

## Child and Youth Migration in West Africa: Research Progress and Implications for Policy

Ann Whitehead and Mariama Awumbila introduced the event. See Ann's presentation [here](#):

### Day 1: Session 1

Child and Youth Mobility: Analyse de quelques stratégies et tactiques et implication dans la gestion de leurs trajectoires sociales. *Abou-Bakari Imorou, Institut Federatif De Recherche, Benin*

For **Abou-Bakari Imorou's** paper please see here ([French](#) or [English](#)) and his presentation [here](#)

**Dorte Thorsen** was the discussant for this paper and made the following points:

The significant points in this paper are that it is not easy to stop children migrating, nor is it clear why it happens. The paper puts an emphasis on social relations and different types of dynamics at origin and destination, it stresses that it is important to include places of origin and destination as well as transit, and that multiple movements may be involved. Migrant youth and children may also be socially mobile: the psychosocial processes include the child becoming more experienced, and they may also be gaining a different social status (often through enhanced material status).

There is a diversity of intermediaries in the migration process and youth themselves become intermediaries. The objective may not be to exploit, but to help others attain similar higher status and wellbeing.

Children may move on to multiple employers, they are driven by the search for status or material wellbeing. They are social actors, active in networks in their own right and capacity, with relationships that shape the way their migration takes place. Migration is also a process linked with the family economy at home – children are not just assets but also part of the family. In West Africa it is seen as less important to remit (as perhaps in Asia) than to mature socially and become an active member of the family unit.

### **Questions and Discussion:**

One participant noted that Imorou's paper recalls what happened in early 18<sup>th</sup>-century slave trade, in the pre-colonial era, West Africa/Africa was the main target. Now again West Africa is exporting people in a form of modern slavery. Why? In addition we need data to form/challenge assumptions and need a definition of child/youth.

Other comments also referred to the definition of a child including in Nigeria where the commentator said the issue of defining a child is very important. The culture doesn't encourage children from 1-4 from leaving the household except if something dangerous happens in that family. Someone from 18 years above, the law says they can decide their movement. So the issue is defining who is a child.

Secondly the issue of intermediaries was raised: How does a child become an intermediary in migration? Are voluntary migrants regarded as intermediaries?

The point was made that there are few methods for protection that are not about stopping migration, but certain organisations such as ILO recommend alternatives such as training. It is not a question of stopping children from leaving, but of giving them a future, support for their families, a long-term solution.

One commentator noted that the paper did not differentiate between different categories of children and their respective development. A child of six or eight should be in school and their mobility should be looked at seriously. What is good about eight-year-old children working on farms? They are subject to exploitation that is prohibited by international convention 182.

Finally one questioner wanted to know whether the study was of voluntary or forced migration. It is important to put it in context so it can be understood better. The presentation emphasised anti-displacement, giving the impression that there was something basically wrong with the migration of children, and it must be stopped. However like all migrations, no attempt to stop them has ever succeeded. ISSER research looks at the positives as well. Since migration cannot be stopped we must take an approach which is about managing rather than stopping migration. Also we didn't hear about what happens to children at destination. They are coming back bringing income – but what happened in terms of abuse and exploitation?

#### **Response:**

Regarding the definition of a child; the one adopted in Imorou's research is not normative. He did not follow the definitions of international conventions because the biological age is not as important as social age. We can look at a young boy who may have been invested with family issues and can be considered the same as someone of 30. What the ILO says about who is a child, at the local level, is not the case. Thus what is important is: the family structure, family relationship, the symbolic capital that the child has in the family. That is what is important.

Regarding intermediaries: Imorou explained that a child becomes an intermediary when there is a change as a result of their migration. In one example a boy left to work in the fields at the age of nine, with a mission, so that his father's house could be roofed with aluminium. He succeeded, the sheets were bought and the house was built. When he came back at the age of 11, considering the experience he had had in the fields he became an intermediary. Thus an intermediary results from change. Children who have a lot of experience play the role of intermediaries. Some have Yamaha motorbikes. The investment is made not for the child to have their own resources, but because the family needs something. So the young boy invested with a family mission is not considered as a child. This is not a normative description.

He also talked about the broad context of policies to prevent migration: some families will say they encourage their children to leave because their conditions will not allow them to feed their children for three months. This is not saying we need to stop mobility or movement, but in the general context the trend is toward stopping or slowing mobility, and the measures put in place mean they must be given alternatives – enrolled in school, or structural solutions such as recreational centres in villages. All these are done so the child will stay where he belongs. Despite all these things, there are children leaving. So what do we do? Imorou pointed out that he was not in a position to say that what is happening is good or not; he can say what is happening, and provide information, but that is all.

In answer to the issue of destination experiences he said that there were rural-urban destinations they could not get to in order to research. Generally the social arguments are favourable, it is less a matter of what happened at destination – often in the field, the child is not happy about what he is going through. But when he comes home,

things change. He presents the exciting and good side of what he has experienced. Why? Does he not think it is necessary to mention the bad things he has experienced? Or does he want to get others to follow his path? The destination cannot be entirely separated from the place of departure. Talking to children going from Bamako to Mauritania, at departure point, many did not want to go back home. They do not know what they may experience at the place of destination, but they know the conditions at home, and they do not want to go home. So when they want to migrate, what do we do?

### Day 1: Session 2

The two presentations were followed by a question and discussion session.

**Child Rural-Rural Migration. *Nana Akua Anyidoho – ISSER, University of Ghana***

For *Nana Akua Anyidoho's* paper (with Peroline Ainsworth) please see here ([English](#) or [French](#)) and the presentation [here](#)

Albertine de Lange was the discussant for this paper and made the following points:

- Rural child migration raises interesting policy issues. For example in the Ghanaian context, when people talk about children working in agriculture – people either talk about them helping their parents (good) OR those being trafficked (bad). But there are others – who have reached the legal working age, and who migrate to cotton and cocoa areas, where do they fit in? These children are less visible.
- Motivations of migration are also interesting – rural to rural migration is not motivated by a desire to get out of agriculture. Children and youth actually want to learn agricultural skills and bring these back to their home areas.
- It is important to look at the demand side of child labour. How can we stop farmers from hiring children and exploiting them? (This links to issue of prices of commodities globally etc).
- A key question is on what basis should we assess if children are better off as child migrants or not? This needs much longer term research than is currently available.
- We cannot ignore the wider political goals which these countries have set.
- We need to distinguish between age and experiences.

**(In)visible young female migrant workers: the "young female domestic workers" of West Africa - Contrasting perspectives; the example of girls and young women at work in Abidjan. *Mélanie Jacquemin***

For Mélanie Jacquemin's paper please see here ([English](#) and [French](#)) and presentation [here](#)

Dzodzi Tsikata was the discussant for this paper and made the following points:

The paper is grappling with a number of things: determining the volume of domestic work and also looking at its dynamics, then relationships between different actors, child, parents etc. It focuses on two types of invisibilities – domestic work and child labour.

- The author points out that quantitative approaches tend to hide the range of practices. A life story illustrates complexities – and these biographies are probably what led her to develop the three models of 'petites domestiques'.

- These are useful recognisable models/categories – but they are also categories that overlap. They are not bounded categories (in terms of structure or remuneration, whether the girls live in or out etc.) so we must treat them with care.
- The paper argues that there is a specific market for juvenile domestic labour – but the paper doesn't compare this with adult domestic labour – does the juvenile domestic market have particular characteristics?
- Studies have looked at social aspects of migration. It would be interesting to look at the role of parents and older siblings in future studies.
- The paper presents policy dilemmas, but there is a lot of reticence in discussing them and committing to certain directions. The author doesn't want to step into making normative judgements. But in choosing to focus on domestic labour, necessarily we are engaging with normative issues. The fact that we are having this conference, means that we do have some feeling that something needs to be changed, that there is a problem. Researchers should not be afraid to engage with what should happen.
- Don't shy away from trying to draw some policy implications. It is important to show how knowing these complexities can help policy making.
- The paper did not have a systematic analysis of Abidjan because she was doing a comparison, with lots of places – maybe it covers too many different situations, which therefore cannot be explored in enough detail.

#### Questions and comments:

One participant commented that women travelling to Cote d'Ivoire from his community go into domestic work, mainly to help them to get their trousseau, but unfortunately when they come back, they are not wanted for marriage.

Another suggested that we need to look critically at this issue, in context. A few years ago in Ghana there were movements to improve the conditions of domestic workers. Those who employed them spoke also about their own very low salaries, and the fact that they clothe and feed them (which is not always taken into account). Consider the position of employers – most of them are women, who are also at the bottom of ladder. For some of them, their conditions are being made worse by the changes in the political economy. So if poverty is increasing, they get worse off, and those they employ also. We need to look at the broader situation of the employers and the political economy. Also there are articles that talk about the problem that employers have with the workers. For some mothers, the bad experiences their children have with house workers is very distressing.

One young person drew attention to the fact that we talk about age, but we are not in the head of the young people in the village, they also have their own criteria for making decisions, it is often not about age (date of birth), but about maturity or ability to work etc. Also we need to look, not just at what the child's role in the family is, but also in the wider community – in many villages, there is electricity and roofs as a result of migration. Then considering research about the numbers: do they make children think? Does it help them understand their problem?

A young researcher from Nigeria spoke about her research which is a stakeholder's analysis of domestic work, taking a child rights approach, in Lagos. The government prohibits this type of migration completely except for children who are related (they are not even called house-help – making their work totally invisible). The children she spoke to talked about push factors – (e.g. bad schools) - and said that they want to learn skills. However they do feel overworked etc. Governmental influence – there is nothing to be

done for them from the side of government. Policies are not strong, law enforcement agencies are weak. Those children are behind hidden doors. Supporting structures are only through neighbours and concerned individuals (especially teachers). We must support the grass roots as it cannot be stopped from the outside.

Other commentators made the following points:

The papers failed to focus on the rights of children. Are children better off as migrants? The discussion focused solely on economic impacts, had the presenters forgotten the negative impacts that migration has on children? If we cannot stop migration is it possible to do something about people who recruit these children? Where countries have signed conventions – and some countries have legislation – are these things just pieces of paper?

The attention has been on domestic workers and the agricultural sector – what about children who are recruited to carry out social vices such as prostitution?

Child migrant rights' politics don't often take into account reality. In Burkina less than 30% go to school. Those who don't go to school often migrate. There have been mechanisms put in place on the borders to stop them – but the parents are upset by this. For parents, the migration of the children is about preparing them for work later on. The tendency to define child migration as trafficking condemns children who are not in school to staying in a context where they have nothing else to do. We need a more nuanced approach and must not allow everything to be subsumed under trafficking.

*Responses:*

The first author, Nana, said she was not avoiding the issue of rights, but that was just not the focus of the paper, which was looking at ethnographic studies.

Mélanie talked about the relevance and usefulness of numbers. They may not be directly useful for children, but she still thinks it is important - if there are no numbers then there is no visibility and no knowledge.

### **Day 1: Session 3:**

Two presentations followed by a question and discussion session.

**Mobile youth with little formal education: Work opportunities and practices. Dorte Thorsen – Migration DRC, University of Sussex**

For Dorte Thorsen's paper please see here ([English](#) and [French](#)) and presentation [here](#)

Stephen Kwankye responded:

Stephen notes that it is important to examine children and young people's experiences and bring to the fore how they negotiate, and it is useful to put the young migrant question into context.

- He raised the point that education is questioned in the paper and how it contributes to movement of youth from several areas. Is it really down to failures in education? Many children don't go to school anyway whatever the quality. How do we sensitise and equip them to take education seriously. A problem is that they don't necessarily have relevant skills when they go to cities.

- In terms of apprenticeships - Expectations are very high but they are not regulated so employers get more and more apprentices, with the result that the training element decreases and cheap labour element increases.
- There are a number of important, but difficult, policy issues. For example even when children are cheated they won't go to police for two reasons: they don't expect much from the police and they also need to work so much they don't have time for the lengthy procedures involved.
- Two areas of caution about the paper are 1) the term relatives should be used with care as people use it to refer to others who are not blood relations and 2) the table showing young migrants' employment trajectories is a bit difficult to interpret. There might be better way to present this data.
- Stephen Kwankye ended by commending the author for a job well done but stressed that policy areas could be emphasised more.

**Key challenges and issues raised by young West African mobile children and youth:  
Findings from the West Africa Mobilities Project, *Guy Massart, Mindelo International Art School (M\_EIA), Cape Verde (For the West Africa Child Mobility Platform)***

For Guy Massert's paper please see here ([French](#)) and presentation [here](#)

**Ann Whitehead responded with the following points:**

She commented on the rich approach and thoughtful set of reflections in the paper but wanted to focus on three points which perhaps reflect some of her personal concerns:

- It is very interesting to have a presentation from work (The West African Mobilities Project) generated within international organisations that focus very much on child protection and child rights and so to hear from organisations that have to take what Guy characterised as 'universalist' approaches to child protection.
- In West Africa these organisations have come across some major challenges when they have sought to protect child migrants and as a result have undertaken a programme of reflection and investigation into what is needed to forward their wellbeing and citizenship.
- In an earlier session there was a suggestion that there is polarisation between research and action with researchers being unwilling to take a normative approach – but the question of what the normative position should be around child and youth mobility is not an easy one. In Guy's account of this research a laissez faire approach is not taken and he outlines situations that ought 'not to happen' and is normative in terms of saying what 'should' happen.
- Secondly Ann introduced reflections on some of the conceptual language in the presentation – how it relates to children and young people and the state. By using the term citizenship it firmly places issues of child mobility as national (not international/universalist) issues and directs our attention to the relation between children and state. Are children citizens? And in what sense are they? In what sense does the convention on the rights of the child protect children as citizens? This approach helps us to go down the road of contextualisation within specific countries and enables the Platform to look at regional and other specific contexts.

- It is important to acknowledge that the questions of norms are not simply ones that can be left to individuals. Rural communities can't be left to develop norms that open them to national stigmatisation so there is a need to debate what children and child migrants need nationally.
- Thirdly Ann drew attention to the implicit suggestion in Guy's approach which stresses the subaltern position of children and pointed out that this had underpinned a range of issues raised throughout the day. Changes in inter-generational relationships are critical issues underlying youth mobility. Societal arrangements around age frequently produce powerlessness for the young. For example when we use the language of child protection the very idea that children need protection can also open the door to vulnerability. It is true the world over that there are power relations associated with age, and migration particularly brings up issues about how these age hierarchies are experienced.

### Day 1: Final Session:

#### Plenary Discussion

Following these two presentations the floor was opened to the many policymakers and practitioners present to present their views on the day's events, to share their experiences and to raise further questions. The following notes are a summary of the issues and discussion rather than a verbatim account.

There were five main areas that many speakers came back to these are:

- Should we prevent or facilitate migration?

Some speakers felt that migration by children should be stopped, and either focussed on the fact that children should be with their families, or that they should be in education. This point overlapped with the discussion about rights, as some speakers focussed on the child's right to education. Those who were not in favour of preventing migration tended to emphasis both children's points of view and how they develop their own plans and ambitions for their migration, as well as the impossibility of preventing migration. One commentator said we should move away from this dichotomy and instead focus on the universal goals of dignity and the best interests of the child.

- How do we support young migrants and 'how do we stop migration going sour'?

This was a key question for many, especially those who took a pragmatic view of the inevitability of children's migration. There were many issues surrounding whether migration is 'sour' or 'sweet', but often these turn on the individuals migrant children come across in their migration, whether they are treated fairly or not by their employers, whether an intermediary exploits them etc. This area of discussion also gave rise to a number of policy implications: including looking at the role of recruiters; supporting child and youth associations to help themselves; looking at relations with the police; looking at social networks in departure and arrival zones; holding test cases to focus on implementation of statutes on rights; training young people to use the media and advocacy skills to represent themselves; providing education about the possible risks of migration.

- What are the drivers of migration of children and youth?

This discussion focussed on how far poverty is a driver of migration, with some speakers maintaining that not only is poverty the main driver of youth migration, but also that this type of migration is a cause of underdevelopment. Attention was drawn to the fact that the effects could be different in Francophone and Anglophone Africa. The importance of cultural factors, of poor or no schooling in the area and the influence of role models who have already successfully migrated were all raised. The influence of peers and the aspirations

produced from seeing even one or two successful examples were considered to be a strong driver, so much so that not even education about risks or bad experiences would necessarily overcome it. An example of training in rights advocacy for trafficked children was given.

One speaker pointed out that mobility is multifaceted and poverty may not be more important than other factors but that interventions that focus on income generation in areas of departure have often failed.

- What is the role of instruments of children's rights?

Some participants felt it was important to draw attention to children's rights as enshrined in international and national conventions and laws, and to ensure that children and young people are aware of these in terms of work, education and family life etc. However, others felt that there were problems in that even though children are entitled to many rights, these are rarely enacted or enforced. While some people argued that this meant this was an unprofitable avenue to follow, others felt that attempting to enforce these conventions and educate children about them was a useful route to take.

- What are the particular vulnerabilities of domestic workers?

The role of placement agencies is an important one for those looking to tackle domestic worker's vulnerabilities, as they can either help or harm their recruits. Their role is specifically to place workers, not to organise or support them, although they can ensure their recruits have recourse in the case of difficulties and make them aware of their rights and responsibilities. The role of gender should be examined as in most areas the majority of domestic workers are women and girls. In particular, there are risks of sexual abuse. This could become an area of women's empowerment. There will always be demand for domestic workers, but there is nothing to say they need to be under the legal working age. Is there a need to mobilise to ensure only those who can work legally do work?

Other comments included:

Concern that there was not enough mention of Nigeria in the discussions, this has not been a topical issue in the country but it must be raised in universities there. The issue of HIV/AIDS and its relevance to child and youth migration was mentioned. Finally there was some further discussion about the definition of a child.

## Day 2: Session 1

This first session consisted of one presentation and a discussion session

Plenary Session: The African Movement of Children and Young Workers (*Mouvement Africain des Enfants Jeunes Travailleurs*) (Moussa Harouna; Benjamin Kossi; Adaora Ina Nnaji - MAEJT)

See Presentation in French [here](#)

The African Movement of Working Children and Youth (*Mouvement Africain des Enfants Jeunes Travailleurs*) was founded in 1994 and is currently represented in 18 African Countries. The movement organises working children to claim their rights. They are guided by their 'bible': the 12 rights of working children. (see [link](#)) MAEJT is supported by UNICEF, Plan International, Save the Children and Enda.

The presentation was based on research into the lives of mobile children, from a study they did in 2007 in five countries in West Africa. He also presented an evaluation of their activities.



The aims of study were to:

- Understand what children think and what they experience when we talk about trafficking etc.
- Develop a set of recommendations
- Evaluate MAEJT activities

Methodology: A participatory approach was adopted in which teams of young people were put together, who collected the data, in their communities and their languages. The population who were studied then came to analyse the data themselves (with some guidance).

Results:

- They asked people to define in their language what migration/ trafficking / exodus etc means – their explanation of it. They found that these words mean leaving when you are to look elsewhere for something you cannot find at home. There was no word that means 'trafficking' but they can explain the pathway to trafficking – you migrate, you get maltreated then exploited. The term 'maltreatment' was known and had several equivalents in local languages.
- Exploitation – not very precisely defined for these children. In their experience, it is maltreatment + something else. It is to do with not being given what they are expected.
- When they interviewed parents they observed 2 groups – for some migration is a solution. For others it is a problem. If a child goes, there is hope that they will get something – sent or brought back, which will help pay for education and healthcare for those still at home. People see it might be difficult, but believe that to succeed you have to suffer – and anyway if you stay you will suffer also. The first group of parents were those whose migrated children had been able to send back something, or get something. The second group (parents who saw migration as a problem) start finding it a problem at the point when they do not get what they hoped for from them – when they have not received money etc. There are lots of accusations – is he ok? If nothing comes back they are worried that their child is ok.
- What do the children think? They explained that at home 'No one listens, we are given orders' at schools punishments are heavy. They prefer to leave – because they see nothing for themselves at home. And at same time there are positive reasons. They have a strong desire to go and discover other places. Some of them had never seen a building or a car. They want to see the town, they do not want to stay in the village – you have not succeeded if you stay.
- It is a difficult choice: no one knows or believes what it is really like over there. But they ask themselves what they can get – nothing at home – at least there is a chance of getting something elsewhere.
- At destination areas, there are problems – there is violence, non payment of salaries. There are lots of people who lose trust etc. They often talk about betrayal. How to provide protection at destination areas is key.

Some MAEJT Activities around Youth Migration:

- Sensitization – between young people (peer education). Organising big public events .
- Developing groups in the village – to help the children in the villages think about how they can address their own problems.
- Activities to 'listen, protect and support' – in markets, streets, schools – everywhere. Young people involved with MAEJT work to identify friends and colleagues with problems and help them find solutions. The chiefs and elders also get involved, and start talking about their past, their own experiences of migration. This is important – creating dialogue between generations.
- Developing alliances, partnerships relationships with everyone involved

- In destination areas – they get young people to welcome and orientate new arrivals

Achievements:

- The children are supported to do what they think is important
- Dialogue between generations

Challenges:

- Adults don't want children to teach them
- Adults feel that the children are getting money from agencies and they want access to this
- Difficult to reach everyone

Lessons:

- The results have been obtained, they are now measuring & monitoring. How can they better go into the field and get the farmers to change their behaviour?
- Remember, mobility is everywhere, children are leaving everywhere in all directions. When the children arrive at destination areas they seek out groups which are familiar to them, which they know.
- Participation: in research and decision making is important – should be encouraged.
- Mobility can be seen as an agent of change – there are people who know the problems with employers, and they teach others how to negotiate and change dynamics with their employers
- Finally: in the formal and informal workplace– there are children who are not seen, invisible – this research goes to the places of work to see them.

### Questions and comments

Respondents were impressed by the participatory approach, but two speakers asked about parents: first, if there was a third group: parents that were not happy at all with migration and who did not want their children to migrate; second were there any differences in the characteristics of the two groups of parents? Another speaker asked why were no Anglophone countries included in the study?

One commentator pointed out that tensions in the social space are important – this is a dynamic where we have to make choices, sometimes difficult choices. People choose, even though they know the choice is difficult. Over here we suffer – over there we suffer. In many of these children's home areas, they are left to fend for themselves, there aren't services. Rights are sung about, but there are no structures in place to deliver them. We think for children – we do not listen to them – we do not know what they want.

Finally someone suggested that more attention should be paid to the responsibilities of the parents including responsible parenting and family planning. Too much is expected of policymakers and more emphasis should be put on the parents.

A representative from ENDA responded to points about the groups of parents:

They didn't manage to identify a 3<sup>rd</sup> group. Why? Because it does not exist. There are 3 groups of children.

1. Decide to leave, and tell parents
2. Don't want to leave, but are pushed
3. Those who leave without parent's knowledge

But if they tell the parents, or send back resources to the village – the parents think he or she must be ok (given that they can afford to send back resources). If nothing is sent back – those parents feel their child is in a bad condition and worry and feel migration must be a bad idea.

The countries were chosen because they have high levels of child migration – it was just coincidence that they were all francophone. This was just a first phase – they have just started working with Nigeria.

Moussa responded that they were surprised that when the children flee without telling the parents, the parents don't tend to know why the children left. Maybe there are parents that don't want migration, but they did not find any. They are concerned mainly with how the situation is beneficial. Some parents want their children to stay, to help, to farm. Some parents were angry, because the children left without blessing. He concluded "Even if we bring all the riches of the world into the village, the children will still leave – they want to discover the world...the important thing is not to think about stopping the kids – but about supporting them to succeed in what they want to achieve, what they set out to do."

## Day 2: Session 2

### **PANEL ONE: Child Migrants as Rural Workers: Policy and Practice**

Four presentations followed by discussion in break-out groups. Each presenter's comments are summarised below, with the full presentation available on the [website](#).

#### **Albertine de Lange – FAO: Presentation [here](#)**

The FAO is focussing on decent work for rural people. Agriculture accounts for a high share of those under 15 in the labour force. Among economically active children globally, 70% are in the agriculture sector.

FAO is in a partnership cooperating on child labour in agriculture. Human rights is an issue but also important to address are the low pay and poor conditions of child labourers that can push down wages and weaken bargaining power of other labourers.

Their work includes a declaration of intent in 2007 with seven partners.

They acknowledge that policies must take into account the fact that labour demand may be taken up by children and that decent youth employment can be a way to fight dangerous child labour if there are good work opportunities for the over 15s.

In their work migrants are given special attention as migrants are considered a vulnerable group as they are often young and outside their protective family or community.

They have produced policy briefs and carried out research e.g. into the livestock sector in Ghana in 2008 (to be published on their website).

The FAO has developed 'Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools' teaching agricultural and life skills to 12-18 year olds. This is taught outside school hours and includes child rights elements. They developed a module on child labour with ILO to inform young people about risks. Not that work is bad but that some things can be dangerous – pesticides, heavy carrying etc. They offer alternatives rather than just saying what children can't do.

#### **Martina Odonkor – Consultant: Presentation [here](#)**

Martina presented a study carried out for the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) entitled "Addressing child labour through education: A study of alternative/complementary initiatives in quality education delivery and their suitability for cocoa-farming communities." The full report of the research is available online [here](#)

It looks at the educational challenges facing children in migrant communities in cocoa growing areas in Ghana: those who migrate with their parents. The study has a two-fold purpose: to examine the existing quality of education in a sample of cocoa-growing communities including ICI pilot communities, and to review existing quality education initiatives by other institutions and organizations, with a view to potential replication and/or adaptation in cocoa-growing communities.

The research was in migrant communities made up of several diverse ethnic groups. They have certain characteristics that hinder education:

- Problematic leadership – communities too complex
- Lack of community cohesion – undermines development efforts. A mix of migrants and indigene population groups can be the most difficult. When the community is made up of all migrants, more likely to be successful
- Split loyalties
- Language barriers

Other difficulties are caused by:

- Climate – can lead to closure of school for 25% of the year
- Remoteness
- Economic hardship
- Low education of parents

These difficulties lead to a range of educational shortcomings including low teacher numbers and poor attendance rates.

**Andrews Tagoe - General Agricultural Workers Union: Presentation [here](#)**

- Andrews outlined the trade union's experience of Policy and Practice around Child Migrants as workers. They are workers – irrespective of where they live, rural or urban.
- They are interested in labour practices at origin, transit and at destination. In all areas people do some form of work, but the destination is most important for them. They also work in a range of agricultural sectors.
- He discussed their policy activities including ratification, workplace policies and how child labour can erode other workplace gains because of their often difficult conditions.
- He described the union's activities and difficulties. For example the law makes room for visits by the labour office to discuss conditions with employers but in rural areas labour officers do not have access so there is more potential for exploitation.
- Finally he recommended more research to understand rural work conditions, moves to strengthen the labour inspectorate and getting anti traffickers to look at transit areas.

**Patrick Asare Nelson– ILO: Presentation [here](#)**

Patrick's presentation was entitled 'Child and Youth Migrants working conditions - especially in agriculture in rural areas.'

- He outlined the number of children in rural work and highlighted the young age of many of these workers
- He talked about the dangers of this type of work
- Then he identified specific vulnerabilities of child migrants as:
  - Child migrant workers may come from a different part of a country or other countries.
  - Wherever they come from, they are often heavily disadvantaged in terms of remuneration/pay, social protection, housing and medical protection.
  - The migrant labour force often consist of whole families, although only the head of the family may be the one formally employed in most cases.
  - In many situations children of migrant workers work next to their parents but do not appear on the payroll.
  - Children who work alongside their parents may have been accompanying them to the fields from infancy.
  - Migrant and seasonal workers need their children to work in order to achieve a living wage as much work is paid on a piece- rate basis.
- He then outlined the research and policy findings about working conditions, especially on plantations.

#### ***Break Out Group Discussions:***

We broke into three groups to discuss the following questions:

- What are the main issues raised for policymakers and practitioners by working teenagers?
- What are the key priorities for action:
  - In the short to medium term?
  - In the longer term?

Below are the points from discussions as reported back:

#### **Group 1**

- Economic well being is paramount to giving children options about migration
- Family planning is needed to allow family support
- States need to be accountable for their commitments, as well as individuals
- Attitudes are changing, of states, employers, parents etc
- Social norms can be investigated – which are protective and which abusive?
- Community empowerment – the grassroots level should be supported better.

- Build knowledge through qualitative and quantitative work.
- Education – investment in formal education, but investment is also required in vocational and technical training.
- Individuals should have the right to move but children should be prevented under a certain age.
- Child empowerment and participation is very important in terms of supporting migration at the destination and also in discouraging migration.
- Employers should be targeted through lobbying, advocacy and legal work.

#### Group 2:

There were a lot of discussions about age and the discussion took two directions. Some saw the relevant ages as 15-18, as they are authorised to work so can't have action taken against them. However, the social age of teenage workers, in view of local realities, takes into account pre-teenage children too.

These two views influenced their proposals:

- Apply laws that already exist, and take measures to enforce the laws.
- Strengthen social services and the welfare state in favour of youth and children.
- Continue measures to raise awareness and encourage action regarding laws and other regulations that already exist.
- Also the informal sector should be taken into account by the legal system as currently laws apply more to formal work. However they did not discuss the definitions in detail.
- In the current situation laws are not enforced (and some people think not enforceable) so governments and activists should take measures to ratify efficient and adaptable laws that might work better instead of universalist laws which do not take into account different contexts and situations.
- Young people should be given a voice and public forum to express themselves.

#### Group 3:

- A working definition is required: i.e. A child between 5-13 yrs and youth between 14 and 18
- Child migration is inevitable
- Push factors include cultural issues such as polygamy, large families, fostering, also the sub cultural practices of sending children to migrate

Solutions include in the shorter term:

- Need for protection networks at all levels, origin, transit and destination
- Listen to children and encourage participation, recognise their rights
- Short to medium – sensitisation about migration, young people should be made aware of challenges

- Strengthen institutional capacity building; support existing institutions; encourage youth networks and peer counselling

Longer term:

- Rural development
- Regularising the informal sector to allow bargaining for better conditions and reduce exploitation
- Pursue complementary education for migrants, introduce system for providing skills in evening classes
- Females most vulnerable so focus on gender empowerment

Day 2: Session 3:

#### PANEL TWO: Coordinating Support for Migrant Children

This session consisted of three presentations and discussion. The full version of each presentation, summarised below, is available on the [website](#).

Olivier Feneyrol -Terres des Hommes: Presentation [here](#)

#### Migration of children and young people in West Africa: Research progress and policy implications

He opened by recalling the central issue of how to better protect the rights of children.

Mobility encompasses a lot of different elements: geographical but also fosterage, placement long term i.e. working as apprentices, Koranic schools, itinerant workers, seasonal work, people displaced by crises of one sort or another, so mobility could be a better way to encompass this variety than 'migration'. Mobility is everywhere, massive and diversified, it is part of the social reality of Africa. Not just evil, dysfunction or slippage in society. How can it be made less dangerous?

Mobility creates two sorts of problems:

- Standards of child protection – normative vision of society vs. real state of society
- Tension between mobility that is also cross border as states want to control what is happening within and across borders

Regarding trafficking – the stakeholders of the Mobility Platform research are strongly involved in fighting against trafficking, but experience showed that the trafficking approach has some limitations, it is not the only solution to mobility, so we need to find a more holistic approach.

He described the research component as including empirical research, a review of research issues of mobility and of society and government norms. A second component is research to try and establish the protection of migrant children with children as stakeholders.

They also carried out an overview of different actions across the countries to bring together knowledge, discuss and share. Finally he hopes for a reflective dynamic, to work jointly, to find solutions and find responses to joint projects and create initiatives moving on from previous ones.

A major question is can we succeed in establishing protection systems for children on the move if projects are top down, determined by donors, the authorities and not by those on the ground who are in touch with realities? – A major debate.

There is also a gap between authorities and communities. We need strong cooperation with the grassroots and an understanding between people of how to establish linkages and harmonise with what others are doing.

The last issue is the problem of regulation against clandestine activities. He issued an invitation to all stakeholders who want to join the discussion project.

**Matilda Nyantakyi Broni: Echoes Project WINROCK: Presentation [here](#)**

### Winrock International: Putting Ideas to Work

She opened by stating that people tell her they move because there are no jobs. If there were jobs they would stay. WINROCK addresses this problem through its Echoes Project: empowering cocoa households with opportunities in education solutions.

- Winrock strengthens cocoa-growing communities by expanding opportunities for youth and young adults through relevant education – through comprehensive vocational training and leadership development
- They focus on cocoa because it is the backbone of the country
- The project is implemented in the western region
- Key Activities
  - Through awareness, creativeness and sensitization, people will change - giving them education to become better cocoa farmers
  - Teach people about how to grow cocoa – practical training
  - Community mobilization – changing the attitudes and perceptions of people
  - Leadership training – to change the mindset of the people. Parents are encouraging their children to leave, because they are now producing at a loss. If taught to farm better, they will earn more, and therefore want to stay in the cocoa sector in rural areas
  - Family support scholarship – small seed money given to mothers. The mothers use the money to take care of their child's needs
  - Community Wellness Committees – taking decisions
  - School Cocoa and Garden Demonstration Plots
  - Renovation of classrooms – school structures is something we need to look at
- Focus on Youth
  - Teaching the out of school youth about farming. Education about testing soil, positioning seeds, the cocoa growing calendar etc. Then they get a kit to help them start their own business
  - Cocoa Farm training, youth entrepreneurship training – there are examples of the youths then setting up business (e.g. agrichemicals shop)
  - Want the youth to learn how to be good farmers they are then less likely to migrate
  - She concluded by stating that the educational curricula must prepare young people for the job market so that they do not leave rural areas



### Sending Communities: Making Migration and Return Safer

- Child migration can be understood in the context of more developed areas attracting migrants
- Child migration has both positive and negative aspects
- There is a need to produce suggestions that will make the process of migration safer
- Make potential migrants aware of risks. So they can mitigate – and have strategies to overcome problems
- We should provide aggregated info and data, before they leave
- Look at labour laws, contract laws, rights as migrants, training skills to be competitive in the job market

### The Study:

- Carried out 2 surveys on child migration (in 2005 – destination areas; in 2007 – looking at sending areas in particular the return and reintegration of the child migrants - do they go back? If they do what do they do?)
- The following questions were asked:
  - Who returns?
  - Why do they return?
  - Is education of those who return different from those who are not migrating?
  - Is their return and reintegration safe?
  - How can we ensure they are safer?

### Findings:

- Half of the return migrants were aged 20-24 (and more females)
- There was little difference in the education level of those who left and those who stayed
- Most went back to the households of their biological parents
- Most first migrated between 15-17 years of age
- Reasons for migration include poverty, hardships and want to find money to continue their education
- Only 20% returned with more than \$100-200
- Upon return worked on farms and as traders
- Small income (but caution! People don't do not always tell the truth about income)

### Conclusion:

- Making adequate savings as a migrant is linked to the kind of job found at destination area
- The kind of work one gets to do is linked to one's level of education training and skills
- Young migrants are boxed out of competitive and better paid work and confined to low paid jobs
- Savings are low and unsustainable

### How do we make migration safer?

- Sensitize parents and potential migrants in sending communities and teaching value of basic education
- Funds should be created to support good students
- Sensitize sending communities about life in cities
- Sensitize sending communities to reduce births as a way of reducing poverty

- Identify and support voluntary return migrants with some financial package to help return and reintegrate

#### Questions and comments to all presenters:

- Did the RIPS/ISSER study allow you to take into account the non-economic consequences of migration and return?
- Safe migration is a good idea but:
  - Did the studies look at social protection measures at the destination area? It is one thing knowing, and another thing being able to enact measures to protect yourself. We need to protect children who come into conflict with the law.
  - Also definition of the youth? In Ghana there is a Ministry responsible for youth, and a Ministry responsible for children. Without a proper definition as to who constitutes the youth, then in terms of policy direction there will be problems. The Echoes project shows the importance of education and opportunity in sending areas to stop migration.
  - Issue of human smuggling is being lost in this conversation.
- There are problems of research design. Drawing the sample based on the population, but with small samples it is difficult to draw conclusions. We need to know the research design and method of collecting the sample. How do you monitor sustainability if a child gets into secondary schools or leaves the area? How do you monitor sustainability?
- One of the reasons for migration is socio-cultural reasons, e.g. prestige – how do you measure this, upon the return of the young migrants – does the return bring any reward in terms of social prestige?
- In the discourse of street children there is a new term, second generation street children – did the study show that having a child in Accra or Kumasi, does it problematize the return home? How does it make their relationship with their parents difficult – are these new children easily accepted into the family, does it delay a return home?
- Stephen said that needy but brilliant school children should be supported. What about the needy but stupid school children? It seems that the ones that are not doing well are more likely to be sent to work? Target the ones who are dumb, because they are more likely to be sent.
- It has been claimed that there are no children in the cocoa industries. Is Winrock training people to go back to the cocoa farms?
- Does migration of children have a positive impact on development?
- How sustainable will the WINROCK project be after they pull out?

#### *Responses:*

##### Olivier

Are there social protection mechanisms to protect migrants? This is rare, there is little that protects children on their journey. We need to work more with the existing resources and social protection networks, and with communities, to provide protection for the children as they move. But it is difficult to make this cooperation legal or legitimate given that child labour and migration is deemed illegal. We cannot do it because they are illicit. There is a conflict between two questions – is it better to protect the children, or to respect the normative frameworks?

A contextualised reading is important. A child must find a place in their community. They have records of thousands of children and lots of info about children who have moved, so they can compare. When a child is in need of something how can we respond to their aspirations if there are no possibilities in their environment? Need to make changes.

## Matilda

How to monitor children if they leave? Perhaps using peer training? Studies show that there is no child labour in the cocoa industry. Child labour is defined as any work which affects the child's health, development, education. We are teaching the child what they need to know....how to do it better in future.

Winrock is working with the Ghana education service including train a teacher, shadow teachers, and school demonstration farm. At the end of the project the shadow teacher and community continue. Also peer educators continue the project.

## Stephen

The research looked at non-economic consequences as well. We looked at non-migrants and migrants, how both groups see the returned migrants. There are mixed results – sometimes seen as spoilt children, who have ignored the cultural rules. If you come back with something you are respected, if not you are not.

In terms of social protection mechanisms, they didn't look at this much, because they were looking at return. Methodological issues: It is difficult to present the whole picture in 10 minutes, but perhaps these things could be brought out.

Social cultural factors are very influential as migration has almost become a rite of passage. Their friends have gone, the women go and return with consumable items for marriage. Many of the men returned to get married.

Brilliant but needy or needy but stupid? Resources are not limitless, if a person is not suited to formal education don't waste resources, instead apprenticeships could be used. Support brilliant but needy in school, others in apprenticeships. There can be positives to child migration. Some studies show migrants can send remittances home to help siblings go to school plus when they go home they can use what they learned.

## Day 2: Session 3

### Ways Forward and Close: Comments from Panel and Plenary Discussion

The final panel consisted of four participants who were asked to sum up their responses to different themes the conference had drawn out and to identify concrete ideas for ways forward:

#### **Iman Hashim – Migration DRC**

She focussed on a personal view of a way forward as well as points drawn from the two days.

One issue to consider is to look at the ways we have used certain terms: Do we all mean the same thing? These terms include 'childhood', 'parenting', 'trafficking', 'education' etc. They are not unproblematic terms and a lot of the debate has been about their different conceptualisations.

This is the result of two factors:

- Policy on child migration emerged in advance of research, as it is a very new area and there is little research to draw on.
- Also because we are talking about children. The topic engenders strong feelings of protection. In all other areas of development there are reps of communities but there are no child representatives here.

It is vital to listen to what people tell us in research and advocacy – Moussa showed that they ask, what do these terms mean to you as a child? And it is very important that we hear, as well as listen.

For example in group 1 they identified that one reason people don't go to school is the poor quality of schooling. But another responded to say children should go to school. BUT many children do not see the benefit of school and this is valid in some situations. We need to address this if we want to make progress.

If we dismiss the findings of research that children want to move or that school is not for them, then we constrain their lives even more. We need to expand choices, not reduce them by not hearing children's voices.

### **Yaw Ofosu-Kusi - University of Education, Winneba, Ghana**

Yaw Ofosu-Kusi decided to look at issues from the first day and to connect that to how we look at the future.

There will always be a need for separate youth and children conceptualisations. Age is a very important axis, and we need to be specific about categories. This is important when determining social power.

When we look at migration we must differentiate voluntary and involuntary migration. We have to address the issue of agency and of children making their own decisions. Is it a flight from poverty? Do they have ambitions themselves? When migration is involuntary we are more empowered to do what is right and it is easier for intervention by, for example, punishing exploitative intermediaries.

Children are involved in their own migration decisions and peer influence is quite critical. When people are unhappy about their circumstances the success of others can enable them to concretise the idea of being unhappy at home into movement.

The historical context is also very important, especially for Ghanaian girls moving from north to south. There is an important context related to colonialism when it was policy to get labour from the north to mines and other areas that required labour in the south, creating problems. It created a route for migration and a culture and tradition of migration.

Children enter into contracts with adults and we need to question the ability of children to do this on an equal basis.

Structural adjustment has been blamed for child labour and this issue is as topical today as in the 1980s as it most significantly led to the informalisation of economies in West Africa. In some areas the ability of men to care for families has been limited as result of structural adjustment as it led to a wide ranging informal economy. As a result of social chaos in cities it becomes easier for children to migrate.

Culture is influential and there are lots of reasons why people go into certain migratory paths. It can be an expectation at the point of maturity. Females are not necessarily seen as economically productive and this can result in limited education. This needs to be factored into policymaking.

He congratulated Mélanie Jacquemin on her new terms to categorise child domestic workers as it helps to think in more specific ways about the work children do.

### **John Anarfi – ISSER, University of Ghana**

ISSER decided to focus on independent child migration research as previously there was over-emphasis on some categories of child migrants – street children trafficking and child labour – and there was a need to shift emphasis on to those who move independently as they are in the majority. Conventions exist to tackle the first

three categories but when proposing policies we must have the majority in mind. There is a related notion that all child labour is bad. Some people question why children move from home to work but many make genuine efforts to improve their livelihoods. For some migrants this is a matter of life and death and so policies must look at how children can make the best of this situation.

If accompanied by their family migration can be less problematic. But if they are independent migrants and minors this complicates the situation – can they travel at all? For some families migration is a matter of life and death, so it should not be a case of how to stop it but how to manage it.

Intermediaries are all seen negatively but we should educate intermediaries and differentiate the bad from the good.

Not all child migrants enter into wage labour but most are self employed. There are some abuses and cheating of young child migrants in the workplace. How do we punish the culprits? Often the police do not protect street children.

There are problems of accommodation – a popular solution is providing shelters, but the fear is this will encourage migration. Increasingly, rescue or drop-in centres are another solution. These can also offer training in numeracy, literacy and employable skills. This development should be supported.

### **Elkane Mooh – Save the Children**

He opened by asserting that mobility is a complex issue, and for this reason presenters have showed nuances. He chose to relate two anecdotes to show this complexity:

In 2006 he met a group of children in Niger, they were stopped at the Burkina border and wanted to go to Cote D'Ivoire. They spoke very good French, and when asked they said they had the leaving certificate from school but wanted to go abroad so as to get girls to marry them. They were not poor, and they were educated but wanted to respond to the cultural requirements for marriage. When they have finished their initiation, girls choose from them for marriage, and choose those who have travelled.

Secondly a group of children from Burkina Faso were stopped at the Cote D'Ivoire border in 2004. They were going on holiday, but as an order had been given to stop children at the border they were arrested and held by the police simply for going on holiday abroad.

There is an urgent need to focus the answers we have to these issues. States ratify conventions but there is no opportunity to harmonise with local laws. Ghana ratified the Convention on Rights of the Child but there has been no local discussion about a legal framework to harmonise it.

We need the courage to tell ourselves that what we have done has not worked and existing solutions are not appropriate. Not a renunciation, but improvement is required. We have inherited old solutions and rehashed them and continue to do the same old things. We are doing what donors want. Ratification is not for our benefit but to please others.

Coming to a common platform like UNICEF, or MAEJT we question our own practices and begin to understand social norms. It is a start, but not easy. There are demands from donors for ratification of laws etc.

There is a disjunction between conventions and local laws and social norms. 'An unwritten law' we say but the law must emerge from a social setting, law cannot be a law with no link to social reality. A country may have the best legislation you can have but it still has no impact on the situation of children.

We have a key opportunity now whatever protection systems we have, and whatever responses we have provided – together we can find new opportunities to ensure child protection.

### **Questions and Comments**

We are all here in the interests of the child, but children are not here to represent themselves – there is not even one child to speak?

Will having support for migrants encourage more to come? Train them in the villages instead.

Are independent children really in the majority? We need more research into this. Are they self employed?

There are so many invisible migrants, especially domestic servants, which need further investigation.

There has been an emphasis on north-south migration which is interesting but we need more research on other, even less visible movements i.e. South-centre.

We need to examine ourselves and build our own capacity to listen and hear and then address problems. We should not be afraid to put children at the centre. Child participation takes time and resources but it's more honest. Also community involvement is very important.

Terminology is important. Organisations refer to children as unaccompanied but this can be in conflict with situations where children are separated, but also where parents migrate, and leave children behind. They are called unaccompanied, or on the move but there are problems reuniting them, especially children of nomads and stockbreeders. It is the responsibility of parents in general.

### **Closing Remarks - Ann Whitehead, Migration DRC and Mariama Awumbila, CMS, University of Ghana**

Ann and Mariama thanked the participants for making the conference such an interesting one and sharing their experiences in a useful and open manner. They looked forward to continuing constructive discussions in the future. Documents from the conference are to be published on the internet at [www.migrationdrc.org](http://www.migrationdrc.org) and networking opportunities for researchers are available at [www.childmigration.net](http://www.childmigration.net).