacts.



Corresponding proverbs

Create a conducive environment for children and the village will have no babies crying at night.

Preventing the flow of a child tears is worth joy and happiness.

Endanger children not, for their minds and heart are tender ill and fragile.

Showing sympathy to children receives a corresponding joy to a family and community.

He who lifts a child by the hand lifts the mother by the heart.

It is usually in times of trouble that, the antelope-mother carries her baby on the stomach as a sign of peace, protection and love.

Wrap the veil around the child to ensure continuous protection and peace.

Sustain the mischiefs but protect and defend the younger soul.

Beating a child is forbidden and curse.

He who is carrying a baby on his back must not participate in a game of stone throwing.

Provide a shed for a child at sun-set to withstand security and protection.

RADIO ADVERTISEMENT

An instrument to share the content of the present document in order to promote the knowledge and respect of Children's rights amongst populations will be the radio, especially the following:



COMMUNITY RADIO FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT - GUSHEGU

FM 94.7 MHz

The voice of the voiceless

Operated by:

Pan African Organisation for Research and Protection of Violence on Women and Children (PAORP-VWC)

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Motto:

Promoting the Communication Rights of Rural Masses

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