



## **IJM's response to BBC Africa Eye Story July 2023**

# **IJM**

### **Background on IJM Ghana**

IJM has been working alongside partners in Ghana since 2015 to end child trafficking on Lake Volta. The team, led and staffed by Ghanaians, has supported authorities on over 75 operations which have led to hundreds of exploited children being brought to safety. 90% of children in cases supported by IJM have been reintegrated with family members who the government has assessed as safe.

The prevalence, danger and severity of child trafficking and exploitative child labor in the Volta Lake fishing industry is well established by hundreds of survivor testimonies and has been well documented by the Ghanaian authorities, the United Nations, academic studies - even the BBC itself in previous reporting.

Protecting and supporting children's welfare is at the core of IJM Ghana's work. All exploitative child labour on Lake Volta is illegal under Ghanaian law; our focus is on combatting child trafficking, as these children are the most exposed to serious harm, life-threatening conditions and malnutrition. They are also the least likely to be permitted to attend school.

### **Response to the BBC Africa Eye Story**

Protecting children's welfare is at the core of IJM's work in Ghana. The BBC's allegations were, therefore, incredibly concerning to us. We conducted a detailed internal investigation into the BBC's claims, and the findings revealed significant inaccuracies and false allegations. We also discovered the story was not generated through a BBC investigation, but by parties who oppose anti-trafficking work who developed the story and pitched it to the BBC Africa Eye for release.

A key factor to note is that all decisions on whether to bring children to safety, as well as arrests and prosecutions, are made by the Police and Ghanaian authorities. We present them with all the facts we have ahead of any operations, and they conduct their own investigations and make a determination about whether or not to intervene. IJM Ghana did not mislead the authorities on the facts of these cases. We were legally obliged to share this evidence with the authorities, and it was sufficiently compelling to prompt them to conduct their own investigation and intervene on behalf of children at risk.

When BBC Africa Eye made us aware of the story, IJM offered to introduce the BBC to survivor-led advocacy groups and other NGOs working to prevent child trafficking. We also provided names of academics who could be contacted in relation to rigorous data about the prevalence of child trafficking and exploitation of children on Lake Volta. The BBC declined all of these offers.

To learn more about IJM's work in Ghana and to read a more detailed response regarding the inaccuracies and false allegations within the BBC Africa Eye story, go to [IJM.org/Ghana](https://www.ijm.org/Ghana).