STREETISM AND CHILD LABOUR IN THE WA MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA
A Gender Analysis of Drivers

CHRISTIANA KANGSANGBATA[7]

Department of Social, Political and Historical Studies
University for Development Studies, Wa, Ghana
Email: C_ kansangbata@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

The challenge of child labor in Ghana, especially in Wa, has been given attention in recent times by various organizations within the country. An understudied dimension of these efforts at eradicating child labor is its gendered nature. This study was therefore conducted to unearth the gender dimension of the drivers of child labor. Specifically, it looked at the gender background of children engaged in street labor in relation to those who drive children to the streets, using the case of the Wa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. Participants were those guardians and street children who were available and willing to participate in the study. Feminized poverty and gender roles and expectations were found to be critical driver of streetism. Specifically, 75% (three quarters) of the children engaged in street labor in the Wa Municipality were females. Out of those found to drive children to the streets of Wa, 75% were females and 5% were males while 20% of children on the streets went there on their own. The domination of girl children in street labor was attributed to perceptions such as extension of domestic roles and likely performance and/or teenage pregnancy. The study therefore revealed that certain socio-cultural practices and beliefs work against the girl child and until some of these practices are unearthed and dealt with, no amount of poverty eradication and educational campaigns would set the victims free.

KEY WORDS: Feminized Poverty, Streetism, Child Labor, Gender Role Expectations, Socio-Cultural Development.

INTRODUCTION

"Yes, ice water, "it is ice," shouted a ten year old girl, as she chased a blue Urvan minibus to sell her ice water to passengers, oblivious of risks. Just across the street, an eight year old boy was also shouting "pop corn, 1000, 1000, pop corn yeeessss," as he also chased a vehicle in motion. The girl is a primary school class three drop-out, a victim of her parent's inability to pay her school bills. The boy is not a drop-out yet, but is bound to become one in the near future, since, according to him, "I get

---

[7] Christiana Kangsangbata is a Lecturer and Ph.D. student in Development Studies. Her research interests are in gender, land management, child rights and traditional institutions.

more money from selling on the street than going to school" (Daily Graphic, Thursday 20, 1994). That is the situation in which many children find themselves these days. Children who are supposed to be taken care of, by adults find themselves on the streets, engaging in several economic activities in the attempt to fend for themselves.

Any nation wary of its future should take its children and their issues very seriously. Especially in the case of Ghana were poverty and deprivation are the lot of many, the national planning should prioritize child survival, protection and development. This is critical for enabling the young to become fully functioning members of their society and community. In fact, Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) suggests that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance and that every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his/her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (UNICEF,2000). This can be effectively achieved through a collaborative effort of the family, community and the state. For many Ghanaian children, however, the reality of childhood is all together different. Each day, countless number of children are denied the care, love and protection that they need in order to enjoy their children and grow to become well-adjusted adults. Many children live under difficult situations and are exposed to dangers that hamper their growth and development. Many suffer as victims of neglect, cruelty, violence, exploitation and war. Many have been abandoned or separated from their homes, families and roots. UNICEF (2000) terms such children as Children in Exceptionally Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) and they include abused and neglected children, children in armed conflict and disaster, working children and street children.

Issues on child survival, protection and development have in last few decades become attractive to the international community as well as individual nations. The aspirations of the international community for the well-being of children are best reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, which came into force in 1990. The Convention considers childhood as a separate stage in life and provides for children all over the world the right to exercise their fundamental rights (UNICEF, 2000). Thus, the convention sets universal legal standards for the protection of children against neglect, abuse and exploitation as well as makes provisions for accessing their basic human rights. These can be summarized as follows:

- ◆ Right to survival and life
- ◆ Right to be protected from harmful influences
- ◆ Right to physical, moral and intellectual development
- ◆ Right to participate actively in social and cultural life

As far as children are concerned, all important decisions and measures taken should be in their interest and right to dignified lives. State parties have therefore been asked

to revise all their laws affecting children and must integrate the provision of the Convention into laws.

Ghana became the first country to sign the Convention and has since demonstrated a commitment to uplifting the status of children. The Governments of Ghana have taken various measures to harmonize national laws and policies within the provisions of the Convention. For instance, Ghanaian children have been guaranteed some rights and freedom in the 1992 Constitution. Article 28 (1) provides for the right of every Ghanaian child to maintenance and assistance necessary for his/her development from parents. Again, every child has the right to be protected from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to his/her health, education or development (Morrison, 2002).

♦ Furthermore, a 5-year National Programme of Action called the "Child Cannot Wait" was prepared between 1993 and 1997 for the well-being of Ghanaian children. The major goals include the following:

♦ Expansion in primary school enrolment to 80% of relevant age group (6-11 years) and completion of primary school by at least 60% of this group.

♦ Reduction in the Proportion of Children in Especially Difficult Situation which includes street children.

Widespread acceptance and observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The general perception in Ghana is that children require a defined social structure that will enable them grow in peace. Unfortunately, these structures are either poorly developed or non-existent in extreme cases. Governments in Ghana, realizing the importance of education in development, have formulated and in some cases implemented policies with the aim of expanding access to education.

Some specific interventions at the national, governmental level have been the establishment of policies and structures that support child rights (Apusigah, 2007). These include the creation of the Ghana National Commission of Children (GNCC), which apart from the national office, has office in all the ten regions of Ghana. The GNCC supports policy making at the national and international level as well as implementation at the local government level. Its flagship initiative, the Status of the Child Report, is conducted periodically to highlight the condition of children in a specific geographical location in Ghana. With the creation of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC), the GNCC is operates at the national level as the Department of Children. MOWAC has also finalized the national gender and children's policy which informs national policy and local programming. Another important intervention relating to structure is the establishment of the Women's and Juveniles Unit of the Ghana Police Service, which has been renamed the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit. Apart from the national office in Accra, there are units in all the ten regions of Ghana within the police administration. The 1998 Children Act

provides the much needed legislative environment for pursuing and asserting the rights of children. Governmental agencies and department such as the Department of Social Welfare, international organizations such as UNICEF and NGOs have found avenues in the Act to advocate and support the rights of Ghanaian children.

UNICEF, in particular, has collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare and Department of Community Development to implement aspects of the 1998 Children's Act at the community level (Apusigah, 2007). This has taken the form jointly working to and actually establishing community-based structures responsible for the protection of child rights. The result Child Protection Teams have been created and functioning in pilot and later expanded in selected districts and communities in the Northern and Upper East Region. The initiative is being expanded to the Upper West Region. The initiative has involved consultations with communities, created of teams and the training of the volunteers on child rights laws, issues and mediation tools. The teams have also been supplied with basic tool to collect and document information in their communities. They are also linkages to appropriate decentralized departments and agencies in the handling of the cases such as DOVVSU, Department of Births and Deaths Registry, Maternal and Child Health Unit of the Ghana Health Service and the Girls Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service among others.

Also, MOWAC has collaborated with International Needs and Department of Social Welfare and ILO, Ghana to rescue children living and working under difficult conditions (Apusigah & Mohammed, 2005). This has involved the tracing, rescuing and re-unification of children pawned out by their parents and guardians to fisher folk along to Volta Lake. Such children who have largely originated from the Central Regions have been used the by the fisher folk to cast nets and retrieve objects from under water upstream the Volta Regions during fishing expeditions. ILO has also collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare and MOWAC and relevant NGOs to development and Human Trafficking and Forced Labor Bill, which has been passed into law.

NGOs such as Assist Mankind, Catholic Action for Street Children, Street Girls Aid, Sports and Cultural Academy for Street Children, Children in Need, Child Rights International, Christ Children Organization, Youth Alive, Afrikids and Plan Ghana are engaged in various interventions that promote the rights and offer various support services toward the enhancement of children and their growth and development needs (NGO Forum, 1997; ILO, 1999).

Despite the efforts by governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to reduce, if not completely eliminate street child labor, the problem is still on the increase. An over-looked dimension of all the tremendous efforts at resolving the issue of child street labor has been its gender dimension. Merely instituting credit schemes and making education more attractive are interventions that may not be sustainable or may not yield lasting results. It is like cutting the stem of a tree, without uprooting it. It is important to trace the issue to the root. Mends (1994) suggests that

extensive education to raise the awareness of the rights of children, abolition of certain customary practices such as infant betrothal, forced/early marriage and other forms of bodily mutilation would help minimize the problem. He also suggests that government should reform social, economic and other conditions such as would minimize poverty.

While the ongoing efforts have been useful and helped in improving the conditions of Ghanaian children, there are still gaps that need to be filled. This situation can be attracted in part to the focus and targeting of intervention. There appear to be inadequate attention on senders and human drivers of streetism. At best efforts have reached beyond the children to target only the users and recipients and not senders. This paper starts from the premise that the drivers of streetism or senders of children to streets are critical for a more holistic approach to curbing the situation. A lot has been done regarding the material factors however the human component driving the process has largely been left off the hook. This paper takes issue with the human component and examines, specifically, the gendered nature of senders and the implication for eliminating child streetism. The main question of interest is: who sends children to the field, males or females? This is premised on the believed that looking at the issue from a gender perspective could make a great difference in intervention strategies since the needs, problems and aspirations of both genders differ. This paper seeks to contribute to address child streetism from a gender responsive perspective. It draws from an investigation into the menace to see which gender is responsible for sending children to the street and provides data on the gender constitution of street child labor in the Wa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

A child is anyone, irrespective of gender, under eighteen years of age (ILO, 1999). Child Labor is simply the exploitation of innocent children under 18 years to undertake economic activities like mining and farming among others. It could also be referred to as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of opportunity to attend school as well as impede their growth and development. The term street children applies to children who by being handicapped, delinquent or victims of all forms of child abuse and neglect, find themselves roaming in search of food, shelter, clothing and emotional comport out of the homes and on the streets (Hammond, 1993). Streetism occurs largely in urban centers, where children from largely rural, peri-urban and deprived urban neighborhoods, who are inadequately cared for and/or maintained, are sent out or move out of the streets in search of livelihood support. According to Blanc (1994), the term initially referred to all urban children who spent most of their time on the street whether working or not. However, in this case it is being applied to those living and/or working on the street. They may have strong, weak or no families at all and have developed specific survival strategies to support themselves. A number of them have no fixed place of residence, no access to regular medical care, no adequate food and are not in a context of emotional stability that

would lead to proper socialization. Again, as they are of school going age, once they start earning money, most of them rarely go back to the classroom.

Education helps in developing the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent, thereby preparing him/her for an active adult life in the society. The World Bank confirms the usefulness of formal education by indicating that an extra year of schooling can increase wages by more than 10% after allowing for other factors. It is therefore no surprise that the Vice President, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, is reported to have said that 'child trafficking would not be tolerated because it constitutes a new form of slave trade' (Daily Graphic, March 08, 2002).

Issuing threats is not the solution to the problem if the root cause is not tackled. For example, poverty has been known to be a major cause of child labor. How much threat would prevent a mother, father or even guardian who knows not where the next meal is coming from, from sending his/her child to carry load at the lorry station for money? Policies to address this issue must be pragmatic. It should involve identification of guardians or parents of children involved; their gender and social status.

According to Blanc (1994), until the child reaches six years, the immediate family members are the main and often the only support system needed to ensure his or her healthy growth and development. In middle childhood, the situation changes and the child moves into other domains such as peer socialization and interaction in neighborhood and the community. At this time, if families and support systems fail to provide sufficient love, care, attention and other supportive services to help form relationships, the child becomes vulnerable to the wider domain and finally moves to the streets. Though the Urban Child Model has been used by many NGOs in countries like India, Kenya and Brazil (Morrison, 2002), it does not provide a gender analysis of the phenomenon. A gender analysis would give a deeper insight to the issue.

According to UNICEF (2004), about 218 million children were working illegally in the world and 30,000 children living on streets of Ghana's cities. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in which article 32 asserts that children should not be encouraged in work deemed to be "hazardous" or interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health. The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), stipulates that child exploitation is prohibited. It further explains that labor is exploitative if it deprives the child of his or her right to education, health or general development. Selling on the streets by children is therefore not only an offence in itself and dangerous to children, but defeats the purpose for which Ghana signed the Convention on the Rights of Children.

In view of the current economic situation prevailing in most developing countries, the plight of children looks grim as they are the most affected by draught, illiteracy and diseases. Poverty is the greatest single force which creates the conditions for the flow of children into the workplace. It forces many children to work full time for

their own and their families' survival. Furthermore, because of poverty, the acute need of poor households to keep as many family members as possible working to ensure income security makes it nearly impossible for them to invest in their children's education (Blanc, 1994).

Another significant concept, gender, refers to femininity and masculinity – ideas, norms and behavioral expectations for girls and boys that are widely shared and learned from family, friends, opinion leaders, religious doctrines, cultural institutions, schools, the work place and the media. Gender is therefore societal perception about males and females and manhood and womanhood. These perceptions are socially constructed and can therefore be changed. Disaggregating child labor statistics by gender is a major step toresponding to the problem since family circumstances and gender roles tend to have implications for child vulnerability to streetism. It is possible to have two children under the same roof with just one of them engaged, in child labor while the other is free because of their sex. Racism, patriarchy, economic deprivation and other discriminatory systems create layers of inequality. A focus on the gender dimension of the issue would lead to behavioral change at the individual level rather than on policy change at the societal level.

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

The starting point from which to analyze the issue of child labor is from the perspective of gender. This is because child labor still remains a role domain. In addition to age, gender is one of the universal dimensions on which status differences are based. Unlike sex, which is a biological concept, gender is a social construct, specifying the socially and culturally prescribed roles that men and women are to follow. This has serious implications for child labor since the type of work engaged in by children would be determined by culture and gender. What this implies is that, child labor though might have the same definition, the activities children engage in would differ from region to region. It is very important therefore, to understand the cultural dynamics of child labor before designing an intervention strategy. This is because child labor is a socio-cultural issue because it determined by gender roles which are socio – cultural. To disconnect gender from child labor is therefore a serious omission on the part of policy makers.

Women, traditionally, have been socialized to ensure the healthy maintenance of their families including cooking, cleaning, and child care. In the traditional Ghanaian society, high premium is placed on child bearing, up-bringing and nurturing. These are also considered women's roles. Children are considered mostly as "property" of their parents and entire patrilineal or matrilineal family than as distinct personalities with special needs and rights which must be given a priority. Consequently, the opportunities available for their personal advancement are extremely limited by not only the property attitude of society but also by the levels of social and economic development of the societies.

Many Ghanaian children, especially those of working class and deprived backgrounds, combine schooling with household chores and family economic activities. In fact, it is acknowledged that the type of work that enables children to attend school as well as work for short periods a day under supervision of their parents or guardian is not child labor. It is however advised that this type of work be limited to a few hours not to interfere with a child's education, health, safety and moral development. What this implies is that child labor is any work that interferes with the well-being of the child. Child street labor is an aspect of child labor. It is the engagement of children in various types of work on the streets considered hazardous to their general development. It is used interchangeably with child labor in this study.

To distinguish child labor from other forms of normal jobs, the child and the circumstance under which the work is being done must be looked out for. Victims of child labor are found working as laborers in fishing and mining areas, lorry parks, bars, hotels and entertainment centers, among others where they may be exposed to immoral behaviors. The impact of work on child's development is key to determining when such work becomes a problem. Work that is harmless to an adult can be extremely harmful to a child. Hard physical labor over a period of years can stunt children's physical stature. Again, children are vulnerable and can suffer devastating psychological damage from being exploited. Work can interfere with development by stifling children's education in the following ways:

♦ It frequently absorbs so much time that school attendance is almost impossible.
♦ It often leaves children so exhausted that they lack the energy to attend school.
♦ Some occupations, especially, seasonal agricultural work, cause children to miss some days off school ((IPEC, 2005).

The exploitation of children's labor not only mean that adults are denied jobs that could have sustained the families but it also means that children are pushed into adult jobs, restricted from enjoying their childhood and forced to do work that is hazardous to their growth, security and life. This also implies a future economy made up of unskilled labor. This hampers development in the long-run.

Child labor is a cause for concern for two reasons: first, because of the number of children affected, which is still very high, and second, because of the negative repercussions that starting working life too young has on the personal development of children, as a result of the poor conditions in which the work often takes place. In Ghana, about two million children are engaged in various forms of child labor as indicated by 2003 Ghana Labor Survey. In the Upper West Region, on 2000 census night, majority of the children in the Region were working; with an additional 40 % having a job but not working and just under a tenth (9.4 %) declaring themselves actively in search for jobs. Looking at the study area (Wa), 85.6 % of the children are engaged in agriculture and related work. One in twenty (5.7%) were service workers and 2.7% were sales workers or were in production, equipment and related work (GSS, 2002).

The major activities of the working children in the Upper West Region were in agriculture, forestry and hunting (86.9%), distantly followed by private household service (3 2%), retail trade (3.0%) and manufacturing (2.9%). Street child labor may be considered the most dangerous form of child labor. This is because children in Wa sometimes run after buses to sell their items and in the process they may get hit by cars which may cause physical damage or kill them.

Since, 2000, and even before, the Government of Ghana has been battling with how to reduce if not completely eliminate all forms of child labor in the country by strengthening social welfare, creating a MOWAC, introducing School Feeding Programme and Capitation Grant as well, nearly five thousand units of new school blocks have been built in the country to integrate, maintain and develop the children and their potentials. Also, children protection and committees are formed in selected communities to help reduce streetism, child labor and irresponsible parenting in the society. The efforts made to reduce child labor are not only the concern of the government but other non-governmental organizations. Youth Alive and Afrikids are NGOs established to safeguard the plight of children.

According to Left (2007), Ghanaian boys as young as four are still being tasked to work on streets and others sold as cheap labor (child trafficking). Left narrates the story of a boy by name Kofi Azadavor who at the age of four was sent together with his elder brother, Mawuta by their mother to live with their uncle in a fishing town 250km away. It was the end of Kofi's childhood and the start of his life as a slave. Kofi explained that while living with his uncle, he and Mawuta got up very early in the morning, washed dishes and swept the house, then headed straight out into Lake Volta to fish. They spent the day checking for the catch.

According to APPLE (a small grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to using community sensitization and education to end child labor), boys as young as six are forced to sell on streets of towns, others are also asked to dive to disentangle nets caught on tree stumps below Lake Volta, while girls are forced to cook and sell fish into the night.

Raggie tells the story of a girl, Esi who lost her parents and went to live with her grandmother. Instead of caring for her, Esi's grandmother and aunt decided to send her to the streets to carry heavy loads for daily survival. A 12 years, Sami Rubaie lives on the streets of Baghdad. He said he ran away from home because he could not stand the beatings he got from his father for not bringing home enough money from begging all day. To support his habits, he recently joined a gang and now men have sex with him in exchange for money.

"I cry every time a man has sex with me and they usually hit me because I am crying. I know what I'm doing is wrong but it's better than living with daily beatings from my father for not bringing him enough money".

The stories above give various reasons why children engage in hazardous activities on streets. These reasons might be different from place to place because of socio-cultural differences though there may be some similarities. It would therefore be appropriate for policy makers to note the dynamics in child - street labor.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical study informing this paper entailed the use of a cross-sectional survey research design. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed in this study. Data was gotten from both primary and secondary sources.

Sampling

The study purposively targeted children less than 18 years engaged in commercial activities on the streets of Wa and the parents of these children. However, the actual selection of respondents was done through the accidental sampling procedure. Some sampled street children's guardians were contacted and grouped according to sex for focus group discussions. To ensure that school going children engaged in street child labor were not left out, the weekends were chosen for this exercise.

Data collection tools and analysis

Self administered questionnaires were used to collect data from hundred street children while a follow up was made on their guardians and a focus group guide was used as a tool to generate discussions on the gender dimension of child labor. Two focus group discussions, comprising 12 people each were organized for male and female adults respectively. Data was analyzed using SPSS and description.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Out of the one hundred children engaged in various forms of activities on the streets of Wa interviewed, 75 (3/4) of them were females while 25 (1/4) were males. The females were generally engaged in the sale of various items ranging from ice water to tomatoes. The male children served as driver mates, truck pushers and head porters. What this implies is that, out of every four children engaged in child labor, three are girls. Apart from having serious implications for development of all children engaged in it, the implication on the female child's development is three times that of males. See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	25	25
Female	75	75
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2008

What an adult respondent said, could explain the pattern in Table 1 above.

"It is not beneficial to invest in female education because most of them do not perform well. What sense does it make to invest one's limited resources in a girl only for her to drop out of school for poor performance or worst still, get pregnant".

Early marriage and lack of tutoring may explain why more girls fail and drop out of school and not because they may be stupid. It is therefore worth researching into discriminating systems at work, dictating early marriage and fewer years of schooling for girls. There were responses that suggested that females were supposed to help their mothers in the house, so engaging the female child in commercial activities was seen as part of her domestic role. Gender roles seem to be an important determining factor of the gender of children engaged in various activities deemed hazardous to their health on the streets of the Wa Municipality.

A survey conducted by Apt *et al* (1995) in Accra revealed a higher (67%) composition of male children than female (33%) children. Esubonteng (1998) and Sam (1999) also maintained that, in two separate street children surveys in Tema and Takoradi, there were 55% males: 45% females and 62% males: 38% females respectively. However, Otabil (1997) also found in a survey conducted in Accra by a local ███ (RESPONSE) that there were more street girls than boys. In addition, most of the children (65%) live with their families and therefore go back home at the end of the day's work.

UNICEF (1996) has identified three categories of street children namely:

◆   Children on the street,
◆   Children of the street, and
◆   Abandoned children

Those in the first category form the greater proportion of street children and are engaged in some form of economic activity on the street for the upkeep of their families. Most of them go home at the end of the day since they have a sense of belonging to a family and may be attending school. Children of the street constitute a smaller group and are also engaged in economic activities. They have tenuous family ties and therefore seek shelter at night in public places such as entertainment centers, lorry stations, markets and store fronts. Though these children themselves have decided to move away from their families and live on the streets, they can be rehabilitated into their original homes. Abandoned children are those who have lost or no family ties at all. They often depend on one another or street surrogates and gangs as family.

With the growth of large industrial and commercial towns such as Takoradi and Tema, children, as a result of economic adventure and sometimes on the advice of

parents, often migrate from rural areas to urban centers in search of work. They find themselves engaged in any activity their hands can find and with no money to afford any accommodation, they make the streets their homes. It is likely to therefore to find more males in this category than females. So the differences in the findings of the above research could depend on the area of the research. For example, the study carried out by RESPONSE was done in Agbogbloshie market where most of the children were engaged in selling and most of them were girls. It is crucial that these dynamics are noted in designing intervention progammes. In all cases, their economic activities are in the informal sector, ranging from washing and guarding cars, begging, carrying the loads of goods of shoppers and traders, running errands for shop keepers to selling toffees, polythene bags and ice water. The data in Table 2 following could be a manifestation of respondent's family economic standing.

Table 2: Respondents' level of education

Level of Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary school	62	62
JHS	19	19
SHS	0	0
Not schooling	19	19
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey 2008

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (62%) were in primary school, 19% in Junior High School, and none in Senior High School. There seem to be a connection between cost of education and street child labor in the Wa Municipality. At the primary level, cost of education may be low as a result of government policies so most children engaged in street child labor could also attend school. As they climb up to higher levels, it becomes expensive and they drop out. Definitely a guardian who has been able to educate a child to Senior High School is either aware of the importance of education or can afford the cost associated with education and so it is not likely to find the children of such a person on the street. This could explain the reason why none of the respondents is in high school. It also means that most children engaged in street child labor are from poor or illiterate homes.

According to an adult respondent of Kambali, a section of Wa:

"We see the students of the University for Development Studies around and would wish our children go that far but it is not easy at all. My husband is a farmer, at the end of the farming season when crops are harvested, he gives me one bag of corn for the year. I have to manage and get soup ingredients for the family till another farming season. My first daughter is very helpful in this direction. She helps the family with proceeds from the sale of groundnut paste."

Asked whether she would allow her daughter enroll in school if everything about her daughter's education is taken care of by the government, Madam Alima responded as follows: "that would mean cutting off the family's support".

Poverty is the greatest single force which creates the flow of children into the work-place. It forces many children to work full time for their own and their families' survival. Furthermore, because of poverty, the acute need of many households to keep many family members working to ensure income security makes it nearly impossible for them to invest in their children's education (Mundlapati, 2006).

Manfred (2000) asserts that in many cultural traditions in the developing countries including Ghana, children are socialized and educated through their participation in economic and social life. They are asked to perform simple tasks or help in a family enterprise, where they can pick up skills that will help them assume responsibilities in later years. Occasionally, they can take odd jobs on the street to earn a little pocket money to buy something they really want. Therefore, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, vice president of the republic of Ghana's comment to tackle the exploitation of children's labor through poverty reduction strategies as well as credit schemes to raise income of their families to better take care of themselves and their family is a step in the right direction. However, merely instituting credit schemes or making education more attractive are interventions which may not be sustainable. What must be done in addition to these efforts is to rid the country of socio-cultural practices that perpetuate the cycle of child labor.

Table 3 shows that out of the 100 respondents, 30 children were living with parents, 26 with one parent, and 43 were living with relatives and one was living alone. A majority (43%) of children engaged in street child labor were living with relatives. These children were either requested from their parents by these relatives or they were voluntarily given to these relatives by their parents. They were mostly taken with the aim to help perform house hold chores but they were finally sent to work on the street to help raise money for the upkeep of the family. Some of the proceeds are sometimes used to buy clothing and sandals, among other for them. See Table 3 below.

Table 3: Respondents' present family position

Family Position	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Living with both Parents	30	30	
Living with one parent	26	26	
Living with relatives	43	43	
Living alone	1	1	
Total	100	100	

Source: Field survey, 2008

More so, children living with single parents (most of them female) end up on the streets because it is very difficult for their father or mother to single-handedly provide for them, especially in situations where the children are more than two. Apt et. al. (1995) point out that that divorce problems such as where to sleep and inadequate family control over children invariably take children to the streets, market places, lorry parks and beaches to do odd jobs for survival.

Sampled children engaged in street child labor were asked of the people who sent them to the streets to engage in various forms of unlawful work. The answers they gave as presented in Table 4 are as follows: 75 of the children were driven onto the street by females; aunts, mothers, sisters and female relatives. 5 were driven by males; fathers, uncles or any other male. 20 respondents went to the streets themselves. Thus in terms of gender, most children (75%) engaged in various economic activities on the streets of the Wa municipality are driven by females. This may be because the burden of child caring is shouldered mostly by women.

Table 4: Gender of people who send children to the streets

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	5	5
Female	75	75
Self	20	20

Source: Field Survey, 2008

In broken homes, the men tend to drive the women away with the children, thereby leaving the entire burden on the women only. In situations where the man keeps some of the children and marries a new wife, the new wife tends to maltreat these children to the extent of sending them onto the street to work not only for money but to keep them out of sight. One street child, Alidu Baba said 'My step mum is making life unbearable for me. I prefer the station here. I am able to make five Ghana cedis (GHC5.00) in a day. I go home very late, after the last bus has arrived from Kumasi. I come back here, early morning after saying the dawn prayers." Another respondent (age 9) interviewed, confirmed that, his uncle's wife maltreated him after the death of his parents. When it became unbearable for him, he packed from the house onto the street. Some of the children voluntarily offered themselves to work on the street. They did this when the burden was too much on their parents. This would be the only alternative through which they can support themselves and their families as well.

Child neglect has forced many children to fend for themselves. In the Accra Metropolis for instance in the year 1999, the Osu tribunal recorded 68 maintenance cases and 38 cases. That of Wa Municipality is not very different. Child neglect cuts across and in certain cases people of high social standing are summoned (The Mirror,

2002). Women's lower economic and social status, multiple roles and lack of time all limit their access to formal employment, social services and general advancement. With comparatively little education, poorer state of health and greater food insecurity, women (and young people) especially in the northern part of the country are the most vulnerable (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000).

Asked of the effect of child labor on child's development, some guardians of children engaged in street child labor gave the following responses: The children become strong and are able to learn the trade of their parents that would enable them manage, successfully, the business in the absence of their parents. It was also added that, child streetism sometimes leads to fast acquisition of wealth that would put them on a higher status in the society.

However, it was also mentioned that, street child labor could lead to teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, and child delinquency. Street child labor threatens the children's future development because the children who would have gone to school to become responsible citizens only end up on the street. One member of the group said "J.A. Kuffour wouldn't have become a president if he had been sent by his mother to sell on the streets."

It was also added that, to ensure quality or responsible children for future development, the state should provide more jobs to enable parents take care of their children. Government should also provide more schools and teachers in the rural areas because some of these street children are out-migrants from the rural areas.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that 75% of females are engaged in various forms of work on the streets of the Wa Municipality, while 25% of their male counterparts are engaged in street child labor. Coincidentally, 75% of children are driven to the streets by females while 5% by men. What these figures mean is that 75% females and 25% males respectively, would grow without employable skills and these would be condemned to perpetual poverty. It also means that more women would continue to be engaged in child labor since they are in a way the inevitable perpetuators of child labor.

Children are the future of every country, region or society. The importance of children in the development of the country cannot be overemphasized. Children contribute immensely to the development of every country. It is often said that in every country, children are the future leaders. The children do that by taking up useful positions in running the affairs of the country. A country without children means that the future of that country is at stake.

It is through children that every country's culture is passed on and maintained. The culture of the country would have been lost if there were no children to replace the aged population. It is important to note that the sitting President of Ghana and the

28

Cabinet Ministers would not have come this far if their parents had allowed them to be engaged in child labor. Children should therefore be given the necessary training and education that would enable them contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. Educating the child is very important because "education is the key to creating, adopting and spreading knowledge. It is fundamental to enhancing the quality of human life and ensuring social and economic progress" (Todaro, 2003:326). Education makes it easy for people to learn new skills throughout their lives and this facilitates their participation in modern economies and societies. In order for a country to exploit fruitfully is natural resources, it is essential that its manpower is equipped with skills and knowledge, which can be achieved through education.

The study conducted revealed that, street child labor has tremendous effect on the child's education. Some of the children are not able to go to school. Some start and are not able to continue, others delay in schooling and others even loose interest in going to school completely. Some children also feel that schooling does not necessarily guarantee them a better future, particularly when they see their siblings, who have completed Junior High School doing the same kind of work that they do and also struggle to make a living. For instance, the Ghana Statistical Service (1995) reveals that in Elmina, it was estimated that 50% of the children of school going age do not attend school regularly, fishing provides a lucrative source of income for them (Morrison, 2002). The few children who are interested in schooling do not have time to study at home. This goes to affect their level of education. Therefore the trained human resource that is needed to develop the region and the country as a whole is lost through street child labor.

Most of the street children are vulnerable to accidents. There are circumstances where some of the female children are maltreated by irresponsible people. They are sometimes raped and beaten mercilessly; leading to teenage pregnancy cases, which retards development. Also, the parents interviewed explained that they were always disturbed when they saw their children on the streets selling. They could sometimes foresee the dangers involved, but they do not have any choice than to allow them. Many of these children on the street end up as armed robbers, pickpocket, prostitutes, drug addicts, rapists among others, causing insecurity in society (Blanc, 1994). The government spends so much of the country's resources in curbing such situations. Street child labor is too expensive for every country since it retards development. It is therefore necessary to mobilize all resources of the state to combat it.

Though government, benevolent individuals and some organizations such as Afrikids, Youth Alive and Plan Ghana, in the Upper West Region, are engaged in giving vocational and formal education to the children on the street by way of improving upon their livelihood, much still needs to be done since majority of children are still found on the street. This is because some guardians see street child labor as a training ground for the children. Perhaps they have not had the opportunity to compare street child labor with the benefits of education. Such people definitely would need to be sensitized on the long term effects of child labor and the rewards of

sending children to school. For some parents, it is not a problem of sensitization but money, for others, it is their traditional beliefs. It is important that these differences are recognized in policy formulation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Street child labor drivers in the Wa Municipality could be conveniently described as a "Women's thing", considering the fact that 75% of the victims are females while 75% of the drivers (those who send children to the street) are also females. Males recorded 5% and 25% respectively. This means that in formulating policies to curb the issue, the gender dynamics is very crucial.

Again, poverty is found to be the root cause of child street labor in the Municipality. As a result, some drivers of child street labor deem it a necessary evil, to them, no amount of free education would make them stop sending children to the street since it would mean cutting off the source of daily food supplies. Most studies have recommended poverty reduction strategies which have not yielded much because it is difficult for countries suffering from this to uproot poverty or bring it to manageable levels. There is a limit on the part of stake holders in reducing poverty. Obviously, poverty is a major factor of child street labor but too much attention on it can rather aggravate the situation since qualitative dimensions of street child labor would be overlooked in the process. For example, how much poverty can be reduced by governments of developing countries to ensure that women do not send their children to the streets to sell? It is high time realistic and pragmatic policies like giving exclusive attention to females, enforcing the law on child labor, removing socio-cultural hindrances that make it almost impossible for women to determine manageable number of children are formulated in addition to efforts at reducing poverty.

In addition, policies should be formulated and existing ones strengthened by government to address the needs of children in both urban and rural areas more holistically. The policy should encourage children of school – going age to go to school. For instance, the Capitation Grant Policy should be made to cover school uniform, supplies and other school essentials.

The study implies the importance of education in development and the effect child labor has on education. Some guardians in an attempt to solve immediate family financial needs loose sight of the long term benefits of education. Such parents need to be educated by stake holders on the importance of education, the consequences of child streetism and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is also the need to provide these children with technical and vocational training by the Municipal Assembly, NGO's in the region and the MOWAC to enable them gain meaningful employment.

Furthermore, the study discovered that some children take to streetism because they find it convenient. For these children, their original homes have not been able to pro-

vide the needed comfort. The best and effective option would be to rehabilitate them and their home so they can feel welcomed, comfortable and enjoying being part of it.

CONCLUSION

From the discussions so far, it can be said that most street children are there as a result of a female somewhere; an aunt, mother or sister, among others. Since females would naturally transfer roles to younger females, it is not surprising that most street children in the Wa municipality are females. In other words, there is a relationship between the gender of drivers and the victims of child street labor. It is important for policy makers to recognize the fact that the issue of streetism is socio-cultural and so area specific, thus differences in strategies in combating it. Finally, recognizing the valuable contribution that can be made by research in revealing the cause as well as solutions to the problem affecting children, special quantitative and qualitative data has to be continuously collected and processed for the preparation and execution of programmes for children.

REFERENCES

AMA/UNICEF/UNCHS/HABITAT (1997): International Workshop on Africa's Poor Children. Towards African Child-Friendly Cities. Vol. 1.

Apt, V.A.; Blavo. E.Q. and Opoku, S. K. (1995). Street Children in Accra. A survey report produced by Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon.

Apusigah, A. A. (2007). Child Protection Project Initiative: An Assessment Report. A report Submitted to UNICEF, Dept. of Social Welfare and Dept. of Community Development (unpublished).

Apusigah, A. A. & Mohammed, J. A. (2005). Baseline Study on Human Trafficking and Forced Labor. A Report Submitted to ILO, Ghana and Dept. of Social Welfare (unpublished).

Blanc, S.C. (1994). Child in Distress: Global Predicaments and Innovative Strategies. Great Britain: Gordon & Breach Science Publishers.

Dowuona– Hammond Christine, et al (1994). The Rights of the Child in Ghana – Perspectives. Accra: Woeli Publishing Service.

Esubonteng, F.A (1998). Socio-Economic Conditions and its Implications on Streetism in Ghana. An unpublished dissertation presented to Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Cape Coast.

Ghana National Commission on Children (1997). Ghana's Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Ikam Press, Accra.

Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child Membership Directory (2000).

Ghana Statistical Service (1995). Ghana Living Standards Survey : Report on the Third Round Commercial Associates Ltd., Accra.

Ghana Statistical Service (2000). 2000 Population and Housing Census, Provisional Results. Commercial Associates Ltd. Accra.

Ghana Technical Committee on Poverty (1998).Unpublished Draft Report of Working Group on Street Children in Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi and Tamale.

Government of Ghana (1992). The Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, Accra.

Government of Ghana (1998). The Children's Act 560. Accra: Assembly Press.

Hammond, J. (1993). Street Children in Ghana. A Case Study of Cape Coast. An Unpublished Bachelor of Arts dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Cape Coast.

Http//www.ucw.projectorg/ucw/Washington.april2407/beegle.2.pro, Approximation of the number of Children who do not attend school and it effects(online). DA: 23, 04, 08.

ILO (1993). World of Work. No 4. June. Bureau of Public Information, Geneva.
ILO (1994). World of Work, No 9. September / October. Bureau of Public Information, Geneva.

ILO (1999). World of Work, No 31. September / October.

Left, Sarah (2007). Sons for sale. www.guardian.co.uk. 23, 04, 2008.

Manfred, L. (2000). Working Children's Protagonism: Childwork, Human Rights and Social Movements of Children Contributions to a dialogue between the Third and First World Technische Universitata. Berlin.

Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (1997), Street Children in Ghana. An unpublished Draft Policy Framework.

Morrison, .A (2002). NGOs and Child Streetism in Ghana. An unpublished dissertation   presented to Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Cape Coast.

Mundlapati Jawahar (2006) Banding Child labor www.guardian.co.uk. 23, 04, 2008.
NGO Forum. Issue 2, No 2. August 1997.

Ofei-Aboagye, E. (2000). Promoting the participation of women in local Governance and Development: The case of Ghana. (ECDPM Discussion Paper 18). Maastricht: ECDPM.

Opare-Osei, F. Akosua (2008) World Day Against Child Labor , an unpublished paper presented to Parliament by Deputy Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment.

Otabil, P. (1997). The Problem of Street Children. A case Study of Kantamanto – Accra. An Unpublished Bachelor of Arts Dissertation presented to the Department of General and African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

Putin, Vladimir (2006) Children and Development , a paper presented at G 8 Summit Held in St. Petersburg. The End of Child Labor: Within Research (pdf file) – executive Summary of 2006 Report (online). Available: www.google.com, DA: 01, 05, 08.

The Mirror, Saturday, July 22, 2000, No. 2382, p.1.

Todaro, M.P. (2000). Economic Development 7th Ed., Addison Wesley, Longman inc., Harlow.

United Nations (1989). 'The Convention of the Rights of the Child", UN Resolution 1386.

UNICEF (1997). The Progress of Nations.3 United Nations Plaza,   New York.

UNICEF (2000). First Call for Children : World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

UNICEF (2001). Say Yes for Children. 3 United Nations Plaza, New York. USA.

UNICEF (2004). The State of the World's Children, UNICEF NY (3 UN Plaza NY, NY 10017) USA.

World Bank (1991). World Development Report. Oxford University Press, New York.

World Bank (1993). Expanding OECD'S Programmes of Impact Evaluations: Proposed Principles and Procedures. Report of Interim Working Group. World Bank, Washington DC.

World Bank (1995). Evaluation and Development: Proceedings of the 1994 World Bank Conference. World Bank, Washington DC.