

Invest in children – GIPC boss

Corporate organisations must contribute to addressing issues affecting the development of children on the continent, Mrs. Mawuena Trebarh, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Investment Promotions Council (GIPC) has said.

“We have all heard about the ‘Africa Rising’ phenomenon and the prospects it portends for our continent. Researchers and analysts say most of the world’s fastest-growing economies are currently in Africa. With these huge potentials, the question that keeps begging for a speedy answer is: ‘How are we positioning and empowering our children to take over a “risen” Africa?’” she asked.

Mrs. Trebarh, who is a Corporate Impact Ambassador for the United Against Child Poverty Campaign in Africa was addressing eminent business leaders at the World Trade Centre, Accra, at the just-ended African Humanitarian Fundraiser.

“Child poverty is most threatening to children’s rights, survival, health and nutrition, education, participation, and protection from harm and exploitation. Poverty creates an environment that is damaging to children’s development in every way: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. Each deprivation heightens the effect of the others and when two or more of these coincide, the negative effect of children can be catastrophic,” she said.

“Fighting poverty in children is to fight, with focus and compassion, the many problems that make the lives of children difficult: lack of access to education, lack of access to potable water, infectious diseases, malnutrition...and the list goes on,” she stressed. She said sometimes, through no fault of theirs, companies can be extremely busy focusing on the crucial factors of production and how to meet or exceed the expectations of their clients -- so much so that they forget about society, especially children.

A few others who remember to implement their corporate social responsibilities often end at stop-gap donations to selected orphanages. Only a few organisations have woven a culture of social responsibility into their business agenda. They operate a systematic and sustainable social responsibility model and see their impact on society as a worthy investment, the GIPC boss said.

According to the United Nations, “Poverty contributes to malnutrition -- which in turn is a contributing factor in more than 50% of the under-five deaths in developing countries. Some 300 million children go to bed hungry every day. Of these, only eight percent are victims of famine or other emergency situations. More than 90 percent are suffering long-term malnourishment and micronutrient deficiency.

“Now, who is going to help the next billion people and their children escape poverty?” she quizzed.

“This is where I will make a passionate appeal to the corporate world, especially those operating in Africa where an estimated 450 million people wake up in poverty each day. You can make a difference if you start right here and now! When we set out to fight poverty, be it through an individual's actions or through corporate philanthropy, we do this to a large extent out of a sense of compassion and love.”

She said that investing in children brings many positive returns and urged corporations, local and international do their best to incorporate this into their overall business growth strategies.

Mrs. Trebarh asked African leaders, professionals and the business world to consider the economic benefits of fighting child poverty: “The less people we have in poverty, the more people there are to

make significant contributions to the development of our society. The more children we rescue out of poverty, the brighter the hope of a risen and prosperous Africa”.

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