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Migrant Child Labourers in Accra:

A Case Study of the Making of an Adjustment Generation

by

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Applied Social Studies**

University of Warwick

School of Health and Social Studies

July 2002

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vi
List of Abbreviations	vii
Illustrations	viii
Abstract	ix
Introduction	
The state of childhood: Contextualizing children's experiences in Ghana	1
The child labour problem	7
The thesis	10
In search of answers: Objectives, questions and intentions	12
Organisation of the study and main issues	16
Chapter 1 From cradle to work: Issues of child labour in Africa	
1.1 Introduction	21
1.2 Delineating child labour: Conceptual issues of age and labour	23
1.2.1 The significance of age	24
1.2.2 The faces of work and labour	27
1.2.3 Legions of child labourers	30
1.3 The nature and categories of child labour	33
1.3.1 Street work	37
1.3.2 Domestic service	40
1.3.3 Agricultural work	42
1.3.4 Apprenticeship	43
1.4 African political economy: Stagnation, poverty and globalisation	45
1.4.1 Structural problems as the catalyst for child labour	46
1.4.2 The constraints of poverty	52
1.4.3 Globalisation and child labour	58
1.5 Social and cultural factors in child labour	61

1.6	Conclusion	64
Chapter 2	Ghana: A case study for the making of an adjustment generation	
2.1	Introduction	68
2.2	Ghana's political economy: Instability, change and structural adjustment programmes	71
2.2.1	The pre-1983 interactions with the IMF/World Bank	71
2.2.2	The Rawlings' era and post-1983 structural adjustments	78
2.3	The legacy: Child labour as a social consequence of SAPs	88
2.3.1	Redundancies, social pressures and child labour	88
2.3.2	Costs of living and child labour	91
2.3.3	Health services and child labour	93
2.3.4	Rising costs of education and child labour	95
2.3.5	Subsidies, agriculture and child labour	99
2.4	Conclusion	100
Chapter 3	Researching child workers: Methodological issues and challenges	
3.1	Introduction	104
3.2	Research design: The construction of a methodology	105
3.2.1	Thinking qualitatively	106
3.2.2	The research questions	108
3.2.3	Selection strategy	109
3.3	The research process: Issues and challenges of dealing with migrant child workers	110
3.3.1	Piloting	110
3.3.2	Study sites and participants	112
3.3.3	The interviews	115
3.3.4	Observations	118
3.3.5	Confidentiality and anonymity	120
3.3.6	Data sources and analytical approaches	120
3.3.7	Issues of validity and reliability	122
3.4	Methodological problems encountered	123
3.5	Conclusion	127

Chapter 4	Becoming a worker: The pursuit of hope and aspirations	
4.1	Introduction	129
4.2	Migrant child labourers: Their origins and characteristics	131
4.2.1	The children's origins	131
4.2.2	Age	133
4.2.3	Types of work	134
4.2.4	Working hours	137
4.2.5	Daily earnings	137
4.2.6	Length of stay	139
4.2.7	Educational background	140
4.3	Learning to crawl: Motivations for migration and child labour	142
4.3.1	The pervasive influence of poverty: "It is getting more and more difficult..."	142
4.3.2	Lack of confidence in the rural economy: "There is nothing to do except go to farm..."	152
4.3.3	The Demonstration effect: "I wanted to be like them..."	158
4.4	Conclusion	165
Chapter 5	At Work: Social environment, exploitation and coping mechanisms	
5.1	Introduction	168
5.2	Work and social environments: Dealing with the hazards, risks, uncertainties and pressures of work	170
5.2.1	Hazardous and risky environment: "We are always under attack from the thugs..."	171
5.2.2	Uncertainties and the pressure to survive: "I pray to God every morning to help me..."	183
5.3	Social relations of exploitation	188
5.3.1	Relationship with parents and guardians: "He gave me to to somebody as a house help..."	188
5.3.2	Relationship with employers: "It's easy for them to tell us what they want than to listen to us..."	197
5.3.3	Relationship with co-workers: "They just bully, slap and kick us..."	200

5.4	Coping in Accra: Co-operation and survival strategies	205
5.5	Conclusion	213
Chapter 6	Beyond work: Its value and implications for children and their families	
6.1	Introduction	216
6.2	Economic and survival roles in the family: The impact of child labour on parental authority	218
6.2.1	The children's economic contributions: "Yes, I send them money and provisions..."	220
6.2.2	Implications of children's economic roles: "...sometimes we do things we shouldn't do but we do them anyway..."	225
6.3	Thinking ahead: The value of work for the future and in relation to school and education	231
6.3.1	The value of work: "For me this is just for the money..."	231
6.3.2	Work, education and future aspirations: "I know only A, B, C..."	235
6.4	Conclusion	245
Chapter 7:	Conclusion: The dilemma of child labour and policy implications	
7.1	Child labour as a development problem	248
7.2	Who are migrant child labourers? A summary	253
7.3	The children's motivations: Reactions to poverty and deprivation	257
7.4	Managing the environments: Coping and survival	260
7.5	Beyond work: Implications for the present and future	263
7.6	The changing structure and dilemmas of child labour	265
7.7	Policy implications: The case of education for all children	270

Appendix I	Guide for interviewing the children	277
Appendix II	Map of Ghana	279
Appendix III	The background of participants	280
Bibliography		282

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My study and research, both at Warwick and in Accra, were made possible by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the University College of Education, Winneba, for which I am grateful.

I acknowledge with gratitude, the invaluable guidance and support given by my supervisor, Dr. Phil Mizen throughout the study period.

I am also grateful to Dr. Kennedy Quagrain, Project Manager for Link Community Development, Northern Ghana, for the advice, news and friendship.

I am equally grateful to Lydia and the children, for holding the fort.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
BAT	British American Tobacco
CAS	Catholic Action for Street Children
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSAE	Centre for Study of African Economies
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNCC	Ghana National Commission on Children
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPEC	International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
MI	Macroeconomic International
NLC	National Liberation Council
NRC	National Redemption Council
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policies
SCUK	Save the Children- United Kingdom
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America

ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

	Title	Page
1.1	Population and labour participation rates of Africa (1989/99)	...32
1.2	Demographic indicators of selected countries	...49
1.3	National and international poverty lines (% of population)	...53
2.1	The extent of economic decline (1975 – 1983)	...79
4.1	The origins of participants	...131
4.2	Types of work	...135
4.3	Daily earnings	...138
4.4	Length of stay in Accra	...139
4.5	Educational background	...141

LIST OF FIGURES

5.1	A section of Kaneshi market	...172
5.2	A section of Agobloshie market	...176
5.3	Head-porters (<i>kayayooos</i>) resting and waiting for work	...179
5.4	A section of Mandela stone quarry	...181
5.5	A child labourer sitting on a pile of chipped stones	...183
5.6	A girl selling iced-water at a lorry station	...186

ABSTRACT

This is a study of child labour as a social consequence of structural adjustment policies (SAP), the economic ideology of the 1980s and 1990s in Ghana. SAP certainly had its positive sides. However, the systematic process of impoverishment through redundancies, the high costs of living and declining state support in basic welfare worsened people's lived experiences. It is therefore argued that political and economic changes, epitomised by the long years of SAP, have burdened families, *monetised* social relations and increased the pressure on children. But, while child labour at the family level is an old phenomenon in Ghana, these problems have transformed some children into a new category of labourers who migrate to the cities to take up some of the numerous informal sector activities as a way of mitigating their poverty. Against this background, three broad findings regarding their motivations, lived experiences and the implications of their actions emerged in a programme of qualitative research. Firstly, the pervasive poverty, dwindling opportunities and the influence of returning migrants in the rural areas act as both the motivation and catalyst for their migration. Secondly, even though Accra offers some relative hope, the children operate in adverse and hazardous conditions that have certain implications for their future. Thirdly, some children's agency are enhanced by the roles they assume in their families and the ability to plan for the future, especially in relation to education and training. Since economic growth and development appears to be elusive, it is concluded that child migration will continue. However, children's education should be repositioned at the centre of social policy because as a preventive measure, any hour spent in the classroom is time spent away from work.

INTRODUCTION

The state of childhood: Contextualising children's experiences in Ghana

Ghana has a very young population since children represent nearly 50%. Out of the total population of 19.7 million in 2000, approximately 10 million were under the age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2001). While the median age has increased from 16 years in 1993 to 18.1 in 1998, children below 15 years still accounted for 48% and 44% of the population in 1993 and 1998 respectively (GSS and MI, 1999). The high population growth and underlying total fertility rates have sustained this trend over the years. For instance, the average annual population growth rate between 1990 and 1998 was 3.1%, in contrast to sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) rate of 3.0% and the low and middle income countries' rate of 1.8% (World Bank, 2000). In addition, the total fertility rate in 1998 was 3.0 children per woman in the urban areas of Ghana, but 5.4 in the rural areas (GSS and MI, 1999). Again, even though the fertility rate for the rural areas was slightly lower than the 5.5 rate for SSA, it was much higher than the developing world's rate of 3.0 (UNICEF, 2000).

The high birth rate is reflected in the harshness of the lives of significant numbers of children. For example, the mortality rates for under-5 years in 1997 and 1998 were 102 and 96 per 1000 respectively (World Bank, 2001), thus placing Ghana 47th in the world (UNICEF, 1998). Twenty-six percent of children in 2000 were under-nourished, 25% were also under weight (World Bank, 2001). Moreover, in 1998, 0.4% of children were orphans, 22% did not live with their parents and 19% lived in single adult households (GSS and MI, 1999).

The state of childhood and the experiences of children are also reflected in the availability of educational opportunities since education is universally acclaimed as a right for all children. Indeed, it is enshrined in Article 28 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Yet, in 1998, 26% of girls and 23% of boys between 6 and 9 years old never attended school (GSS and MI, 1999). At the same period, 14% of girls and 13% of boys in the 10 to 14 years age group had never been to school. Thereafter, the rates of people with no education progressively increase as age increases. With respect to compulsory basic education¹, only 57% of girls and 59% of boys aged 15 and 19 years old had completed one by 1998.

Another way to look at Ghanaian children's access to education is through the net primary school attendance ratios². Between 1990 and 1998, this was 70% for males and 69% for females (UNICEF, 2000). Though these rates were much better than the SSA's net primary school attendance ratio of 61% for males and 57% for females, they were however lower than the developing world's rate of 81% and 75% for males and females respectively (*ibid.*). The attendance ratios for some regions of Ghana however were quite dramatic. For instance, more than 50% of the 6 to 11 year-olds in the Northern, Upper West and Upper East regions were not attending school in 1998 (GSS and MI, 1999). For the nation as a whole, the percentage of children who are enrolled in secondary schools is quite low. Between

¹ Primary school of 6 years and junior secondary of 3 years represent basic education in Ghana, which in principle is free and compulsory. This should be completed by age 14 or 15 years.

² This is the percentage of children attending schools that corresponds with the official age group for that particular stage.

1990 and 1996, the gross secondary school enrolment ratios (GER)³ in Ghana were only 45% for males and 29% for females (UNICEF, 2000). Comparatively, the average rates for developing countries in the same period were 55% and 46% for males and females respectively. In all the cases, attendance rates were lower in the rural areas of Ghana than in the urban areas (GSS and MI, 1999), a fact that partially accounts for the rural-urban migration. The centrality of education to childhood implies alternative time-use for the large numbers that are excluded for one reason or the other.

The families of most of these children are uneducated themselves. They have very little economic opportunities and for them poverty and its ramifications dictate life. With the high unemployment and inflation rates in Ghana (ISSER, 2000), but low per capita income of a mere \$390 in 1998 (World Bank, 2001), most children suffer the consequences of deprivation. Moreover, social problems of inadequate and overcrowded housing, rapid urbanisation, migration and exploitation affect families and their children. A critical demographic indicator with both economic and social consequences for children in particular, is the low life expectancy. This in 1998 for instance, was 58 and 62 years for males and females respectively (World Bank, 2001). The combination of this and the high fertility rates imply many children are left in the care of mothers or the extended family. While these are fundamental problems facing most people, they also provide a scope for

³ This is the number of children enrolled in primary or secondary schools *irrespective* of their age, as a percentage of the children in the age group that are officially expected to be at that level.

differentiated childhoods and its consequential effects like child labour and exploitation.

Childhood and children's lived experiences are naturally closely related to the social and economic backgrounds of their parents or families. In the traditional rural areas where the subjects of this research originate from, children are socialised in families which are both production and consumption units (Assimeng, 1999). In this sense, children represent a critical part of the family labour supply and are usually pushed into predefined gender roles (Mends, 1994). Girls are socialised towards a life of domesticity and reproduction, hence their education is not given as much attention as that of boys (GNCC, 2000). As parents grow older, part or all of the socialising responsibilities are gradually delegated to older siblings (Nukunya, 1992). The foundations for extended family relations, a significant factor in child labour, are then laid.

The limits of childhood are therefore evaluated in terms of social competence rather than specific age categories. As a result, children are initiated into adult roles as soon as they demonstrate the capability. Aries' (1962: 125) 'miniature adults' aptly describes the childhood under consideration here since children's initiation into adult roles presents early freedom of movement and participation in adult life. Children therefore mingle with adults on farms and in other family activities as part of the family production unit. However as a result of the simple social

structure and the close affinities that govern life, the 'miniature adults' are guaranteed a social network of protection that enhances that freedom.

A different type of childhood emerges in urban middle class families. Childhood here is usually experienced in more nucleated households in which the significance of kinship and extended family in children's lives is less relevant (Assimeng, 1999). There is therefore a closer parent-child relation, which as de Mause (1974) pointed out leads to greater understanding and reduced anxiety between the two. Moreover, the economic value of children in most of these households is minimal. For these children, child labour is what other children do and they may even enjoy the benefits of other children working for their families. They also have the time for uninterrupted education since it is known already that children of well educated parents have more opportunities for schooling in Ghana (Coulombe, 1997; Bhaloptra and Heady, 1999).

Children of the urban poor by reason of their area of residence have better schooling opportunities than their rural counterparts. But the urban poverty their families face imposes limitations on their childhood as well. A major aspect of their lived experiences then is the combination of school with work engagements in the urban informal sector (Verlet, 2000).

Generally, there are no state support systems to families or children to alleviate their economic problems. Thus, while children are cherished in the family and

lineage system (Mends, 1994; Assimeng, 1999), many impoverished families also judge the value of children by their economic contribution. This can even be carried to the extreme through the ‘child as property notion’ common in most impoverished families in both the rural and urban communities (Mends, 1994: 34). Consequently, most children are not socialised according to their own wishes or in adherence to national and international rules. They are socialised, if necessary, through punitive practices to ensure their compliance as hard working children who respect the authority of parents. In one survey, 86% of children aged 10 years and over claimed their carers occasionally caned them to ensure compliance (GNCC, 2000). This conjures images of the evil-incarnate child who needs to be purged through appropriate regimes of discipline and punishment (Jenks, 1996; James, *et al.*, 1998). Afrifa (1994: 15) notes in this respect that children have lost ‘faith...in the wisdom of the adult world’ since the majority of children in Ghana are ‘robbed of their childhood by being exposed too early to the ‘secrets’ and vagaries of adulthood – violence, illness, death and sexuality’. The exploitation of children’s labour in debilitating circumstances is another early exposure to the adult world.

Considerable efforts, though, have been made to protect children within the limits of international conventions, constitutional provisions and legislation. For example, in 1979 the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) was set up to oversee matters concerning children.⁴ After ratifying the United Nations

⁴ The GNCC was set up in 1979 under the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) Decree 66.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in September 1992, a National Programme of Action (NPA) was immediately devised to identify and pursue policies that enhance the development and welfare of children. Again, Article 28 of Ghana's 1992 constitution specifically guarantees the child's right to education, health, protection and general welfare. The age of criminal liability has been raised from 7 to 14 years while the minimum age of sexual consent has also been raised from 14 to 16 years⁵ to give further protection to children. Moreover, in 1998 the various laws on children under disparate bills and legal instruments were consolidated into the Children's Act 560. While these efforts do not confer formal rights of equality on children, they elevate childhood to a much higher level than previous. In spite of this, childhood in Ghana is a differentiated experience with the socio-economic backgrounds of families being one of the major determinants. One manifestation of this differentiated experience of childhood is child labour.

The child labour problem

The recognition of childhood as a social category and the increasing importance attached to issues concerning children, and in particular child labour are manifested in a number of international conventions. Among these are the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 1973, (No. 138), The ILO Homework Convention 1996, (No. 177) and The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999, (No. 182). There is also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989, the most widely ratified and comprehensive international agreement on children. Most of these conventions

⁵ These were enacted under the Criminal Code Amendment Act, Act 554 of 1998.

seek global consensus through unitary interpretations of childhood and child labour. The current views and discussions on childhood however, increasingly point to the multi-cultural and context specific nature of children's experiences. Following these arguments of social particularities, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) 1990 was devised as a follow-up to the UNCRC. The ACRWC also provides the basis for protecting children but with special attention to African cultures and social practices. In view of this, childhood experiences and the differential approaches to protecting children take us to the basic social, cultural and economic conditions in which families and children are located.

Even though child labour has always been part of the social landscape, the commercial roles of children and their exploitation are most problematic. The ILO estimates that 12% of working children in Ghana do so in commercial or economic situations such as truck pushing, *portering*, prostitution, agriculture, etc. (ILO, 1999). Moreover, 13% of the total labour force in the country is made up of 10 to 14-year olds (World Bank, 2001). The most visible of these children are those who work in the adult domains of markets, bus stations, traffic junctions and other strategic places in the cities. The Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS) counted 10,420 street children in Accra alone in 1997 (CAS, 1997). A recent survey in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis found that 80% of school children hawk and peddle wares deep into the night (Ghana News, 2001). Many others are children who have migrated internally from the rural areas to the cities (Van Ham,

et al., 1994). The population of street children in Accra, those born there and migrants, over a two and half year period was estimated to have increased by 50% (Cambridge Partnership for Organisational Transformation, 1999).

A number of factors account for the increasing numbers of children in the cities, particularly Accra, as child labourers. The major explanation that emerges in most studies on child labour in Ghana is the widespread poverty (Korboe, 1997; Beauchemin, 1999; IPEC, 1999; Eldring, *et al.*, 1999, Verlet, 2000). In addition, domestic abuse and strict parenting practices are identified as some of the push factors for children to migrate to the cities (Van Ham, *et al.*, 1991; Korboe, 1997; Beauchemin, 1999; GNCC, 2000). Moreover, the imbalance in the supply of education to children in the rural areas and the discrimination between boys and girls' education in families also raise education as a causative factor (UNICEF, 2000; World Bank, 2000). Children who are unable to attend school for reasons of the costs, poverty, or discrimination, have a higher chance of being placed in child labour situations (Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 1997; UNICEF, 1997a).

No doubt, the growing tendency for children to work on the streets and in the markets of Ghanaian cities has become a major social issue. The public perception of these children, however is that of 'vagrants' who are pursuing the 'elusive attractions' of the cities (Korboe, 1997: 3). As a result, the terms of debate have been framed by the demand for government to act before these children mature

into armed robbers, prostitutes, drug addicts and other social misfits (Accra Mail, 2001). Some sections of the press are even entreating the government to enact laws to punish parents who disregard their responsibilities to children. The Minister for Basic and Girl Child Education recently blamed, 'irresponsible fathers who bring children into the world and ignore their responsibilities, leaving helpless mothers to carry the burden of raising children alone' (Lartey, 2001: 2). What is even more distressing are the debilitating offshoots of child labour like slavery and prostitution. These social practices and activities have increasingly become part of the childhood experience in Ghana (ICFTU, 2001), in spite of social modernisation. All these underline the problematic nature of childhood and in particular child labour in Ghana.

The thesis

Child labour as a social issue is a dynamic one. A multiplicity of interpretations can be brought to it, usually from anthropological origins, through sociological, to moral and ethical standpoints in protecting childhood. These are strongly influenced by the economic environment. In this regard, social and economic landmarks like structural adjustment policies (SAP) and their impact on employment, costs of living, and the resulting structural developments in society are instrumental in children's experiences. Furthermore, global systems in economics, culture and politics ensure that childhood and its related issues like child labour are no longer isolated social issues with purely local origins.

Adjustment policies, with their origins in global political and economic forces have been a watershed in all aspects of life in Ghana. All post-independence governments have had to negotiate with the IMF and the World Bank and in some cases implemented their conditions to qualify for financial and development support. Until 1983, SAPs in Ghana never lasted for more than two years. Implementing governments were either overthrown in military coups or the policies were discontinued by succeeding governments. However, the adjustment policies started in 1983 by the Rawlings' government were continuously implemented over the years. In fact, any child born after 1985 in Ghana has grown up in the shadow of SAP. Such a child then is the product of the times, and belongs to what this thesis terms the *adjustment generation*. The child's lived experiences, particularly those emanating from parenting strategies, schooling, social and economic opportunities are all closely related to the legacy of this predominant economic ideology. This somehow demarcates a child of the *adjustment generation* as a brand of the 'Marxist child, ... a product of its time and material condition' (James, *et al.*, 1998: 54). Their childhood experiences are conditioned by the many hardships SAPs are known to have caused some of their families. While child labour is a common feature of childhood in Ghana, for some children in this generation, it represents more; it is a mechanism for expressing their agency and asserting their independence. For others, it is a tool of economic, social and cultural exploitation. Whatever the nature of childhood, this generation of children experience it within the constraints and opportunities of SAP.

This study is therefore based on the central proposition that Ghana's political economy, epitomised by the implementation of SAP since 1983, has burdened families, *monetised* social relations and increased the pressure on children. More specifically, this has transformed some of them into new categories of children who migrate from the rural areas to the cities to work in order to mitigate their personal or familial deprivation. However, the general failure of the most critical development policies in resolving national problems implies that even the relative opportunities of Accra do not offer them much relief.

In search of answers: Objectives, questions and intentions

A review of studies on child labour in Ghana shows that the directions of enquiry are often on the role of social and cultural factors (Van Ham, *et al.*, 1994; CAS, 1997; Korboe, 1997; Agarwal, *et al.*, 1997; GNCC, 1997; Beauchimen, 1999). They provide little or no connection between child labour and SAP. In other cases where economic angles are introduced, the critical issues are reduced to variables in traditional econometric studies (for example, Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Coulombe, 1997; Bhatotra and Heady, 1999; Heady, 2000). Others like Ashagrie (1997) are surveys that eventually provide concise answers to specific questions on child labour. While providing quantitative background to the problem, such surveys and econometric studies lack the perceptive, detailed and life-history information about child labour, particularly from the child's perspective. As Verlet (2000: 68) argues the studies relating to the impact of SAP on families and its culmination in

child labour have been ‘less systematic’. Most importantly, there has been little or no effort to link SAPs in Ghana to child labour from a qualitative point of view.

Secondly, the conventional approach to child labour as a cultural and social problem that can be tackled through legislation has been problematic. As a result, the various ILO conventions and even the UNCRC have been largely symbolic in Ghana. This is due to the overwhelming significance of poverty, deprivation and inequality in social relations. To the extent that families or children themselves rely on child labour as a matter of survival and necessity, such legislation represents an exogenous intervention that lacks legitimacy in people’s lives. This therefore demands the forging of closer connections between child labour and the role of economic and political forces in the impoverishment of ordinary people than has previously been attempted.

It is against this background that the study aims to examine the impact of SAP on families and their children and how this has led to the making of an *adjustment generation*. Granting the social and cultural origins of child labour, the study attempts to place child labour within the context of the structural changes in Ghana’s recent political economy. In effect, it seeks to treat and evaluate child labour as a social problem that has been given a new meaning and shape by the problems associated with SAP in a developing economy like Ghana. Against this background, the interconnected roles of economic agents, social groups and the government are consistently placed at the centre of any discussions.

In addition, the study attempts to personify the *adjustment generation* by the category of children who migrates from the villages to work in Accra in order to generate a clearer understanding of their motivations and lived experiences. In order to achieve these objectives, six research questions have been formulated as the bases of enquiry.

The questions are:

1. What is the nature of children who travel from the rural areas to work in Accra?
2. What are their motivations for coming to Accra instead of working in their local areas?
3. What is the nature of the work and social environment in which they operate when they get to Accra?
4. How do they conceptualise exploitation in their relations with others, especially at the work place?
5. What are the children's valuation of their work in relation to education and their future?
6. What are their economic contributions and their impact on the family relations?

To address these, the study takes children's motivations and decisions about leaving home as the starting point and follows their transformation into migrant child labourers in Accra. It also explores and constructs explanations on the evolution of such motivations within the uncertain economic and social

environment. This sheds light on the role of relative underdevelopment in certain social and economic groups in Ghana and how these conditions force children into work.

The study then brings a unique approach to the analysis of child labour in Ghana by relating the political and economic forces through time and space to social processes. As a result, historical quantitative data are used where possible to enhance the analytic and descriptive interpretation of the political economy in relation to social behaviour. Whereas the analyses of SAP on people's lives are traditionally approached through quantitative measurements, a concern for the subjective is also developed here. As a result, the accounts of children regarding the effects of economic and political policies on themselves and their families are explored. The overall intention then is to use children's own accounts of their labour to reveal a hitherto concealed dimension.

What is the justification for this approach? While there are powerful sociological and anthropological factors to child labour, the view in this thesis is that the national economy and its effects at the family level mediate such factors. For example, eventual decisions on children's schooling, where they live, parenting strategies and type of childhood concepts the family subscribes to are strongly related to the family economy. These in turn are related to child labour. For instance, it is known that being out of school increases a child's susceptibility to labour (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995; Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1997).

Similarly, children who live in the shantytowns or poor rural areas are more exposed to debilitating work situations (ILO, 1996a; UNICEF, 1997a). The family backgrounds of the majority of street children in Ghana also clearly point to a situation where the acquisition of basic survival needs appears to be the predominant concern (Van Ham, *et al.*, 1994; 1997; Korboe, 1997; Agrawal, *et al.*, 1997; Bar-On, 1996). What all these factors indicate is the mediating role of the macro and micro economy in the underlying cultural and social factors. Most importantly, the complexities of child labour demand that alternative approaches to the traditional interpretations be tried.

Organisation of the study and main issues

The study is organised into seven chapters. The child labour problem in Africa is considered in Chapter One. The basic argument here is that the worst forms of child labour are essentially a development problem. The chapter therefore provides a broader analytic framework within the familiar development problems confronting African countries. It also provides the opportunity for a review of the relevant literature on child labour in Africa. For clarity, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the construction of age and its relation to children and their engagement in labour. The conceptual issues of child labour and child work as well as the extent of the problem are also considered. In the second section, the nature of child labour by way of its inherent characteristics and the social conditions surrounding it are discussed. In addition, the categories of child labour based on what pertains in the informal sector are explored. In this regard,

the highly visible street and market activities, the invisible domestic labour, agricultural work and apprenticeship are discussed. In the third section the problems of development in Africa and the ensuing stagnation and poverty are also discussed in relation to child labour. These factors are argued to provide the bases for both children's voluntary engagement in work and the exploitation of social and cultural practices to pressurise or push them into work situations. In addition, the destabilising effects of globalisation are considered. Globalisation is argued to contribute to the child labour problem through its impact on the structural problems of Africa and its tendency to entrench Africa's role in the international division of labour.

The broad discussion on Africa is reduced to the country level in Chapter Two as Ghana's economy is examined in relations to the central focus of the study. The chapter considers children's engagement in intensive and competitive child labour in Accra as the product of the political instability and economic crisis and their culmination in the protracted implementation of SAP. It is therefore argued here that while SAP failed to mitigate the economic problems of families, its contradictions resulted in the shrinking of the social responsibilities of the state. These arguments are developed in two sections. The first section traces Ghana's engagement with the IMF and World Bank from its first contact in 1965 to 1979, that is the pre-1983 adjustment period. The Rawlings' years from 1983 to the late 1990s or the post-1983 adjustment period are given more detailed consideration because the category of children under study was born in this era. The second

section however, discusses the impact of the post-1983 adjustments on families within the argument that any policy that impoverishes families by extension places children in vulnerable situations.

Chapter Three is devoted to the research methodology. It is also divided into three sections. The first deals with the research design, the research instruments, data sources and generation strategies. Most importantly, the justification for the qualitative methodology is presented. The second section concentrates on the actual research process. The piloting phase, the choice of study sites and participants, interviews, observations and analytical strategies as well as issues of confidentiality, validity and reliability of the research are discussed. The last section deals with the problems encountered in the field. This section in particular shows child labour as a controversial problem when it comes to research and investigations since adults as the beneficiaries of child labour tend to act as effective gatekeepers.

The research findings are presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The first two research questions on the nature of migrant child labourers and their motivations are answered in Chapter Four. This begins with the examination of the profiles of children in the study by way of their origins, age, education, types of work and their daily incomes. The second part examines the children's motivations for migrating to work in Accra. The main issues that emerge here are the pervasive influence of poverty, children's lack of confidence in the rural economy, the

demonstration effect of returning child migrants and the influence of adults as the major sources of pressure and motivation.

Chapter Five addresses research questions three and four, regarding children's work and social environments and the conceptualisation of their relations with others. The first part of the chapter therefore looks at the lived experiences of children in terms of hazards and risks as well as the uncertainties and pressures that characterise their daily existence. The second part examines the social relations of exploitation through the interpersonal relationships that exist between them and guardians or proxy-parents, their employers and co-workers or peers. Children's co-operation and survival strategies as their responses to the exploitative relations and the harsh and unpredictable work and social environments are also discussed in the third part.

The third and last set of findings in relations to research questions five and six are presented in Chapter Six. This chapter examines children's views and actions beyond the physical act of travelling and engagement in work. The first part explores the economic and survival roles they play in their families and how that affects their positions in the family relation. The second part relates the children's valuation of their work to education and their future.

Chapter Seven is the concluding part of the thesis. It presents a summary of the findings as well as a discussion of the implications of child labour. Child labour is

conceded as an inevitable aspect of Ghana's developmental problems, especially if it persists with the draconian policies of IMF/World Bank. The conclusion however is that the worst and exploitative forms could be controlled and managed if the development effort is effectively geared towards poverty alleviation and a truly free basic education for children.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM CRADLE TO WORK: ISSUES OF CHILD LABOUR IN AFRICA

The countries with the highest illiteracy rates, lowest school enrolment ratios and serious nutritive deficiencies are in general those that have the highest proportions of children working (Canadian International Development Agency, 1997: 1).

1.1 Introduction

For millions of African children, work represents an inevitable part of the lived experience because of the impoverished conditions of their families or the social and cultural practices surrounding their existence. Some types of work, however, are detrimental to the interest of children; others raise long-term implications for Africa. After all, if large numbers of children end up uneducated, they will not possess those skills necessary for economic and social development. Yet the enormity of the problem is set to surpass the current trend of 80 million child labourers in Africa (ILO, 1996a). For, ILO estimates that 100 million African children will actively be working by 2015 (Ngunjiri, 1998). Stemming this tide and creating conducive environments to protect African children is not only an essential part of the search for social justice, but is also a necessary condition for nurturing their capabilities and potential as human beings.

It is no surprise, therefore that there has been considerable focus on the problem, particularly from UN agencies like the ILO, UNICEF, IPEC and both governmental and non-governmental organisations. There is now a considerable shift in attitudes towards the plight of African children, with child labour as the means of exploitation and abuse often coming to the fore. There is equally a broad global and continental consensus and recognition that something drastic

should be done about the African child labour problem. In order to have a clear strategy for pursuing this objective, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) has been devised as a follow-up to the UNCRC. Yet, social and cultural practices, stagnation in African political economies and the resulting deprivation in families hamper ameliorative actions. The efforts have also been hampered by definitional confusion since concepts like labour and childhood evoke contrasting interpretations. This is even more so in Africa where child labour is relatively under-researched.

This chapter argues that child labour is endemic to African societies and so represents a significant aspect of children's lived experiences. But, while it is rooted in long-standing social processes, it is also principally influenced by economic and political forces that have shaped Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. These forces appeared in the form of structural adjustment programmes imposed by the IMF and the World Bank as preconditions for development aid and loans, ineffective and unachievable economic policies and goals or political and social instabilities. The consequent failure of African economies to generate sustained economic and social development not only places families in unsustainable situations, but also increases the pressure on children to work. However, since sustainable economic growth and development still remains an elusive goal for most African societies, it is possible that the child labour problem in Africa will get worse before it gets better. Even as some evidence point to a declining incidence of child labour in some parts of Africa, children in other areas are working at more intensive and competitive levels with debilitating implications.

The chapter pursues this argument in four sections. The first looks at the conceptual issues of age and labour. It examines why the insertion of age limits in international conventions on child labour though necessary, is not always effective in protecting African children. It also explores the definitional debate on child labour and child work. The second section examines the nature and categories of child labour to underline its pervasive nature in Africa. The emphasis is placed on street and market activities, domestic service and agricultural work. The role of apprenticeship as a mechanism in facilitating the exploitation of children is also discussed. The third section looks at some of the structural problems of Africa. In particular, the meagre economic and social development, the resulting constraints of poverty and the restrictive impacts of globalisation are presented as the driving force behind more recent social and cultural practices that exploit children. The last section examines informal fostering as part of the social process of exploitation.

1.2 Delineating child labour: Conceptual issues of age and labour

It is essential to bring some precision to our understanding of what child labour is in order to develop the various arguments. This involves addressing the importance of age in delineating child labour since without this we have no means of defining what it is to be a child. Moreover, without knowing what child labour is we have no means of assessing what children should and should not do and the numbers of children involved.

1.2.1 The significance of age

Most societies perceive childhood as a vulnerable stage in both the physiological and psychological development of a person. Laws and conventions are therefore established to define the limits of childhood and to protect children. However, those relating to child labour in particular are often problematic since they are contested and usually unenforceable in Africa. Consequently, formal age is less significant in delineating childhood in relation to child labour, despite its central position in the various conventions on children and child labour.

The ILO's Minimum Age Convention provides a common starting point for setting different age thresholds for different activities (Nkurlu, 2000). Under Article 2, countries are expected to set the minimum age for children's entry into work at 15 years, provided it is not lower than the compulsory school completion age (UNICEF, 1997a). However, developing countries are allowed to set the minimum age for *light work* between 12 and 14 years. The Convention further stipulates a minimum age of 18 years in hazardous work situations; again with the liberty of setting it at 16 years if the country takes the necessary steps to protect children (Nkurlu, 2000). There is, therefore, considerable latitude for countries to interpret what children between the ages of 12 and 18 years can and cannot do. For example, a global survey of legislation on children and work in 155 countries by the ILO, found that 122 had laws that prohibit children below 14 years from work or limit them to specific activities (Lansky, 1997).

The Minimum Age Convention however has been problematic. What constitutes light work and the ambiguous age limits set by the Convention have discouraged

many countries from ratifying it. Only 33 of the 53 African nations have ratified the Convention (ILO, 2001). In contrast, the UNCRC, which sets the defining age for a child at 18 years but is flexible on its application, had by 1999 been ratified by all 195-member states, except the United States¹ and Somalia².

A number of reasons can be adduced for the failure of 20 African countries to ratify the Convention and why those who have ratified it hardly enforce it. One explanation lies in the social and cultural construction of childhood. As in other societies, childhood is constructed and maintained by adults in relation to the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions. In Western societies for example, age and childhood are largely formalised concepts based on biological maturation and have come to represent a distinctive stage in the life cycle (Abernethie, 1998; Boyden, 2001). Even then, the boundaries of childhood are sometimes contested.

There is greater ambiguity about childhood in Africa, however. In most cases, social criteria supersede biological age in differentiating a child from an adult (Amin, 1994; Grier, 1994; Assimeng, 1999). The fact that many births are not officially registered (World Bank, 2001), by reason of illiteracy, costs or sheer inconvenience compounds the problem. Without certified records of age, the limits of childhood become unpredictable and subjective. The social perception of children and their capabilities then determine their lived experiences rather

¹ Kilbourne (1998: 244) argues that the political and financial clout of primarily 'conservative religious organisations' mobilised against the UNCRC's ratification on the grounds that it seeks a 'surrendering of American sovereignty', impairs American 'federalism', and threatens 'parental rights'.

² Somalia on the other hand has been struggling to exist as a nation-state since its civil war and has no legitimate government to ratify the Convention (Kilbourne, 1998).

than formal age criteria established by laws or conventions. In Ghana for example, several linguistic references point to the limits of childhood, with the Akans³ maintaining that a *child who knows how to wash his/her hands eats with adults*.

Another reason is the interpretation of light work. The majority of African children undertake domestic, farm and other family work by age five or six (Cockburn, 1999). These are routine aspects of familial socialisation, yet the tasks involved are not necessarily light work. Thus, an adherence to the minimum age of 12 years for light work problematizes most activities, if African governments commit themselves to enforcing them. This feeds into political and economic considerations. Many African governments lack the legitimacy to enforce age limits because of the high unemployment and paucity of economic opportunities. It is politically inexpedient to fully restrain parents from using their children's labour, if those governments cannot offer them jobs. It will be similarly difficult to prevent some children from working if work represents their only means of survival.

Thus, while the constructions of formal minimum ages are essential to monitor or limit children's involvement in dangerous work situations, the reality of social and economic conditions in Africa undermines such efforts. The major problem this poses for any analysis of child labour in Africa is the exact specification of what children can and cannot do.

³ The Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana.

1.2.2 The faces of work and labour

Not only is the interpretation of age problematic in Africa, what constitutes work or labour poses interpretational problems as well. This begins with the interchangeable use of child labour and child work, which according to Myers (1999: 22), often results in the two being treated as ‘approximate’ synonyms. Specifically, child work is argued to be a less harmful activity, more benign in its impact and in some cases even essential for the child’s development (White, 1996; Abernethie, 1998; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Myers, 1999; Woodhead, 1999; Verlet, 2000). Child exploitation may not be a primary motive. Viewed this way, work is an important and inevitable aspect of child socialisation.

Child labour on the other hand is treated as a strenuous activity, with the tendency to impede the child’s development, often with lasting and damaging effects (White, 1996; UNICEF, 1997a; Abernethie, 1998; Boyden *et al.*, 1998; Myers, 1999, Verlet, 2000). It is also characterised by economic motives and often leads to exploitation. Child labour therefore is not in the best interest of the child. In this sense, according to the Encyclopaedia of the Social Science, ‘children’s work as a social good is the direct antithesis of child labour as a social evil’ (cited in Hanson and Vandaele, 2000: 31).

It is difficult in reality, to achieve a sharp dichotomy between child labour and child work on the basis of economic motives, exploitation or even the value of work to the child. For instance, in a survey of Ghana, Senegal, India and Indonesia, the ILO defined child labour simply as ‘economic activity’ (ILO 1996a: 22). The implication of this definition is that activities like domestic

service, with no direct economic value, are excluded. Yet, domestic service represents a crucial source of exploitation in Africa. The survey indicated that the extent of child labour in the countries would have been greater for girls than boys if 'non-economic' activities like domestic services had been taken into consideration (ILO, 1996a: 22). The ILO itself estimates that domestic service and other unpaid activities are responsible for as much as 81% of children's time (Gulrajani, 2000).

The ILO has subsequently defined child labour as, 'work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of children' (ILO, 1999a: 16). In this connection, it considers activities like slavery, bonded labour, child trafficking, child prostitution and the use of children in drug trafficking as the 'worst forms of child labour'. UNICEF (1997a) also provides a list of exploitative conditions that give rise to child labour. These include work that demands long hours, exerts physical and psychological pressures, inhibits schooling or jeopardises the child's development. These categorisations emphasise one extreme end of children's activities, the worst forms, or 'social evils'. To account for the more benign and perhaps useful activities or 'social good', we have to look at the other extreme.

Arguing against the viability of constructing boundaries between child work as a 'neutral' activity and child labour as a 'detrimental' one, White (1996: 837) suggested the continuum approach. This rates children's work situations from unacceptable and intolerable forms through useful and tolerable ones. At one extreme are activities that are unacceptable and so dehumanising that they are

incapable of 'improvement'. In such cases, he argues, the only solution is to ensure that children are never placed in those situations. Next in line are forms of work that are harmful and obstructive to children's development but are susceptible to reform and legislation. This is followed by 'neutral' activities that are neither particularly harmful, nor particularly beneficial' (*ibid.*) At the opposite end are the tolerable or useful activities. In order to construct such a continuum, the actual work process, the social relations of work as well as the alternative costs of work have to be considered. This way, White (1996) concluded, the question of why certain activities are more problematic than others could be answered. In this connection, Grootaert and Kanbur (1995) also argue that it is not the perception of work itself that is necessarily negative but the psychological and physical pressures surrounding it.

However, identifying the opposites of the continuum cannot be an end in itself, since a tolerable activity can easily deteriorate into a harmful one if the social relations surrounding that work are abused. Evidently, activities that are debilitating, exploitative and give rise to enslavement are incontrovertible in their impact and can easily be identified and isolated. The real problem however lies in the particularity of social relations and how they are exploited or abused to transform benign activities like simple domestic work (social good) into domestic servitude and exploitation (social evil).

As Rogers and Standing (1981) argue, the way of life of most African children itself constitutes economic activity. Most of these activities fit the criteria UNICEF (1997a) and ILO (1996a) have raised in relation to child labour.

Depending on the conditions and social relations surrounding such ubiquitous economic activities, they would lie anywhere on White's continuum. This inevitability of work and the propensity for benign activities to deteriorate into exploitative ones underpins the child labour problem. A criterion of physical, social and psychological demands are therefore necessary in identifying useful work from detrimental ones. The Government of Ghana's interpretation of child labour endorses this and thus will be pivotal to this study. Accordingly, child labour applies to children below 16 years:

if the work is preventing the child from attending school and acquiring relevant skills for adult roles and responsibilities; if the child is exposed to danger; the work causes harm to the child in whatever form; if there is wilful and deliberate exploitation of the child (Government of Ghana, 1992: xii).

Implicit in this condition is the inevitability of work in the lives of most children, as presupposed in this study⁴. Significantly, it is the surrounding social and work processes that determine if that work is impeding the child's social, psychological and physical development.

1.2.3 Legions of child labourers

The endemic nature of child labour further renders most estimates in Africa unreliable. It is estimated that some 250 million children world wide, between the ages of 5 and 14 years work to earn a living (ILO, 1999a). Of this, 120 million work full-time and 130 million combine school and work. On a regional basis, 61% are in Asia, 7% in Latin America and 32% (80 million) in Africa.

⁴ The participants in the study by their status in Accra meet the conditions established in the government's view of child labour: most are not attending schools, while a few do so irregularly, their activities are full of danger and are likely to have both short- and long-term consequences. Moreover, they experience diverse forms of abusive situations on a daily basis.

Gender-wise, 56% are boys and 44% are girls. African children however are most economically active, with 41% engaging in economic activities compared to 22% in Asia and a global average of 25%. Of Africa's economically active children, 46% are boys while 37% are girls (ILO, 1999a). The absolute figures are quite dramatic; in Zimbabwe 300,000 children below the age of 16 years are estimated to be working in the agricultural sector alone (Weissman, 1999). Nigeria has an estimated 12 million child workers (Siddiqi and Patrinos, 2001) and 500,000 children work in Morocco (BBC News, 1999). It is also estimated that 120,000 children work as child soldiers in Africa (Terre des homes, 2000).

Table 1.1 elaborates the extent to which children aged between 10 and 14 years participated in the labour force of 35 African countries in 1980 and 1999. The country populations are shown in columns I and II, the total labour force in columns III and IV, while the percentage of 10 to 14 year-olds in the total labour force appears in columns V and VI. In 1999, Mali had the highest child labour force participation rate of 52%, while Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, and Uganda had rates in excess of 40%. Other nations like Ghana, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia had rates lower than 20% in 1999. Even though the child participation rates fell in all African countries from 1980 to 1999, the rates across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) were still extremely high. On average, the child participation rate for SSA as a whole fell only marginally from 35% in 1980 to 30% in 1999 (World Bank, 2001). The North African states of Algeria (from 7% to 1%), Tunisia (from 6% to 0%), and Morocco (from 21% to 3%) however achieved significant declines.

Table 1.1: Population and Labour Participation Rates of Africa (1980/99)

Country	Population (Millions)		Labour Force			
	1980	1999	Total (Millions)		Children:10-14yrs: %	
			1980	1999	1980	1999
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	
Algeria	18.7	30.5	5	10	7	1
Angola	7.0	12.4	3	6	30	26
Benin	3.5	6.1	3	3	30	27
Botswana	0.9	1.6	0	1	26	15
Burkina Faso	7.0	11.0	4	5	71	47
Burundi	4.1	6.7	2	4	50	49
Cameroon	8.7	17.7	4	6	34	24
CAR*	2.3	3.5				
Chad	4.5	7.5	2	4	42	37
Congo, DR	27.0	49.8	12	20	33	29
Congo, Rep.	1.7	2.9	1	1	27	26
Cote d'Ivoire	8.2	14.7	3	6	28	19
Egypt	40.9	62.4	14	24	18	10
Eritrea	2.4	4.0	1	2	44	39
Ethiopia	37.7	62.8	17	27	46	42
Ghana	10.7	18.9	5	9	16	13
Guinea	4.5	7.2	2	3	41	32
Kenya	16.6	30.0	8	15	45	40
Lesotho	1.3	2.1	1	1	28	21
Madagascar	8.9	15.1	4	7	40	35
Mali	6.6	10.9	3	5	61	52
Mauritania	1.6	2.6	1	1	30	23
Morocco	19.4	28.2	7	11	21	3
Mozambique	12.1	17.3	7	8	39	33
Niger	5.6	10.5	3	5	48	44
Nigeria	71.1	123.9	29	50	29	25
Rwanda	5.2	8.3	3	4	43	41
Senegal	5.5	9.3	3	4	43	29
Sierra Leone	3.2	4.9	1	2	19	15
South Africa	27.6	42.1	1	0	17	10
Tanzania	18.6	32.9	9	17	43	38
Tunisia	6.4	9.5	2	4	6	0
Uganda	12.8	21.5	7	11	49	44
Zambia	5.7	9.9	2	4	19	16
Zimbabwe	7.0	11.9	3	5	37	28

Source : Derived from Table 3, World Development Report, 2000/2001.

* Central Africa Republic

The conceptual difficulties discussed earlier affect the reliability of these estimates. Hence, even though the decreasing trend in Table 1.1 is a positive development, it cannot be uncritically accepted. The lack of consensus on definitions of child labour means that what constitutes child labour worthy of enumeration in one part of Africa may be discounted in another. A case in point is the millions of children in apprenticeship, whom, though learning a trade are very productive. The problem is that many of them do so in debilitating and sometimes slavish circumstances (Goddard and White, 1982; Morice, 1982). Similarly, Orkin (1999) demonstrates in his survey of Zimbabwe that the extent of child labour varies directly with the definition used. Moreover, the unreliable nature of some country statistics in terms of under-reporting and data generation procedures impairs their reliability (Bequele and Boyden, 1988b; Lansky, 1997; World Bank, 2001). There is therefore more to the incidence of child labour in Africa than what is often portrayed by official statistics.

1.3 The nature and categories of child labour

The nature of child labour

Children as a source of labour are both psychologically and physiologically underdeveloped (UNICEF, 1997a). Their underdeveloped attributes - smallness in frame, flexibility and docility – make them attractive in situations where simple, repetitive and labour-intensive techniques are necessary (Bequele and Boyden, 1988a; Hobbs, *et al.*, 1992; Lavalette, 1994). Elson (1982) argues that their *otherness* as immature and unskilled labour is used to justify the attribution of a lower marginal productivity and wages. Some empirical evidence however show that in activities like carpet weaving (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995) or

domestic service (Kapinga, 2000), children are efficient and sometimes even preferred to adults for their greater dexterity. This presupposes a potentially higher marginal productivity and the justification for higher wages, yet child labour, irrespective of the level of productivity is poorly remunerated. Even when children do the same work as adults and/or work longer hours, their effort is valued less (Bequele and Boyden, 1988a; Kapinga, 2000). This partially derives from their minority status which employers take advantage of to unilaterally determine wages or hire and fire them without the need for redundancy payments (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000).

A gendered division of labour is also a common aspect of child labour (Frederikson, 1999; Qvortrup, 2000). It is even more so in Africa where the differential positioning of gender is played out early in life, at least in the rural areas. Across Africa, in Togo (Lange, 2000), Ghana (Assimeng, 1999; Beauchemin, 1999), Cameroon (Amin, 1994), Zimbabwe (Grier, 1994) and Tanzania (Kapingi, 2000), household demand for child labour follows a pattern in which rural boys work with their fathers on farms and girls assist their mothers both on the farm and in homes. In the urban areas, Agarwal, *et al.* (1997) also argue that girls are engaged more in petty trading, load carrying, commercial food preparation and sale largely because these are considered traditional female tasks. Furthermore, even though child labour is generally cheap, the girl-child's labour tends to be even cheaper, a fact that reflects adult life (Bequele and Boyden, 1988b; Mizen, 1992). For instance, girls are over-represented in domestic service, yet UNICEF (1997a) claims they are consistently paid lower wages than boys.

The social preference to educate boys sustains this differentiation, and for that matter the unusually high demand for girls. This is predicated on the perception in traditional African societies that girls will marry early in life and therefore need to be trained in domestic and family work (Grier, 1994; Brown and Kerr, 1997). Consequently for some families, raising the girl towards a life of 'domesticity and subservience' is preferable to any investment in their formal education (UNICEF, 1997d: 7). Even where girls are sent to school, they are still expected to perform more of such responsibilities. Thus, on a cumulative basis, girls work more and for longer hours than boys; they also have fewer opportunities to attend school (FCO, 1997; Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998).

Categories of child labour

UNICEF (1997a) categorises child labour in the developing world into seven main activities: domestic service, forced and bonded labour, commercial sexual exploitation, industrial and plantation work, street work, family work and girls' work. ILO (1999a) also groups child labour into four: agricultural activities, including fishing, farming and horticulture; informal sector activities like street trading, small-scale factory work and workshops; domestic service and generally illegitimate activities like child prostitution and drug peddling. Others categorise child labour by where it is performed; in the rural or urban area (Bonnet, 1993).

We are again confronted with the problematic interpretation of child labour in some of these categories. Those set by UNICEF (1997a) are wide and inclusive enough but generally tautological. For example, children forced into slavery could end up as domestic servants, plantation workers, or prostitutes. Bonded

labour *per se* therefore cannot be a good category, since it is not an activity, but the product of a social relation that enslaves children in all forms of debilitating situations. What they are forced to do as a result of that enslavement rather should be identified as such.

A more plausible approach is to categorise child labour within the formal and informal economies of Africa. This narrows the definitional problem to the dualism that characterises the production and distribution of goods and services in Africa. The formal sector which consists of the civil and public service and the mainstream private companies has little or no direct child involvement in its activities (World Bank, 1995; Bhaloptra and Heady, 1999). This fact shifts the attention to what pertains in the informal sector which consists of irregular and marginal activities that are often based on traditional or rudimentary technologies (Sethuraman, 1976). Ninsen (1991: 2) describes it as ‘crowded by people forced by low income, unemployment and by desperate poverty to engage in any kind of income-generating activity for subsistence’. It is in this sector that child labour in Africa is largely located (CIDA, 1997) since what happens is a direct reflection of the broader society. The preponderance of children in this sector is attributed to Africa’s small manufacturing sector and the limited incentive for the formal sector to employ children (World Bank, 1995; Bhaloptra and Heady, 1999).

In view of this, three broad categories, all located in the informal sector, will form the basis of the discussion on children’s activities. These are street work and its constitutive elements like petty trading, *portering*, truck pushing, car

washing, shoe-shining, begging and child prostitution among others. The other two are domestic service and agricultural work.

1.3.1 Street Work

Street work is the epitome of informal sector activities in Africa because of its visibility. Generally, more than 100 million children are estimated to be working in the streets of the developing world (Ojanuga, 1990). It usually starts in the neighbourhoods but extends to the markets and business areas as children mature and gain more sophisticated survival strategies (Amin, 1994; Glauser, 1997). In a survey of street children in Cameroon, Amin (1994) identified three types of street workers: those who form part of the family economic unit and have been sent to sell things; those with irregular contacts with the family; and full-time workers with no contacts with the family. Street children are also categorised on the basis of the prepositions 'in' and 'of'. Children 'in' the streets are those who utilise that space for work only, while children 'of' the streets live and work there (Glauser, 1997). However in the attempt to reconstruct this, Glauser groups street children into 'lower and upper realms' (*ibid*). The lower realm children, he argues, are in contact with their families, operate in the neighbourhood streets and are guaranteed familial protection. Those in the upper realm however are more hardened, socialise without the benefit of their family and therefore use the street as the place of last resort. In both cases, children face social and spatial exclusion in the streets and markets. Many of them therefore operate illegally or under extremely dangerous conditions.

Street workers are usually in the service sector, with about 90% either selling wares or working as general labourers (ILO, 1996a). In the urban areas of Africa, these children work as scavengers, beggars or guides to adult beggars, head-carriers, shoe-shiners, car-washers, truck-pushers and bus attendants (Kapinga, 2000; Komolafe, 2000). Most of them are boys, with girls constituting less than 25% of the street populations (Bar-On, 1997). Again, the literature points to staggering numbers of working children in the streets. Between 2000 and 3000 children were estimated by UNICEF to be working in the streets of Dakar in 1993 (Mbaye and Fall, 2000). A head count in 1997 by the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS) found over 10,420 child street workers in Accra (CAS, 1997). In Zambia, 90,000 street children were estimated to be working in Lusaka in 1998 (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). The Child Welfare Society of Kenya estimated 45,000 child street workers in Nairobi in 1997, while some 12,000 children of former refugees from Mozambique are homeless and working in the streets of Zimbabwe (Barometer Africa, 2001).

Among the reasons for the explosion in the number of street children is increasing poverty (Balanon, 1989; Van Ham, *et al.*, 1994; ILO, 1996a, Bar-On, 1997; UNICEF, 1997a; Korboe, 1997; Orkin, 1999; Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). Another is children's preference for life on the streets as a way of escaping domestic and social abuse (Aptekar, 1994; Amin, 1994; Beauchemin, 1999; Iverson, 2000). The increasing social instability in parts of Africa and the victimization of children in the process is equally critical. Loforte (1994) attributes the vast numbers of street children in Mozambique to the devastating civil war. UNICEF (1997a) adduces similar reasons for the increasing numbers in

Monrovia (Liberia), Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Mogadishu (Somalia) where wars have disrupted normal family relations.

Begging and prostitution represent two tragic street activities in terms of their impact on children. In the predominantly Islamic regions of West Africa, it is common for children to beg for alms to sustain their Koranic teachers (Ojanuga, 1990; Mbaye and Fall, 2000). A survey in Senegal found that 58% of such children have to beg for a minimum of five hours a day to obtain the daily minimum requirement of 100 CFA francs⁵ for their teachers (Mbaye and Fall, 2000). There is therefore little residual time for the original purpose of Islamic education.

A number of children also work in the streets as prostitutes. At least one million children, some as young as 5 years, are thought to be under commercial sexual exploitation, with nearly 50% of them being HIV positive (UNICEF, 1999). As with other forms of child labour, social problems, dysfunctional families, wars, social upheavals, and poverty are considered responsible for nurturing the conditions that give rise to this exploitation (Black, 1993; UNICEF, 1997a). Sadly, children who are forced into such situations face rejection when they attempt to normalise their lives. It has been found in Ghana that many girls return to the same dangerous and exploitative work because of the social stigma attached to their former prostitution (Beauchemin, 1999).

⁵ This is the currency used in French-speaking West Africa

In what ways does the street affect children? According to UNICEF (1997a), street children are generally malnourished and for that reason prone to or suffer from communicable diseases like tuberculosis. They also have less aversion to risk and so end up in accidents and illegal activities like pick pocketing and drug peddling. They are also susceptible to the aggressive street culture (Balanon, 1989). In addition, the dirty environments and traffic-congested city centres in which they operate expose them to noxious gases that affect their long-term development (Forasteiri 1997; 2000). UNICEF (1997a: 41) sums up the effects this way:

... life is often precarious and violent, unhealthy and unfair. Many are exploited and cheated by adults and peers and must spend many hours earning their survival. Many suffer from malnutrition and from illnesses including tuberculosis. Self-esteem is often low, despite the superficial air of exaggerated self-confidence they may assume to appear street-smart.

Street children, however, are not always passive to the social environment they find themselves in. It is therefore argued that they rely on social networks in their street communities to provide themselves with the necessary security (Bar-On, 1997; Myers, 2000; Morice, 2000).

1.3.2 Domestic Service

A consequence of the gender division of labour among African children is the widespread demand for girls as housemaids in the urban areas (UNICEF, 1997d;). Such workers are usually between 8 and 12 years old, while globally, one-third of them have never enrolled for school or have had to quit in order to work (ILO, 1997). It is necessary to distinguish between domestic work as part of a child's socialisation and occurring in the family from the type, which occurs

outside the family, primarily as full-time domestic servitude. The latter is the invidious type for which there is considerable international consternation. In its worst forms, girls work for as many as 16 hours a day (FCO, 1997). Yet, they are paid very little and may even be bonded in domestic servitude (Blagbrough and Glynn, 1999). Ironically, as both Blagbrough and Glynn (1999) and Anderfuhren (2000) point out, when children are taken from villages to work as domestic servants in the cities, they are assumed to have been offered a better life. They are therefore expected to show gratitude rather than demand monetary returns. The reality however is far from this idealised version since the children work long hours, are discriminated against and prone to various forms of abuse.

As a result of the pressing economic and social problems, domestic servitude seems to be on the increase in Africa. The growing economic inequality creates both the demand and supply for children in this capacity. In the suburbs of cities in Kenya, Senegal, Ghana and Madagascar even lower middle class households are known to be using children from poorer backgrounds as housemaids (GNCC, 2000; Mbaye and Fall, 2000; Ravololomanga and Schlemmer, 2000). As Verlet (2000: 69) argues, these children are pushed into domestic work by parents or other family members under the pretence of 'bonds of kinship and friendship'. The real motive is monetary. However, economic and social inequalities often ensure that children from minority groups, lower castes or poor backgrounds are the ones used as domestic servants (UNICEF, 1997a). There is, also a close relationship between domestic work and child trafficking in both West and Central Africa. Increasing numbers of children are trafficked from Benin, Togo

and Mali (poorer nations) to Gabon, Nigeria and Cote d' Ivoire (relatively better-off nations) to work as domestic servants (Anti-Slavery International, 1999).

By definition, domestic workers are kept in the homes of employers or hidden from the public gaze. The children are therefore susceptible to higher levels of abuse and may therefore experience devastating psychological and physical effects. Very young children are starved, punished, and sexually abused and because of the hard work are plagued by 'fatigue and poor growth (FCO, 1997:

3). According to UNICEF (1997a: 32) they:

may well be the most vulnerable and exploited children of all, as well as the most difficult to protect. They are often extremely poorly paid or not paid at all ... they are deprived of schooling, play and social activity and of emotional support from family and friends. They are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

1.3.3 Agricultural work

Millions of children in the rural areas engage in cash crop and/or food crop production. The ILO survey of Ghana, Senegal, Indonesia and India found that 75% of all child labour-related activities took place in the rural areas, while 90% of children in such situations worked in agriculture (ILO, 1996a). In 1993, 43% of casual farm labourers in South Africa were women and children (Boyd, 1994). The same trend in high percentages of children in the sector is evident across Africa as thousands work on family farms or plantations (Cockburn, 1999; Weissman, 1999). In Zimbabwe for example, commercial growers of tea, tobacco and cotton account for more than 80% of child labour in the country (Weissman, 1999). In addition to working on their own, children also accompany their

parents/relatives as unpaid family labour in cocoa, tea, sisal, coffee and other plantations⁶ (UNICEF, 1997a; Eldring, *et al*, 2000).

It is essential however to contrast the judicious use of children in farming as part of the growing-up process with the more hazardous type, where children are pawned to commercial farmers or employed for meagre payments. There is considerable exploitation of children in the latter situations. In Zimbabwe, children are known to work 60 hours a week picking cotton or coffee for \$1 a day (UNICEF, 1997a)⁷. Agricultural work exposes children to dangerous chemicals, sharp objects, heat and dust (Bonnet, 1993; Forastieri, 2000). UNICEF (1997a) estimates that the persistent carrying of heavy loads and hard physical labour permanently disable children's bodies and can stifle their physical growth by up to 30% of what they are biologically capable of achieving.

1.3.4 Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is also considered under this section, not as child labour in itself, but as a mechanism that facilitates child exploitation. All aspects of life are replicated as children learn trades in car repair, electronics, refrigeration, masonry, carpentry, dressmaking, hairdressing, bakery, cooking, agriculture and others, without remuneration. As a learning process, it affords millions of children the opportunity to acquire skills outside the formal educational system.

⁶ There was international indignation at a ship, *Etireno*, that sailed from Benin to Gabon with child slaves who were going to work as domestic servants or on cocoa plantations. Fearing an international backlash that could lead to the boycott of cocoa from the Ivory Coast, the government sent two ministers to London. They attempted to explain the impoverished conditions in which farmers operate and to lobby for higher cocoa prices so that farmers can recruit adults instead of children.

⁷ Considering that 36% of Zimbabweans survive on less than \$1 a day (World Bank, 2001), the children's earnings are quite substantial. The issue however is why children are used when there is

The process begins with children or their parents paying initiation fees to a master/mistress in return for training and protection. These payments are crucial to the survival of the small craftsmen because they replenish their declining capital (Marguerat, 2000). In addition, as Morice (2000) argues, apprenticeships as a source of free labour provide an effective way for small enterprises to compete against the more resource-endowed formal sector businesses.

However, while apprenticeship is a useful training opportunity, it is also exploitative for a number of reasons. By stripping children of their freedom and the conditions under which they supply their labour, Morice (1982: 512) considers it, 'a mechanism for the facile extraction of surplus labour'. There is also an endemic paternalism that creates an unequivocal master-servant relationship. This is what gives rise to the labouring aspect, since children are intensively used in income-yielding activities, often under hazardous conditions. Furthermore, children in some cases do not acquire the necessary skills on time because of the haphazard way in which the training is organised (Morice, 1982).

The masters tend to exploit and perpetuate the inherent culture of apprenticeship, that children work for their employers as long as possible, while the costs of their reproduction fall on parents. The inevitable exploitation however is a derivative of the inherent contradictions of the system, since the slower the process of skill-acquisition the higher the opportunity to exploit children's unpaid or undervalued labour. There is therefore an implicit benefit in providing ineffective training in

considerable adult unemployment in the country. It boils down to the duality of cost minimisation and profit maximisation. The ethical issue of employing children is lost in this economic argument.

order to prolong the service period. Even after acquiring the skills, some children are prevented from leaving to start their own activities until hefty graduation fees are paid (Marguerat, 2000). There is also considerable scope for enslavement and exploitation since children are often cut off from their family and friends. On the bases of some of these problems Morice (1982: 523), concluded from a study in Senegal that children, 'suffer premature physical attrition and high mortality rates' usually through 'malnutrition'.

The crucial concepts of age, labour and work as well as the extent of the problem in Africa have been examined. The common forms of work by way of street activities, domestic work, farm work and apprenticeship have also been discussed. The extent of the problem was also discussed to underline the fact that children's lived experiences, to a large extent, are shaped by work. Most of the activities discussed are therefore integral to survival and children's socialisation as part of the quest for survival. Others like begging, prostitution and commercial agricultural work however demonstrate the level of desperation many children face.

1.4 African political economy: Stagnation, poverty and globalisation

We have seen in some detail that child labour is extensive in Africa. In this section, we consider child labour in relation to Africa's economic problems, the resulting poverty and deprivation and the destabilising impact of globalisation. The discussion here supports the central argument that, the general failure of African economies and the consequent poverty persistently act as the catalyst for the emergence of more intensive and debilitating forms of child labour. The

constricting stabilisation and adjustment policies also dictate children's lives and deprive them of normal childhood experiences.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the most underdeveloped region of the world. It has the lowest gross national product (GNP) of \$320.6 billion, among the developing regions of the world, but a population of 642 million (World Bank, 2001). Also, while the regional per capita income is \$500, the majority of SSA nations have per capita incomes of less than \$400. In fact, annual per capita incomes have been declining. Throughout the 1980s, per capita incomes declined by 2.4% (Hewitt, 1992), while the standard of living fell by 2% per annum (Giddens, 1997). The 'optimism' of the immediate post-independence period (1960s and 70s) in Africa had by the beginning of the 1980s faded (Kiely, 1998b: 24). This is attributed to the difficulty of achieving minimum growth targets or anticipated levels of industrialisation and poverty reduction. Hence, the majority of sub-Saharan Africans, by the beginning of the 1990s, were actually poorer than they were three decades earlier. This decline has aggravated long-term uses of children as labourers in all sorts of situations.

1.4.1 Structural problems as the catalyst for child labour

In spite of relative advances in agriculture and industry, the structure of production in Africa remains largely traditional and marginal. This development provides considerable scope for child labour. The significance of agriculture as a source of employment and income generation for the majority of African nations and their citizens is unquestionable. For instance, it supports 90% and 80% of the populations of Malawi and Mozambique respectively (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000), with

similar trends across SSA as a whole. Much of SSA's comparative advantage is therefore located in agriculture and primary commodity production, yet productivity levels are low. In 1999, agriculture added a value of only 18% to GDP compared to 32% and 50% for industry and services respectively (World Bank, 2001). Agriculture has therefore remained in its traditional and peripheral state.

Yet, UNICEF (1997a) notes that, the more traditional the structure of production in agriculture, the higher the incidence of child labour. The methods of production in such situations are labour-intensive, in most cases inefficient and so require cheap labour to be sustainable. UNICEF (1997a) therefore argues that a shift to modern methods will gradually phase out the basic labour-intensity and the consequent demand for child labour. The resulting efficiencies gained in production will justify and also lead to higher demand for adult labour. This in turn will boost family incomes and to some extent reduce the necessity for children to work in exploitative situations. A virtuous cycle is then created.

The plausibility of UNICEF's argument however depends on SSA's ability to overcome the problems inhibiting agriculture. Natural problems of drought and infertile soils, inefficient agricultural practices and financial problems partially account for the low productivity. But the major obstacles, which the argument fails to acknowledge, are international primary commodity pricing, SSA's role in the international division of labour and access to the developed world markets. For instance, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire as the leading producers of cocoa have no role whatsoever in its pricing in the global market. Rather, traders in London

determine the fate of nations through pricing structures that generate instability, in most cases, falling prices. This feeds into the role of African nations in the international division of labour. Efforts to process some of the primary commodities into higher value products (with higher elasticities of demand and supply) are inhibited by tariffs and barriers to the developed world markets. Similarly, the billions of Dollars in agricultural subsidies in the developed world ensure that some surpluses are dumped elsewhere at prices that endanger local production. Instead of improvements along the lines UNICEF argues, rice production in northern Ghana for example, has virtually collapsed because of the pressure from the IMF to import rice from the USA, Japan and other countries (Endale, 1995).

As a result of the unstable prices and declining terms of trade, incomes from agriculture have not been cumulative and stable enough to guarantee sufficient revenue accumulation at the national levels. The subsequent returns to farmers have been unstable and inadequate, thereby exacerbating the practical problems of survival. In order to meet the basic needs of survival, social practices are exploited to maximise the utilitarian value of all family members. In the ensuing social production, child labour assumes the dual purpose of socialisation and economic usefulness. The idea of exploitation hardly enters the family's considerations (Cabanes, 2000). This partially explains why 90% of children who work in the rural areas do so in agriculture, with the majority working for parents or relatives (ILO, 1996a).

The high population growth rates of SSA and the inability to generate sufficient employment have considerable impact on families and children. Most importantly, it perpetuates poverty and intensifies the pressure on children to work. Some indicators are presented in Table 1.2 for selected African countries to illustrate the point. The highest life expectancy was only 58 years, compared to the developing world average of 62 years. Sierra Leone had a mere 37 years, an improvement over the previous decade's of 34 years (UNICEF, 1998).

Table 1.2: Demographic indicators of selected African countries

Country	Annual popn. Growth Rate (%)	Under-5 mortality* Per-1000	Life expectancy (years)	% popn. urbanised	Annual urban popn growth-%
	1980-96	1998	1996	1996	1980-96
Angola	2.9	204	47	32	5.5
Benin	3.0	140	54	39	5.2
Burkina Faso	2.8	210	46	16	6.9
Cameroon	2.8	150	56	46	5.2
Chad	2.3	172	47	23	3.5
Ivory Coast	3.4	143	51	44	4.6
Gabon	2.9	148	55	51	5.5
Ghana	3.1	96	57	36	4.1
Madagascar	3.3	146	58	27	5.8
Mauritania	2.6	140	53	53	6.7
Nigeria	2.9	119	52	41	5.5
Sierra Leone	1.8	283	37	34	4.0
Uganda	2.7	170	41	13	5.1
Zambia	2.3	192	43	43	2.8
Zimbabwe	3.0	125	49	33	5.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.9	151	51	32	5.0
Developing Countries	2.0	-	62	38	3.8
World	1.7	-	63	46	2.8

Source: Derived from Table 5, The State of the World's Children, 1998.

* Derived from Table 2, World Development Report, 2000/2001. For Gabon, the rate is for 1995 and comes from Table 1, The State of the World, 1997.

The mortality rates are also presented as an indicator of the level of underdevelopment and the plight of early childhood, while the rates of urbanisation also show the growth of cities in SSA. With the exception of Sierra Leone, all the selected nations had high annual population growth rates. The growth rate for SSA as a whole was 2.9% compared to the developing world and the global average of 2.0% and 1.7% respectively. Ghana, Benin, and Zimbabwe had rates in excess of 3%, with Ivory Coast even registering 3.4% during the period. At these rates, and against the background of overall poverty, under-5 mortality was equally high. The SSA average was 151 deaths per thousand, while Sierra Leone, had a dismal rate of 283 deaths per thousand.

The high population growth rates often outstrip the real economic growth rates (World Bank, 2001) thereby restraining economic expansion, and consequently, employment generation. As a result, average open unemployment rates in SSA frequently exceed 20% while underemployment and disguised unemployment are equally high (Endale, 1995). For instance, Malawi's unemployment rate in 1997 was 25%; South Africa's was 34%, while only 1 million of the active population of 15 million in Tanzania, were formally employed (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000).

An implication of the high population growth rates and the low life expectancy is a high circulation of children within the extended family, while others are left on their own. An estimated 2 million people died of AIDS in 1999, while about 23 million people are considered infected with the virus (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). It is estimated by UNICEF-UK (2001) that 95% of the estimated 13 million orphaned

children in the world are in SSA. The effects of this unparalleled situation on families and children are bound to be adverse as children's interests are suppressed under the survival needs of the family (Bennet, 1996, Orkin, 1999). Necessity and the lack of adult support and guidance then push children into some of the worst forms of child labour like prostitution.

There is also the politically induced economic and social instability across Africa. Ethnic wars, political uncertainties, famine and impoverishment govern many people's lived experiences (Endale, 1995; World Bank, 2001)⁸. For instance, in Liberia, 1.2 million of the pre-war population of 2.8 million have been internally displaced since 1990 (Barometer Africa, 2001). Meanwhile, 21% of those disarmed after the war were children forced to work as child soldiers. Some of the children were forced into illegal logging and mining operations after the war (Barometer Africa, 2001). The initial effects of such instability are the disintegration of families, deaths, and increases in the number of orphans (Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). The high rate of attrition also affects social production and cumulatively worsens the impoverished conditions in the rural communities. In such cases, Boyden (2001:5) notes, some parents might even resort to 'abandonment, sale or militarism' with children being 'expelled from the domestic unit to reduce the economic burden on the family'.

⁸ In the 1990s Liberia, Sierra Leone and Chad in West Africa experienced devastating civil wars while Nigeria experienced occasional ethnic clashes. More than a million people were massacred in Rwanda and Burundi in South-central Africa. In East Africa, Ethiopia fought a civil war which led to the creation of Eritrea, while the on-going civil war in Somalia has destroyed its status as a nation-state. Zaire in Central Africa is still embroiled in a civil war.

1.4.2 The constraints of poverty

Poverty is so endemic in Africa that no aspect of life can be evaluated without considering its specific impact. It is therefore argued here as the major force behind child labour and for impoverished families, the justification for extensive use of children's labour. To begin with, the 1980s and 1990s were the periods many African countries implemented SAPs and experienced a host of restrictive socio-economic conditions. These exacerbated the impoverished conditions many people were already living in. For instance, between 1988 and 1993, the number of children in poverty in SSA increased by 20% (UNICEF, 1997f). The worsening plight of children has continued, since UNICEF (2000) estimates that more children now live in poverty than ten years ago.

To further elaborate the extent of poverty, data on national and international poverty lines in Africa for various years are presented in Table 1.3. The level of poverty was greatest in the rural areas for all countries, except Cameroon. In Madagascar, Sierra Leone and Zambia, for example, more than two-thirds of the rural populations were poor by the country's own standard. The extent of income poverty was even more drastic when the international threshold of disposable income of \$1 or \$2 a day was applied. More than 70% of the population in Mali, Nigeria and Zambia subsisted on less than \$1 a day. In Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Madagascar and Niger, the percentage of people with similar constraints was in the 60s. Only the Arab states of North Africa fared relatively better. The rates of poverty increase more drastically when a 'higher' benchmark of \$2 a day is applied.

Table 1.3: National and International Poverty Lines (% of Population)

Economy	National poverty lines			International poverty lines			
	Year	Rural	Urban	National	Year	Below \$1/day	Below \$2/day
Algeria	1988	16.6	7.3	12.2	1995	<2	15.1
Benin	1995			33.0			
Botswana					1986	33.3	61.4
Burkina Faso					1994	61.2	85.8
Burundi	1990			36.2			
Cameroon	1984	32.4	44.4	40.4			
CAR*					1993	66.6	84.0
Chad	1996	67.0	63.0	64.0			
Cote d'Ivoire					1995	12.3	49.4
Egypt	1996	23.3	22.5	22.9	1995	3.1	52.7
Ethiopia					1995	31.3	76.4
Ghana	1992	34.3	26.7	31.4			
Kenya	1992	46.4	29.3	42.0	1994	26.5	62.3
Lesotho	1993	53.9	27.8	49.2	1993	43.1	65.7
Madagascar	1994	77.0	47.0	70.0	1993	60.2	88.8
Malawi	1991			54.0			
Mali					1994	72.8	90.6
Mauritania	1990			57.0	1995	3.8	22.1
Morocco	1991	18.0	7.6	13.1	1991	<2	7.5
Mozambique					1996	37.9	78.4
Namibia					1993	34.9	55.8
Niger	1993	66.0	52.0	63.0	1995	61.4	85.3
Nigeria	1985	49.5	31.7	43.0	1997	70.2	59.0
Rwanda	1993			51.2	1983/85	35.7	84.6
Senegal					1995	26.3	67.8
Sierra Leone	1989	76.0	53.0	68.0	1989	57.0	74.5
South Africa					1993	11.5	35.8
Tanzania	1991			51.1	1993	19.9	59.7
Togo	1987/89			32.3			
Tunisia	1985	29.2	12.0	19.9	1990	<2	28.2
Uganda	1993			55.0	1992	36.7	77.2
Zambia	1991	88.0	46.0	68.0	1996	72.6	91.7
Zimbabwe	1991	31.0	10.0	25.5	1991	36.0	64.2

Source: Derived from Table 4, World Development Report, 2000/2001, p.280

* Central African Republic.

Even though these figures represent incomes alone, poverty is a broader concept that encapsulates people's health, life expectancy, level of education; in fact, the total quality of life of a person or household (Clark, 1993). In this sense, poverty is not just a static concept but also the lived experience of the family. The economic contribution of children under such extreme poverty is inevitable. Gross deprivation pushes families as a whole into unsustainable situations

thereby driving some children into dangerous work situations (Bonnet, 1993; Orkin, 1999). As UNICEF (1997f: 6) points out, 'poverty begets child labour, which in turn perpetuates poverty, inequality and discrimination'. Wahba's (2001: 1) study confirms this 'inter-generational poverty' since parents who worked as child labourers are more likely to push their children into similar situations.

The contribution of working children to their families under such conditions can be quite crucial. UNICEF (1997f) estimates their contributions to be 25% of household incomes, while Canagarajah and Coulombe (1997) put it at 33%. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean also estimates that the incidence of poverty in nine countries in that region would have risen by 10% to 20% had it not been the economic contributions of 13-17 year-olds to their families (UNICEF, 1997d). The contributions are even more significant considering that the greater part of poor household's income goes on the basic necessity of food. It is predictable under such conditions that some parents will actively seek work for their children or encourage them to do so. The children themselves will resort to work to provide for their school needs or address their relative poverty (White, 1996). Children who are considered marginal contributors to the household economy in the developed world (Lavalette, 1994; Mizen and Pole, 2000) become mainstream providers.

While the family's survival strategy is critical under such constraints, it also imposes work obligations for children. Grootaert and Kanbur (1995) argue that parents allocate children's time in ways that maximise the family's expected gains. The determining factors in this strategy are the size and composition of the

household, their levels of productivity and the degree of labour substitution between children and adults. Land is also crucial, since families with access to large tracts of land tend to use their children more on farms, while those with 'marginal' or no land tend to work as waged labourers, together with their children (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995). The utility value of children then motivates men to have more children as a way of increasing their supply of labour (Grier, 1994; Lange, 2000).

In view of this, poverty, parental neglect and the need to raise money to meet school and family needs are variously cited as the cause of child labour in Africa (Bonnet, 1996; Orkin, 1999; Eldring, *et al.*, 2000, Verlet, 2000). However, despite the obvious implication of poverty, there is no consensus on the connection between child labour and poverty. Econometric studies in particular, tend to downplay the correlation between the two. For instance, though Ahmed (1999, cited in Gulrajani, 2000) recognises poverty as causing child labour, he considers the connection to be insignificant. Based on cross-country data for 79 countries, his multiple regression analysis came up with a correlation of only 0.32. Columbe (1997) also found a significant but very low effect of household welfare on child labour in Ghana and therefore disputed the connection between poverty and child labour. Similarly, Nielson (1998) found poverty and low income to have a minor effect on the possibility of child labour in households in Zambia.

One major reason such econometric studies find only minor correlations between child labour and poverty is the problematic nature of their operational definitions.

Both Ahmed (1999) and Coulombe (1997) adopted the ILO's (1996a) 'economic activity' definition, discussed earlier. As a result, they neglected a large and important group of children who work in non-economic activities. In addition, the long hours the majority of children spend in domestic or other unpaid family work leave them with few hours for paid work. Besides, as Nieuwenhuys (2000) argues, conveniently categorising children's economic activities is difficult since they work under uncertain conditions. These problems and conditions render the quantification of time problematic.

Others, pose the question of why the extent of child labour is not greater than present if poverty is the overriding factor (MacEwen Scott, 1982; Boyden *et al.*, 1998). MacEwen Scott (1982: 537) acknowledges that poverty provides a 'scope' to child labour, but argues that the extent in most Third World countries would be greater if 'poverty and economic necessity were sufficient cause of the problem'. In the same vein, she notes, it should have declined far more rapidly in nineteenth century Europe than it did.

But, irrespective of the speed with which child labour declined in nineteenth century Europe, the history of child labour in the world is closely linked to economic development and the poverty that goes with it. Europe, America and even Japan had their versions of child labour at times when necessity and poverty dictated family life. Studies by Bodnar (1982) and Walters and Briggs (1993) for America, Davin (1982) for Britain, Cura (1996) for Catalonia, Saito (1996) for Japan, Herdt (1996) for Belgium, among others, show the significance of poverty and early stages of socio-economic development in child labour. For example, in

the early twentieth century southern USA, families considered children's contribution to be vital to their survival and even suppressed their schooling needs (Walters and Briggs, 1993). This vastly contrasts with the present conception of the child in the USA as sacred, without an *economic* value, but a cost to the family (Zelizer, 1984). Again, in nineteenth century Britain, The Prince Consort at an educational congress in 1857 noted:

The working man's children are not only his offspring to be reared for a future independent position, but constitutes part of his reproductive power... To deprive the labouring family of their help would be almost to paralyse its domestic existence (cited in Davin, 1982: 638).

The critical role of poverty however can be better appreciated if child labour is treated as a *relative phenomenon*. The more economically developed a society becomes the less significant it is to families and the larger society as a whole. This explains why child labour is not relatively critical to the household economy in the developed world and children who work do so in marginal service sector activities (Hobbs *et al.*, 1992). Even then, when child labour occurs in major activities like agriculture in a developed country, it is usually children from deprived families who are involved at an intensive level. For instance, the General Accounting Office of the USA estimated a 250% rise in the use of child labour between 1983 and 1990, with most of the children coming from families of recent immigrants (UNICEF, 1997a). Similarly, the lowest child participation rates in Africa (Table 1.1) occur in the relatively 'developed' North African states. It cannot be a mere coincidence that their GDPs are larger, per capita incomes higher, fewer people fall in the poverty thresholds of \$1 and \$2 a day (Table 1.3) and their economies relatively modernised than the rest of SSA, except South Africa. This brings the crucial family economy to the fore since an

inverse relationship exists between the rate at which children participate in the labour force and the per capita GDP (Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998). Countries with per capita GDPs of less than \$500 have participation rates of 30 - 60%. The rates however fall between 10 and 30% when the per capita GDP increases to between \$500 and \$1000, and becomes less significant in per capita incomes of \$1000 to \$4000.

1.4.3 Globalisation and child labour

A diversified view of Africa's social and economic problems and their relation to child labour should also be placed in the context of the global economy. However, discourses on child labour are usually situated in local social and economic systems, yet the intertwining nature of the world economy has turned the world into what Giddens (1997: 63) terms a 'single social system'. As McMichael (1996) argues the way of life in virtually all parts of the world are conditioned by global social, economic and political practices. For Africa, this is manifested largely in IMF and World Bank policies that compel an alignment of their economies with the demands of the global economy (McMichael, 1996). Trade, financial and labour market liberalisation and privatisation of state enterprises became the generic strategies of adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s and continue to be the case. This alignment however, has had disastrous consequences and, as Kiely (1998b) points out, in some cases has been the causative agent for declining standards of living. The results have been more unemployment, higher costs of living and a consequent impoverishment of millions (Ampofo, 1994; Brown and Kerr, 1997; Verlet, 2000). The majority of those who lose their jobs or find none seek economic refuge in the informal

sector as marginal workers or producers. Two effects are likely here. The unemployed adults cannot fulfil their familial responsibilities, hence their children will have to contribute more to the family economy by engaging in higher income-yielding activities. Children may do so voluntarily or be pressurised into such situations. The other effect lies in the expansion of the informal sector since the unemployed adults who seek refuge there are the potential employers and/or exploiters of children.

According to the World Bank (1995), globalisation has generally increased trade and capital flow across borders, while direct foreign investment to the developing world has reached record levels. They point out, however, that SSA has not benefited from this because of the slow rate at which its exports have increased and the low rate of participation in international migration. Nonetheless, production, trade, consumption and employment in Africa have been subjected to considerable pressure from the process (Endale, 1995). As Kiely (1998a: 11) argues:

It is not the case then that some parts of the world are effectively incorporated while others are insufficiently globalised; rather, it is that the *actual process of globalisation that have occurred have been intrinsically uneven, unequal and unstable* (original emphasis).

A major source of this instability is that SSA nations participate in globalisation as single commodity producers. For instance, 88% of SSA countries rely on one commodity for more than half of their total export revenues (Brown and Tiffen, 1992). Naturally, the demand for these commodities, rather than the quantities produced or the level of concentration, determines the export revenues. Yet, IMF and World Bank's adjustment programmes encourage higher production of these

primary commodities, in effect encouraging economic insecurity through higher supplies and lower prices (Brown and Tiffen, 1992). At the same time, efforts to process these commodities into higher value products are hampered by tariffs and inaccessible global markets. Price volatility, unstable and marginal demand for their products means that Africa and the rest of the Third World enter global trade on unfavourable terms (Kiely, 1998a). This development entrenches the international division of labour in which the developing world specialises in primary commodity production. In view of this, UNICEF (2000: 3) sums the impact of globalisation on poor countries thus:

The number of people living in poverty continues to grow as globalisation proceeds along its inherently asymmetrical course:...increasing the incomes of a relative few while further strangling the lives of those without the resources to be investors or capabilities to benefit from the global culture, the majority are women and children, poor before, but even more so now, as the two tiered world economy widens the gaps between the rich and poor countries and between rich and poor people.

UNICEF's assertion reflects Kiely's argument of the inherent inequality and instability of globalisation. The unbalanced competition and ruthless capitalism offer few of the benefits of globalisation to Africa. To this extent, globalisation as a process of advanced capitalism not only serves to entrench the economic divide between the rich and the poor nations, but also exacerbates intra-country inequalities. The ensuing poverty affects children most. In this regard, and as rightly argued by Morice (1982), child labour is a product of the role developed nations assign developing ones as producers of raw materials and yet fail to pay prices that genuinely promote local and national capital accumulation.

From a different perspective, White (1996) argues that the globalisation of cultural events, particularly music, clothes, food and drinks makes children in

even the poorest parts of Africa aspire to be like their Western idols. This projects 'relative poverty' as poor children attempt to adopt the lifestyles of the 'relatively better-off' (*ibid*: 830). In this consumption-driven argument, children are motivated to work in order to improve their social lifestyle. While the premise is wholly valid, the vast majority of children however, work alongside their parents or for adults without any direct monetary payments. They have no control over their daily earnings and therefore have little capacity to consume.

1.5 Social and cultural factors in child labour

The preceding section has shown in considerable detail how the structural problems of African economies and the resulting destitution renders child labour a plausible alternative for millions of families and children. To complete the discussion, the role of social and cultural practices in sustaining child labour will be considered next. The point at stake here is that while poverty provides the context, social and cultural practices offer the mechanisms through which child labour takes place.

As an intrinsic part of social life, work represents one of the means by which children are integrated into social and kinship structures. It also provides informal education in life skills. To achieve this, families operate a division of labour based on gender and a chain of command and authority that centre on male superiority (Neto, 1982; Grier, 1994). Such socialisation, Grier (1994) argues is a social relation of, 'indigenous patriarchy', that promotes polygamy and high fertility as social and economic strategies. As the controllers of family wealth, men are the beneficiaries of this patriarchy. Lange (2000) has shown in

her study of southern Togo that the number of wives and children positively relates to the size of the man's farm and wealth. This then encourages the utilisation of children in various activities under the guise of occupational socialisation.

The problematic nature of socialisation in this regard arises from the fact that the majority of children in Africa have limited agency and tend to conform to family authority. This is even more so in the broader scenario of economic constraints since it is the productive nature of the child's socialisation that comes to the fore. While this is interpreted as meeting their responsibilities to the family, the depth and frequency of this involvement in work often suppress children's interest and developmental needs for those of kin and family (UNICEF, 1997d). Thus, even though occupational socialisation can aid the child's development when judiciously applied it can also be counter-productive. It is frequently abused in Africa and therefore acts as a convenient smokescreen for some of the most invidious forms of child labour (Lange, 2000). Children have been sold into domestic servitude, forced into marriages, and trafficked under the guise of socialisation (Anti-Slavery International, 1999; Nkurlu, 2000). A study by Sayed *et al.* (1991) found that the majority of children (62%) were pushed into work by their parents (cited in Siddiqi and Patrinos, 2000). Amin (1994) also found that 90% of children in Cameroonian cities originate from the rural areas where parents had entered into some form of arrangement with employers or middlemen. In this sense, the family as an institution facilitates child labour under the guise of socialisation. Thus, while economic necessity accentuates the productive value of the child, socialisation, which should have been the process

of positive transformation, provides the mechanism for exploitation. It provides so much scope for abuse that it is irrational to condemn child labour as exploitative, only to justify it on grounds of socialisation. The reality however is that socialisation is an inevitable process of social and cultural change. When placed within the broader constraints families experience, it represents an opportunity to utilise all resources to enhance reproduction. A product of this development is the practice of informal adoption and the resulting servitude.

Informal fostering and adoptive servitude

Fostering is a key aspect of the kinship structure of African societies. In the properly functioning mode, it provides opportunities for less fortunate children to grow up in relatively better environments. It therefore represents a re-distributive process in which responsibility is shared within the extended family, with the most resource-endowed members assuming adoption roles. Greenhalgh (1998: 203) also describes it a 'social mobility strategy' that poor parents adopt to push their children into the modern sector through successful relatives in the urban areas. This works well where the intentions on both sides of the social transaction are honest and geared towards the long-term interest and stability of the child. In such cases, children are given the proper opportunities to develop, often with minimal levels of work to compensate for their presence in the household.

In view of the general economic difficulties however, such adoptive practices are now done in the full knowledge that children will work for the host family (Amin, 1994; Ravololomanga and Schlemmer, 2000). The resulting relationships between children and their fosterers in some cases become, 'unequivocally those

of employer and employee' (Van Hear, 1982: 505). Women are known to play critical roles in this, since in most cases, they are the ones who put children to work when they join their households as domestics (Verlet, 2000).

In line with the broader aspects of child labour, children of lower socio-economic backgrounds are often disproportionately represented (UNICEF, 1997a). As both Komolafe (2001) and ILO (2001) point out many parents accept direct monetary benefits, possibly to compensate for the loss of the child's labour. They also hope that their children will be properly cared for and eventually placed in vocational training. Fostering, in its worst forms, has been associated with child trafficking. The increasing movement of children from rural to urban areas or across borders in West and Central Africa has often been subsumed in extended family relations (Anti-Slavery International, 1999). In all cases, however, once such payments take place, it is more likely that the child will be used in intensive economic situations to justify the investment in them.

1.5 Conclusion

The chapter set out to explore the endemic nature of child labour in Africa, the role of poverty and impoverishment in pushing children into more intensive and debilitating work situations. This was placed in the failure of African economies to generate the necessary socio-economic development and how the repercussions continuously reproduce unsustainable conditions for families. In order to systemise the discussion, the definitional confusion surrounding age and the concepts of labour and work were presented as the first step. The discussion on age as the basis of exclusion from work centred on ILO's Minimum Age

Convention. This was however shown to be unrealistic, difficult to implement and thereby discouraged nearly half of African nations from ratifying the Convention. Even in cases where it has been ratified, as in Ghana, there is neither the political will nor the legal and economic infrastructure to implement it.

Related to age is the conceptual issue of work and labour. The discussion centred on the traditional perception of work as a benign and useful activity and labour as strenuous and exploitative one with the tendency to jeopardise the child's development. It is more difficult in reality, however, to clearly differentiate between the two since the particularisation of childhood raises multidimensional perceptions of work. Hence, what may be perceived as unequivocal exploitation in one situation may be treated as a simple anomaly in another. Nevertheless, the inevitability of work and the tendency for benign activities to degrade into abusive experiences demands a formal categorisation of activities as either good or bad.

In this regard, the chapter also examined the nature and categories of child labour. Though many children are active agents in the labour markets, the docile nature of others by reason of their psychological and physiological make-up, was considered as part of the motivation for their employment. Beyond this, child labour replicates real life in Africa. It is gendered, with children undertaking roles that are traditionally reserved for males and females. Girls tend to work more in domesticated environments as housemaids or servants, while boys work in more visible activities. In addition, girls are often paid less than boys even for similar jobs. The common types of activities children engage in are street and market

work like peddling, head-carrying, truck-pushing, prostitution and begging. Another is domestic service, which by its hidden nature, exposes children to abuse and exploitation. Other children work in agricultural settings as supplementary or substitute labour for their families. A major mechanism for the exploitation of children in various dimensions is apprenticeship. The inherent paternalism that arises when children are placed in apprenticeships is abused and generally transforms the relationship into a master-servant one.

While there are several factors behind child labour, the high incidence of poverty across Africa raises it as the most important determinant. Basic survival motivates families to pressurise children into intensive work situations. Children themselves engage in work in order to address their own relative poverty. Africa's economic stagnation arising from inefficient production structures, specialisation in primary commodity production and the declining terms of trade are some of the barriers to socio-economic development. While corruption, political and social instability worsen the situation, the inhospitable international economy under the aegis of globalisation further blights developmental efforts. Africa has neither the economic infrastructure nor financial ability to compete properly. Thus, some of the global economic ideologies imposed by the IMF and World Bank entrench poverty rather than alleviate them. To the extent that poverty promotes child labour, globalisation and the intransigent position of the IMF in the pursuit of such goals are complicit in the final analysis.

However, the high population growth rates in conjunction with terminal diseases like HIV/Aids and the low life expectancy increase the pressure on children to

assume responsibilities for themselves or others. While these may seem like self-inflicting problems, the unfortunate reality is that the same poverty pushes people towards high birth rates. The economic value of children appears to underline such behaviour, since children act as the major social insurance and security for parents, particularly in their old age. While the debates surrounding the links between child labour and poverty are far from certain, it was argued nonetheless that poverty provides both the necessary and sufficient conditions for child labour. When most families have to subsist on less than \$2 a day, it is hard to think of any other reason why they send their children to work other than basic survival.

Finally, social and cultural practices were considered as mechanisms for the exploitation of children. Through extended family relations and the process of socialisation, children are made to work in situations that are not always to their best advantage. Again, the overall social and economic conditions are important reasons why parents choose to circulate their children within the extended family structure or give them to strangers all together.

Having developed a general background in most issues on child labour, the next chapter will focus specifically on the role of Ghana's political economy. It will be argued broadly that the protracted implementation of SAP has moulded an *adjustment generation* for whom intensive labour is a way of life.

CHAPTER TWO

GHANA: A CASE STUDY FOR THE MAKING OF AN ADJUSTMENT GENERATION

It is the young child who is paying the highest of all prices, and who will bear the most recurring of all costs, for the mounting debt repayments, the drop in export earnings, the increase in food costs, the decrease in family incomes, the run-down of health services, the narrowing of educational opportunities (UNICEF, 1989: 2).

2.1 Introduction

We have discussed in considerable detail the issues and debates surrounding child labour in Africa. The problem is reduced to the country level in this chapter through a discussion of structural adjustment programmes and their impact on families and children in Ghana.

The critical periods in the evolution of Ghana's political economy have left distinctive impacts on families and children. Colonisation, the introduction of cocoa as a cash crop and the commercial exploitation of rubber, timber and palm products, brought rudimentary forms of capitalist modes of production to the family. Furthermore, the introduction of a formal currency demanded some level of voluntary or involuntary participation in the emerging economy. Survival for families therefore gradually transcended traditional subsistence as the need for money rationalised the sale and exploitation of excess labour. The growth of a demand for labour in commercial agriculture, mining and construction also redefined

the social division of labour and created roles beyond the traditional and social realms for children.

The emergence of Ghana as a nation state at the end of colonialism in 1957 created considerable optimism. However, the failure of development policies in the 1960s and 1970s to steer the economy from its peripheral status towards sustained industrial development nurtured years of political and economic instability. The ensuing financial difficulties necessitated international finance, support and regeneration of foreign confidence in the economy. The various governments of Ghana therefore, at one point or the other, had to negotiate with or implement structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank. They did so with considerable apprehension, since interactions with the IMF/World Bank had been politically ruinous for at least one government and fomented instability in others. However, from 1983 the Rawlings government was able to implement the classical form of the programme and its spin-offs for nearly two decades until they lost power in 2000. Variants of SAPs have now become an entrenched part of Ghana's political economy since the process of governance and the formulation of economic policies are strongly influenced by the two institutions. There have been some relative benefits of SAP. However, there is a general acceptance of its negative impact on the ordinary people, most visible in the rise of unemployment and the deterioration of welfare (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The conditions of children have been particularly badly affected and more are thought to live in poverty now than ten years ago (UNICEF, 2000).

This chapter argues that the intensive forms of child labour seen in the urban areas of Ghana are the culmination of the crisis, instability and the protracted implementation of SAPs in Ghana. It is therefore argued that the implementation of various policies under the structural adjustment programme in the 1980s failed to mitigate the hardships of families and children. Rather, its contradictions have resulted in the contraction of the social responsibilities of the state, but increased impoverishment of the most vulnerable. The consequent failure of government to generate adequate social and economic development has therefore given some legitimacy to the exploitation of children, often under the guise of cultural and social practices. As a result, the two decades of SAP have created a category of children – what we may call an *adjustment generation* - for whom non-traditional child labour and exploitation are routine aspects of their lives.

The argument is developed under two sections. The first section traces the periods of change and crisis and the various governments' interactions with the IMF/World Bank. This is divided in two parts, with the first looking at the pre-1983 efforts at economic recovery and negotiations with the IMF/World Bank. The second part of the first section considers in greater detail the context and elements of the SAP initiated by the Rawlings government in 1983 and maintained in the succeeding years. There is greater emphasis here because the children who participated in this study were born and raised under the Rawlings government. The second section of

the chapter discusses child labour as a social consequence of SAP on the grounds that any policy that impoverishes adults, by extension, affects children negatively.

2.2 Ghana's political economy: Instability, change and structural adjustment programmes

The Gold Coast gained its independence from Britain in March 1957, adopted the name Ghana and in 1960 declared itself a republican state under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, the first Prime Minister. But, over the next 23 years, the nation experienced considerable political instability and diverse economic crisis. It also experimented with various forms of economic and political ideologies and policies. This section traces the instability and crisis in relation to Ghana's dealings with the IMF/World Bank. The objective here is to provide the background and context to the Rawlings era, as a prelude to examining the most significant period in moulding the category of children under study.

2.2.1 The pre-1983 interactions with the IMF/World Bank

The Nkrumah Era

Nkrumah's effort at national development from 1957 to 1966 was the most profound in the history of Ghana. Like other nationalist leaders of the time, he envisaged a rapid development of local potential, which had been held in check by the forces of colonialism (Kiely, 1998b). The long-term strategy for achieving this was self-sufficiency through an import substitution strategy as well as rapid social development. Nkrumah embarked on an expansionist economic programme and for

most of the period, manufacturing grew at an annual rate of 10% (Sowa, 1993). In global terms, however, the economy remained a peripheral one as it continued with raw material production and cocoa as the main foreign exchange. The declining cocoa prices vis-à-vis massive investments in the construction of the Tema harbour and township, the Akosombo dam, expansion of educational and medical facilities dissipated available resources (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The government therefore needed international support to manage the deteriorating balance of payments and to reschedule its foreign debts.

Ghana's first contact with the IMF for financial assistance was in May 1965, and later that same year, it approached the World Bank also (Rimmer, 1992). In response, the IMF/World Bank delegation to Ghana demanded reductions in public expenditure to affordable levels and 'non-inflationary' government borrowing as the pre-condition for assistance (Rimmer, 1992: 120). For a nationalist government determined to raise social development and to provide the necessary infrastructure for economic growth (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991), this was unacceptable. As Boafo-Arthur (1999) argues, agreeing to those conditions would have implied a curtailment of the various development programmes. It would also have compromised the import substitution strategy Nkrumah considered vital for diversifying the industrial base of the economy. While the demands of the IMF/World Bank were somehow economically prudent, the problem for the government was its political expediency. The negotiations were eventually aborted since the government rejected the IMF/World Bank conditions, a development which Rimmer (1992: 120) claims

undermined 'foreign confidence' in Ghana. In spite of the considerable economic and social progress between 1960 and 1966, the political climate was characterised by Nkrumah's dictatorial tendencies. This worsened as the economic problems increased.

The National Liberation (NLC) Era

In 1966, a combined team of moderate police and military leaders overthrew Nkrumah, in what was then seen as a popular coup (Rimmer, 1992). They formed the National Liberation Council (NLC) and embarked on economic restructuring. The NLC quickly developed cordial relations with the IMF/World Bank and by May 1966 had initiated enough measures to satisfy them (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Ghana was then granted a stand-by credit, while Western creditors accepted a suspension of its debt repayments pending a sponsored meeting by the IMF in December. A series of debt rescheduling meetings were then held between representatives of the government and the Paris Club of Western donors. Ghana accepted its first SAP in 1966, the result of which was a deferment of some national debt obligations. Between that period and 1968, some standard adjustment policies were implemented by the NLC. These involved reducing public expenditure, capping wages and salaries, a credit squeeze through reductions in loans and a reduction of total wage labour or retrenchments by 10%. In addition, the external sector of the economy was liberalised, price controls and subsidies were removed, while the national currency was devalued by 30% in relation to the US dollar (Frimpong- Ansah, 1991; Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The NLC's political ambitions were modest, but their period in power was also marred by both

economic and political instability. Before the full impact of the first SAP could reverberate on the government, they handed over power to a civilian government.

The Busia Government and IMF

The succeeding Busia government of 1969 operated under similar constraints of economic instability and inadequate resources. But the NLC, as a military government, was not accountable to any electorate and therefore could implement the IMF-instigated policies. Busia's was a civilian government that needed to gauge the impact of policies on the electorate. It therefore had to decide between continuing the course of deflation or following its own policies of rural development and accelerated industrialisation. It opted for economic expansion in order to implement the policies outlined in their 1971/72 budget (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991). This however contradicted the stabilisation policies the NLC had agreed upon with the IMF and the Paris Club of Donor Nations. The government could not obtain the necessary support from Western governments and under pressure from Britain approached the IMF to renegotiate its short-term debt obligations (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The negotiations deadlocked since Ghana's Finance Minister insisted on economic growth and expansion, while the IMF/World Bank advocated economic contraction. The IMF/World Bank's position was that Ghana should pay all outstanding debts and interests owed to foreign businesses and secondly to devalue the currency or failing that surcharge imports as a way of limiting them. The Finance Minister objected to these conditions, except to impose surcharges at an appropriate time in future (*ibid.*). He was wary of the political consequences of a full IMF-inspired adjustment policy.

In December 1971, a consensus was reached and Ghana began another round of IMF stabilisation programme. The most significant was the devaluation of the Cedi by 48.6%, which immediately led to higher prices for essential items (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). There was general dissatisfaction with the rising prices and other economic problems. Two weeks later, the military capitalised on the public discontent to overthrow the government. Thus, as Boafo-Arthur (1999: 8) argues the IMF package, epitomised by devaluation and its consequences, provided an outlet for ‘incipient discontent’, which was all the military needed to rationalise a coup.

The National Redemption Council (NRC)/Supreme Military Council (SMC) Era

The new military government, the National Redemption Council (NRC) criticised the previous government for permitting excessive international control and influence in the country and for not suspending payments on Ghana’s external debt (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991). It therefore quickly reversed Busia’s devaluation to gain the necessary legitimacy. The NRC renegotiated a number of foreign debts and even crudely repudiated a few others (Alderman, 1991). Such bold, but unilateral actions affected Ghana’s credibility and resulted in denials of short-term financial assistance. A combination of import licensing (to ration foreign exchange) and price controls (to check inflation) was instituted as remedial measures but to no avail. As a result, corruption, rent-seeking and large-scale smuggling of subsidised goods to the neighbouring countries were endemic. But the NRC like Nkrumah resisted the IMF/World Bank pressures.

In 1978, the leader of the NRC was overthrown in a palace coup that resulted in a reconstituted military government of the Supreme Military Council. They yielded to the IMF/World Bank pressures and another round of SAP was initiated in Ghana. Among the stabilisation measures applied this time was a massive devaluation of the Cedi by 58% against the US dollar. They also increased the producer price of cocoa but attempted to clear up excess liquidity from the economy through deflationary measures (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The IMF offered 53 million Special Drawing Rights (SDR) in January 1979 to support the programme. However, standards of living continued to deteriorate and precipitated an unprecedented exodus of trained personnel (Sowa, 1993). Amidst the political and economic confusion, Rawlings and his Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) assumed power in 1979. Again, an IMF/World Bank sponsored programme was abandoned even before it gained serious foothold in the economy. Rawlings and the AFRC reduced the intractable problems of Ghana's political economy to that of corruption and indiscipline. For a brief period of three months, they embarked on a campaign of ridding the country of these ills before handing over to a democratically elected government.

The civilian government of Limann that inherited power was equally bedevilled by economic and political instability. They were also forced by circumstances into new rounds of tense but unsuccessful negotiations with the IMF/World Bank over another SAP (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The two institutions had by this time gained considerable notoriety in Ghana and the Limann government faced widespread negative reactions to their negotiations with them. They were all too aware of the political consequences

of accepting IMF/World Bank conditions for economic restructuring in Ghana and for that matter never reached any conclusive agreements. Within two years Rawlings returned to the political scene through another coup, this time under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). Their ostensible objective again was to root out corruption, 'privilege, inequality, and exploitation wherever it was found' (Rimmer, 1992: 142).

While Ghana went through five governments in a space of ten years, the population almost doubled, yet the gross domestic product at constant market prices declined by 12 % over the decade (Rimmer, 1992). Both cocoa production and exports fell below the levels of the 1950s, even as its value was declining due to falling world prices (Sowa, 1993). Inflation, unemployment and underemployment were extremely high, export revenues had sunk to the lowest ever, while commodity shortages were experienced all over the country (Alderman, 1991; Rimmer, 1992; Sowa, 1993; Brown and Kerr, 1997). There were few economic options, with the most important among them being development aid and loans from the West. The route to financial support however was through the World Bank and the IMF. Yet many members of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government were anti-IMF, despised capitalism and envisioned Ghana as a country modelled on Cuba or Libya. This changed quickly.

2.2.2 The Rawlings' Era and post-1983 structural adjustments

The context

The background to the adoption of SAP in 1983 by Rawlings and the PNDC lay in this political instability, corruption, the expulsion of a million Ghanaians from Nigeria and a drought in 1983 (Toye, 1990; Sowa, 1993). In addition to these internal problems, was the 'inhospitable' international economic environment (Liebenthal, 1990: 20). This had its origins in the global oil crisis, followed by the recession of 1979/80, with high interest rates, the collapse of primary commodity prices and the eventual limitations in aid and investment from OECD countries (Kakwani, 1995; Killick, 1995). The World Bank itself acknowledges the 1980s as a decade in which sub-Saharan Africa experienced unprecedented economic and social gloom. For example, even though Africa's debt in 1970 was only \$6 billion, it had by 1987 increased to \$129 billion, 70% of which was to be repaid at market interest rates.

In Ghana, the economic and social deterioration continued rapidly and was reflected in declines in all national economic indicators. However the 'steepest rate of decline' occurred in the period from 1975 to 1983, the period of greatest political instability (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991: 97). Table 2.1 elaborates the extent of decline at this period. In 1975, the revenue base of the government was about 16% of GDP, but by 1981 had sunk to an all time low of 4.5%. The comparable rates for other countries in West Africa at this time were between 20 and 25% (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991). The tax base of the cocoa industry, a crucial source of revenue, in 1982 had also fallen to an unprecedented 1.2% of GDP, while net reserves were zero.

Table 2.1: The Extent of Economic Decline (1975-1983)

Year	Govt. revenue ratio to GDP	Govt expenditure ratio to GDP	Cocoa export ratio to GDP	Net reserves ratio to GDP	Rate of inflation (%)
1975	15.5	21.9	10.5	2.4	29.8
1976	13.4	22.9	7.9	0.3	55.4
1977	10.5	19.1	6.1	0.0	116.5
1978	6.6	15.1	4.7	0.1	73.1
1979	9.9	16.4	6.5	1.2	54.5
1980	6.9	10.9	6.0	0.5	50.2
1981	4.5	10.6	1.5	0.3	16.3
1982	5.6	11.0	1.2	0.0	22.3
1983	5.6	8.0	3.4	-3.1	122.8

Source: Adapted from Frimpong-Ansah (1991: 95), Table 6.2

The already high inflation rate of 30% in 1975, started worsening and by 1977 was approximately 117%. This declined in the succeeding years only to reach an unprecedented rate of 123% in 1983. Food production in 1983 also declined to approximately 72% of the 1971 level as a result of the worst drought ever and the resulting widespread and devastating bush fires of 1982-83 (Adepoju, 1993). Meanwhile, the shortage of foreign exchange affected the capacity utilisation levels of industry, since they could not import raw materials and other necessities. As a result, the level of employment in the formal sector diminished to historic lows. By the early 1980s, drastic economic reforms were inevitable if Ghana was to make any strides in resolving its problems. The PNDC then designed its own economic recovery programme (ERP) in early 1983 but lacked the resources to pursue the programme. They had to reverse their antipathy to the IMF and enter into

negotiations for the necessary assistance. In April 1983, the first standby credit was granted to Ghana thus paving the way for the nearly two decades of IMF/World Bank-inspired policies (Gibbon, 1992; Rimmer, 1992).

As we have seen, all post-colonial governments in Ghana have been involved with the IMF/World Bank in one way or the other. However, the rise of conservative governments in Britain and the USA in the 1980s provided a stronger ideological legitimacy for market-oriented policies and the preponderance of the private sector (Kiely, 1998b: 31). The liberal discourse on markets at the time emphasised unbridled markets, free and voluntary choices and individualism. The basis for this, Kiely argues, was the rise of neo-liberalism and its contention that it was 'inefficient' for governments to intervene in the economy. The reasons adduced were that firstly, interventions gave succour to inefficient producers and suppressed competitive tendencies among companies. Domestic consumers were therefore made to pay higher prices for poor quality goods. Secondly, people and companies tended to capitalise on state controls and the bureaucracy surrounding it by engaging in corrupt activities instead of focusing on 'productive and wealth-creating' ventures (p: 31). Thirdly, the regulatory mechanisms of governments were often discriminatory and therefore counterproductive for some industries. Against this background, the power of the market was treated as sacred and capable of ensuring a smooth functioning of the economy. The import-substitution strategies of the 1960s and 70s were then branded as ineffective and unsustainable, while state activism was considered anathema to economic growth (Kiely, 1998b). In this sense, the role of the state was

drastically reduced. Hence, the rudimentary forms of social welfare initiated in the earlier decades under Nkrumah and sustained by his successors, in terms of subsidised health care, education, housing and basic support to farmers were abandoned or curtailed. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Ghana religiously pursued adjustments programmes and by the World Bank's own estimation did so with more vigour and dedication than any other country (Verlet, 2000).

The elements of post-1983 adjustments

The post-1983 SAP implemented by Rawlings started with short-term stabilisation measures through the economic recovery budget of April 1983 and supported financially by the IMF (Rimmer, 1992). The aim was to stabilise government finances, eliminate price distortions, regenerate incentives for producers, rehabilitate economic and social infrastructure and mobilise both internal and foreign resources (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991). The producer price of cocoa was increased as an incentive for production, while surcharges were imposed on imported goods. In addition, the government-controlled prices of staples like rice, maize, cooking oils, etc. were raised, while subsidies on various agricultural inputs and fuel were removed or phased out. Moreover, rates for electricity, water supply, public transportation and telecommunications were all drastically increased (Rimmer, 1992). According to Rimmer (1992), these initial stabilisation efforts regenerated interest in Ghana to the extent that Western donor nations wanted to test policies being advocated by multilateral agencies. In November 1983, the first of various annual meetings on Ghana between the donor nations and agencies was organised by the World Bank.

The massive devaluations of the Cedi began in October 1983 when the official exchange rate sank to US \$0.033 from the previous rate of \$0.36 set in 1978 (Rimmer, 1992). There were further devaluations and by January 1986, the rate was \$0.011 to the Cedi or ₵90 to \$1. By 1990, the exchange rate had further depreciated to ₵340 for \$1 (Rimmer, 1992), a fall of nearly 6000% compared to the 1983 value of the currency (Gibbon, 1992). The official acts of devaluation ended when foreign exchange bureaux were licensed to buy and sell foreign currency, in which case the value of the currency came to be partially determined by demand and supply conditions. While the currency depreciations were generating inflationary pressures on ordinary people, the government was also imposing higher indirect taxes, reducing government expenditure on vital social services, increasing interest rates and tightening access to credits. In what Giovanni (1990: 8) brands as the 'overkill', these deflationary pressures were meant to reduce liquidity and consequently curtail aggregate demand. The SAP also emphasised trade liberalisation, fiscal re-structuring and discipline and higher efficiency in the public sector. The financial sector was restructured through re-capitalisation, while a more liberalised environment was created to promote private sector initiatives and investments. To generate revenues to reduce the country's foreign indebtedness, incentives for production were directed at export-based industries. Moreover, quantitative restrictions like quotas and import licensing were either removed or reduced (Libenthal, 1991).

The general impacts of the post-1983 adjustments

The initial impact of the SAP was considerable improvement in the economy relative to the pre-SAP situation. There were initial reductions in the budget deficit and in both 1985 and 1992, inflation fell to 10% (Centre for Study of African Economies (CSAE), 1999). In addition, GDP increased from a low of \$9.9 billion in 1983 to \$15.9 billion in 1992 (Maddison, 1995). These improvements often formed the bases of the World Bank, IMF and government claims of a successful SAP in Ghana. A major aspect of their argument in this regard was that the alternative of not applying SAP would have been more catastrophic. Rimmer (1992), in justifying SAP, has also argued that those who consider it a failure do so on the implicit assumption that Ghanaians who were negatively affected would have been protected by the economy in its original position and therefore would have been better off without SAP. In his opinion, the Ghanaian record did not support such assumption.

The problem however is that most of the gains of SAP have not been sustainable enough to benefit poor families. Thus, claims by the Bank/IMF that SAP was a success in Ghana in the 1990s often come under considerable criticism. Toye (1990: 95) for example, considers what happened to be a mere 'recovery, an unwinding of a crisis'. In fact, over the years, budget deficits expanded again, export growth and investment stagnated, while inflation crept back to 74% in 1995 (CSAE, 1999). The inflation rate subsequently fell to 34% in 1996, 20.5% in 1997 and 15.5% in 1998 (ISSER, 2000). Even then, the rates of inflation are quite high considering that formal sector employment is small while, as Ninsin (1991) points out the majority of people

in the informal sector are underemployed. Furthermore, while trade and foreign exchange liberalisation provided consumers with a wide array of imported goods, domestic industries were producing at sub-optimal capacities or failing (ISSER, 1993; Sowa, 1993). They were not properly positioned to compete with imports from established economies. It was ironic that in seeking improvements in Ghana's external reserves, IMF/World Bank concurrently promoted a full liberalisation of imports. This policy rather precipitated the decline of some local industries because of the cheap imports¹ as well as unsustainable pressures in the foreign exchange market.

Besides, declining global market prices for cocoa, gold, diamonds, manganese and bauxite, the main export commodities, plagued Ghana's revenue base. For example, while in 1986 the price of a tonne of cocoa was \$2,406, it had declined by nearly 50% to \$1,237 in 1992 and rose only slightly to \$1,419 in 1999 (ISSER, 1993; 2000). As a result, revenues from cocoa export over the years declined from \$593million in 1986 to \$302 millions in 1992 (ISSER, 1993). Thus, even as SAP encouraged a higher production of cocoa and other primary products in Ghana, their prices were consistently falling and yielding less and less in export revenues. By 1998 the total external debt had reached \$6.9 billion (World Bank, 2001), with at least 15% of export revenues going to debt servicing in the 1990s compared to only 5% in 1970 (UNICEF, 1998).

¹ The on-going steel issue between Europe and the United States is the latest contradiction of the

There have however been considerable difficulty and lack of consensus on the exact effects of SAP on the poor. Killick (1995) partially attributes this to the very difficulty inherent in capturing poverty statistically. There is also no consensus on the methodological approach for determining the impact of adjustment. The preferred method by the staff of the Bank/IMF has been to compare pre-adjustment with post-adjustment economic conditions, or to compare adjusting with non-adjusting countries. For instance, in an econometric study of 77 developing countries, Kakwani (1995) attempted to resolve the question of whether economic performance had been better in countries that adjusted in the 1980s as against those that did not. He based his comparison on life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates among other social indicators. When he controlled the effects of population growth and external shocks, he found countries that had adjusted to have done better than those that had not. However, this positive result fizzled out when external shocks were decontrolled. This is quite significant since the whole idea of SAP is located in the efficacy of trade and exchange liberalisation. On social matters, he found countries that adjusted to be lagging behind in the improvement of people's standard of living than those that had not, thus confirming some of the negative social consequences of SAP.

Global institutions like the UNICEF, UN Economic Commission for Africa and the ILO however have been virtually unanimous on the negative impact of SAP on social services, wages, employment, and on the poor and disadvantaged (Adepoju, 1993). A

trade liberalisation argument.

United Nations' conference in Sudan in 1988, at the peak of adjustments, concluded that the various adjustment measures had inflicted considerable suffering and was 'rending the fabric of African society' (Adepoju, 1993: 4). Decades later, there has not been a single case of unqualified and sustained success of adjustment, rather SAPs have come to be seen as a causative factor in the economic problems of the developing world for their inability to produce results (Cassen, 1994). As Kiely (1998b: 39) points out, 'in many cases, adjustment policies have coincided with, and partly caused, absolute falls in living standards'.

To the extent that economies have to adjust to the exigencies of time and the prevailing economic conditions, some aspects of SAP were inevitable considering the difficulties Ghana was experiencing. However, it was the draconian and often contradictory conditions that accompanied SAP and its apparent disregard of the social consequences that evoke concern. The reality of SAP with the passage of time is that the benefits to ordinary people have been largely non-existent, a fact both the Bank and IMF by their actions now concede. In fact, to mitigate the hardships and quell some of the criticisms, the World Bank has financed and supervised a number of remedial policies. The most prominent of these was the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) initiated in 1988 (Rimmer, 1992). The objective was to alleviate some of the social tensions and hardships arising from retrenchments and to provide some basic needs for some vulnerable groups (Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 1996). Unfortunately such actions have been belated, largely ineffective and at best 'symbolic' (Verlet, 2000: 68).

The series of adjustment policies that began in 1983 have had profound social consequences, particularly for the already impoverished families. The pressures of unemployment, cost-recovery in health services, education, and other social services have considerably affected families (Sowa, 1993; ODI, 1996; Verlet, 2000). The welfare of the poor was hardly given any thought in the early stages. The 'urban poor' for example are now noted to be one of the groups that suffered most, while cross-country studies show that SAP frequently worsens the plight of the poor (Killick, 1995: 309). Consequently, one of the most enduring criticisms of SAP is its neglect of the human side of development, especially on the poorer sections of Ghanaian society (Sowa, 1993; IPEC, 1999; Verlet, 2000). It is on this basis that the role of SAP in moulding the *adjustment generation* will be argued, since the impoverishment has exerted pressures on certain categories of children to migrate in search of work. This is the irony of SAP, after all, as even the neo-liberals argue economic progress must lead to greater improvements in the lives of people. In the case of children, SAP should have led to better school and social opportunities, free health services and better welfare programmes, rather than early entry into intensive commercial work, worst of all, migration from home. To what extent then did the consequences of SAP translate into child labour generally and in particular motivated children to migrate from the rural areas to the cities?

2.3 The legacy: Child labour as a social consequence of SAPs

Even though there were three previous instances of structural adjustments in 1966, 1971, and 1978, none of them lasted long enough to leave attributable effects on families and children. The post-1983 adjustments were however implemented over several years and therefore lasted long enough to directly influence all aspects of social and economic life in the country. It is the most relevant to the context of the thesis since the children under study were born in 1985 or later and are therefore growing up under the influence of SAP.

2.3.1 Redundancies, social pressures and child labour

A major source of the neglect of ordinary people and a potential for the commercialisation of child labour was the retrenchment of workers from the formal sector. The unemployment rate in Ghana in 1997 was as high as 20% (ISSER, 2000), a development that was largely attributable to the large-scale layoffs under SAP. The Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board (COCOBOD)², for example, had to lay off thousands of workers in the 1980s (Sowa, 1993). Subsequently, the workforce of COCOBOD decreased from 90,000 to about 43,000 (Africa Economic Digest 26 August 1991, cited in Gibbon, 1992). Other agricultural ventures besides COCOBOD were also divested, while support to the rest was reduced (Gibbon, 1992). All these were part of

² Cocobod was the umbrella government body that dealt with the cocoa industry. The World Bank's intransigent position on it originated from Eliot Berg's (1981) paper, *Accelerated Development in sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* in which he espoused the idea that state enterprises that deal with export crops are inefficient, monopolistic and have the tendency to keep prices low (Gibbon 1992).

the World Bank's Agricultural Services Rehabilitation Programme of 1987-92, a reform package for agriculture in Ghana.

Such formal sector redundancies should be viewed broadly within the extended family, which is critical for the extension of support to needy children. The social costs of sacking a public servant goes beyond his immediate family in the city, as the extended family partakes in the good fortune of those employed. It has therefore been argued that SAP has been indirectly responsible for the disintegration of families. Verlet (2000: 68) notes that lay-offs, 'not only stripped them [men] of their social status and income, but left them petrified, marginalized, no longer the family protector, chief and guide'. The added pressure significantly falls on children as well as women, as they struggle to meet the shortfall in the family income (Verlet, 2000; Eldring, *et al*, 2000). If urban formal sector workers partially supported their rural counterparts, then a failure to do so increased the pressure on the much more disadvantaged rural relatives. The consequent ramifications are their inability to pay school fees, sustain production on the farm or fully support the family. Such pressures, as shown in Chapter One, constitute some of the reasons why children are given to distant relatives or complete strangers as domestic workers. Others voluntarily migrate if their parents are unable to properly meet their care-taking responsibilities (Van Hear, 1982).

Against the background of the 'dualistic nature' of the economy (Sethuraman, 1976: 69), an inevitable outcome of the formal sector contraction was an expansion in the

informal sector (Ninsin, 1991). ISSER (1996) concede that between 1987 and 1991, the public sector contracted by 50% but argue that since the informal sector expanded, many of the retrenched people found employment there. Christian Aid (2002) on the other hand claims that SAP has made it difficult for people to earn a living in the informal sector because of high interest rates and lack of access to credit. Even if expansion of the informal sector could be claimed as a successful outcome of SAP, it also symbolised the desperation of people. The sector is an indication of the extent of unemployment in Ghana since it absorbs much of the annual additions to the total labour force (Sethuraman, 1976; Ninsin, 1991). Many, however are not fully employed since they engage in marginal and parasitic activities in petty production and services. This underlines the impoverished conditions of most urban informal sector workers. In this regard, Ninsin (1991) argues that it is an indication of the 'failure of capitalism', in this case SAP, to transform the economy by offering people more sustainable employment.

In order to remain competitive, it is essential for those who operate in the informal sector to rely on cheap labour. This creates a demand for child labour (Morice, 1982; 2000). While some families use their own children as labour for their activities, others create a demand for other people's children as labour. It is this demand, which motivates some children to travel from the rural areas to the cities as independent porters, peddlers, car washers and *chop bar* workers (see Chapter Four). Others are recruited through the extended family network or intermediaries who supply children to petty producers in the informal sector (Apt and Grieco, 1997; Korboe, 1997).

2.3.2 Costs of living and child labour

Devaluation has been a major stabilisation tool in the economy since the first post-colonial government. It has in most cases had depreciating effects on wages and incomes, resulted in price increases and higher costs of living. This in turn affected the day-to-day survival of families in both the rural and urban areas. The main theoretical assumptions of such devaluations are that a low-value Cedi, *vis-à-vis* other major currencies, will make exports cheaper and thereby increase demand. Meanwhile, the higher import prices will curb demand, stabilise prices and in the process help to redress the balance of payments deficits. Consequently, by the end of 1990 the Cedi had nominally been devalued by over 6000% compared to its 1983 value (Gibbon, 1992).

However, because of the low elasticities³ of demand and supply, devaluations have yielded few results in Ghana. Africa's elasticity of supply happens to be the lowest in the world (-0.3 to -0.5) (White, 1996) and for that reason render devaluation an ineffective tool. In spite of this, its potential in Ghana was always overestimated. In reality, the devaluations came to be synonymous with inflation. In the 1970s when it was a common economic tool, people factored it into their decisions on what to buy, sell or hoard in anticipation of government's annual budgets. It never achieved its aim and only afforded the rich greater opportunity to earn more profits at the expense

³ This is the rate at which a unit change in prices generates a unit change in demand or supply. The higher the elasticities are the greater the changes in demand or supply as a result of changes in prices. However, because most imports in Ghana are necessities, they are less responsive to such price changes, hence the low elasticity. Ghana's exports, like cocoa, are raw materials that respond to price changes with a lag and are also less responsive to devaluations.

of the poor (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Successive devaluations rather have led to increases in the price of petrol which are translated into higher transport fares. It also seriously affected the rural communities since the price of kerosene, in use in large quantities, increased in such cases. In spite of this, as Jayarajah and Branson (1995) argue, a common fallacy of devaluation is that it will lead to increases in rural incomes. However, the combination of these factors alone increased the costs of living and quickly suppressed any expected gains to the poor in the rural areas (Adepoju, 1993).

The effects of the devaluations inherent in SAP on children can be located in the increasing costs of living against declining real wages and incomes. Research shows that the poor in Accra needs and indeed spends, 'more than eight times the minimum wage' for basic survival (Sowa, 1993: 16). Consequently, most salaried workers undertake a number of supplementary activities to sustain themselves while others are driven to a host of illegal activities including, 'theft, corruption, black-marketeering and prostitution' (*ibid.*). If parents have to resort to such activities for survival, then children as part of the family production unit also have to contribute in ways that exceed their traditional roles. This then affects the way children utilise their agency in either a positive or negative way by resorting to work to enhance survivability. Children regularly cite their obligation to support parents, meet the high costs of living or parents' inability to provide their needs (for example, Beauchemin, 1999; Korboe, 1997) as reasons why they migrate to the cities or take up jobs. The high costs of living also entrap children in work. Many children who migrated from

the rural areas to work in the cities have not been able to return home as planned because of the difficulty of raising enough money (CIDA, 1997; Korboe, 1997). Even though children live in the most Spartan shelters, their maintenance costs represent considerable expenditure to them and therefore minimises the potential to save money quickly.

2.3.3 Health care and child labour

For a country where the majority of people are categorised as poor by the international standard of \$2 a day (World Bank, 2001), subsidies on vital services like education, health, housing and other social services are critical to survival. The impact of infectious diseases like malaria and tuberculosis in terms of productivity losses is overwhelming. Thus, a free health care system in government hospitals, health posts and centres was instituted just after independence and was financed through the national budget. This however was abandoned in 1987 when cost recovery in health services became a central policy under SAP (Sowa, 1993). Hospital fees became additional expenditures people had to accommodate, especially against the background of decreasing real income. As a result, hospital attendance in the rural areas dropped by 50%, while living standards survey in 1987/88 showed that 48% of Ghanaians failed to consult doctors or nurses when sick (Sowa, 1993). Even though an ability to pay principle was introduced in 1992, the trend remained largely the same. Most people preferred the cheaper approach of self-medication by purchasing medicines from the pharmacies or local chemical sellers than the more expensive formal medical treatment (Brown and Kerr, 1997).

There is a close connection between the burden of diseases and child labour. First of all, sick parents who cannot afford hospital fees to ensure a quick recovery become incapacitated for longer periods. This naturally affects the total family productivity and leads to a loss of income. Generally, it has been found that GDP rises by 0.3% for every 10% reduction in the incidence of malaria in SSA as a whole (Rabinovich, 2000). The flip side of this is that family productivity and incomes decrease considerably when malaria or any diseases incapacitate members. Considering that over 90% of children in the rural areas are engaged in unpaid agricultural work (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997), children have to assume more labour-substitution responsibilities in place of their sick parents. This means working longer hours or doing harder jobs and in the process jeopardising their own health. Children who are orphaned or live with incapacitated parents are known to assume adult responsibilities quite early in Ghana (SCUK, 2000). In addition, family responsibilities that impinge on children's agency are known to motivate some to run away from home (Amin, 1994). To the extent that the long-term illness of a parent can burden children, some will leave home as a result. It is possible that others will leave to work for altruistic reasons of supporting sick parents. Children are also known to absent themselves from schools to meet the shortfall in family labour as a result of prolonged illness in the family (Ennew, 1982; GNCC, 2000). This also serves as a motivation for migration if parents are unable to meet children's school needs as a result of the illness. A long-term absence from school equally justifies migration for work in the city.

The high cost of health services affects some children directly once they arrive in the cities. Most studies of child workers in Ghana (for example GNCC, 1997; Agrawal, *et al.*, 1997; Apt and Grieco, 1997; Korboe, 1997) find the majority of street children to be self-medicating. All of them cite the high hospital charges as the reason for their actions⁴ but most critically the need to work to meet such costs. However, the failure to properly treat and cure the disease can result in protracted illness with long-term consequences for the child. This also prolongs their stay in the cities because they cannot work to save enough money for their return home or they have to spend their savings on medicines.

2.3.4 Rising costs of education and child labour

Any policy that militates against the maintenance of children in schools presents both voluntary and involuntary child labour as plausible alternatives. In this sense, the introduction of a variety of fees and charges in schools alongside the other SAP-induced problems in families have contributed in no small measure to the commercialisation of child labour. It has also enhanced the migration from rural communities.

The SAP-induced reforms in education appeared in two phases. The first phase, from 1987 to 1990 aimed at restructuring the provision of basic education while the second phase from 1991 to 1993 dealt with reforms in senior secondary education (Sowa,

⁴ In Zimbabwe, Davis and Saunders (1987: 23) found that stabilisation policies have impacted on child health through the reduction in the real incomes of many households, the effect of which was 'discrepantly high levels of under-nutrition...'

1993). As a result, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP increased from 3.1% in 1980 to 4.2% in 1997 (World Bank, 2001). However, education still remained under funded with the majority of schools lacking classrooms, equipment, teachers and other essential materials (Brown and Kerr, 1997). The direct implications of the reform however came in the SAP-inherent policy of cost recovery through reduced subsidies to secondary schools (Sowa, 1993). The cost components arising from SAP are considerable and have greatly inflated the cost of education to parents. Even though official primary and junior secondary school fees are nominal, there are other charges for textbooks, utilities and meals while parents are expected to contribute significantly to the provision of physical infrastructure (Brown and Kerr, 1997). This has greatly undermined access to education, particularly when contrasted with the free primary and highly subsidised post-secondary education policies of the 1960s and 70s.

Prior to the education reform and the inherent cost recovery in 1987, the gross enrolment ratio (GER)⁵ for 1986/87 was 77.3% but had declined to 76.5% by 1996/97 (ISSER, 2000). The current GERs for primary schools in the northern regions (source regions of most of the participants) are much lower than the national average, especially at the post-primary stage (GSS and MI, 1999). UNICEF (1998) puts the ratio of secondary school enrolment between 1990 and 1995 at 45% for boys and 29% for girls. The average rate for the three northern regions at this level again is

⁵ The GER is the proportion of children of all ages who are enrolled in primary schools from year 1 to 6 relative to the number of all 6 to 11 year-olds in the country.

a dismal 28% (ISSER, 2000). The implication of this is that more than half of the population of boys and girls eligible to attend secondary schools do not.

There are several reasons why thousands of children do not attend school, but the most prominent is the direct costs of education. This largely explains the remarkable change from the high GERs for primary schools to the low rates for secondary schools. It is estimated that the 'out-of-pocket' costs incurred by poor parents in sending their children to school cover a third of their cash income (UNICEF, 1997f). There is therefore a high correlation between school attendance and family income (Siddiqi and Patrinos, 2000). This provides enough justification for the 'indirect opportunity costs of schooling argument' advanced by UNICEF (1997d: 5). The poor family incurs an income loss in two ways when they send the child to school. Firstly, the costs of education have to be borne, while secondly, no income is generated since the child is not used in a directly productive way to the family. Thus, by not enrolling their children as a result of excessive costs, parents save money as well as benefit directly from their labour. Brown and Kerr (1997) have also found that parents' inability to pay school fees is the main reason why most girls are kept out of school. SCUUK (2000) notes further that this discrimination against girls leads to their early entry into adult life through marriage and child bearing, all of which affect their future prospects in life. Another problem is that children who are motivated to look after themselves in school through work, find it difficult because of the high cost. Against this background and also by premising the argument on the fact that any time spent in schools reduces the residual hours for work, it is possible that more children

have had to work than would have been the case if the costs of education were lower. Others are motivated to seek work opportunities in the cities.

If children have to combine school with work in order to meet the cost of education and living generally, they cannot always find the time or strength to do their homework (UNICEF, 1997d). Such children easily lose interest in formal education and certainly claim that school is of no use to them. The primary reason however are the difficult conditions under which they attend schools since, even the most innovative curricula will provide little inspiration to a tired child. The long-term consequence is that some children are effectively marginalized from the mainstream economy when they become adults because of their lack of recognisable skills. Stewart (1994: 107) notes appropriately that ‘African economies are potentially rich in human resources, yet people are relatively neglected, badly educated and in poor health, with their capacities frequently underused.’ This process of individual impoverishment and marginalisation starts with the failure of the state to provide affordable education in the first place. The consequence for many children is their engagement in activities that offer no transferable skills for the future.

2.3.5 Subsidies, agriculture and child labour

The significance of agriculture is reflected in the fact that it is the main source of employment, both for commercial and subsistence purposes. As a result, the impact of policy changes in the sector reverberates across the nation. In this case, a critical

impact of SAP was the removal of subsidies on farm inputs like fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides and seeds and seedlings at the beginning of the 1990s (Gibbon, 1992). The resulting increases in the prices of these inputs exceeded the inflation rate by a factor of nearly six when the phased removal of subsidies was completed in 1992 (Gibbon, 1992). Logically, the demand for such farm inputs fell and resulted in lower application of fertilisers in maize production and pesticides for controlling cocoa diseases (Asiedu-Saforo, 1989, cited in Gibbon, 1992). The policy therefore worsened conditions in the impoverished rural communities and in particular sustained the culture of migration in the northern regions.

The case of rice cultivation in the rural areas of northern Ghana is well known (see for example, Van Hear, 1982; Endale, 1995). The combination of trade liberalisation and importation of rice *vis-à-vis* higher local production costs arising from the removal of subsidies, have dissipated any competitive advantages rice producers had. As a result, the demand for rice in Ghana has shifted from the local produce to imported ones thereby displacing rice farmers (Enale, 1995). The vibrant rice industry, which formed the source of employment and income for the majority of the rural poor in the North prior to SAP, has all but collapsed⁶. When Van Hear undertook one of the earliest studies in child labour in Ghana, it was children's involvement in commercial rice production in the North that formed the basis of his

⁶ There was considerable dismay over statements by Peter Harold, the World Bank Resident Director in Ghana, to justify the pressure on Ghana to import rice when he noted recently that Ghana has no comparative advantage in rice production. This is a fallacy and was pointed out by the Minister of Trade. Ghana was self-sufficient in rice production (and even accumulated surpluses) until SAP and the pressure to import rice made it unprofitable.

research. The latter generation of boys and girls who would have worked on those farms as family labour (under more controllable environments) or on their own, now migrates to Accra and other cities. The collapse of the rice industry in the northern regions is therefore widely viewed as one of the primary reasons of impoverishment and for sustaining the migration culture (Abugri, 2000). As a result, Toye (1990) identifies the rural poor (and their children) in the North as one of the groups most affected by the removal of subsidies under SAP.

2.4 Conclusion

The chapter set out to explore the role of structural adjustments in Ghana's political economy and how that contributes to the making of a category of children who consider migration and child labour as routine aspects of life. To do this, it traced some of the early negotiations between Ghana and the IMF/World Bank and the adjustments policies that were implemented. It was shown however, that for a number of political and economic reasons none of the earlier SAPs lasted long enough. Rather, they contributed to the political, social and economic uncertainty and instability and conferred a mythical status on the IMF and SAPs in the country.

The post-1983 adjustments undertaken by Rawlings however, were explored in greater detail because the generation of children under study was born in this era. The impacts of the protracted implementation of the post-1983 adjustments on families and children were considered. In this regard, it was shown that the contraction of the public sector through retrenchments in the 1990s deprived many immediate and

extended family members of their sources of incomes. Most of these people sought economic refuge in the informal sector, which incidentally is the main area of employment for children. The increasing costs of living as a result of the depreciating currency, the resulting inflation, which in turn affected the value of wages and incomes, further impoverished families.

In addition, the cost recovery principle in health care produced disastrous health implications for families. The majority of people, especially in the rural areas, are known to be self-medicating and never seek proper medical attention. This is a negative development considering that diseases are prevalent and life expectancy is low. For children, the protracted illness of parents results in the redistribution of family responsibilities towards more intensive work forms. In ensuring the elimination of highly subsidised health care in Ghana, the IMF/World Bank through SAP, have contributed to the poor health of millions and the low life expectancy. Furthermore, their failure to acknowledge and treat properly the connection between good health and productivity through affordable health care systems has erected additional barriers to social and economic development. Children as usual are the eventual losers since the implication for most of them is intensive engagement in child labour. The increasing cost of education was also shown to give greater urgency to the opportunity cost of education as both parents and children attempt to rationalise the essence of education in relation to work. Lastly, the removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs was shown to affect the productivity and viability of certain agricultural ventures in the Ghana.

On the basis of this, it can be concluded that the increasing intensification of child labour in Accra and other cities is largely attributable to cumulative economic failures. The need for children to work is certainly an intrinsic part of the social and cultural landscape, however this does not occur in a vacuum. It all depends on the prevailing economic circumstances and how they impact on adults and children. Policies and decisions that impoverish adults provide the legitimacy for engaging children in more intensive and higher income-generating activities. Consequently, the post-1983 economy symbolised by SAP, through its contribution to higher unemployment, higher costs of education and health among others, provided the necessary as well as sufficient conditions for child migration and more intensive forms of child labour.

The realisation these days is that greater attention should have been paid to the long-term social consequences of SAP on the family and children. However, SAP as a neo-liberal Western construction, succeeded largely in empowering the elites of Ghana. For the majority of ordinary Ghanaians, it left in its wake further impoverishments. With increasing numbers of children in especially difficult situations in the country because of inadequate family resources (Government of Ghana, 1992), it is inevitable that some children will assume responsibilities for themselves. This prevalent impoverishment has given greater scope to migration and intensive child labour as a way of mitigating some of the socio-economic problems

people encounter in the more deprived rural communities. In this sense, the role of children in the family's division of labour has increased beyond normal expectations.

Chapters One and Two have set the bases for the thesis through the strategy of discussing the broader issues of child labour and then narrowing it down to role of the economy, through its embodiment in SAP. In the subsequent chapters I will discuss how these themes motivate children to leave home and are expressed in their lives as migrant child labourers in Accra. But first, the methodological approach to the research will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCHING CHILD WORKERS: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

...the practical difficulties are further complicated when the population are street children, given that the intense, haphazard nature of street life often results in a way of living that is alien to the majority of researchers (Young and Barret, 2001: 384).

3.1 Introduction

Even though child labour is a major social problem in Ghana, it is a sensitive topic. While some adults are reluctant to discuss how they utilise the labour of children, some children themselves are apprehensive of the outcome of such investigations. Matters are also complicated by the fact that child labour occurs in contrasting research environments. It may occur in the privacy of a home or small informal business and as a result raise the issue of private space. It may also occur in disorganised public spaces like the streets and markets. The surrounding conditions in all cases render the conduct of research a difficult enterprise that demands negotiation of space and consent at all times.

The current perception in childhood studies is that children are among the best interpreters of their lived experiences (Qvortrup, 1990; Mayall, 1996; 1999; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Woodhead, 1999). This is an important innovation given that migrant street children live and work hundreds of kilometres from home, in most cases independent of their families. Both to understand and to develop practical interventions that carry with them the support of children, their interpretations need to be treated as a primary source of information. This can be achieved through detailed interviews and observations of children in their

'natural' working environment. Backed up by additional information from secondary sources generated from research and data on children and child labour in Ghana, we can develop a powerful and illuminating analysis of an adjustment generation.

This chapter therefore deals with the methodological approach to achieving these objectives. It is divided into three parts. The research design is discussed as the first step, during which the choice of qualitative research methods is considered. The research questions underpinning the study are also raised as part of the design. The research process itself is discussed in the second part. In this instance, the piloting phase, the choice of study sites and participants, the interviews and observations are discussed. The analytical method and issues of confidentiality, validity and reliability of the research process are also discussed. The third part discusses the problems encountered in organising and conducting the research and their implications for the findings.

3.2 Research Design: The construction of a methodology

The first issue in designing the research methodology was where to place it within the broader quantitative and qualitative traditions. Adopting a quantitative approach usually demands the use of questionnaires, hypothesis, statistical procedures and representative samples. All these will rest on the assumption that the social reality can be systematically observed in order for rational explanations to be constructed. The general view is that when social research is undertaken this way the intrusion of personal values are minimised and thereby lead to more objective findings (Blaikie, 1993; Creswell, 1994; Crotty, 1998). However, these

strengths of quantitative research are also its weaknesses in an increasingly socialised world. For example, in the quest for representative samples and objectivity, the researcher is often unable to fully explore the inner self and convictions of the subjects of the study. Only a shallow relationship can exist between them because of little immersion in and familiarisation with the social environment. However, as May (1993) argues, social research is also an examination of the very basis of social existence, where both researcher and the researched are constituent parts of that social world. A successful coexistence through greater immersion on the part of the researcher as the outsider can ensure a greater understanding of the social structures and processes. The quest for such deeper understanding of social reality has resulted in widespread respect and adoption of qualitative research in the last twenty years or so (Blaxter, *et al.*, 1996)

3.2.1 Thinking qualitatively

Even though quantitative and qualitative methods are located in contrasting research traditions, they complement each other in the search for rational explanations and in the construction of knowledge. Qualitative research offers dimensions that quantitative ones are unable to cover such as process, meanings and experiences that people bring to their social lives. It also allows us to get beyond the numbers and the quantification of social life by bringing it alive and by understanding the motivations that frame people's terms of reference and guide their lives. As Crotty (1998) points out, knowledge is not simply out there to be unearthed; rather we construct explanations or meanings based on how we engage ourselves with reality in a society.

Research traditions like interpretivism, feminism, and critical theory with these ontological assumptions involve lengthy periods of time in observing social actors during which direct personal contact takes place between the researcher and the subjects (Hughes, 1990; Blaikie 1993, Neuman, 1994; Crotty 1998). This study follows the tradition of such interpretive social research and uses the strategies of in-depth interviews of children as well as observations of their social and work environments. Thus, the different social conditions, cultures and sub-cultures and the multi-dimensional interpretations children exhibit constitute the bases of knowledge to be interpreted and used to construct meanings of children's lives.

What then is the logic behind the choice of these qualitative methods and strategies? The opportunity of spending long periods of time talking to and observing children provides a more effective way of studying their lived experiences. Besides, it is the underlying social mechanisms and processes that are essential in the research rather than statistical correlation to *a priori* hypotheses. The motives of children in their social and economic life are the critical elements and as Neuman (1998: 63) suggests, have to be taken into consideration 'even if they are irrational, emotion-laden, and contain false facts and prejudices'. Thus, by following what children ascribe to their own reality and how they rationalise their very existence, through a programme of qualitative research, the objective of seeking to understand their everyday experiences in relation to the economy can be achieved.

Furthermore, the approach enhances the understanding of the group dynamics of

migrant street children since detailed information from complementary but divergent backgrounds and experiences can be pieced together to build rational explanations. The immersion into their social world through qualitative methods therefore facilitates the understanding of how they constitute building blocks in their subculture and survival strategies.

Moreover, qualitative research's analytical method of induction leads to the construction of descriptions and explanations about social reality in a negotiated way with the relevant social actors (Merriam, 1988). Some qualitative researchers do this by taking their findings back to the participants for their comments. While this is an important process of validation, the practical difficulty of tracing participants and their inability to read the research outcome limits the practice in this instance. However, social workers and government officials will be asked to comment on a number of issues that emerge from the interviews.

3.2.2 The Research Questions

The research design is located in the social research traditions briefly discussed above. However, the best way to identify the social problem and the social reality that encapsulates it is to raise general research questions as the basis of the study. These are questions that emerged from the literature review in the preparatory stage of the study and have been critical to the choice of research strategies. They have also been subjected to constant reassessment as the research progressed.

These are:

1. Which children travel from the rural areas to work in Accra?
2. What motivates or pressurises them to come to Accra instead of working in

- their local areas?
3. What is the nature of the work and social environment they operate in when they arrive?
 4. How do they conceptualise exploitation in their relations with others, especially at the work place?
 5. What are the children's valuation of their work in relation to education and their future?
 6. What are their economic contributions and impact on the distribution of power and authority in their families?

3.2.3 Selection Strategy

Qualitative methods were chosen because of the need to understand the social process that surrounds child labour. Against this background, the issue of sampling and selection withered to non-probabilistic strategies. The goal was not to seek a large and representative sample to generate 'surface patterns' (Mason, 1996: 410) but rather in-depth understanding through the specific group of participants who reflect existing knowledge. The participants were therefore purposively selected to represent a, 'theoretically comprehensive' sample with variable backgrounds and contexts as the 'key informants' (Pope and May, 1995: 110). To some extent, Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame's (1981) suggestion to continue sampling until a 'theory-saturation point' is reached was followed. Among the factors taken into consideration in the selection process were children's origin, family background, age, type of work, and the ability to speak

the Akan language¹. The snowballing method was the main approach to selecting the participants.

3.3 The Research Process: Issues and challenges of dealing with migrant child workers

A total of forty-five children were eventually selected as participants and studied over the five-month fieldwork period. The research covered a wide area in Accra, besides the participants tended to roam rather than operate at stationary positions on a daily basis. It was therefore impossible to maintain a day-to-day contact with all the forty-five participants. In all, the participants were aged between 10 and 15 years. Eight months after the initial fieldwork, another visit lasting one month was paid to the study site. This time, four adult social workers from two of the most active non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), World Vision, Ghana (WI), and a government commission, Ghana National Commission for Children (GNCC), were also interviewed as a means to reflect on the initial interpretations.

3.3.1 Piloting

The interview guide was tested at the pilot stage. The first week of the field study, during which four participants were interviewed and observed, was used as the piloting period. The pilot allowed the interview schedule, the participants' ability to comprehend the questions as well as the effectiveness of the interview process to be tested. It became apparent at this stage that the level of comprehension of even the most basic questions varied from child to child. Age was the determining

¹ This is the predominant language in Ghana.

factor. The younger the children were, the more difficult it was for them to formulate opinions about some of the issues at stake. Hence, even though a number of children below 10 years were observed in the study sites, a minimum threshold of 10 years was set as a way of getting around that practical difficulty.

The pilot study also revealed that tape-recording the interviews unnerved some children, especially the younger ones. The solution was to engage in initial conversation on general questions that relaxed them and served to introduce the main and more sensitive ones. The interviews were then tape-recorded when the children appeared to be more relaxed and willing to talk at length. While they were apprehensive of such intrusions, my background as a teacher when divulged often reassured them. It often allayed their fears of whether I was working for the Accra Metropolitan Authority, an organisation most of them were quite suspicious of².

The pilot study also served as the period for determining the study sites and planning the best way to tackle anticipated problems, like interference from outsiders and negotiating gatekeepers. It also became obvious at this stage that the cherished goal of conducting the interview in the naturally occurring work environment was going to be difficult. Hence, quiet spaces within that environment had to be located to ensure a proper setting and meaningful conversations.

² The Accra Metropolitan Authority is the body that manages the city and occasionally attempts to rid the streets, markets, and other public spaces of child labourers.

The pilot study was extremely useful since it shaped my initial understanding of the research environment, allowed a trial for the interview process and provided insights into the behaviour of the social actors. The knowledge and experience gained from the pilot greatly influenced the subsequent interviews by reshaping my approach, the framing of questions and the choice of study sites.

3.3.2 Study sites and participants

Following Hakim (1987: 87) two key units of study and analysis – ‘social unit’ and ‘space’ - were chosen. Work is a way of life for the majority of Ghanaian children hence most children were potential subjects of a study like this. However, the visibility of migrant children in the streets, markets and construction sites have projected them as a major social problem. This made migrant child workers an apposite choice. Children’s working and living spaces were to be the second unit of research. These were the streets, markets, quarries and other petty production centres of Accra. According to Agrawal, *et al.*, (1997) migrant child workers can be located in all parts of Accra, particularly in the commercial sections and markets. However, for practical reasons of accessibility and the need to contact the participants as frequently as possible, this was narrowed down to four specific places: Agobloshie market, Kaneshi Market, CMB/Railway Station, and the Mandela stone quarry.

Locating children in the demarcated areas was hardly a problem because of their large numbers. The majority of the children who participated in the study were based at the Agobloshie Market. Most of the children here originated from the northern regions and operated in a very organised social network with their own

youth leaders and chiefs. It was therefore necessary to negotiate with those leaders for access to both the market and children. After two days of negotiation through the assistance of two youth leaders I met the Kokomba³ chief at the Agobloshie Market and was granted permission. The original intention was to conduct two interviews a day among the Kokomba children, but I had to abandon this plan as a result of objections from some elderly women. They feared that the outcome of the research would be published in the popular press and therefore disgrace their community. My assurances to the contrary could not dispel the notion⁴.

However I approached a rival group of northern migrants, the Dagombas and went through the same procedure of gaining access to the children. The leaders, this time, were quite co-operative and with the minimum of explanation, consented to the study. They even provided me with a quiet space in the market where some of the interviews were subsequently conducted. The difference in attitude was perhaps due to the fact that the Dagomba elder I talked to was literate and therefore easier for him to grasp the concept of research and interviews. The earlier objection by the rival group could also be attributed to research fatigue. A number of studies by both local and foreign researchers had already been conducted on children, particularly the head carriers, in the area.

I gained access to some head porters (*kayayoos*), off-loaders and truck pushers in the Agobloshie market, while the site also became one of the central places

³ Kokomba is a major tribe in the northern region of Ghana. In Accra they form one of the major groups that reside and operate at the Agobloshie market. The other ethnic group is the Dagombas, also from the northern region.

⁴ I could have conducted the research by directly approaching the children. But since they had no parents in the area the ethical issue of seeking some adult consent guided me.

studied over the period. The research strategy envisaged a more divergent background of migrant children hence it was essential to establish study centres at other places in Accra. Thus, the Kaneshi market became the second study space. It is not a specialised market like Agobloshie and therefore has a more divergent group of people. Moreover, children who work here are not organised in any social groupings hence their individual consents were enough. A similar process was repeated at the CMB/Railway station, the third study site. However, to gain access to the area, I informed the stationmaster of my intention to regularly visit and interview some children. The last study site was the Mandela stone quarry. Access to children here could only be gained through the adults with whom they worked. I approached this task by initially contacting one of the young men who worked at the quarry, who in turn introduced me to the parents/adults working with children I wanted to interview. With him as the intermediary, I gained the consent to interview five children at the site. In spite of this initial permission, I encountered some problems from adults in my subsequent visits (discussed in section 3.4).

The profile of children envisaged for the study was boys and girls aged between 10 and 15 years, who had migrated internally from other parts of the country to work in Accra. They could be living independently or with adults. In the initial stages of the research, I approached children if they fitted the profile. I would then explain my intentions to them to gauge their interest. These children were simply approached at random, but only if the circumstances in which they operated at the time were conducive. A number of them disagreed, others readily agreed, while others voluntarily expressed their interest. The majority of participants though

were selected through the snowballing strategy. Children introduced me to their friends and if they fitted the profile were considered. In addition, the youth leaders in the Agobloshie market directed me to some other possible participants. Eventually 45 migrant street workers were interviewed.

3.3.3 The interviews

The detailed interviewing of the children was expected to provide what Blaxter, *et al.* (1996: 153) describe variously as, ‘naturalistic, autobiographical, in-depth, narrative, or non-directive’ information. To achieve this, an interview guide consisting of the broad research questions enumerated earlier was used. The interview guide was thematic and loosely structured to provide the prompts rather than specific questions. This was however not followed in any specific sequence since the issues raised within the themes dictated the line of questioning.

A number of interesting qualitative strategies have been adopted in the past to achieve high quality data. An example is Hecht’s ‘radio workshops’ adopted in interviewing street children in Brazil, during which the children interviewed and tape-recorded their friends (Young and Barret, 2001). Others have asked children to describe what they do by writing essays, dramatising, drawing, filming and photographing (for example, Mizen, *et al.*, 1999; Woodhead, 1999). While all these methods have their strong points, they are equally limited by the appropriateness of the context in which a research is done. For example, the essay-writing method was completely impractical for my study because the majority of the participants could neither read nor write. Besides, their natural environment was a disorganised one, thus creating a conducive environment for

writing, drawing and drama within the chaos of that space would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible. Yet, I did not want to compromise the crucial objective of conducting the research in its naturally occurring environment. The aim here was simply to avoid what Dockrell, *et al.* (2000: 50) consider as a 'controlled' or 'contrived' environment. While this would have simplified the research process, it also would have diminished the significance of the context in which the children operated.

Thus, within the qualitative tradition, the general approach adopted for the study was multiple case studies of migrant children working in Accra. The specific method for achieving this was in-depth interviews that loosely followed the interview guide. This provided the participants the opportunity to talk about their lives and their social reality in the street, markets and quarries. In all cases, after introducing myself and giving the necessary assurances about the study, the participant and I would agree on a suitable place within the vicinity for the interview. These 'quiet' spaces were invariably within the participant's working area so as to maintain the daily reality.

The interview process for each participant began from simple questions about their age, hometown, family, etc. and gradually built up to more elaborate ones. These elaborate questions centred, among others, on their perception of the economy, their daily lives before and after their arrival in the city, their conception of exploitation and the utilisation of their agency within the social environment in which they operate. Even though the interviews were loosely structured, questions relating to age, sex, marital status of parents, etc. were standard and routinely

asked. The other questions however were approached with greater freedom and improvisation, and in all cases bordered on a conversation with the participants. A copy of the interview schedule is attached in Appendix I.

All the interviews were tape-recorded after the purpose had been carefully explained and the children's permission obtained. This was done to calm their fears and anxieties regarding the purpose of the tapes. The apparent assurance most of them needed was that the tapes would not be traced back to them⁵. The interviews were all conducted in Akan. The average length of initial interviews was thirty minutes but some were as long as forty minutes and others as short as fifteen minutes. The follow-up interviews with the core group took different lengths; some were very brief while others lasted longer. No specific focus group interviews were conducted but two girls in the core group worked as partners and were always interviewed together to reflect the nature of their daily working interactions. There were occasions when other participants would get involved in the interview of another person because they happened to be there. Each interview was transcribed and simultaneously translated into English on the same day. Considerable attention was paid to the translations to avoid any misinterpretations of children's intentions, views and explanations.

⁵ This in itself provided an initial insight into the unease some children felt about their lives on the streets.

3.3.4 Observations

The second qualitative method was observation of the work and social environment. As pointed out by Sapsford and Jupp (1996), observations are critical because they provide the opportunity for relating the perception of reality to the real life situation. It also helps to present a direct representation of the participants and therefore eliminate the artificial aura that surrounds other methods like survey (Robson, 1993). Observations were therefore used for exploratory purposes to understand the dynamics of the social reality in the initial stages and subsequently as a source of supplementary information. Thus, not only were observations used to augment the depth interviews of children, they also served as a way of validating most of the information children presented in the conversations.

The observation strategy was informed by the traditions of 'pragmatism' and 'formalism' born out of the Chicago School of Sociology (May, 1993). The main assumption of pragmatism is that society evolves in a continuously dynamic way hence the immersion of oneself in it will lead to a higher understanding. Consequently, by participating in the social relations through some form of observation, a wealth of information and knowledge can be gathered as the building blocks for constructing meanings of reality. The main assumption of formalism, on the other hand, is that even though social relationships vary, individual behaviour can be better appreciated if common traits and intra group trends are taken into consideration. The observations were undertaken with both traditions in mind. While in all instances the essence of the individual was recognised, it was largely about studying him/her as a constituent part of the child

migrant community in Accra. Their unique orientations were studied when possible but the observations of group dynamics were equally critical in relations to what they had divulged in the interviews.

The observations were done without reference to any structure or formalised strategy. As a result, it was possible to interact with children socially while the observation and study processes were in motion in a non-structured and non-participant way. Considerable number of hours went into regular but unscheduled visits to generate the graphic familiarity of the general environment and to track the movements and behaviour of the core participants.

A major part of the process was geared towards ‘descriptive observation’ (Robson, 1993: 200) in which case the background to the physical and social environment was documented as they appeared during the visits. The observations were linked to the interview process. I would sit at any convenient place after an interview and observe the situation in the market, street or quarry. Later in the fieldwork, when I became known to some shop owners, I would sit in front of the shops. The quarry presented the best opportunity for observations since it was less crowded and all that I had to do was to sit under one of the sheds to observe. Again, there were no specific lengths of time, though it was common to spend three hours in a study area for interviews and observations. Brief notes and points of interests were inconspicuously taken and developed into comprehensive notes later. Several photographs were also taken at different times of the study, even though the participants were not directly photographed.

3.3.5 Confidentiality and anonymity

Most of the participants expressed concern about the issue of confidentiality themselves, in spite of my personal obligation to ensure that their identities were preserved anonymously. Generally, research confidentiality implies handling the research information in such a way that they cannot be related to a participant and utilising that information in ways that protects the source (Masson, 2000). In addition, the research environment 'is generally not identified, individuals are anonymized or given pseudonyms, and some facts which might identify them, are changed or omitted' (*ibid*: 41).

Considerable efforts were made in the study to adhere to such principles. All the participants were given pseudonyms. While they were associated with the regions they came from, their hometowns and villages were completely altered within those regions. Children were also related to the areas in which they operated in Accra, but on the assumption that the large numbers of children who operate there would negate the chances of identification. Moreover, even though a number of pictures were taken of the areas to provide graphic backgrounds, care was taken not to photograph any child who was directly involved with the study.

3.3.6 Data Sources and Analytical Approaches

The primary source of data was the information gathered from the participants through interviews and observations of the social and labour processes. Field notes were also compiled about the work environments during the many visits to the study sites. The visits were deliberately scheduled to take place at different times of the day in order to capture the contrasting scenarios. The third source was

information from adults who deal with children on the streets and others in adverse situations. They provided information on the location of ethnic clusters of migrant children in Accra and their own experiences in dealing with them. Lastly, secondary data relating to costs of living, standards of living and human development indices among others were also gathered from World Development reports, government sources and other research reports on child labour in Ghana. These data provided the basis for analysing the socio-economic conditions in relations to the information provided by the children. Its usefulness lies in the opportunity it provides for validating and augmenting information gathered in the field.

The analysis of data began in the field and continued afterwards. The effort was to determine what constitutes relevant knowledge from the vast amount of data gathered from the interviews, observations and other sources. It must be recalled that the participants were purposively sampled. That process in itself is considered to be an integral part of the inductive process of data analysis (Mason, 1994). This allows distinctive comparisons to be sought and analysed as the basis for constructing children's understandings (Mason, 1996).

Two types of categories, 'descriptive' and 'conceptual' (Mason, 1994: 42), were applied in the analysis. The descriptive categories were made up of descriptive nouns, adjectives, and phrases provided by the participants (Sapsford and Abbot, 1992) in the various interviews. These were used to build up a descriptive picture of the daily social and labour processes. The conceptual categories on the other hand related to the research questions and therefore dealt with aspects of the data

that presented possible explanations to the research questions. Each transcribed interview was then numbered and skimmed. More careful readings were then undertaken during which notes relating to the categories were made in the margins of each transcript. As the categories appeared, each number identifying a participant was noted under the categories and themes on a broad sheet. These entries were starred according to the depth of the views or interpretations the participants had given. The result was a simplified thematic chart since for each category or theme it directed me to which participant and pages in the transcripts to refer for interpretations or the appropriate quotation to support a discussion. Even though no *a priori* hypotheses were generated for the study, a pattern-matching analysis was also done to link the children's interpretation to existing knowledge in the bid to discover new meanings or relate to existing ones (Yin, 1994).

3.3.7 Issues of validity and reliability

The validity of the research design was considered quite crucial to the overall significance of the study since it would enhance the credibility of the eventual conclusions. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the research answered the questions it set out to answer. To do this, multiple sources of evidence were built into the research design to present different angles to the same issues or themes. Besides, different study sites with contrasting social backgrounds were also chosen. Children are commonly not considered as 'valid' subjects, especially in Ghana, hence their opinions and views are ignored. However, considering the initial objective of the study to treat children as the best source of information on their lived experiences, they were considered as valid respondents. Thus, the

detailed descriptions presented by the children were in themselves treated as powerful evidences that validate their experiences. As Hakim (1987: 27) argues, the detailed accounts that emerge from in-depth interviews of this nature will in themselves be, 'sufficient detail for the result to be taken as true, correct, complete and believable reports of their views and experiences'.

Regarding the issue of reliability, the question to answer is whether the research can stand a test of replication. Exact replication is impossible in this study or any other qualitative research hence the criterion of reliability was not necessarily built into the research design. While the interview guide and similar observation strategies could be followed in a future work, this study like others, is a unique experience within the broader qualitative tradition and therefore does not leave precise trails for replication. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that if I talked to a different group of children elsewhere in Accra, the conclusions would have been any different.

3.4 Methodological problems encountered

A number of problems regarding the study sites, participants, gatekeepers and ethical issues were encountered in the study. Firstly, many of the children who were approached were apprehensive because they were on the run from city officials bent on their eradication from public spaces. A number of them were also suspicious of the research intentions and feared they might be stigmatised by its outcome. Boys were often most suspicious while girls were more willing to talk. However, there was always the odd person who would chide others for agreeing to participate in the study. Adults in this regard, viewed the interviews with

considerable apprehension. The enquiry appeared to generate some level of embarrassment, especially if they were utilising the labour of the child, as evidenced by the incidents at Mandela stone quarry and Agobloshie market, discussed below.

Adults therefore were effective gatekeepers that had to be negotiated at all levels. Even after the negotiations, a number of difficulties were encountered as a result of their interventions in the research process. At the Agobloshie Market, it was adults and not children who initially opposed the interviews. For example, on the second day of the piloting, two elderly women who objected to the study confronted me. Their argument was that interviews with the children would reflect negatively on the northern regions.⁶ My explanations that it was a purely academic work yielded no positive results and the earlier agreement I had struck with the leaders had to be abandoned.

Similarly, on one of the visits to the stone quarry, I interviewed an eleven-year old boy after I had sought permission from the parents. After the interview, I took some of pictures of the area as a backup of the information gathered for the day. However the boy's parents angrily objected to the taking of the pictures because they feared the interview and pictures might appear in the newspapers. Even though I had previously explained the purpose of the research and assured them of my profession as a teacher to gain their permission, I had to go through the

⁶ In the very week the study began, a disturbing documentary on the exploitation of children in some rural areas of the northern regions and how adults exploit culture to perpetuate child exploitation was shown on national television.

negotiation process all over again.⁷

The most dramatic objection came at the CMB/Railway station when a man in a wheelchair vehemently objected to an interview with a 15-year girl. He and others were drinking in an open bar in the vicinity and were perhaps tipsy. My argument to him was that since he was not related to the girl and she had personally given her permission for the interview, he could neither stop it nor demand for the tape. I felt threatened however when his friends joined in the argument and so reported the incident at a nearby police station for resolution. When the Police Officers questioned the man about his objections, he claimed that last year a group of people promised to send him some things after they had interviewed him. But since the things had not been delivered he did not consider it proper for anybody to conduct a research in the area, until those who made promises had fulfilled them.

There is always the ethical problem of conducting research on children when it is difficult or impossible to seek permission from their parents or some responsible adult. However, in the streets of Accra most child labours are on their own and not supervised by any adults hence a researcher might not need to negotiate with adults to gain access to them. This however does not stop adults without legal or social rights from acting as barriers and gatekeepers.

In another development, the manager of a refuge for pregnant migrant girls would

⁷ The mother of the boy explained that their neighbours did not know that they were chipping stones and would rather keep it that way, hence their anxiety about the pictures.

not allow me to interview two residents, even though I had sought permission from her assistant and booked an appointment a week earlier. She claimed that the girls were not caged pigs to be inspected and interviewed each time people wanted to. She would only allow the interview on condition that she briefed and coached them first. I considered that an absurd proposition since the girls' responses might not necessarily reflect their views and therefore abandoned the idea of interviewing them.

Then, there was the difficulty of what constituted reasonable private space for me to interact with the children. Yet, attempting to conduct the interviews in public spaces also had its drawbacks. There were noisy distractions from passing vehicles and the various actors in the markets and streets. On a few occasions, people, particularly adults, who were attracted to the process eagerly wanted to participate in the interview. In such cases, the process had to be switched to another place or suspended. Such problems were always averted in the follow-up visits since with the confidence of the children gained we could find relatively quieter places to continue the interview. Some studies in similar environments attempt to solve this problem by interviewing children at drop in centres (for example, Young and Barret, 2001). This was not an option because the interviews had to be conducted in the naturally occurring environment, for reasons given earlier. It was therefore necessary to confront and deal with the problems as they occurred rather than transfer the interviews to an artificial environment.

Another practical difficulty was the need to translate the interview questions into the local language for the participants as well as translating the responses back

into English. This is a universal problem confronting all researchers in Ghana, but assumes greater significance if the participants are children. The questions in this case had to be reduced to the lowliest level. This was condescension towards children, though a worthy one, because it was essential that they understood the questions in order to generate the best responses. In addition, the very young children were naturally limited in expressing themselves for lack of confidence, mistrust and a lack of opinion on some issues under investigation. However, as I became a familiar figure in the study sites and to some of the children, some of these inhibitions faded away. The fact still remained though, that the younger children were, the less communicative and informative they appeared.

3.5 Conclusion

While there are some points of convergence in why children are labouring on the streets, there are also forty-five unique stories on why children have travelled from different parts of the country to work in Accra. The best way to tell these stories was spending more time with children than through survey research for example. The choice of qualitative research methodology was therefore most appropriate since it facilitated some immersion in the lives of the children. The daily interaction with them, the negotiation of spaces and adult authority all generated a sense of familiarity that deepened the level of understanding and presented the best graphic illustration of the social reality.

The spatial context of the study was a difficult one though, because some sense of order and normality had to be created out of the disordered environment in which the participants' social reality occurred. Yet it was the best environment to

conduct the research in. The natural setting of the markets, streets and quarry eliminated the incidence of artificiality and provided the appropriate backdrops for direct allusions in the course of the interviews. However, a number of practical difficulties were also encountered in the research process. The most difficult were the distractions that arose from conducting it in the public gaze. The sensitivity of child labour as a social problem also raised the role of adults as gatekeepers to the fore.

In order to understand the category of children who migrate from their villages to work in Accra, a profile of the participants and an analysis of their motivations will be presented next.

CHAPTER FOUR

BECOMING A WORKER: THE PURSUIT OF HOPE AND ASPIRATIONS

4.1 Introduction

In recent times, child migration from the rural areas, particularly the northern regions to southern Ghana, has become a major social problem (Korboe, 1997). While cultural and social factors influence such behaviour (Plange, 1979; Beauchemin, 1999) the long years of instability and economic restructuring have given this a new and more pressing salience. The underdevelopment and paucity of opportunities in the northern and rural areas have compounded the problems of subsistence. The specific implications of adjustments in these areas have been profound, as almost all the public and private investments flowing from SAP occurred in the cities. At the same time, the urban informal sector, especially in Accra, has expanded considerably and in doing so has created numerous opportunities for employment in informal activities. However, as a result of the inefficient conditions under which these activities take place, the emphasis is on cost reduction, often through unlawful means in the search for competitiveness and profits. The demand for cheap and unregulated labour, especially those of migrant children can help to meet this requirement.

Notably, social and cultural aspects of childhood are mediated by the prevailing economic circumstances. As a result, the widespread impoverishment, due largely to instabilities in Ghana's political economy and epitomised by SAPs, has led to children's engagement in more intensive work. This has been at the instance of families who utilise children within the extended family systems or the children

themselves exploiting whatever opportunities they can find. In spite of the underdevelopment in the rural areas, children are able to gather information about the cities through radio, perhaps television, school and friends. This provides the basis for comparing their experiences to life in the city in which case the comparative disadvantages of living in rural areas become obvious. Eventually, the disparities in their lived experiences provide the justification for migration. These developments provide the motivation for leaving school, migrating and working. For the children, the availability of jobs irrespective of their nature or surrounding social relations provide opportunities for the pursuit of their aspirations.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider this process of migration. More specifically, it sets out to consider who these children are and why they embark upon a considerable process of migration. In turn, the intention is to illuminate some of the lived experiences of children who are compelled by force of circumstance to leave their homes and families in pursuit of money and work.

To undertake this, the chapter is divided into two parts. The first introduces the participants in the study. This begins with the origins of the children through an examination of the types of work and pay, their age, gender, levels of education and the periods they spend in Accra. As a group of migrant child labourers in Accra, this will provide some idea of who some of the adjustment generation actually are. The second part examines their motivations in order to provide a clearer understanding of the factors that motivate the children to migrate in search of work. This is done under three main themes of the pervasive influence of poverty, the dearth of opportunities in the rural areas and the influence of returning migrants to the rural areas.

4.2 Migrant child labourers: Their origins and characteristics

4.2.1 The children's origins

Children travel from all parts of the country and over vast distances to live and work in Accra. This is clearly evident from the participants if we identify the regional capitals as the children's starting points in their migration to Accra, as shown in Table 4.1. Appendix II shows the ten regions of Ghana and give an idea of the children's origins and the distances they had covered.

Table 4.1: The origins of participants

Region/Country	Number	Distances covered
Greater Accra	0	0 kilometres
Central	3	144
Eastern	2	85
Western	0	218
Volta (North)	6	185
Brong Ahafo	3	400
Ashanti	5	270
Northern	20	640
Upper East	3	810
Upper West	1	895
Burkina Faso	1	1350
Togo	1	110
Total	45	

Twenty of the 45 children came from the Northern region¹ alone, while 6 were from north Volta region. Five came from Ashanti and the rest were from Central, Eastern, Brong Ahafo, Upper West and Upper East regions. There was one participant each from nearby countries of Burkina Faso and Togo. Significantly, the majority of

¹ Thirteen of them were of Dagomba ethnicity from Tamale and Savelugu districts, while 7 were Mampurasis from the Walewale area.

participants came from regions that are already recognised as the centres of child labour, like the north-eastern parts where according to Korboe (1997) most migrant children originate from. They had travelled over vast distances, with the 20 children from the Northern region having covered over 640 kilometres. Those from the Upper East had also travelled over 800 kilometres, usually on trucks loaded with foodstuffs because of cheaper or free fares.

The notable point about the origin of migrant child labourers is that they are usually from areas of the country that are traditionally more underdeveloped. As this study confirms (for example, Van Ham, *et al.*, 1994; Korboe, 1997; Agarwal, *et al.*, 1997) children from northern Ghana are found to be disproportionately represented. Even then, child migration is more predominant in particular districts in Northern and Upper East regions (Korboe, 1997) compared to others like Upper West that suffer similar problems of relative underdevelopment. This implies the existence of a culture of migration, in which the process and social infrastructure would have been laid already. Generally, these regions attract less public and private investments, the results of which is significant adult unemployment compared to the urban areas (ISSER, 2000). Consequently, the predominant activity for most families is subsistence farming, which in turn accentuates the relative impoverishment. This in turn affects the efforts of parents to provide the developmental needs of their children. For the children themselves, the potential employment Accra offers provides an avenue for escaping that overwhelming poverty.

4.2.2 Age

Age-wise, the participants were fairly representative of child workers in Accra. The youngest participants in the study were 11, the oldest 15 years, with the majority either 13 or 14 years old. Specifically, there were seven 15-year olds, and three 11-years olds. The remaining thirty-five were aged between 12 and 14 years, while the average age for the entire group was 14 years. This is in line with earlier studies by ILO (1996a), Apt and Grieco (1997) and GNCC (1997), which found that the majority of child workers in Accra are aged between 12 and 14. The coded names, gender, age and activities of the children are presented in Appendix III.

Why are most migrant child workers in this age category? One explanation lies in the high costs of education. It costs relatively less to maintain children in primary schools hence large numbers of children below 11 years, even in the poorer rural areas, are able to attend. As a result, the gross attendance ratios at this level, even in the rural areas, are relatively high. UNICEF (2000) puts the rate between 1980 and 1998 at 70%, while a demographic survey puts the total rate for 1998 alone at 97% (GSS and MI, 1999). The problem of educational costs however assumes greater significance at the post-12 years' stage when children enter junior and senior secondary schools. The higher costs undermine the viability of children's formal education as a family investment rather than as a right or necessity and for that reason the alternative of work becomes a cost-free option. This reflects UNICEF's (1997d) indirect opportunity costs of education argument raised in Chapter Two. As a result, attendance levels drop considerably after the initial eight years of education (GSS and MI, 1999), when most children will be 13 or 14 years old. Added to this, rural children at this stage are expected to assume more responsibilities on the family farm.

If they are considered socially mature to perform adult roles, then migrating in search of their own incomes becomes an extension of this expectation.

Much younger children are also involved in this migration. There is evidence that girls, as young as 8 years, are either financed by their parents to travel from the north to work as street and market porters or are recruited as domestic servants (Agarwal, *et al.*, 1997). Physically, most of the participants looked typical for their age, though others looked thin and stunted. This however is not surprising since between 1990 and 1997, 35% of children in Ghana were considered to be underweight (UNICEF, 1998). To the extent that poverty influences nutritional needs, these children were most likely undernourished and underweight even before they came to Accra. However, the adverse conditions in which they operate also significantly contribute to their physical condition.

4.2.3 Types of work

The children generally engaged in marginal urban activities that are traditionally performed by children. Table 4.2 shows that 16 were peddlers selling iced-water, carrier bags, fried foods, sweets and other items. While the boys in this case worked for themselves, the very young girls tended to work for older women, the so-called 'aunts'. The other popular activity was *portering*, which consisted of carrying loads on the head (*kayayoo*²), in a wheelbarrow or on a truck as well as off-loading.

² The etymological derivation of the word stems from Hausa, the predominant language in the Sahelian regions of West Africa and Ga, the local language of Greater Accra region. *Kaya*, the first part of the word in Hausa means load. In the 1960s and 70s migrants of Hausa origin from Nigeria who came to Ghana worked as carriers, hence even in the dominant Akan language of Ghana, *kaya* came to be synonymous with *potering*. The other half of the word *yoo*, is a Ga word for woman, hence *kayayoo* literally means a woman who carries load for a living (See Agarwal, *et al.*, 1997).

Table 4.2: Types of work

Types of work	Boys	Girls	Total
Peddling	5	11	16
Portering, of which			17
Barrow/truck pushing	6	0	
Kayayoo	0	5	
Off-loading	6	0	
Stone chipping	3	2	5
Beggar's guide	2	0	2
Shoe shinning	2	0	2
Cook/Dish washing	0	2	2
Apprentice – Welding	1	0	1
Total	25	20	45

Differentiation of some types of work among migrant child workers are both gendered and ethnically based. For example, all the six off-loaders were boys. The fact that it is a physically demanding job, done at a fast pace, for long and irregular hours explains this. Moreover, it is easier for a group of friends in close contact with each other to constitute themselves into a gang of off-loaders. Generally, the majority of children from the north work as porters. However the mode of operation depends on gender, for while girls carry loads exclusively on their heads, boys often use simple mechanical means like trucks or wheelbarrows. An explanation for this can be sought in the domestic division of labour, in which load carrying is considered part of the female's responsibility (Agrawal, *et al.*, 1997). The problem is that they hardly use any means of mechanical transportation in contrast to males. Thus, while all the boys use a wheelbarrow or truck in their *portering*, a girl who adopts similar tools will be derided and not get any custom. However, this expectation even in the more liberal urban environment, effectively excludes girls from more efficient means of work as well as the significantly higher payments that it entails.

Besides this cultural constraint, pushing or pulling of a load is considered to be more difficult and should therefore be undertaken by males who are perceived to be physically stronger. This idea manifests itself in situations where very heavy loads like bags of maize need to be carried in the markets. Males, this time carry the loads on their heads or backs. Again, ethnicity becomes the critical factor in this differentiation since most of the boys providing this service are from northern Ghana. This is a product of the historical process since predominantly northern migrant labour was used in head carrying, *portering* and mining in the colonial era (Thomas, 1973; Plange, 1979; Van Hear, 1982). Thus over the years, child labourers from the north have developed an occupational specialisation in such jobs, which unfortunately tend to be dirtier and more dangerous (Korboe, 1997). Boys from the south also engage in *portering* but tend to specialise in peddling, shoe shining, car-washing, or assisting drivers as fare collectors.

Head-portering (*kayayoo*) by girls is a fully-fledged commercial activity in Accra and other major cities in southern Ghana (IPEC, 1999). Shop owners, *chopbar* operators and market women retain the girls as carriers, while shoppers use them as trailers when they shop in the overcrowded markets. With the explosion of child workers in Accra from the mid-eighties, *kayayoo* has become the defining activity for girls from the north. While children from all parts of the country can potentially be porters³, girls and women from the northern regions, mostly of the Kokomba, Kotokoli and Mamprusi extraction dominate the activity⁴. The *kayayoo*s in the study were all from

³ Nana Apt *et al* (1991) found that some Krobo girls (from the Eastern region) prior to their initiation into adulthood are brought here by adult-relatives to work as porters in Accra.

⁴ Of the 112 girls working as porters in the market and studied by Apt *et al* (1997), 67% were northerners: a generic term for people who come from any of the three northern regions of Ghana.

villages around Tamale and Savelugu in the Northern Region and northern Volta. Consequently, it is estimated that 70% of *kayayoos* in Accra come from the north (IPEC, 1999), while Agarwal *et al.* (1997: 4) consider the activity as an ‘ethnic occupational niche’ for northern girls.

4.2.4 Working hours

The children spent long hours at work because their migration to Accra was governed by the belief that funds could be generated relatively quickly. They were therefore motivated to work long hours and under stressful conditions because of the perception of their work as a temporary activity. Only 4 children in the study worked less than 8 hours a day. The majority (34) worked between 9 and 11 hours, with 7 of them even exceeding 12 hours a day. Generally, the boys worked longer than girls because activities like truck pushing and off-loading begin in the early hours of the day and could continue late into the nights. Daily working hours of 10 to 15 hours in six-day working weeks have been found to be common among child workers in Accra (GNCC, 1997).

4.2.5 Daily earnings

Income-wise, some of the children had high earnings to justify the long and uncertain trips. Table 4.3 shows their earnings. The lowest daily income was between ₵⁵2000 and ₵3000. Sixteen children were earning between ₵4000 and ₵5000, a sum that was equivalent to the national daily minimum wage at the time. Nine earned between ₵6000 and ₵7000 while eleven earned amounts exceeding ₵8000 a day.

⁵ This is the national currency, which at the time of the fieldwork, was been exchanged in the foreign exchange shops at a rate of £1 to ₵7,000.

Table 4.3: Daily earnings

Daily earnings	Boys	Girls	Total
₺2-3,000	1	3	4
₺4-5,000	12	4	16
₺6-7,000	5	4	9
Above ₺8,000	4	7	11
Total	22	18	40
Number of children directly giving the earnings to adults	7	10	17

The earnings of the 5 stone chippers could not be computed on a daily basis because they worked directly with adults who received all incomes. In all, 17 children were directly handing over their earnings to adults. The daily earnings of children were closely related to their age, but most crucially to the types of work. Generally, the relatively younger they were the lower their earnings because they worked fewer hours in less strenuous activities.

Twenty of the participants were earning more than \$1 a day and therefore had exceeded the international poverty indicator of \$1 a day in the developing world (see Chapter One). This is part of the motivation for their migration since there are no opportunities for even adults in the rural areas to earn such incomes on a daily basis. This point however does not negate the cheapness of the children's labour as much of the theory indicates (see for example, Bequele and Boyden, 1988b, Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). The fact is that adults would have collected higher wages for similar work, while the employers would not have the same leverage over them. As a result, some employers look for children instead of adults, while most adults

would be reluctant to take up such jobs, even if they were unemployed. However, while such relatively high earnings can be interpreted as opportunities for this generation of children, the reality is that the earnings come at very high personal costs. The children work under insecure, uncertain and dangerous environments while such work and earnings are unsustainable in the long term⁶.

4.2.6 Length of stay

The participants had spent different lengths of time in Accra as shown in Table 4.4. Half of the children had been there for more than 10 months, while the rest were in various stages of their stay. The relatively older they were, the longer the periods spent in Accra. All the 15-year olds for example had already spent more than a year in Accra, underlining the early age at which they had migrated. The children often claimed that they were in Accra for brief periods only and would return home as soon as they had saved enough money. The real test however lay in their ability to achieve this objective. Girl porters for example are known to stay for 6 to 12 months before returning home (Agarwal *et al.*, 1997), under 'normal' circumstances.

Table 4.4: Length of stay in Accra

Time Period	Boys	Girls	Total
1-3 months	3	1	4
4-6 months	5	5	10
7-9 months	3	5	8
10-12 months	6	3	9
13-15 months	1	0	1
Above 16 months	7	6	13
Total	25	20	45

⁶ These points are fully discussed in Chapter Five.

However many others end up in complicated situations that prolong their stay indefinitely. For example, in 1997 Street Aid, a NGO that assists pregnant street girls, registered as many as 200 babies of street porters at its crèche (CAS, 1997). Many other girls in similar situations predictably do not contact any formal organisation for assistance. If children get into such situations, the stigma of returning home with a baby makes the prospect unbearable (Beauchemin, 1999). For such children, there is no time limit or seasonality to their stay.

4.2.7 Educational background

Most of the participants have only had a few years of schooling and were therefore largely uneducated. The point is illustrated in Table 4.5. The first group of 26 had some years of education, with the highest attainment being the completion of junior secondary school. The second group of 9 had never been in school, while the third group of 10 were combining school with work. Notably, none of the 20 girls had completed the mandatory 9 years of basic education. This confirms the earlier point about discrimination against girls in the distribution of school opportunities in families (see Chapter Two). For some families in the rural areas, formal education contradicts the social expectation of girls as future wives who must be trained in domestic roles (Assimeng, 1999). As a result, girls are often saddled with more work responsibilities than boys and, according to the GNCC (1997), forced to quit school.

Table 4.5: Educational background⁷

1. Some years of education	Male	Female	Total
1-3 yrs. Of Primary School	5	7	12
4-6 yrs of Primary School	1	3	4
1-2 yrs. Of Junior Secondary	2	0	2
3 yrs. Of Junior Secondary	8	0	8
Sub-Total	16	10	26
2. Never attended school	4	5	9
3. In school			
Primary	4	4	8
Junior Secondary	1	1	2
Sub-Total	5	5	10
Total	25	20	45

In summary, the background of the participants reinforced what we know about urban child labourers. They were barely educated (UNICEF, 1997a), came from poor rural households (CIDA, 1997; Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998) and engaged in marginal activities (Amin, 1994; Orkin, 1999) once in Accra. They also worked in dirty, noisy and unpredictable environments (UNICEF, 1997a; Forasteiri, 1997). Hours worked were long, but in jobs that promised little skill acquisition for future employment opportunities. What they did was also differentiated according to gender (Abernethie, 1998; Fredreikson, 1999). An important point in these particular cases was that their work was also differentiated according to the areas of origin. While some studies project migrant child labour in Accra as a seasonal activity (for example, Agarwal, *et al*, 1997), the time frame for children's migration in this study, on the contrary, was more related to the achievement of travel and work objectives. All the relatively older children, 15 year-olds had already spent more than a year in Accra, but had no

⁷ The participants would be products of the reformed educational system initiated under SAP. Primary school lasts for 6 years while the junior secondary school (JSS) lasts for three years. The two together

definite plans about returning home until they had achieved particular objectives. The issue of seasonality also implies that the children will return to the villages for school or to engage in seasonal farming. The few in schools were attending in Accra, while escaping the drudgery of farm work was a major motivation for many of them. They were therefore not in a hurry to return to it.

4.3 Learning to crawl: Motivations for migration and child labour

Over a two and half year period, the Cambridge Partnership for Organisational Transformation (1999) estimated a 50% increase in the population of Accra's child workers, most of them migrant street children. What is producing this relocation of children from the rural to the urban areas and to Accra? This section attempts to answer this question by addressing the theme of children's motivations. Data on why children migrate to Accra converge on three main points - the pervasive influence of poverty, the dearth of economic and social opportunities in the rural areas, the influence of returning migrants. Poverty plays a mediating role in all these factors so it will be considered first.

4.3.1 The pervasive influence of poverty: "It is getting more and more difficult..."

The relative deprivation of the rural areas in comparison to the urban areas raises poverty and its ramifications as a critical factor in both child migration and labour. In fact, children's decision to migrate to the urban areas represents a conscious decision to overcome rural poverty. We have shown in Chapter One that the poorer a family is, the more probable the incidence of and importance of child labour in

constitutes basic education in Ghana.

reproducing that family (see also UNESCO, 1997a; Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998). Thus children from the poorest families are likely to work more on farms and even be recruited to work in the cities. They may also migrate on their own accord. It is also possible that as economic conditions of the family worsen, child labour advances from the mundane socialising activities to high-income yielding ones that are available only in the cities. This is given poignancy by the contradictory social and economic environment SAP has reproduced over the years. On one hand, the stringent conditions discussed in Chapter Two have impoverished some families and consequently placed their children in unsustainable situations. On the other hand, the expansion in the informal sector (ISSER, 2000) has opened up more opportunities in the marginal activities children engage in.

Contrary to the conclusion of Coloumbe's (1997) study that a weak correlation exists between household welfare (an indicator of poverty) and child labour in Ghana, the significance of deprivation and poverty was a strong one. The children in this regard had a well-constructed notion of how the economy and poverty influence their lived experiences in terms of opportunities, work, schooling and the broader social relations. Most importantly, the children were aware of the dismal economic conditions and therefore had a perceptive understanding of what needed to be done.

Impoverishment and the exploitation of poverty

A common theme was the impoverished conditions of their childhood and the need to disengage themselves from the constricting rural existence. Steve, for example came to Accra two years ago when he was 13 years old. He had since worked in different capacities and at 15 was one of the oldest and most 'street-wise' in the

study. He left home after quarrelling with his younger sister and mother but the primary reason for him was the lack of care and support from his parents. Though he blamed his father in particular for neglecting his paternal responsibility, he conceded the economic difficulty confronting parents.

Steve OK, many of these children come from homes where the parents are poor and cannot afford the things their children need. Therefore they (children) have no choice but to go out to work. They have to earn their 'chop money' so that they can eat today and the day after...I also think it is important to help their parents and themselves.
[15 year-old truck pusher]

His attempt at a universal explanation is steeped in economic inadequacy and the pressures parents have to endure as a result. 'Chop money' is the maintenance money a man provides his family on a daily basis. As a primary responsibility, a father's inability to do so diminishes his authority considerably and in some cases will be the ultimate affront to his dignity. It may then be a source of disrespect from the children and most crucially for the woman, the basis for divorce. Thus in most Ghanaian households, it is unusual for children to be directly responsible for earning this 'chop money'; they rather play a supportive role. Yet as a result of the overall economic hardships, children like Steve are increasingly placed in the situation where they "have to earn their *chop money*" both in and outside the home.

Steve and others nevertheless demonstrated an understanding of the constraints their parents face, when he suggested the need to assist them to fulfil this basic responsibility. The same motivation sustained Mary in her work as a stone chipper.

Mary I think some of them (children) have to help their mothers by working to earn some money so that their mothers can buy food and other things for them.
[13-year old stone-chipper]

Again, acquisition of the basic need for food underlines the primary importance of necessity. The reference to mothers here reflects the critical role they play in the daily maintenance of children, especially in cases where the parents have separated. As in Mary's case, it is the mother rather than the father who bears primary responsibility for her daily maintenance. Yet most mothers in Ghana suffer greater deprivation than fathers because fewer of them are formally employed, while family resources tend to be controlled by males (World Bank, 2001). The diminishing role of some fathers as front-line providers can be partially located in the large-scale redundancies under SAP and the consequent marginalization of men (Verlet, 2000). Children like Mary, in such circumstances, have to play a bigger supportive role in the informal sector activities their mothers turn to as the last resort.

However, while Mary saw her contribution and those of others as critical for their families, she blamed some parents for allowing much younger children onto the streets.

Mary I think their parents should take care of them properly so that they can learn a trade for example. It is useless when very young children work because they earn very little any way. I wouldn't do what I am doing now if I had the choice, but for me I have to help my mother...
[13-year old stone chipper]

In this extract, she perceptively draws together important aspects of child labour in Accra: the role of parents and the low pay that accompany very young children's effort to earn a living. This underlines children's precariousness and the marginal importance of their earnings. However, while the pay may be insignificant, it still represents the marginal difference between survival and going under. Mary therefore reiterates the necessity of work and how that suppresses her freedom to act otherwise. In this regard, children also cite the failure of the government and other adults in

mitigating the basic problems of survival. Faced with a lack of choices and “providers”, work then represents a way out of the economic difficulties, as Afua explained.

Afua They don't have any providers, as it is really difficult now, so they must find a way to cope with the high cost of living and everything. Nobody takes care of them that is why they are here...

YK Why is that?

Afua It is the fault of their parents, they should not let them onto the streets like that, but some of the parents themselves have no work... or life in the village is difficult so they push their children to go out and do this or that...
[15 year-old iced water seller]

In this case, while the primary responsibility lies with parents, it is nevertheless extended to all adults. In a properly functioning extended family mode, some adult in the family would have taken care of Afua and other children without ‘providers’. This has not been the case for her and others as families struggle to cope with their own impoverishment. The government, as part of the ‘providers’, must then be complicit in the lack of jobs and opportunities for their parents or respite for children in dire need. It is the responsibility of governments to provide minimum opportunities for individuals to exploit to assume responsibility for themselves and others. However, the focus on privatisation and individualism under SAP imply that fewer of such opportunities through welfare provision are available.

Fuse, for example, appreciated the frustration of unemployed parents since his father lost his job as a purchasing officer in COCOBOD some years back. They moved from the Eastern region to Kasoa, a shantytown on the outskirts of Accra, two years ago. After searching fruitlessly for work, his parents decided to take up stone chipping as a temporary measure. Fuse's predicament as a child worker therefore

arose from his father's misfortune, since there had been no need for him to work before.

Fuse I think they [children] are working because they are trying to find some money for their school, food and other things...

YK But why can't their parents do the work while they go to school?

Fuse They [parents] haven't got jobs that can provide the families with adequate incomes, that is why some of them work. Some parents also don't like the jobs that are available because they are too dirty...
[12-year old stone chipper]

At 12, Fuse demonstrates a reasonable appreciation of the scarcity of proper and well-paying jobs and the consequences for children, in his case having to contribute towards school and even daily living expenses. However, his view that some parents may not work because of the unsuitability of jobs raises another dimension. Is it right for a parent to stay at home because available jobs are dirty, beneath their status or unsuitable for their image while their children work? If some children are working because their parents are unwilling to do any available jobs then the commitment of parents to their children becomes a major factor in child labour. This point confirms the theoretical position advocated by some (for example, UNICEF, 1997c) that child labour is simply not about poverty as a state of being, but the exploitation of that condition. In this argument some parents simply exploit the general state of inadequacy to shirk their care-taking responsibility and also to use their children as a source of income. The weapon is parental authority.

Chris They (children) need money, some of them like me need the money to go back to school, but as you know there are others here [Agobloshi market] who were sent by their parents to sell things like iced water. They have to do it whether they like it or not...
[14-year old off-loader]

Elements of compulsion, lack of choice and a suppression of agency are the issues for the children Chris refers to. Selling iced-water in a child's neighbourhood may be

some parent's solution to finding supporting roles for children in a difficult economic situation. However, if children do so in places like Agobloshi market their exposure to environmental and social hazards increases drastically. The motive is clearer in the case of children brought to Accra for this particular purpose. They are expected to earn money for adults who see child labour as a lucrative source of income. Parents who knowingly supply children are exploiting them beyond the normal family relations, while those who demand children's labour are also exploiting the poverty and vulnerability of such families.

However, the exploitation of poverty to push children into work, give them to others in the cities or neglect their needs also motivates some to engage in crime. Steve attested to this in the following way:

Steve When I left home I was annoyed and talking loudly to myself because when I remember what my father has done to his children by not caring a hoot about any of us, I get sad and annoyed. One or two of my brothers are thieves in Kumasi. One was arrested and imprisoned for picking somebody's pocket. All these bother me a lot... Sometimes I just cry but my friends don't understand why.
[15-year old truck pusher]

He raises the frustration of children in such circumstances and the consequences of social neglect as some are forced into criminal activities. The consequences of neglect and pressures of work are obvious in this extract. What appears to annoy Steve though is his father's propensity to neglect his children. As a child however, he has virtually no rights in getting his father to honour his obligations to them. His mother, however, can pursue the issue of negligence with the district Social Welfare Department or the National Council for Women and Development. It is doubtful if Steve's mother has considered this option, perhaps out of ignorance or the lack of resources and desire to challenge the dominance of males in such family relations.

Middle-class women, however, have the knowledge and capacity to do so if necessary. However, since the tendency for a child to work in Ghana is related to the mother's education (Bhalotra and Heady, 1999), their children are hardly found in such situations. There is the broader issue, however, of whether an unemployed father can be forced to do what he is financially incapable of. In this sense it is not just parent's behaviour but also the broader social and economic reality.

Is migrating to Accra the solution?

Migrating to Accra is not the solution to children's economic and social problems either. Even though Accra has relatively better opportunities than the rural areas, children are still confronted with the basic problem of survival. Otuo, for example, quit junior secondary school to join his uncle in Accra and was recovering from typhoid fever when I met him. The main problem for him at the time was trying to earn enough money in what he considered to be a competitive environment.

Otuo ... even in Accra, it is difficult to sell things that is why I have decided to push a wheelbarrow, even that is not easy because it is difficult to get load to carry... And once you get the money you spend it quickly because there is nobody to help you even if you fall sick. You must still go to work...
[13-year old wheelbarrow pusher]

The children have to deal with the reality of high inflation, lack of support and in particular, the unbearable costs of health care as Otuo has found out. As noted in Chapter Two, one of the most negative aspects of SAP was the fact that children like Otuo have to pay exorbitant fees for medical attention. Yet prior to that, he would have been entitled to free care in any government health centre.

The real test in living in Accra then, was the ability to manage these problems against the background of intense competition and dwindling opportunities as explained by

Steve:

Steve ... now it is difficult to save money because the prices of things are always going up. Even the price of water we buy to drink or wash with increases, ... you also have to work harder to be able to get some money because there are so many other children doing the same work I am doing...it is not easy to get a load to carry.
[15-year old truck pusher]

The high costs of living and the dwindling work opportunities therefore made it difficult for children to realistically pursue their aspirations. In the end, there were no simple solutions to the necessity that drove children to Accra since economic problems confront them in all directions. In this sense, not only were the children aware of the need to work to escape the poverty of their villages, they were equally aware of the lack of progress in the economy. When asked if anything could be done to improve the situation, Mary's perceptive but pessimistic assessment was that:

Mary There is nothing that can be done to improve the situation of these children because of the way the world is going... It is getting more and more difficult and I don't think things will change. I think that more and more children will come onto the streets and other places to work.
[13-year old stone chipper]

Her assertion that things were "getting more and more difficult" contrasted sharply with the earlier claims by the IMF/World Bank about the efficacy of SAP in Ghana. Both Mary's and Steve's construction of the present economy vis-à-vis their aspirations was quite pessimistic and reflected the Ministry of Finance's (2000) assessment that poverty had increased for most ordinary households in spite of the several years of SAP.

The reasons cited by the participants - poverty, parents' refusal or inability to assume responsibilities, the need for children to supplement the family's income - are recurring reasons for child labour (Van Hear, 1982; GNCC, 1997; Korboe, 1997; Agarwal, *et al.*, 1997; IPEC, 1999; and Verlet, 2000). The critical role of poverty and its multi-faceted implications in child labour in Africa is commonly acknowledged. It assumes even greater importance when dealing with migrant child labourers because they have travelled hundreds of kilometres to what might be unfamiliar territories.

What clearly emerges from the study at this stage is that for migrant children, child labour is not the simple domesticated work experience under the supervision of a parent or some trusting adult. It is an economic activity whose origin is intricately linked to the influence of poverty in the rural areas. Poverty in this case is not a simple static concept but the process of impoverishment that gradually dissipates opportunities and motivates drastic measures for the acquisition of simple survival needs. Such situations are also exacerbated by the dynamics of *marketised* social relations, which bring incipient poverty to the surface. More money is needed for education, health, utilities and agricultural activities against the background of fewer opportunities in the villages and the urban poor. This impoverishment eventually creates a rational basis for child labour, not only on family farms in the rural situation but in the urban areas where relatively 'better' opportunities exist. This then brings us to the second major motivation for the children's migration: lack of confidence in the rural economy.

4.3.2 Lack of confidence in the rural economy: “There’s nothing to do except go to farm...”

If life in Accra is difficult and children cannot easily achieve their objectives why do they risk it? The answer lies in the fact that these children had little confidence in the rural economy and therefore migrated to escape the restrictive and difficult lifestyle it imposed on them. Different social and economic opportunities existed in the areas participants originated from but the predominant activity in all cases was cash or food crop farming. The children’s lived experiences therefore revolved around this.

Rejection of rural life

The children’s quality of life in the rural areas (or in the urban areas) in the absence of state support was ultimately related to their parent’s economic circumstances. In this regard, the participants (especially boys) tended to relate their lived experiences and future aspirations to the rural economy, particularly farming. They also frequently cited their fathers as the reference point for their rejection of what the rural economies had to offer them, as Josh explained:

Josh I want to be here [Accra]. There is nothing to do in the village except go to farm, there is no money and they are all very poor...like my father, he has nothing even though he goes to farm everyday...
[14-year old truck pusher]

The main complement to land and labour in this farming was capital and the capacity to purchase and use other inputs like fertilizers or insecticides. The inability to do this however limited many rural families to subsistence farming which provided them food but as Josh pointed out, not enough money to meet the costs of living.

Josh It is better here in Accra because in the village they don’t get anything and people can’t afford very simple things. They have food to eat all right but no money. The schools are bad and there are no teachers. As a boy in the village all that you do is to follow your parents to the farm or try to work on somebody’s farm as a labourer. Even though you can

earn some money there, it will not be as much as you could here in Accra...

[14-year old truck pusher]

Josh provides a summary of the problems of the village and children's motivation for leaving. For example, every indicator shows that rural schools are poorly equipped while teachers are reluctant to work there (UNICEF, 1997a). Besides it is difficult to "afford simple things" because few have regular sources of income that formal employment or profitable informal sector activities generate in the urban areas. A solution to the liquidity problem as Josh pointed out would be selling their labour to the larger commercial farms. However, while working for them would provide some basic incomes, the infrequent nature of such employment could not lift such impoverished families from their poverty. This was the basis for Josh's comparative assessment and his conclusion that Accra offered better opportunities.

Dan, an off-loader related the strenuous nature of farming to the limited returns, again on the basis of his father's lifetime experience as a subsistence farmer, in the following way:

Dan The farm work we had to do was difficult, you know. You get old in no time. My parents are very poor but they have been farmers all their lives. I didn't see them prosper so there is no need for me to remain in the village and go into farming too...

[14-year old off-loader]

Generally, farm work is difficult because people use basic implements, which demand considerable physical effort. The returns however are not always commensurate with the hard work hence the children's rejection of that future. This provided the motivation for Dan and others to seek alternative economic opportunities. In this sense, Accra represented an opportunity to address the relative deprivation of the rural areas and the pressures of family work on farms.

In spite of Dan's preference for life in Accra, he was aware of the potential in farming if it could be done under viable circumstances. The impediments his father faced however were the crucial factors in his rejection of farming and the rural life.

Dan Farming is much better than working in Accra, especially if you can find the money to buy the various inputs. But it's useless if you don't have money, my father for example is poor and did not have money to buy the inputs. I don't want to do that kind of farming, it is a waste of effort...
[14-year old off-loader]

One of the direct theoretical implications of SAP discussed in Chapter Two was the impoverishment of the rural communities as a result of higher prices for agricultural input. The prices of simple farm inputs like fertilisers, seeds and cutlasses quadrupled after the removal of subsidies (Adepoju, 1993). In addition, government agencies that sold them at controlled prices were disbanded. As a result, private firms viewing profit maximisation as the first priority, stepped in to sell farm inputs. Even farmers' ability to transport their produce to the marketing centres was compromised by the high costs of transportation. Prior to deregulation, the Ghana Food Distribution Corporation (GFDC) purchased agricultural produce directly from farmers. This effort greatly reduced farmers' transportation and storage costs, guaranteed minimum prices and boosted their profitability. The extensive deregulation in agriculture has however, overexposed farmers to market forces without any government support. This was a cardinal principle of SAP, though an ironic and contradictory one, considering the nature of agricultural policies in the developed world. If farmers in the developed world need subsidies, support and guarantees to operate, then the case for the impoverished farmers of Ghana, through cheap and affordable inputs, is overwhelming. Thus even though Ala, like Dan, recognised the benefits of rural life,

he also considered the high costs of agricultural inputs as obstructive to development in those areas.

Ala On the farm, at least you learn something that you can use for your life. You learn how to farm from your elders and other things about life. Here you are on your own and you can't offload cabbage all your life... you only do this for a short period but you can farm all your life.

YK Why then are you here and not back in the village?

Ala Because the farm inputs especially, fertilisers are expensive. You can't do much and my father is old and cannot do so much farming now. But we need to get these inputs to be able to make any reasonable money out of farming in the north, else you work for nothing. If it weren't so I would be working on the farm, I could have made more money if the conditions were right in farming...

YK Then why don't you use the money you are saving now to go back and buy the inputs to do what you are talking about?

Ala No, those inputs cost a lot more than I am saving here. Besides farming up north is very a risky venture. If I do that and the weather fails I will lose everything that I have and will have to start all over again.

[14-year old off-loader]

Even though Ala raised occupational socialisation as a mechanism for preparing for the future, its effectiveness was limited by the lack of resources. In addition, the activity through which it took place was "a risky venture" for a number of reasons. Generally, there is no certainty to the weather patterns as the rains rarely fall at the right times or in sufficient quantities. The result is frequent and prolonged periods of drought that render some farmlands infertile as well as susceptible to the annual bush fires (Ministry of Finance, 2000). In addition, the SAP-induced problem of high input prices against the unstable demand and prices for farm produce render farming unpredictable and unattractive. For children like Ala, these problems generate rational explanations for the myth that farming is for old people. The apparently

insurmountable problems project farming as a waste of effort to children compared to other activities in the urban areas.

Dreaming of Freedom

Migrating to Accra for most children did not just offer relatively better economic opportunities, but it also liberated them from the difficult existence of going to the farm every morning.

Gabby: In Accra it is easier to find work but in the village there is no work. The only work there is farming and they wake you up as soon as the day breaks and they say, “get up and let’s go”. But as school children we hate the idea of having to do that everyday that is why we dream of our freedom and leave the place...
[15-year old off-loader]

It is generally common for children to work for two or three hours in nearby farms before going to school, often without any choice, as Gabby has noted. This of course impacts on their learning since tiredness can impair their attention span (UNICEF, 1997a). The impact of going to sleep every night with the thought of waking up early to go to the farm before school is daunting. Perhaps in a situation where children have no idea of what transpires in the urban areas they will accept their plight as the only way of life. Children however have access to information about other places through different sources, particularly education. This projects the incompatibilities between opportunities in the village and their aspirations and resonates with Standing’s (1982) argument that schools accentuate the ‘dissatisfaction’ with rural lives. Being able to read and write or understand what appears on the radio or television, unlike some of their parents, broadens their horizon and provides the opportunity to move beyond the traditional rural life.

Dan for example had just completed junior secondary school and believed his future was linked to the utilisation of that education in Accra. While it was difficult for him to acquire employment in the formal sector with only a junior education, he was convinced of the wisdom of migrating.

Dan I have already said that as an educated person I don't have to be in the village and become a farmer. I have to do something better with the little education I have. Even if you didn't complete at all [school] you have to go to the city to do something so that you can help in the future... that is why our parents sent us to school... I can't go back to farming in the village. I have to come here and find something better to do...

[14-year old off-loader]

This view reflects one of the myths in Ghana that only illiterate people go into farming. The logical extension is that only illiterates stay in the village. Hence children like Dan who had finished junior secondary school (JSS) consider moving to the city as “doing something better with their little education”. In reality, however, most young people shun agriculture because of the low returns and the uncertainty that surrounds it (Korboe, 1997). This is what sustains the myth that young educated men should live and work in the cities. In any case, Dan's basic education hardly qualifies him as “an educated person” on a national basis. In the village however, he is an exception since many children fail to complete their basic education, as shown in both the Introduction and Chapter Two. Dan's emphatic rejection of farming, “I can't go back to farming in the village...” captured many of the children's interpretation of the limitations of that existence.

In effect, the rural economy, particularly under the shadow of SAP, operates on a narrow base with few economic avenues to absorb the increasing adolescent population. Yet the evidence shows very little confidence in farming as the main

activity because of the negative image children have about it. Migrating to Accra therefore provides a liberating experience from the arduous but impoverished conditions under which their childhoods are experienced. Children may eventually return to the rural area and its dominant activity, but only as Beauchemin (1999) found in his study and confirmed by this, as the last resort.

4.3.3 The demonstration effect: “I wanted to be like them...”

Another critical factor in children's migration was the influence of returning migrants. These returnees provided valuable information on the types of work available, where to live, ethnic clusters and friends in Accra. Interestingly, it was the ability to plan and concretise thoughts of migration based on such information and the physical presence of the returnees, that triggered factors like parental negligence, family dysfunction, poor schools and others. Thus, decisions to travel were often not spontaneously taken but were part of a more systematic evaluation of the risks of migration in relation to the predictable conditions of the rural areas. Once decisions were made, children sought to minimise the level of uncertainty and risk by joining friends or relatives who were already established in Accra. They also travelled in the company of others who were already familiar with Accra. The implication here was that once the cycle of migration began, the social infrastructure of contacts, networks, support and relative security that had already been established, sustained it.

Exploiting contacts

All the participants had some form of contact before they arrived and were often initiated into their activities by them. Muti, for example, joined her sister who was already established and working in Accra. She hosted her for the first few weeks,

introduced her to the *kayayoo* work, and taught her the intricacies of living and working in Accra, especially the survival strategies. She noted:

Muti Well, she (her sister) told me a lot about this place and I wanted to have money like she had... I came here on my own accord. It was my own decision because a child learns to crawl before walking...but I needed somebody to show me what to do to succeed here. It was good that she was here before me because it was very difficult when I came here at first...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Muti's account suggested some planning in terms of an aspiration, to "have money like she had" and establishing a contact, "I needed somebody...". The insistence on coming to Accra on her own accord was a demonstration of social maturity. A counter interpretation could be an attempt to absolve her parents of any involvement in her presence in Accra. She was aware of the controversy surrounding the role of adults in the child migration from the north to Accra. The critical point here though was the significance of contact persons in Accra for migrant child workers. Muti could probably have survived without the initial support of her sister, but her presence reduced the uncertainty of starting life in Accra.

This need for support and direction explained why children sometimes placed their fate in the hands of returnees. Opportunities in the rural communities are rare and the returnees easily become high-profile reference leaders and role models. Their relative prosperity and sophistication distinguish them from their rural counterparts, as they become sources of information about life in Accra. In what Plange (1979) calls the 'demonstration effects', they dress up in city clothes, portray urban mannerisms and show off items that are often cherished. Interestingly, such demonstrations are the apparent response to the social expectation of tangible results as a justification for the trip.

Max, for example came from the village to live with his sister. He had been combining schooling with peddling of shopping bags since coming to Accra a year ago. The fascination of living in the city was a major reason why he joined his sister.

He recollected his thoughts of Accra in the following way:

Max All of us thought of the big city and wondered how life would be like here. My sister had been living here and we all liked the presents and the nice things she brought us when she came home for Christmas and other occasions. Things she told me about this place were fascinating and I wanted to come and live here...

[12-year old peddler]

Otuo's migration was also a direct response to the behaviour of his returning friends.

For him, while farming with its unrewarding experiences was an incipient cause, the discovery and need to address his relative poverty was given practicality by the returnees. His hope was to return home as triumphantly as his friends did.

Otuo I hated going to the farm everyday because it was too tedious...also my friends used to come home for visits from Accra, especially during Christmas. They will dress up and parade along the streets of the town... They were the smart ones because they had been to the city and had money and all the girls liked them. I wanted to be like them that is why I decided to come and work here...

[13-year old truck pusher]

A common feature of internal migration in Ghana is for people to return to their villages during important occasions like Christmas, Easter, festivals and funerals. This is the time when the demonstration effect is most effective since the returnees compete to show off what they have acquired in the cities, as Otuo has pointed out. It also represents the time when prospective migrants concretise their plans by forming alliances or getting in touch with intermediaries. Notably, people looking for assistance for their children could be most vulnerable at this time since they might be enticed by the supposed wealth of the city that returnees or visitors display.

Rejection of negative experiences

What happens if the image or information about Accra is a negative one? Apparently people expect success and positive impressions, thus those deemed failures are not motivated to return to the village for fear of derision (Plange, 1979; Van Ham, 1994; Korboe, 1997). It is equally possible that even if they did return, their negative image and information might be less significant to prospective child migrants. In effect, children search for positive images that confirm their hopes rather than those that negate them as they hope to participate in the urban economy. Muti expressed the difficulty of conveying the accurate situation in the following way:

Muti Our people don't understand... you have to work hard here and deny yourself in order to save. It is not easy to explain this fully to them. When you go home and dress up they will look at you and say they want to go with you... They think it is easy here and you just make money like that...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The children's lives are full of contradictions. While they lead a regimented and difficult life in Accra just to acquire the basic things like clothes and shoes, these items become valuable status symbols when they return home. They are largely anonymous in Accra but opinion and fashion leaders when they "go home and dress up". They prove that their trips were a worthy cause to satisfy people's expectations in the village, but in reality many of them barely survived just to save money to go home with. Even though the village life would not be any better if they returned, the common view was that the money they had saved could help them enter apprenticeships or go into trading.

If children expected positive images then there was an incentive for some returnees to embellish their experiences or deliberately project inaccurate impressions about their

lives in Accra. A number of participants indicated that they would not inform people back home of the exact nature of their work, largely because they felt it was demeaning.

Otuo No, I won't tell them what I was doing here. That won't be necessary but if somebody wants to know I will tell him I was just working for somebody who paid me a salary at the end of the month.
[13-year old truck pusher]

Doing a fixed-wage job in Accra represented the ultimate dream in the village since it set that child apart from the others who had to do dirty jobs like truck pushing or *portering*. This explained why Otuo, for example, indirectly ranked their jobs on a scale of social desirability. Similarly, Abe believed being a driver's mate carried more respect than pushing a truck.

Abe I'll tell them that I was a driver's mate; that is better isn't it? [he laughs]...there is no reason why I should say something else, especially not as truck pusher.
[14-year old truck pusher]

Comments like these served as the lasting images that encouraged children to view the returnees as role models whose path should be followed in order to escape a constricting rural life. It is important however that we put this 'success' in a relative dimension; it is the marginal difference between what the static rural life offers and the small 'fortunes' that can be amassed by the successful child migrants. It may not be much, but in the poverty-stricken rural areas of Ghana these achievements are powerful justifications for a trip to the city regardless of the conditions prevailing there.

Reactions to siblings' desire to follow suit

How will children react if their siblings wished to follow their footsteps? As an expression of how grim life in Accra was for them, the common view was that

siblings should remain in the rural areas to continue their schooling. This view was strongly expressed by those who had never been to school or had dropped out. Paradoxically, as children searched to explain their presence in Accra, they seemed convinced of the need for their younger siblings to continue their education or remain at home. When we link this to their desire to remit parents or assist their siblings to remain in schools, we glean some altruistic behaviour in the children. Though children, they seemed willing enough to assume responsibilities not just for themselves but also for their families, if possible.

Bietu for example had no previous education. She had been working in Accra for nearly two years and had visited home once. She was aware of the aspirations of her younger siblings, but was categorical about what they should aim for.

Bietu ... my younger siblings go to school, one thing I won't do is to advise them to come and work as *kayayoo*. They must go to school and find some other work. I enjoy doing it but I don't think it is good for all of us to be doing it.

YK Why don't you want them here since you say you enjoy doing this work?

Bietu It is difficult work and you can't do it forever... Every one of us here is dreaming of getting enough money to go back home. It works out fine for some but it turns out badly for others. I don't think my younger siblings can take care of themselves here the way I have done.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The contradiction in Bietu's explanations is quite obvious: she enjoys *portering* but will not do it indefinitely or want her sisters to do it. There is an implicit acceptance of the significance of education in relation to long term aspirations when she points out that *portering* is something that cannot be done indefinitely. Her siblings however still have the benefit of finding alternatives through their education, hence

the insistence that they must stay in school. However since they face the same constraints in the village, it is doubtful if her advice will be heeded.

The unpredictability of the life Bietu alluded to presents life-threatening consequences for others. Frank was one of the two participants who were suffering from typhoid fever at the time of the study. He attributed his illness to being on the streets. For that reason and the harsh environment, he considered the streets of Accra unsuitable for his younger siblings.

Frank I'll just tell them not to come...Life is terrible for me here, I have to scratch a living and there is no reason why they should come and do the same thing that I am doing here. Maybe I would not have fallen sick with typhoid fever if I had stayed in the village.
[14-year old truck pusher]

Generally, children are prone to these contagious diseases (UNICEF, 1997a; Forastieri, 2000) since in the bid to save money as quickly as possible many of them live in extremely unhygienic conditions. This increases their susceptibility to infections. Consequently, Afua would also caution her sisters and friends about life in Accra.

Afua I will tell her I can't bring her to Accra because it is difficult and some places are dangerous but it will be up to them to make up their minds about coming or not.

YK But if you can live here why can't they?

Afua Life is difficult here and I won't advise any of my younger siblings to come and live the way I am doing... But in the long run it depends on the individual.
[15-yearold iced water seller]

Unlike Otuo and Abe, Afua would inform rather than distort the reality in Accra to her acquaintances. She appeared to be aware of the strength of individual desires and agency in pursuing the Accra dream irrespective of what others suggested. It could be

difficult to discourage others from coming because of the demonstration effect. In this regard, Muti believed the real experience of living and working in Accra would provide the proof of reality and that other children should come if they wished to.

Muti ... If you tell them not to come they will reply that you don't want them to prosper like you, that is why you don't want them here so if they come to see for themselves they will know whether it is good or bad.

[14-year old *kayayoo*]

As noted earlier, it would seem contradictory for returnees to tell other children in the village that life was hard and uncertain in Accra when their lives were viewed as relatively better. As Muti had correctly pointed out, any advice to the contrary will be seen as a selfish one aimed at preventing others from achieving similar status.

A common theme was that siblings should be dissuaded from engaging in similar adventures because of the hardships and uncertainties. Apparently, such efforts do not work since many migrant children already claimed to have followed their friends or relatives. Perhaps, it was only after their arrival that the real situation was understood. Until they are confronted with the realities of Accra, items like cassette players or cooking utensils serve as powerful images in motivating children to tackle their relative poverty.

4.4 Conclusion

On the basis of evidence gathered in the interviews and presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that Accra's migrant children are typical child labourers. They have had no education or only a few years of schooling. The girls are worst off in this case, though their plight is not unique. It conforms to the national trend in which girls tend to have fewer years of education. They come from poor backgrounds, not

surprisingly, considering that the rural areas and the people who live there are relatively more deprived. They engage almost exclusively in marginal activities in the informal sector as independent workers or supplementary labour for adults. The environments in which they work are noisy, dirty and unpredictable and so increase their susceptibility to diseases, risks and accidents. They are however hardworking people who interpret their sacrifices as the price for achieving their dreams, especially if they work for themselves. Even though many of them looked dirty and tired, the relatively older ones seemed to have a good earning potential compared to their lives back in the rural areas and even in some cases to their parents. The issue however is the sustainability of that earning potential, because of the uncertainties in their social environments.

Regarding the children's motivations, a variety of reasons give meaning to their migration and work plans. Based on the evidence, the commonest and strongest is the need to make up for shortfalls in family or personal economies. A culture of migration to the cities already exists in some parts of the country and in particular districts and villages. However, the migration of children from all parts of the country seemed to have gained momentum as the level of deprivation has increased over the years. The so-called benefits of SAP have not translated into economic relief for the majority of families in the villages. The lives of children have therefore been defined more by their family deprivation than any modicum of state support. Their villages do not possess the vibrant informal sectors of the cities and therefore offer little or no employment opportunities if they wished to address their impoverished conditions. The solution for many children therefore, lies in migration.

Thus, within the broader frame of family poverty and their own relative poverty, children take a number of factors into consideration in their labour plans. The availability of information and awareness of the 'good life' in Accra serve as an attractive pull factor. While the local push factors generate the initial thought, the presence of siblings and friends help to crystallise decisions on what to do or where to stay once in Accra. The influence of returnees is equally critical in establishing a visual image on migratory plans that may have been mere passing thoughts. Evidently children's trips to the city are not spontaneous decisions. The eventual movement is often planned with most of the available factors taken into consideration. The risks to be encountered are even rationalised by the expected economic gains to be made at a future date. However, the essential motivation for travelling tends to be the quest for money that can be applied for some form of transformation in their lives. For the successful ones, migration represents an effective and beneficial utilisation of their agency. Even then, for those who are not able to live out their dreams, it still represents a potential to exploit social and economic opportunities rather than wait for the government or parents. In this regard, work in Accra represents the migrant child labourers' reaction to rural impoverishment and their efforts to counteract some of the effects of the years of adjustments.

In the next chapter I will explore the social organisation of work and its inherent exploitative practices as well as children's coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER FIVE

AT WORK: ORGANISATION, EXPLOITATION AND COPING MECHANISMS

5.1 Introduction

The backgrounds of the participants and the motivations arising from the effects of SAP were extensively explored in Chapter Four. As a result, we have a broad picture of migrant child labourers as a component of the *adjustment generation*. Their decisions to travel from the rural areas to Accra though a bold one, are just the initial steps in the attempt to address their absolute and/or relative poverty. The ability to overcome the challenges of the work and social environments that confront them in Accra, however, will significantly determine the outcome of their migration. More importantly, the period in Accra is the definitive point in their transition from rural children blighted by deprivation to independent and ambitious ones struggling to overcome their personal or family poverty. This is most significant considering that the neo-liberal principles that underline Ghana's adjustments promote private and individual empowerment as against state-sponsored solutions to welfare and impoverishment.

In this sense, the vibrant informal economy of Accra, itself a by-product of adjustments (Ninsen, 1991; ISSER, 2000), offers the avenue to and opportunities for various work activities for children. The open spaces in the markets, lorry parks, roadsides and junctions, building sites, quarries, *chop bars* and others are all largely unregulated and uncontrolled work places. The ability to make a living and to achieve dreams out of this disorganised space and time depends on individual ingenuity and perseverance. Armed with this, any child can find a small

foothold to operate as a child labourer. In the same way, there are smarter or older people who exploit the weaknesses of others, particularly children to sustain themselves in this informal labour market. The fact that it is unpredictable and virtually beyond full legislative control and policing, however sustains the negative elements of child labour like insecurity, exploitation and hazards. This janus-faced environment is therefore critical to the experience and making of the *adjustment generation*.

In order to advance the theme of how the effects of structural adjustments have moulded some children into migrant child labourers, we have to establish in greater detail what happens to them in Accra. The chapter attempts this by unpacking the data in relation to three broad questions raised in Chapter Three. The first asks what the nature of the work and social environments the children operate in Accra are. In response, a detailed background of the work sites studied and the threats and risks they pose to children are examined under the themes of hazards and risks on the one hand and uncertainties and pressures of work on the other. This will also provide a clearer understanding of the work and social processes that govern their existence in Accra. The second question asks how children interpret their relations with others in the work place. In this case, the power relations governing their interactions with proxy-parents, guardians, employers and peers and how that culminates into exploitation are examined. The third question deals with how the children sustain themselves in the unpredictable environments. In this regard, their efforts at devising strategies to cope with the adversity and potentially exploitative relationships are examined.

5.2 Work and social environments: Dealing with the hazards, risks, uncertainties and pressures of work

The extent of adult unemployment clearly shows that the formal economy – the public sector and mainstream private sector - operates with an over-abundant supply of unskilled adult labour. The general view is that little or no child labour is used directly in these situations (ILO, 1996a; Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). This is plausible because there is little incentive to employ children in such organised sectors when thousands of unemployed adults can be employed under similar circumstances. Besides, these organisations operate within the laws and conventions on labour, while their activities can be placed under the scrutiny of their own employees, local and national trade unions as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations. The potential losses for employing children therefore appear to exceed the benefits. However, the very nature of the informal sector - its flexibility, marginality, and the preponderance of illegal activities - makes it possible for children to work there. It was therefore in this sector that the participants ended up as workers in the markets, *chopbars*¹, car parks and the streets. The specific markets and locations in which the participants operated were the Kaneshi market, Agogobloshie, Makola-Tudu and CMB area and the Mandela stone quarry. The filling stations, kiosks, trading sheds and shop fronts in some of these areas were also transformed into sleeping spaces at night. Others gravitated towards the impoverished shantytowns at the outskirts, where cheap or free shelter and spaces for the informal sector activities abound.

¹ A 'chopbar' is an eating place where local Ghanaian foods are sold. They are usually located in sheds in the markets and lorry stations. Unlike the formal restaurants, they are not strictly supervised to ensure health and quality standards. It is a typical informal sector activity.

5.2.1 Hazardous and risky environment: “We are always under attack from thugs...”

The work environment in which migrant children operate can be both dangerous and hazardous. This is against the background of an increasing population of Greater Accra², which in 1970 was 805,435 but had surpassed 2.7 million by the end of 2000 (Beuchemin, 1999). Consequently, planned spatial development has been overtaken by the emergence of shantytowns, over-extended and spur-of-the-moment markets and workshops that serve as convenient places of work and habitation for migrant children.

The literature, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, is replete with the impacts of such social and work environments on children. Street and working children are known to risk their lives and sometimes even engage in illegal activities like pick pocketing and drug peddling just to survive (Bequele and Boyden, 1988b; Balanon, 1989). The younger ones become victims of the aggressive street culture (UNICEF, 1997a) in which strength is frequently used to settle arguments or to ensure compliance. UNICEF (1997a) notes further that the majority are generally malnourished and for that reason prone to communicable diseases like tuberculosis. In addition, the dirty environments and traffic-congested city centres in which they operate expose them to noxious gases that can affect their long-term development (Bequele and Boyden, 1988a; Forasteiri, 1997; 2000). UNICEF (1997a) estimates further that the persistent carrying of heavy loads as well as the heavy labour can reduce their physical development by nearly 30%. The children faced these conditions on a daily basis. As a result, their expectation of quick

² Greater Accra represents Accra city itself, the suburbs and the nearby port-city of Tema.

money to overcome their problems was more difficult to achieve. Brief descriptions of the four research areas will be presented to elaborate some of the risks and hazards they faced.

Kaneshi market

The first was the Kaneshi market, parts of which are shown in figure 5.1. The market lies on both sides of the dual carriageway from Obiteshi-Lamprey circle, as its southern tip for about one kilometre to First Light Junction in the north. It also stretches to Zongo Junction along the Korle-bu Teaching Hospital road to the west and merges into the neighbourhoods in the east.



Figure 5.1: A section of the Kaneshi market.

Lorry stations and car parks flank the main market since it serves as the gateway to the western part of the country. Even though the Kaneshie market is officially designated by a main shopping centre (yellow building in figures 5.1), it has become a sprawling open market that has devoured the residential buildings in the area. In all, the adjoining markets cover an area of approximately six square kilometres with both residential and market areas co-existing in some places. In view of this, not all children found here are necessarily working children. However, for children who live in the area, the integration of domestic lives into the daily activities of the market creates both an economic opportunity and social environment for them to work and play simultaneously.

While there are permanent structures like shops, banks and restaurants, most commercial activities take place in temporary structures such as table-tops or stalls and from stationary vehicles or other spaces people acquire for the day. Others do their trading from baskets, pans and boxes as they roam the area in search of customers. The market springs to life from about 5am and peaks by late afternoon as traders and shoppers, pedestrians, taxis, buses and trucks jostle for space and attention. Essentially, Kaneshie market, like the others, is a haven for both legal and illicit activities. Predictably, the majority of people and businesses stay competitive by cutting corners and/or using the cheapest sources of inputs, with child labour often presenting attractive opportunities. For children, the market presents numerous work opportunities. Nine of the children in the study worked here, of which three boys were variously selling coconuts, iced cream, and plastic shopping bags, while two girls sold iced-water. There were also two truck and barrow pushers, a beggar's guide and a shoe shine boy.

In presenting opportunities to children, the very marginal nature of most activities in the market also created and sustained real and potential hazards. As figure 5.1 shows, a three-lane carriageway bisects the market hence there are always long lines of vehicles in both directions. Even though it is illegal for people to trade or work by the roadsides, both adults and children disregard the law. The participants in this market disregarded their safety and the law to trade alongside the road or ran after vehicles in order to sell their wares or get loads to carry. Yet, a large percentage of vehicles in Ghana are old (Nicholas, 1998), while a prolonged exposure to their polluting gases are known to be debilitating for the health of children (Forastieri, 1997; 2000). In addition, the children frequently risked their lives by crossing the carriageway instead of using the overhead pedestrian bridges. Again it is known that some children in the area had been hit by vehicles while others who peddled wares to passengers in vehicles and on the pavements had met similar fates (Gyamfi, 2000). The children's disregard for their safety and the risks they persistently took confirms the general risk-taking perception of street and working children.

An explanation for their behaviour lay in the sheer numbers of children who operated by the roadsides and in the market. This made the work environment a competitive one hence the children were motivated to take short-cuts and risks if they were to earn any money for the day. Steve for example expressed the daily risk and hazards they faced in the following way:

Steve It is very difficult... You stand in the sun for the whole day and then if we see a vehicle coming to the market all of us run after it with the hope of off-loading it and carting it on our trucks. Whoever gets to the truck first and taps a load gets to carry it... it is hard and competitive and by the end of the day you have to take painkillers to soothe your aches else you will fall real sick.

YK Really, you must be very strong then?

Steve Yes, some of the boys even smoke marijuana and that makes it possible for them to run faster than others when we see a truck with goods in it...
[15-year old truck pusher]

The very process of finding customers, as noted earlier, was quite dangerous. They disregarded many safety regulations and jeopardised their lives by meandering through moving vehicles. Running after a vehicle in a busy market obviously exposed the child to all sorts of danger- slipping and falling or being very close to a polluting vehicle. There was also the sheer exhaustion from the sudden burst of such physical activities. Perhaps the most revealing risk was the need for some children to boost their energy levels and work rates by smoking marijuana. This practice is sustained by the myth within youth circles that they can work harder and longer or learn better at school if they smoked marijuana. However, for some children, this can be the beginning of an addictive process, which as UNICEF (1997a) indicates, is one of the worst forms of risk-taking and experimentation among street children.

Agobloshie market

Similar situations and hazards existed in the Agobloshi market, a section of which appears in figure 5.2. The market is a product of the rapid urbanisation and the haphazard developments in some parts of Accra. As a result, commercial activities take place largely in wooden structures, with the majority trading in open spaces. It is basically a foodstuffs market where vehicles with large supplies of agricultural produce from different parts of the country terminate.

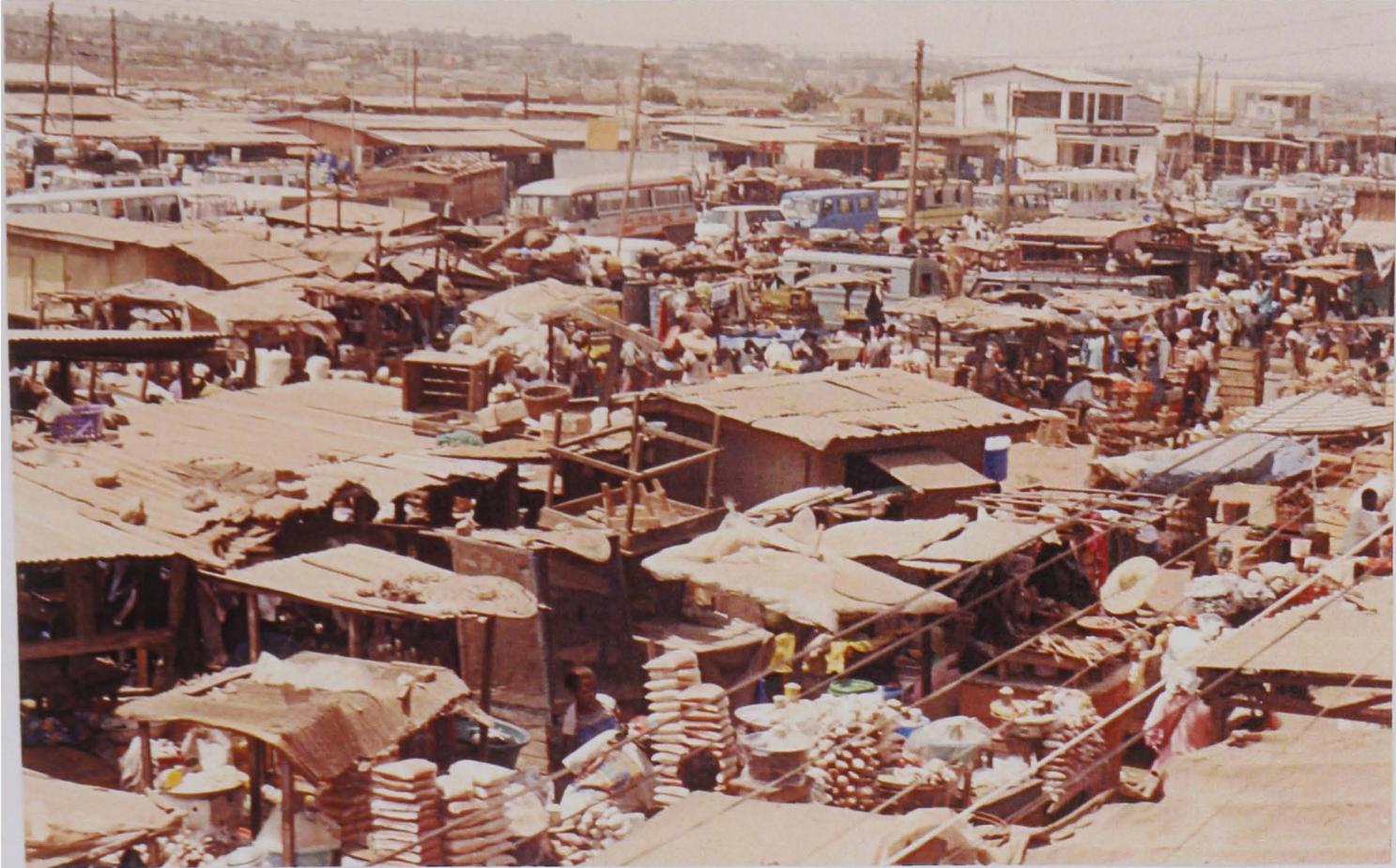


Figure 5.2: A section of Agobloshie market

A distinguishing feature of the market is the large concentration of migrants who work there. It is estimated that 25,000 people, mostly migrants, live and work in the Agobloshi market area (CAS, 1997). The notable communities are the Kokombas, Nanumbas, and Kotokolis from northern Ghana; as well as foreigners from neighbouring countries of Togo, Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

In spite of the large numbers of vehicles and people in the area, only a single pot-holed road passes through the market, and this is predictably always congested. Moreover, the combination of temporary and inadequate infrastructure, the haphazard organisation of activities and a total disregard for the environment

result in mountains of garbage, overflowing gutters and pools of standing water. At the end of the day, child labourers in the area sleep at a nearby filling station, in front of shops or in sheds. Others sleep in overcrowded shacks at the nearby illegal settlement called Sodom and Gomorrah. As with its Biblical namesake, the area is known for its criminal activities and as a hideout for wanted criminals. Yet, large contingents of children, particularly from northern Ghana make the Agobloshi market their destination (Apt and Grieco, 1997). The market has therefore become synonymous with migrant child workers, especially *kayayoo*s. Sixteen of the children worked there. Of these, three were head porters (*kayayoo*), two truck pushers, four plastic bag and yam sellers, six off-loaders, and one welder's apprentice.

This market and its environs were also full of hazards and therefore exposed the children to risk taking, pollution, unhygienic conditions and infectious diseases like typhoid fever. Eleven-year old, Kojo worked in the area as a beggar's guide. His routine involved standing or walking for several hours by the roadside and was therefore exposed to the ever-present danger of intense heat, noxious gases and the risks of being hit by a vehicle. He described some of the dangers he faced in the following way:

Kojo I worry about the traffic as well but I try to be careful. We only approach vehicles when the lights turn red and they have come to a standstill...

The most difficult part is that you have to stand in the sun all the time. You can't beg by sitting in the shade. Even when we are not by the roadside we have to walk to many places so that we can meet people...

[11-year old beggar's guide]

His work involved leading the uncle by the hand to stationary or slow-moving

vehicles; the uncle in turn would appeal to the passengers for money. This meant standing in the sun all day or walking long distances in order to come into contact with potential givers. This represented one hazard, the others were attacks from older boys who try to rob them of their earnings.

YK What are some of the problems you face in this work?

Kojo Thieves! We are always under attack from thugs because they know for sure that we will be having money on us, especially when we come here at midday or are about to go to our sleeping place. Usually, they wait for us at where we change the money...

YK Really?

Kojo Yes, as soon as they see me changing the coins into notes they try and harass me and even attack me. Once they forcibly covered my eyes while the other searched my pockets for the money.

Much of what they receive were in coins hence the need to change them into bank notes at the end of a begging session. The fact that others could use force to deprive them of their earnings portrayed the level of uncertainty and insecurity. This again confirms the general perception of such children's vulnerability and the extent of abuse they suffer (UNICEF, 1997a; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Abernethie, 1998).

The CMB/Railway station area

This was the third study site and consisted of a lorry station, adjoining open markets and a railway station. Only a small part of the station is in use with the rest overtaken by traders, artisans, shoeshine boys, porters, and idlers as their places of residence and work. In the same vicinity is the Tudu, UTC and Makola markets and further down, the Rawlings' car park, built out of the ruins of

Makola No.2 market³. These are potential working places for children; indeed large contingents of *kayayoos* were observed resting on traffic islands or in any shade they could find as shown in figure 5.3. There were fourteen participating children from this area, of which seven were variously selling iced-water, fried yams and sweets; two *chopbar* workers; two *kayayoos*; a truck pusher, a shoe shiner and a beggar's guide.



Figure 5.3: Head-porters (*kayayoos*) resting and waiting for work

The work environment here had its peculiar hazards. City guards from the Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA) patrolled the area in the attempt to decongest roads and shop fronts. They used whips and canes to chase children and other traders and in the process often caused minor stampedes. The child peddlers,

³ It was razed down in 1979 in the heat of Rawlings' supposed revolution in Ghana. He considered it to be the citadel of corruption as well as being a major cause of the scarcity of

beggars and idlers were particular targets. This conformed to the view that street and working children are targeted in such situations because of the general perception that they encroach on adult spaces (Bar-On, 1997). The peddlers among them were fined when arrested. This presented anxious moments and exacerbated the children's vulnerability. Kofi, a peddler in the area noted:

Kofi But mostly, you worry about the AMA taskforce, that means you must always be ready to run when they swoop down on the street-side peddlers. If you are unlucky and they seize your wares you will have to pay a heavy fine to get them back, sometimes you don't. For me I will not be able to pay the fine so, it will be the end for me, I'd as well go back home. You worry a lot in this kind of work...
[15-year old peddler]

While the anxiety arising from such controls might pose psychological problems for children, the attempt to escape when it took place actually put a number of them in physical danger. For example, a girl peddler collapsed and died moments later in 1999 while running away from a police vehicle patrolling the area (Gyamfi, 2000), perhaps from a heart condition. The children could also lose their earnings for the day or as Kofi pointed out, everything they had worked for since arriving in Accra. Consequently, the children were more concerned with protecting their wares when dashing away from the guards to be mindful of the potential risks and dangers to them.

Kofi's work demonstrated the same dangers and risks the other children faced on a daily basis. He began his selling rounds early in the morning to take advantage of the morning rush and the congestion by meandering through the traffic. Sometimes, he shouted to draw attention to his wares or engaged in pressure

selling by persistently offering the product to pedestrians or passengers in a vehicle. Negotiation and sale of an item had to take place quickly while the vehicle was momentarily stationary. If he were in the process of closing a sale he would run after the vehicle as it moved along, thereby exposing himself to all the dangers mentioned earlier. He would go through the same routine endlessly in the intense heat, pollution and through the hazard of moving vehicles.

Mandela stone quarry

The fourth study site, unlike the first three, is a stone quarry located just outside the city. It covers a rocky surface of approximately three football fields (figure 5.4) where about a hundred men, women and children break rocks into millions of aggregates.



Figure 5.4: A section of Mandela stone quarry

The blasting of rocks with explosives creates large pits from which stones are carried by hand to the surface for further processing. The work process involves the use of hammers to persistently chip chunks of rocks into small bits or aggregates. When enough stones have been chipped they are sold to building contractors, most of whom sometimes pre-finance the stone chippers. Unlike street work, children at the quarry usually work in the company of adults. A few relatively older ones though gather stones for sale to adults or offer their services by hauling the stones from the pits. Five participants in the study, 3 boys and 2 girls worked there.

As a result of the level of environmental degradation at the site, there were no trees to provide shade from the scorching sun. Intense heat and bodily injuries therefore represented the main danger to the children. Mary, one of the participants, explained the intensity of their work in the following way.

Mary ...the sun...! As you can see there are no shades here and we have to sit in the sun all day and it makes you get headaches all the time. We only get a short period to rest and that is when you can go and look for some shady place to rest. But we have to work faster without taking rest breaks if Mother has got a contract to meet....

Then you have to deal with the stone fragments, they get into your nose and face, sometimes they even hit you in the eyes. I get injuries on my legs and hands when I gather the stones from the pit all the time...

[13-year old stone chipper]

Mary and the others chipped the stones by placing them on a hard surface one at a time and hitting them with a hammer. Sometimes one strike was enough to break the stone into the required pieces else the process was repeated. This was done repetitively and at a fast pace as a heap of stone aggregates gradually accumulated (see figure 5.5 where a child is sitting on a heap of stones).



Figure 5.5: A child labourer sitting on a pile of chipped stones

The hammering process kept fragments and particles of stones flying and therefore hitting them in the face. In spite of this, Mary and all the children observed working there did so without any protective gloves, clothes or goggles. Only a few of them had covered their heads with pieces of cloth to shield themselves from the sun.

5.2.1 Uncertainties and the pressure to survive: “I pray to God every morning to help me...”

In addition to the risks and hazards, were the considerable level of uncertainty surrounding children’s activities and the pressure to work hard. Such pressures are considered to have psychosocial impacts on children (UNICEF, 1997a; Woodhead, 1999). Accounts of their work lives showed considerable psychological pressure on them, largely because of the uncertainty surrounding

their work. In order to adjust to or manage these problems the children needed to be intensely disciplined to withstand the long hours of hard work since the loss of a day's work could involve significant costs. Again, this motivated them to take unnecessary risks as a way of meeting the responsibilities on them or realising their aspirations.

As a result of the nature of their work, we saw in Chapter Four that the majority of children work long hours, mostly between 9 and 11 hours. However, while some children especially the boys, were driven by their own ambitions, the pressure on girls to work long hours was largely traceable to adults and circumstances. Afua was confronted with the pressure of having to sell her daily allocation of water to earn a commission. To obtain her daily earnings of ₦3,000 she needed to sell ₦20,000 worth of iced-water. This could only be achieved through long hours of very hard work. She therefore began her daily activities by 7am and continued throughout the day, sometimes late into the night. She expressed her worries in the following way:

Afua I worry about whether I will be able to sell all the water I collect because if I don't, it will be a loss and I will have to find money to pay my share of the sales for that day... If you contract to sell a certain amount a day you must try very hard to sell it since the woman will insist on collecting her money from you. That is what makes it difficult because you have to work without resting to be able to sell everything...
[15-yearold iced water seller]

Even though Afua determined her own work schedule, the pressure to sell the daily allocation dominated her behaviour. She could only rest if she had made substantial progress in selling her contract quantity for the day else she would not get any commission. The organisation of work allowed the fridge owner to pass on

the commercial risks to the children. This made the day's work unpredictable but importantly necessitated long hours of work.

Agnes also operated under similar pressures and uncertainties. In her case, it was her mother who was responsible for their daily allocation. She recounted the uncertainty and pressure that surrounded the arrangement.

Agnes I always think about whether I will be able to sell the water they give me. I pray to God every morning to help me sell my allocation of water...

YK Why do you worry about that? It's not your fault so you can just put them back in the fridge for another time?

Agnes No I can't do that...my mother collects what we can sell in a day and if we are unable to do so we still have to pay for what we collected since the fridge owner will collect her money whether we sell or not.
[12-year old iced-water seller]

The thought of completing her daily assignment was uppermost in her mind if she went to bed praying for divine intervention. Like Afua and others in similar situations, the desperation simply resulted in long hours of hard work, especially in the afternoons when the sun was at its hottest and the demand for water highest.

Moreover, the children faced competition from the other girls who sold iced-water hence the rewards were uncertain irrespective of the amount of work some of them engaged in. Dorothy related the conditions of work in the following way:

Dorothy: ... all the walking in the sun, you can walk quite some distance and nobody will buy it. There are many others who are selling iced-water as well and you have to work hard to sell your allocation at any time.

YK What about the other children you work with, do they treat you well?

Dorothy: Yes, but some of the boys are very rough... they bully the small girls. Sometimes some of the older girls also say you can't sell your

water near them. They can drive you away from the good places and that makes it even more difficult to sell, they want to have the place to themselves. But I have some friends here and I like them.
[11-year old iced-water seller]

Hence, the pressures of work did not come from adults alone since the participants had to deal with other children at a competitive level. In the scramble for strategic selling points, very young children like Dorothy and Agnes operated from a disadvantaged position of age and physical ability. They were sometimes excluded from the 'good places' – traffic junctions or places passengers alight from vehicles - where children simply waited for customers. Instead, they had to move from place to place to find customers (figure 5.6). This was the survival strategy the older children adopted to minimise or manage the competition.



Figure 5.6: A girl selling iced-water at a lorry station

Similar pressures were experienced in *portering*. As an individual activity, it demanded self-discipline and the ability to compete aggressively.

Ayes When we get here in the morning you have to compete with the boys for the loads, sometimes they bully us and threaten us to leave some places because they don't want any competition...
[15-year old *kayayoo*]

Such threats could not be taken lightly because arguments in Ghana are loud and easily deteriorate into exchange of blows, especially among children. This general susceptibility to aggression (UNICEF, 1997a) was a way of life for the children, with the boys often using their superior strength to dominate the girls.

As noted earlier in Chapter Four, many children operated under the assumption that they could earn money relatively quickly to facilitate their return home or realise their long-term dreams. In reality, only a few achieve the dream of quick money because of the uncertainties, pressures and the high costs of living that confront them. Ala for example had hoped to stay in Accra for a brief period to acquire some capital and return home as a trader. However, after two years of hard work, he was still struggling to achieve his objectives and was facing the possibility of being permanently assimilated into the migrant community. When asked of the problems they faced as off-loaders, Ala noted:

Ala The possibility of somebody stealing the cabbage that we are supposed to be watching or off-loading. When that happens we are threatened and asked to pay for the losses because in cases where the items were stolen if we don't the owner will inform the police. That creates a more difficult situation so we just pay when that happens.
[14-year old off-loader]

These were additional costs, since the risks of having to use their entire savings to redeem lost or stolen items was real. It could be argued that adults who used children for their cheap labour should not blame them when the unexpected

happened. However, as noted earlier, one of the strongest attractions of the informal sector is the lack of policing and control. Thus, in the absence of a general rule of law to govern such relationships, the sheer might of the dominant actors determine courses of action. In fact, some adults molested and threatened children in such cases, and also held them responsible (as indicated by Ala in the extract) even if children were not necessarily culpable. The children on the other hand had little recourse to the law because of the difficulty of dealing with the police, as minors.

5.3 Social relations of exploitation

The hazards, risks, uncertainties and pressure from adults eventually culminate in some form of exploitation at the work place. In spite of the hard work, many of the children do not benefit from their labour because of the nature of their relationships with others. The social construction of childhood and the inherent paternalism in Ghanaian society discussed in Chapters One and Two provide the legitimacy for some of the more patently exploitative relations. The children faced different levels of exploitation in dealing with parents/guardians, employers and their peers.

5.3.1 Relationship with parents or guardians: “He gave me to somebody as a house help...”

It was argued in Chapter One that deprivation and impoverishment drive many families and their children into unsustainable situations. One expression of such conditions is the arguments of parents pushing their children into work situations as expenditure-saving strategies (MacEwen Scott, 1982, Boyden, 2001). Another is that, under the guise of socialisation and extended family relation, children are

given to city dwellers who use them in a variety of work situations (Amin, 1994; Anti-Slavery International, 1999; Nkurlu, 2000). Greenhalg (1998: 203) even argues that poor, rural parents utilise the practice as a 'social mobility strategy' to push their children from the rural areas to the cities. In relation to this argument is the linkage between children's familial responsibilities and the traditional perception that they 'belong' to the parents (Mends, 1994: 4). Even though this 'property attitude' is contested, children are generally considered as being socially and economically accountable to their parents. In fact, the early stages of Zelizer's (1984) theory of the social value of the child are quite relevant in the sense that the child's economic value supersedes the sentimental value.

Children's limited agency

All these are consistent with the perception of children as a source of labour and opportunity for the family. Thus, against the background of family impoverishment but within the context of traditional extended family relations, some of the participants were given to distant family members. Such children become pawns in the game of shifting responsibilities as families seek to maintain their survival strategies in the face of additional financial burdens attributable to the various aspects of adjustments.

The ulterior motives of some women in fostering children from the rural areas were often evident in what the children were made to do when they arrived in Accra. Only one of the six iced water sellers in the study came to Accra on her own accord. The rest were recruited or brought by their 'aunts' to sell things in lorry stations and markets. Araba for example, was brought to Accra by an 'aunt'

after her father withdrew her from school on financial grounds. She believed at the time that she would continue schooling but was told subsequently to bag and sell iced-water. The aunt's son, who was of comparable age, however was attending school and did not have to sell iced-water like Araba or do any laborious housework. She noted her frustrations in the following way:

Araba I didn't know what I was coming to do in Accra, if I knew I wouldn't have come... I like living in Accra but this is difficult work... I am always having chest pains and other pains in my back. I fall sick all the time, I wish I could go back but I don't even know where my mother is at the moment...
[12-year old iced-water seller]

The need to carry iced water over long distances and routinely run after moving vehicles explain the persistent pains she had in her chest and back. Another iced water seller was fortunate to be attending school but also talked of her frustrations in the following way:

Laura My father was not in the village at the time she came for me... But she told my grandmother that the village school was not good and that she was going to put me in a school in Accra. She put me in a school all right but they didn't tell me in the village that I'd be selling iced water...
[13-year old iced water seller]

A pattern of deceit therefore seemed to permeate the cases of girls recruited to sell iced-water. Their daily social reality in Accra contradicted their expectations and rather involved long hours of work and often the suppression of their schooling needs. To maximise sales, Laura had to work long hours thereby constraining her learning potential.

Laura Even during the end of the term when we have tests and I want to study she will shout at me to stop wasting time. She always manages to find something for me to do. After selling water here at the station I go home to sell water in the neighbourhood at nights also...
[13-year old iced-water seller]

Unfortunately, very young girls with limited capacity to influence their lives were

targets for their docility. Laura was clearly overworked but appeared incapable of counteracting the situation. Hence, relatively older girls were unattractive to the 'aunts' because they were more active agents who did not guarantee the 'aunts' secure sources of labour or maximum profits. The irony was that these aunts preferred to recruit children from poor rural areas, while their children concentrated on their education. This confirms UNICEF's (1997a) assertion that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are often the ones recruited for such purposes.

To facilitate the practice, imaginary family relationships are sometimes created where none exists thus giving rise to what (Verlet, 2000: 77) describes as, 'the domestication of working relations'. When the relationships turns abusive in such cases, the child's protestations are treated simply as petulant demands. Laura was making significant contributions to her new family yet she was sometimes denied basic necessities on such grounds.

Laura When I tell her that I need some things she then begin to rain insults on me and say I should try and use the little that I have and that I should be lucky that I am here. Sometimes she'd insult my parents that they are irresponsible people...

YK But who gets the money from your work?

Laura I give them to my aunt, everything! I'd have a lot of money if I were keeping it myself, it'd be enough to pay for my lorry fare and buy me other things to go back home...
[13-year old iced-water seller]

In this extract, we see not just the exploitation of her working capacity, but her limited agency in shaping issues concerning her. She had to give away her earnings without a reciprocal provision for her needs. The cliché that the child is seen but not heard gains a new meaning. In her case, it was a trenchant social

barrier that ensured that her interests were subordinated to those of the proxy parents.

Laura and the other children's exploitation is a derivative of the construction of an adult-child relation in which the child is completely subservient. In this construction, when a problem arises between the child and the parent/guardian, the child is automatically 'adjudged guilty' irrespective of the 'substantive nature of the case' (Assimeng, 1999: 112). The designation of childhood as a period of ignorance (Mayall, 1996) is also the norm, while the evil-incarnate attitude (James, *et al.*, 1998) underlines the very existence of children. These antiquated views facilitate the exploitation of children as well as define the conditions in which migrant child labourers operate.

The children's interpretation of familial relations

How do the children conceptualise such behaviours within the family? Their views converge on two main points: loyalty to the family and the belief that those they work for will reciprocate in future. Firstly, they viewed their responsibilities within the total well being of the family. Some of the children demonstrated considerable altruism in rationalising the loss of schooling, leisure and their childhood in meeting the demands of the family. Kojo, the 11-year beggar's guide, epitomised such familial relationships with its intertwining kinship ties, loyalty and exploitation. He had not been attending school for reasons of poverty but rather had been assisting an uncle to earn an income through begging. His mother and stepfather also received a share of the begging proceeds each time they returned home. Even though only an insignificant proportion of their earnings

came to him directly, he demonstrated a considerable degree of goodwill in accepting his responsibilities to his uncle and mother.

Kojo In the village, I get a lot of food to eat and I don't have to sleep in the open space. Yet it was my mother's wish that I accompany my uncle so I could not refuse... it makes me feel ashamed sometimes and I wish I were somewhere else. But I have to help my uncle, you know, he has no means and I don't want to disobey my mother.

YK Why is his own child not accompanying him?

Kojo His children are all small and they can't follow him to Accra that is why mother says I should do it...
[11-year old beggar's guide]

The fact that he felt ashamed of begging, because of the insults and sneers from unsympathetic people, was a source of psychosocial pressure on him. The tension however was the conflict of his personal interest and loyalty to the family. The references to doing what his mother wanted and the emphatic "I don't want to disobey my mother..." pointed to the subservience of some children. He went on to indicate his preferences and frustrations.

Kojo I prefer the village life to the one here. I like the travelling but after you have done it a couple of times it is no longer interesting. But I am told to go with him each time he comes to Accra or goes to Kumasi. I don't like it any more but I have to do it, that is what they say...

His preferences were clear, the difficulty was disengaging them from the wishes of adults, which in Ghana is impossible for many children. Moreover, within the context of his loyalty, he attached no exploitative intentions to their behaviour. For example, they earned reasonable amounts of about ₵20,000 on most days yet his daily allowance or *chop* money was only ₵500; or 2.5% of the earnings. This was a grossly insignificant allowance for the pressure and uncertainty he sustained daily.

Kojo's plight confirmed the earlier argument that the family is a major facilitator of child employment and a source of exploitation. Though his situation was a consequence of poverty, it nevertheless reflected the way adults exploit children to mitigate their own economic constraints. This was not the usual case where employers exploit impoverishment to utilise children's free labour or for pittances; his exploitation was internal to the family structure. The type of activity he engaged in had little occupational significance for his future; the beneficiaries were the adults in the family. His unremunerated responsibility was simply interpreted within the survival needs of the family, for which he was assumed to have a role. However, if he had forfeited his schooling and normal childhood, it was probably fair that he received a reasonable share of the income generated. This was not the case and therefore constituted an exploitation of his childhood.

Mary was another case. School-times offered her a welcome break from the tedious work of stone chipping since it provided a legitimate excuse for not working. She, like Kojo, had no intention of rebelling against the wishes of her mother. She noted:

Mary I will do whatever she wants me to do... I might be sorry if she couldn't look after me in school but I know she would if that is possible...
[13-year old stone chipper]

In spite of the harsh and dangerous work environment, she was anxious to support her mother, and therefore continuously worried if they had enough stones to fill a truck. Mary's interpretation of her toils was one of necessity arising from their economic predicament and loyalty to her mother. She discerned no exploitation and stayed focused on her dedication and support to her mother as she

contemplated a future linked to her mother's progress. Both Mary's view and behaviour confirmed the conclusions in some studies that children take pride in contributing to the family finances (Boyden, *et al.*, 1998).

Mary I don't get paid directly for the work I do because all the money goes to my mother therefore I cannot determine my lifestyle. But that does not worry me at all because I have to help my mother to look after me in school. If I don't help her it will be even more difficult and I can't continue my education in future...
[13-year old stone chipper]

She was given the occasional pocket money but the ₦70,000 they got for a week's work went to her mother who was saving towards their return home to become a trader. Her mother's dreams were no different from the migrant children's, most of whom are also hoping to return home to trade if they could find the necessary capital. Mary, as a daughter of an adult migrant, was however fortunate because she had a more stable life than the other children. She had the benefit of maternal support, a relatively decent place to sleep and could attend school, despite the difficult regime of work and school. Thus, while the issue of exploitation was clear in Kojo's case, it was contestable in Mary's. It raised the genuine need for children to support their parents for the sake of survival. The pertinent issue here was the critical role of SAP in impoverishing families to the extent that some had to compromise the safety and future of their children, just to survive.

Secondly, the children seemed to believe in social and economic reciprocity in working for others, even if there were no familial relationships. This related to the burden-sharing aspect of extended family relations or informal fostering raised in Chapters One and Two. The case of Aba, a stone-chipper, illustrated this. She was working alone at the quarry when I first interviewed her. She worked daily

because she was not attending school. Her task was to gather enough stones for chipping before her sister, who was sick, resumed work. For her, the concept of exploitation did not exist since her contribution was a legitimate social responsibility, irrespective of the working hours or earnings. She noted:

Aba I have to work because we need the money... I have to do whatever she says because she is taking care of me... Sometimes she gives me money, like when we go to the church, she will give me money for the church collection.

YK Do you feel cheated?

Aba No, because she gives me food and buys the things I need for me. Besides she says she will buy a sewing machine for me to learn dressmaking.

YK Are you happy with that decision?

Aba Yes!
[13-year old stone chipper]

Aba took the issue of reciprocity seriously in the linkages she established between their poverty (we need the money) and labour (doing whatever her sister says). Thus, like Mary and Kojo, she interpreted her work as her contribution towards their survival even if it impinged on her personal development. In this sense, some of the children demonstrated a commendable sense of responsibility, a quality which is sometimes argued, child labour instils in children (for example, Boyden, *et al.*, 1998). This might well be so.

The children's interpretations are therefore firmly grounded in the economic constraints their families experience everyday. A counter argument however is that this sense of responsibility is an offshoot of a culture that demand service from children. Many children are either conditioned to perform such activities as part of their childhood upbringing or are forced by necessity to assume such

responsibilities as the three cases have demonstrated. The evidence, as it is, points to children's incomplete and sometimes contradictory notions of exploitation within the family relations. Aba and Kojo for example seemed to have just a partial awareness of their exploitation. Their daily incomes when computed on annual basis would be far in excess of what would be needed for their entry into future apprenticeships, if they ever got one.

5.3.2 Relationship with Employers: "It is easy for them to tell us what they want than to listen to us..."

Another source of exploitation was children's relationship with employers. This, in most cases bordered on a master-servant relationship, especially in apprenticeships or even the brief encounters between children and the people who gave them jobs for brief periods of time. This was however found to be an unequal relationship in which adults determined the nature of work and the conditions surrounding it with the essential elements of payments, hours and time of work often imposed on children. This then culminated in meagre remuneration or improper and inadequate accounting of their incomes when necessary. Again, children operated under limited agency and could only react to the exploitation by quitting, if that was a feasible option. Yet, they had no right to compensation, neither could they pursue legal justice since the working relation was often patterned on a domestic one. Moreover, costs, fear and the unsustainable nature of a 'child versus adult employer' litigation in a law court precluded any actions from the children's families.

Power relations

The migrant child labourers' limited agency, legal status and fear of litigation therefore enhanced the power of adults in the child-employer relations. The children's labour was therefore often freely utilised or under unenforceable verbal agreements. Tima was a *chopbar* worker and on her second job when I first interviewed her. She was sacked from the first one over money she claimed her 'madam' owed her.

Tima She spent my money and refused to give it to me. I had worked for four months and was expecting a large sum but she gave me very little...
I only complained to her and she threatened me to leave because she said I was disrespectful and had insulted her... I didn't, I only wanted my money...

YK So how do you know your new employer won't do the same?

Tima I am saving with the *susu*⁴ collector now. But this Madam is a lot better. She is very kind and I like her...
[14-year old chop bar worker]

Since many of the children slept in insecure places, giving their earnings to adults or employers for safekeeping appeared to be a worthwhile solution. However, while there could be a genuine miscalculation over such savings, some employers might, out of greed, exploit the arrangement. If it did happen, the child would be the eventual loser because of the difficulty of proving a case against the adult. The child might also, as in Tima's case, be thrown out of work.

There was considerable awareness of the exploitative relationship between children and their employers as far as the relatively older ones were concerned. Yet, their reaction, just like the very young ones who had been fostered, bordered

⁴ See section three of this chapter for a full discussion of the *susu* saving scheme.

on a resignation to the way things were rather than what they could be. For them, it was just the way of life, the socially constructed notions of adult superiority over children. The views of three off-loaders on this were instructive.

Ala The way I see it we are only after the barest minimum in order to survive, so we are content with the little we get for our efforts. You don't always get what you want but we are children who are dealing with adults. It is easy for them to tell us what they want than to listen to us...
[14-year old off-loader]

*

YK Do you think they will pay adults more to do the same work?

Dan Maybe....

YK Why will that be the case?

Dan They know they are adults and will have to listen to what they say. We can't force them to do anything because when you say something they don't like they threaten that next time a truck comes in they won't let us off-load...and since all of us in the gang are after the money we just keep quiet and do whatever they want...
[14-year old off-loader]

*

Karimu: Yes, we the off-loaders are always annoyed about the way they treat us but we can't complain. If you don't do what they want they won't call you again when a truck comes in to be off-loaded. It is not good but it is better than not having anything to do and not having any money at all...
[14-year old off-loader]

In all three cases, the children were fully aware of the implications of the power relations. They recognised the difficulty of getting their demands across because of their status as children even though they gleaned a more balanced scenario when the employers dealt with adults in similar situations. In spite of this, the children's primary motivation of need and their search for the "barest minimum to survive" as Ala put it, forced them to uncritically accept the status quo. The fear of losing these sources of income was a decisive weapon that was exploited by the

adults. The children therefore accepted the inevitability of adults' power and control. The obvious solution was for them to decline work under conditions they considered to be exploitative. However, the issues of poverty, survival and the desire to overcome their adversity were powerful motivations.

5.3.3 Relationship with co-workers: "They just bully, slap and kick us..."

Interactions between the migrant child workers could be variously cordial, equitable, protective or exploitative. There were, however, traces of subjugation and exploitation that originated from the sub-cultures of the streets. This was based on seniority, which was a very important factor in their socialisation. It was not necessarily based on age but essentially on whom was the longest serving member. However by virtue of the fact that younger children tended to follow older ones, the same ethos governing extended family and authority tended to apply. For example, the different groups of northerners at Agobloshi market had de facto youth leaders who resolved their problems.⁵ Generally, the older and stronger children assumed responsibility by virtue of their familiarity with the work environment.

Violence and insecurity

The seniority system however provided some scope for exploitation when the relatively older children deal with younger and weaker children. For instance, in most cases the children did not have to pay any money to work or sleep in the open spaces of the markets. However, the older ones often demanded money

⁵ See Chapter Three for the process of establishing contacts with the children through youth leaders and chiefs and the problems of dealing with them.

before the weak ones were allowed to sleep or work in particular areas. While some older boys simply asked for money without resorting to violence, others were notorious for the force of authority they deployed in getting their way. Violence and intimidation were therefore effective instruments of compliance in the children's community. This unfortunately could be interpreted as the embryonic stage of a future power relation that would be replicated by current victims when they are capable of influencing social relations.

Steve seemed capable of protecting himself against the bigger boys, yet he talked extensively of the insecurity they created for the younger and weaker ones. For him, the older boys rather than the adults were the adversaries.

Steve They just bully, slap and kick us and sometimes forcibly take our earnings for the day. Sometimes when you sleep they will just come and knock you or shred your clothes searching for your money... Sometimes they will simply demand ₦2,000 from you. They do whatever they want and nobody apprehends them, that is why the smaller boys are always falling sick...

The smaller ones are at the mercy of the older boys... When we see them coming without their barrows we know they are out to bully us or to steal our money so we just run away. Sometimes they catch you...

[15-year old truck pusher]

Violence and insecurity in the form of physical abuse, intimidation, fear and anxiety were part of the oppressive behaviours of the older boys, as this extract shows. The main problem for Steve and the other children was the fact that those responsible for such behaviour were never apprehended. The streets by their nature offer no security, especially at nights. Besides, the fear of reprisals prevented victims from reporting such actions even if a channel existed. The older boys were seasoned street workers who appreciated the difficulty of earning money in those conditions. As a result, they preferred the easier solution of bullying

and intimidation to lay claim to particular territories. Otuo recounted an earlier experience.

Otuo Some boy came over one day when I was about to sleep and demanded that I pay him ₦500 each night to sleep at the spot. He was bigger than I am and I was terrified. I paid him the amount for the day but fortunately he never came round again to demand more money...

[13-year old barrow pusher]

Thus, not only were the weaker children prevented from selling at strategic locations, they were also hindered from sleeping at specific spots in particular areas. Violence was the weapon of compliance, as demonstrated by Abe and Steve in the following way.

Steve As for the older boys they beat us... sometimes they will just come and order you to leave a place or just ask you to pay money, if you refuse you will be in trouble.

[15-year old truck pusher]

Abe We don't pay money for where we sleep... we just lie down at any empty space we can find...

[14-year old truck pusher]

Steve But sometimes there is a lot of violence. Somebody could just come and slap or knock you and you won't know who did it...

Abe Sometimes when you wake up you will find that your trousers have turned into a shirt. They cut it up in search of your money...they just destroy your clothes if they don't find any money in your pockets.

Many of the children had no fixed addresses and so kept the day's earnings or pocket money on them when they went to sleep. However as a result of the level of exhaustion, many of them slept so deeply that they would not even stir when their pockets were being searched or cut to shreds. Asked how they could sleep so deeply, Steve noted:

Steve It's the work, we get so tired that once you go to sleep you lose all consciousness. It should be difficult for us to fall asleep there but at the end of the day's work you'll be grateful for any space you can get and just go to sleep like a dead snake.

Sexual pressures and exploitation

Some of the girls faced a different sort of exploitation from their co-workers. Without the guidance and control of their parents, the girls were highly susceptible to sexual advances and pressures from their peers and older people. As a result, there was considerable anxiety among some girls about getting pregnant.

As a worker in a *chop bar*, Tima was always in direct contact with males. A prevalent social problem in the rural area she came from was the tendency for females, both young and old, to travel to Accra to engage in prostitution. Thus, girls in her situation were presumed to be acting similarly. She was, however, acutely aware of the implications of such behaviour and was doing her best to ward off the persistent advances.

YK Do you have a boyfriend?

Tima I'm afraid I'll get pregnant if I take one.

YK Do some of the boys approach you?

Tima Yes... they come to where we sleep all the time, others come here. But here in Accra we are all from different places so if you make the mistake and you become pregnant the man will run away and just leave you alone with the child. It has happened to many girls here... just go to CAS⁶ and see...
[14-year old chop bar worker]

The girls who worked in *chopbars* and beer bars were particularly vulnerable because more males frequented the places than females. Moreover, their unwanted advances got more persistent as they became drunk. Even though the minimum age for consensual sex in Ghana is 16 years, it was possible that some of the girls

⁶ CAS has a refuge at Mamprobi, a suburb of Accra where street children can rest for the day. It is affiliated to SAID, another refuge that specialises in giving temporary relief to pregnant street girls..

would be enticed into relationships with older boys and men. Yet, as with many infractions against children, few if any, would be prosecuted for their actions. It was equally unlikely even in the extreme case of a girl becoming pregnant, as Tima persistently referred to. There was therefore considerable anxiety and need for vigilance on the part of girls. Tima perceptively noted in this regard:

Tima There are many reasons and things that make this place difficult. Now it is difficult to get a good job and when you get one sometimes they try to cheat you. Also we the girls are in danger because of the boys who are always pestering us...but you have to be careful. We are all strangers here.
[14-year old chop bar worker]

Three points from Tima's account could motivate the girls to yield to such sexual pressures – the difficulty of getting good jobs, cheating from employers and the persistent overtures from boys. As a result, some girls were known to give sexual favours for money, food, clothes and other things.

Muti If you don't want to work hard you can't get money. Some girls try to find the easier way out by having sex with people for money. Not only girls from Tamale, but also those from other places. Some girls even work and give their money to boys...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

*

Bietu I try to stay away from the bad ones. It is easy to get into serious trouble if you are a girl here. But you just have to be careful. They [boys] tell you all sorts of lies just to get what they want from you...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The level of vulnerability for the girls was evident in the fact that some had to engage in prostitution to provide the needs of their boyfriends. It was predictable that the same group of relatively older and street-wise boys who bully, slap and shred the clothes of the small ones for their money were the ones who convince or coerce the girls into prostitution.

What these accounts show is that children face as much pressure and exploitation from their contemporaries as they do from proxy-parents, adults or employers. There is an unfortunate economic logic to the bullying and intimidation that many of the children had to endure as migrant child labourers. The level of impoverishment and the quest for survival at all costs however motivate the children to engage in different survival strategies. Thus, another dimension to the making of the adjustment generation is the paternalism that is based on superior strength and advanced survival skills for the streets. The stronger ones use their superior strength for territorial claims to the best patches, extort money from the weaker children or simply rob them. They equally manage to exploit some of the girls for both sex and their money. In this sense, just as the streets and work can be argued to increase the child's resilience (Bar-on, 1997; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998), it equally results in extremely negative consequences for some children. The vulnerability of the children in this study tended to clearly outweigh any resilience they gained from being in Accra.

5.4 Coping in Accra: Co-operation and survival strategies

This section attempts to provide further elaboration on what sustains children and how they survive the unpredictable and adverse conditions that confront them in Accra. It was noted in Chapter One that children are not always passive to the problems of the social and work environments. It has also been theoretically argued and supported by empirical evidence in other research that children utilise social networks for protection and security (Bar-on, 1997; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Myers, 2000; Morice, 2000).

The outstanding issues from the preceding sections were that the migrant children operated in considerable adversity, pressures and uncertainties away from their families. Since there were no forms of formal assistance, their survival depended on basic resourcefulness, co-operation and networking. This was evident in their survival strategies and for that reason confirmed the perception that children in such conditions develop their own networking and social co-operation strategies for survival. What emanated from their bonding and socialisation were strategies for support, group savings, communal accommodation and general survival and co-operation.

Clusters

To begin with, they operated in clusters based on area of origin or ethnicity as a primary source of socialisation. These were groups of children from the same village or area in the country and were operating in close proximity to each other in Accra. The common bond was usually a language and similar or related work. The clusters provided the necessary solidity and security to deter outsiders who might have predatory designs on their properties, work or sleeping territories. They also permitted a social grouping in which information from home could be shared. Those returning home or coming back also carried messages with very little linguistic distortions.

The migrant children were according to UNICEF's (1997a) categorisation, children 'of' the streets, in the sense that they lived and worked there. However, the designation of such children as people with no contacts with their families was unsustainable. They were indeed hundreds of miles from their families, yet they

relied on the information network in the clusters to stay in contact with their families. Kofi indicated the significance of such groupings in the following way:

Kofi There are many boys from my area [hometown] at Kaneshi, there is always somebody going back home... others also return from there. Whatever you do here, people back home get to know of eventually so we try to help each other... You have to think of your own future, if something happens to you, you will need some help or somebody to go and tell your family back home.
[15-year old peddler]

Besides information, Kofi hinted at the social insurance such associations provided. In this sense, not only did the members of the clusters help in times of illness and accidents, they also acted as the link between members and their families. As a result, the children ended up in sub-communities within the broader child migrant community. As a result, they congregated at specific places to rest, look or wait for customers or simply to socialise. This had therefore resulted in a spatial distribution based on ethnic origin or type of activity. It was therefore common to see the various groups Dagomba⁷, Mamprusi, Kotokoli, Ashantis, Ewes, and others in compartmentalised zones. This development made sense because of linguistic barriers, familiarity and a shared understanding. In addition, the process of child migration to Accra itself originated from the familiar social circle to the unfamiliar. As noted earlier, the majority of children in the study travelled to Accra in the company of those already familiar with Accra. The need for security and guidance from people they already knew therefore led to ethnic-based selection processes. Work specialisation also followed this pattern of differentiation with new arrivals joining their acquaintances in similar activities.

⁷ The Dagombas are from in and around Tamale and Savelugu; the Mamprusis are from around Walewale, all in the northern regions while Ashantis is used to represent those from the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions. The Kotokolis are basically from northern Togo or northern Volta while the Ewes are from the Volta Region generally (See Appendix II).

Thus, one of the easiest ways to locate children from a particular part of the country was to locate such clusters or children engaged in similar activities.

In this regard, peer influence was critical to the children's experiences in Accra since the young ones tended to be under the direct influence of those already familiar with Accra. In the absence of parental or formal guidance and counselling, their friends, group leaders and siblings acted as the social advisers. This street paternalism could also work to the disadvantage of many children as we saw in Section 5.3.3. The defence mechanism against such negative peer pressure in their social groups was to be selective in the types of relationships they developed. Kofi therefore preferred a limited social life by not cultivating unnecessary friendships.

Kofi I just walk around on my own a lot, it is better that way because some of the boys are not good. They can easily get you into trouble because some are thieves or they get into fights all the time and draw a lot of attention to themselves...
I prefer to go about my activities here quietly... I see some of the boys I know from Kumasi, sometimes we stop to chat for a couple of minutes and I go my way...
[15-year old peddler]

In this sense, a child could get in trouble simply by associating with other boisterous ones. Again, it was likely these troublemakers were the relatively older and bigger ones who had the capacity to survive the consequences of their actions.

Another important aspect of their survival strategies was the tendency to share rooms, sheds or open spaces as their sleeping places. They benefited from the security of close friends and relatives as well as savings on rents and other expenses. This strategy also originated from the temporary nature of their plans

and the need to save money as quickly as possible. In reality, it was inconvenient and/or impossible for them to pay rent deposits or meet the demands of landlords.

Kofi slept on the front porch of a house with five others in the Kaneshi area. When asked why, he gave an instructive view of how not to entangle oneself as a migrant child worker.

Kofi That will place responsibilities on me since I'll have to pay rent, electricity and water and I'll be drawn into the politics of the house. The way it is now I am an outsider and do not have to worry about what goes on in the house. I only go there in the night and leave very early in the morning. It suits me fine...
[15-year old peddler]

It was pointed out earlier that some residential buildings in the Kaneshi market area had been integrated into the market infrastructure. Hence, it was common for some children to rent or plead for sleeping spaces in front of those houses, as Kofi and his friends had done.

Insurance schemes

Once bonding and socialisation was achieved along lines of ethnicity, informal insurance schemes of joint accounts/savings or contributions were undertaken. They collectivised the risks associated with living and working under such conditions. This significantly allowed the children to develop practical forms of support that were useful in times of illness, bereavement, loss of work, and other mishaps. The off-loaders for instance operated a common savings fund based on a percentage of their group earnings. Ala elaborated the scheme in the following way:

Ala All of us contribute towards a joint saving for such an occasion. When the unexpected happens it is our saving that is used to take

care of it...as a group we save about ₵20,000 on a good day.

YK Do you get on well with each others in the group?

Ala Well, you see whom your friends are when you get into trouble...
But we try to help each other when for example one is sick and
cannot work, then we give him some money for food.
[14-year old off-loader]

While the joint savings were used to meet unexpected expenditures affecting the group, the members also helped each other out. A child would not starve to death as a result of illness for example, as long as he/she belonged to one of the social groups. Somehow, some minimum amount of food and support would be provided until that person was well enough to resume work. If the child had shunned such clusters or failed to participate in the schemes then as in the broader social world, that person would have to rely on his/her own resources.

We showed earlier that one of the primary motivations for the children's migration to Accra was to find start-up capital for trading, apprenticeship or most importantly to facilitate basic survival. It was therefore essential to minimise their expenditures in order to maximise their primary objective of savings. It was however practically impossible for them to use the formal banking structures. Firstly, as minors they could not open bank accounts; secondly, they lacked addresses as street children and workers; and thirdly, the nature of their activities rendered them unattractive to the formal banking institutions. Yet, it was not safe or wise for them to keep large amounts of money on them. The children therefore availed themselves of two main schemes to achieve their savings objective.

The majority of them participated in an informal, highly flexible saving scheme

called *susu*. The scheme operated through an individual collector (bank) who went round his customers (savers) daily to collect their savings. Records of the saving were kept on two cards, with the saver and the collector each keeping a copy⁸. The children made daily contributions to the collector, usually over a period of thirty days. At the end of this period, a lump sum was paid to each person after the collector has deducted his commission for the services provided. The majority of the 28 participants who had control over their daily earnings (the rest did not) were saving through the scheme. Most of them reported daily savings of ₦3,000.

In addition to the *susu* system, the *kayayoo*s in the study were involved in another saving scheme called *adashie*. In this scheme, each person in a group of ten to twenty made daily contributions towards a joint savings. Some members of the group were paid lump sums at the end of the month in relation to an established pecking order. Unlike the *susu*, this was a co-operative scheme based on a revolving fund that allowed the girls to acquire large sums of money to purchase more 'expensive' items. Muti recounted her motives for joining one.

Muti Me, I need cloths, utensils and money, that is why I came. If you steal somebody's things it will be a serious case and you'll end up in prison, won't you? That is why I contribute to the *adashie* so that when I get my money I can buy the things I need.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The need for these cloths and utensils was a major reason for a number of the *kayayoo*s since their marital chances would improve if they acquired them. It took considerable effort and discipline though to save the required amounts, hence the scheme. The contributions also served as important insurance against unexpected

⁸ The card system presupposes some reading abilities on the part of the savers though the real purpose is to guard against fraud. While some children can read the daily entries, those who

events like death, sickness and inability to work since members were paid lump sums in such eventualities. There was a greater need for trust in this scheme and was therefore built around ethnic groups and socialisation. Interestingly, such informal and street-level savings schemes represented the children's reaction to barriers in the formal banking system, yet their money got there eventually. The collectors as adults, opened accounts in their own names to benefit from the interests offered by the banks.

Dealing with employers

Some of the children had also developed their own coping mechanisms to minimise exploitative tendencies in the employer-child relationships. Most of the *kayayoo*s for example tried to predetermine their charges before rendering services to adults.

Asmao... people pay me the money I charge them. Sometimes they try to cheat but it is better to charge them before carrying the load so that there won't be any problems about what they have to pay later.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Asmao obviously was familiar with Accra and understood the local language well enough to negotiate a fair charge for her labour. Many of the head-porters however, had neither the language skills nor the courage to predetermine and enforce payments. Bietu faced such problems when she started working as a *kayayoo* and could afford to look back on those naïve and ignorant days.

YK What will you do if they refused to pay what you asked for?

Bietu I threaten to take the load back to where I carried it from... This is often an empty threat but most people are decent and would pay something close to what I demand. When I came here at first I was naïve and always gave the shoppers the advantage of deciding how

cannot simply get others to verify the entries of their savings for them.

much they want to give me. Now I tell them how much they should pay me...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The two quotes proved some amount of agency as the girls attempted to manipulate the relationship to their advantage. However the ability to do this would be practically related to the age of participants; the older they were the better their capacity in negotiating and managing the child-employer relationship. They were also acutely aware of their limited capacities in counteracting some of the exploitative behaviours, if adults really wanted to perpetrate them. Muti demonstrated their limitations this way:

Muti At Kokomba market, they make you carry very heavy loads only for them to give you ₦200 or ₦300⁹, sometimes you feel like crying...

YK Don't you charge them first?

Muti We agree over the price by haggling, but once we carry the load to the agreed destination they tell us they don't have enough money to pay for what we agreed upon.... Can you believe that? They get money to buy all those big things but can't find money to pay the little we charge them...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

This behaviour originated from the practice whereby the *kayayoo*s allowed the customers to determine the reasonable payment for the service they had rendered. This was however based on the naïve assumption that people were voluntarily motivated to pay a fair amount. This was far from the case in most situations.

5.5 Conclusion

In order to unravel the social processes that contribute to the making of the *adjustment generation*, this chapter set out to examine the lives of the migrant

⁹ This is less than a pence, based on the exchange rate of ₦7,000 to £1 at the time of the fieldwork.

children in Accra, as a complement to their decisions to leave home. This was developed under three broad questions regarding the nature of their work and social environment, their relationships with others and their coping and survival strategies.

Clearly, any adjustments the children have to make in their lives when they arrive in Accra depend on the types of work they do there. However, in all situations the children work under hazardous and uncertain conditions as well as intense pressure to achieve something for themselves or others. Work and its ramifications and the primary motivation to earn money as quickly as possible dictate their lives. As a result, even though they work in harsh and risky environments, there is always a tendency to maximise time-use by working as intensively as possible.

Based on the evidence from the various sites migrant child labourers work and socialise in, it can be concluded that life in Accra is not just uncertain and risky, but also represents an exploitative experience for the majority of children. The pressures they encounter at the work place exacerbate the difficulties while the unpredictable informal sector also sustains their exploitation. This takes place at different levels. The relationships between children and their proxy-families often result in the exploitation of their labour for commercial purposes. Similarly, the child-employer relationship is disadvantageous to children because of the characteristic nature of child labour and the unhindered possibilities of child exploitation for lack of legal reprisals. Even their relations with their contemporaries are marred by street paternalism in which the older and stronger

ones exploit, bully, steal from and coerce the smaller ones into submission.

In spite of these problems, it can be argued that migrant child labourers will continue to remain in these places, even as more join them in future. The simple reality is the paucity of opportunities in relation to the desperation many of them demonstrated. Thus, the expansion of the informal sector (which some interpret as a positive sign (ISSER, 2000) but others view as a symptom of national economic failure (Ninsin, 1999) will open up more child labour possibilities and encourage more children to migrate to Accra. The flexibility, demand for cheap labour and the lack of effective legislative or social controls in this sector allows children to be absorbed at little or no costs to themselves or those who place them there. Sadly, the majority of the children disregard the potential risks to their lives. Their energies are directed more towards the pursuit of their dreams for coming to Accra to permit a proper care of their health and safety.

On a positive note, the migrant child labourers do not always passively accept their plight. Some of them strive to utilise whatever power and agency they have in shaping the relationship between them and others. While these do not yield the desired results always, they represent some level of resilience in their attempt to make some meaning out of the unpredictable work environment.

In the next chapter, the implications of work for the children's families in terms of their support and the authority of parents as well as the children's views on education will be explored.

CHAPTER SIX

BEYOND WORK: ITS VALUE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

6.1 Introduction

The general claim of the study is that child labour in Ghana is largely a product of economic and political decisions that impoverish families. And that the long years of SAPs and their consequences for families have created an *adjustment generation* of children. Discussions in Chapter Four substantiated this claim through the evidence of the impoverished and deprived backgrounds of migrant children. In addition, the powerful forces that motivate them to migrate as a way of mitigating this deprivation were examined. In this regard, it was concluded that, children's migration to the urban areas and their subsequent engagement in work are their responses to the poverty and dearth of opportunities. Discussions in Chapter Five also show how the children fit into the structure of Accra's informal economy and their efforts at overcoming the practical day-to-day difficulties that confront them. While the work environment and the social relations that surround them are unpredictable and in most cases exploitative, the conviction of the children to make some money for the future, irrespective of the circumstances, was remarkable. The children were therefore found to consider their migration as worthwhile experiences relative to their previous lives in the villages. Having looked at the process of migration, the work and social processes at the children's destination, the implication of those efforts will be considered in this chapter to provide a further understanding of the *adjustment generation*.

This chapter therefore provides an insight into the migrant child labourers'

perception of their work and how they view this in relation to their futures. In addition, it examines the increasingly important role of some children in their families. These discussions are based on the last two research questions raised in Chapter Three. The first question asks what their economic contributions are and how such efforts affect the distribution of power and authority in the family. Even though child labour is inevitable for many children in Ghana, the aim here is to show that these children are assuming new and more crucial roles in their families. The forms of child labour, as shown in Chapters Four and Five, are not the domesticated type, without any direct monetary returns. Instead, many of the children earn daily incomes, however inconsistent, that could only be dreamed of in the villages. This provides some relative basis for supporting others in the family. However, in the quest to alleviate some of the problems of the family some migrant child labourers also gain some relative freedoms, a development, which also defines the *adjustment generation*. It is the implications of this relative economic power in the family that this section of the thesis seeks to address.

The second section answers the question of what the children's valuation of their work in relation to education and their future is. In line with the Education Act 1961 and other Articles in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, all the participating children should have been attending school as a matter of right and law. The discussion will therefore provide a clearer understanding of the children's assessment of their work relative to what they should have been doing, by attending school. Furthermore, it will help us evaluate the claim that children in the developing world often appear to prefer work to school because of the ambiguous value of education and its uncertain relevance to their future. Most

importantly, the section relates to the broader question that education is the solution to the problem of child labour. As a result, some insights into how the impacts of structural adjustments have shaped children's perception of the future in relation education will be provided.

6.2 Economic and survival roles in the family: The impact of child labour on parental authority

The ramifications of, as well as the social and economic pressures arising from structural adjustment programmes are wide. Not only are some children denied school opportunities because of the costs involved or undertaking more intensive labour to meet their needs, many of them have also become direct financial contributors to their families. While child labour has always been part of children's lived experiences, the assumption of such direct economic responsibilities for siblings and even adults is a new and increasing phenomenon. This is another implication of SAP for the generation of children who are growing up in its shadow.

The lack of viable employment opportunities motivates most people to engage in petty and peripheral economic activities. IPEC (1999) for example estimates that poor households derive 86% of their incomes from self-employment especially in agriculture. It has been shown in both Chapter One and Two that this self-employment is a major source of child exploitation by way of forced or voluntary child labour. The significance of this development though is that children in Accra (or the other major cities) can earn incomes, even if under uncertain and hazardous circumstances. In this regard, the participants claimed to be earning substantial

incomes. The trend, especially for the 14 to 15 year-olds working for themselves, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, was towards incomes that exceeded the daily national minimum wage. Some of them even earned more than their destitute parents in the villages and therefore could play important roles in the sustenance of their families. It is arguable that their families would have subsisted without their financial contributions, nonetheless many of the children helped to alleviate their families' poverty. Generally, the mere act of travelling to Accra helped to lessen the care-taking and financial burdens on their families in the villages. In addition, any contributions made towards their siblings' upbringing and direct support to their parents helped to further reduce the family burden. This implied some vital economic contributions from the children.

Such roles embolden children and create dilemmas for some parents, because in accepting money and gifts from their children, the parents lose some of their authority. It can be countered that this economic responsibility liberates children from the clutches of the family, especially in abusive situations. In the same vein, the social legitimisation or entrenchment of such roles for children can lead to further abuse and exploitation. The motivation to push children towards migration and the more intensive, high income-yielding child labour will become more established. It is known in this regard that children who work on the streets report improved relations with their family and tend to have more privileges than those who remain at home (Rizzini *et al.*, 1994 cited in Bar-On, 1997). The ostensible reason for this elevated status is that they perform viable economic roles for the family and therefore must be rewarded with special treatment.

6.2.1 The children's economic contributions: "Yes, I send them money and provisions..."

The children demonstrated a clear desire to help their families in a variety of ways, usually by sending money or provisions. This is consistent with earlier research, which shows that children contribute significantly to their families (for example, UNICEF, 1997f; Cabagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Fallon and Tzannatos, 1998). It also reflects considerable altruism on the part of the children in helping to alleviate family poverty. However, the impoverished conditions they left behind brings some degree of inevitability to the children's decisions and eventual roles in the family.

Happy to receive things and money

Many of the children therefore clearly related to their parents' hardships and saw their remittances as partial solutions. In the following instances, the children sent home money and provisions upon the assumption that their families would be happy to receive them.

Chris Yes, I send them money every now and then. I also buy clothes and provisions for them. I think they like it and are happy to receive from me since their son is working and everybody in the village knows that. It will help them ... it will help them a lot.
[14-year old off-loader]

*

Asmao Yes, I send money and provisions when somebody is going back to the north...They will be happy to receive those things [money and provisions] in the full knowledge that their daughter is doing well in Accra.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

*

Gabby I have only been here for six months yet I am able to send them some provisions. It will help somehow and I am sure they will be happy to

receive it. They can get food from the farm but sometimes it is difficult to come by money to buy some basic items.

[15-year old off-loader]

All the three cases projected family hardships as the primary motivator for the children's altruism. In addition, Gabby presented the usual constraints facing rural communities. Their parents were not starving; the difficulty rather was getting enough money to meet the basic needs of clothing, shelter, health, children's education and others. There was no evidence of direct compulsion in the children's decisions to support parents at home. However, the personal obligation they expressed underlines the point of altruism mentioned earlier. A counter explanation could be the need to do something to compensate for their absence from home, considering that the loss of their labour in the domestic and family occupation represents both direct and indirect costs to their families.

For Ala however, remittances would generate a sense of approbation since he would be meeting the expectations of his parents. On the other hand, his failure may cause some pain and anxiety.

Ala Actually there is no money at home. We have to come and work here before we can send money back home... that money can make a lot of difference back there...

YK Will your parents be annoyed then if you don't send money home?

Ala Not annoyed but it will pain them, because their son is in Accra so they will think of me and pray for me, so if I am able to send them something they will be happy and think that I am doing well. If I don't they will think that maybe I am a useless person who spends his money on the wrong things...
[14-year old off-loader]

Apparently, while not mandatory for him to send money home, there was still a moral expectation on the part of his parents. There were hints of the family first in

the way he anticipated his parents' construction of his life in Accra, since his inability to send money home might be construed as a squandering of opportunities. Crucially, there appeared to be an implicit acceptance of Ala as a provider for the family, because of necessity. This underlines the argument that increasing numbers of children are stepping into the shoes of parents who cannot support their families and in a number of cases taking over direct support.

The parents of some of the children however would not accept money from them, irrespective of their economic conditions. Perhaps they considered the reversal of economic roles to be irresponsible and shameful, as Tima explained:

Tima I don't think my parents need my money... They don't want me to be here and will never take any money from me even if I gave it. My father in particular will be ashamed to ask me for money... I send money to my grandmother instead; she is old and cannot afford to refuse any help she gets.

YK Do you give them something else?

Tima Sometimes I buy some simple things for my mother and even gave her some presents when I went home for the Islamic festival, but not my father...
[14-year old chop bar worker]

In contrast to Ala, Tima's parents were perhaps capable of backing up their objection to her presence in Accra by not accepting any money as 'pacification'. At stake however, was the issue of relative impoverishment since the degree of need would determine the parents' ability to maintain their status as such. The fact that Tima's grandmother accepted her money however, indicates a more pressing need considering her age and the consequent inability to fully support herself.

How does the issue of remittance fit into the provider status of the father or

contradict his role as the head of the family? It is socially acceptable to use children in family occupations, for instance farming or herding in most cases under extreme conditions. Yet, the activities all the migrant children engaged in will technically be unlawful by the government of Ghana's own definition of child labour discussed in Chapter One. The main problem will be the denial of schooling opportunities, the work conditions and their age. The point then is that if it is illegal for children to chip stones or spend the whole day selling iced water instead of going to school, then it should be socially reprehensible for adults to benefit from such activities. But as we have shown in Chapter Four and in the preceding extracts, the reality is that many parents and adults benefit from children's work, most of them in violation of the laws. These benefits also accrue indirectly in the domestic and family environment.

However, while child labour may be appropriated indirectly to support the family, a contradiction emerges when children earn money in their own right to sustain the family, particularly the father. It compromises the provider status of the father, undermines his paternal role and moral authority in directing the affairs of the family. The underlying point here is the authority of the father in relation to the child, which under normal circumstances is supposed to be sacrosanct in Ghana (Assimeng, 1999). However, in the face of the economic difficulties, the direct economic value of children as independent earners has become an irreversible fact of life. This development however is incompatible with the moral authority and responsibility of the father as the 'breadwinner' or 'caretaker'. This is a further indication of how the effects of SAP are shaping the *adjustment generation* in terms of their roles and responsibilities in the family.

Indirect payments

In view of this cultural sensitivity, some of the children had devised various ways of sending money to their parents. For instance, instead of sending cash, many of them sent provisions and clothing. Others had assumed responsibilities for their younger siblings by paying their school fees, providing school uniforms and other necessities. In these ways, they relieved the father/mother of the direct responsibility and saved them the task of finding scarce resources to meet those expectations. Most importantly, they circumvented the embarrassment some parents would feel in accepting money from their young children.

Dan Yes, I buy provisions for them. I also buy clothing for my younger brothers; it saves them from having to wait to get one from them [parents]. Just last week I sent some provisions to them, it will help...
[14-year old off-loader]

*

Josh I am pushing the truck so that I can get the money to enter a trade...still I send them things, I do... I buy soap and other provisions for them but I hardly send money... I also buy school uniforms and other school materials as a way of encouraging my brothers to stay in school.
[14-year old truck pusher]

In view of the scarcity of money for people to regularly purchase basic items, such ostensibly simple non-monetary contributions could be instrumental to the family's well-being. We saw in Chapter Two that the costs of education by way of school uniforms, reading and writing materials exclude many children from schools. Thus, Josh's contribution was significant in that it could motivate his brothers to remain in school. The children therefore supported their families through ways that would be less embarrassing, if direct monetary payments were

impossible.

6.2.2 Implications of children's economic roles: "... sometimes we do things we shouldn't do but we do them anyway..."

How does the assumption of direct economic roles by children affect the distribution of power and authority in the family? One social implication of the children's role as economic agents in the study was a decline in the ability of some of their parents/adults to exercise their full moral authority in the parent-child relation. This was manifested in their increasing assertiveness, particularly in taking initiatives, managing and determining the courses of their lives. This trend did not originate from the UNCRC or the constitutional rights of children, but circumstantial developments arising from impoverishment and relative deprivation. What appeared to sustain the children's assertiveness was the realisation of their economic potential outside the family and their immediate vicinity, particularly in far away Accra. In view of this, it can be asserted that the *adjustment generation* are more independent children, capable of taking far-reaching decisions and adventurous. All these are positive developments considering that Ghanaian children are expected to obey the wishes and demands of adults, particularly parents, unquestionably (Afrifa, 1994; Assimeng, 1999). For children in abusive family situations, the belief that they can take control of their lives through work can also be liberating.

Lack of prior consultation

While all the 11- and 12-years old children were brought to Accra through some intermediary, the rest of the children left their homes without initially informing

their parents of their intentions. Bietu symbolised this initiative through this emphatic statement:

Bietu I didn't [inform parents] because they wouldn't have let me... sometimes we do things that we shouldn't do but we do them anyway because sometimes we have to do things for ourselves...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Though she used an abstract collective interpretation, presupposing that other children behaved as such, the real point was the fact that her personal interest superseded other considerations even if it was unacceptable to others. The significance of her reasoning lay in the fact that children from her community in northern Ghana are socialised under extreme paternalism. Defying a father or even any older male in the household could be a considerable source of social tension (Assimeng, 1999). There was the recognition, nevertheless, that as a social agent she had the capacity to shape her own future. This was considered by Ala to be common to most children.

Ala Many children just do what they like...many of them here came without telling their parents that they are going to be here. They only tell them when they get here and even when they send for them they don't go back home.
[14-year old off-loader]

This implied some loosening of the bonds of parental authority and power. The traditional perception that the views and wishes of parents were sacrosanct might not be fully appreciated if that authority did not match the parents' economic responsibilities. The counter reaction from some parents might be a total disregard for the well-being of the children. Steve made the connection between recalcitrant behaviour of some children and the increasing number of street and working children, when he commented:

Steve I think some children are to blame because they don't listen to their parents, they won't pay any heed even if they ordered them not to

leave, so they also leave their lives to them, that is why there are so many children on the streets here.

[15-year old truck pusher]

What Steve raised (just like Ala) was the frustration of some parents. Parents might be aware of children's plans to travel but feel helpless since their orders would be disregarded. The fact that children acted to the contrary symbolised the decline or even the failure of that authority in some cases. However, while parents might abandon any hope of influencing the lives of children in such situations, as Steve has indicated, the reality was that many of them faced similar predicaments. Interestingly, the explanations children like Ala and Steve proffered were contradictory to their own recognition of such parental authority. They had also travelled without informing their parents.

Other children had what they considered to be justifiable reasons for not informing their parents. Neglect of parental responsibility was the cause as Steve and Abe revealed:

Steve I didn't tell any of them [parents]... It will worry my mother but not my father. He has been saying all the time that it won't bother him if I weren't one of his children...

[15-year old truck pusher]

*

Abe For me it was useless telling my father, he is a hard man and doesn't care about any of us. Sometimes I think it is the work that he used to do (soldier). I don't feel like going to him with my problems.

[14-year old truck pusher]

The issue in these extracts was not the strength of paternal authority but the breakdown of the father-child relationship. The cause of this might be more complex but was essentially circular. Fathers could neglect their children because of disrespect for their status as parents, which in turn could generate the tendency

for children to disregard that authority. However, parents' behaviour in this regard could be attributed to the central issue of impoverishment in the thesis. While the children might perceive their parents' inaction as neglect or irresponsibility, the primary reason could lie in the difficulties they encounter in the performance of their duties as parents. It was shown in Chapter Two that SAP had marginalized many parents, particularly fathers, impoverished families through the high costs of living and diminished their capacity to exert their influence. The children's behaviour represented one more effect of SAP on the family and in the making of the adjustment children.

Disregarding parents' orders to return home

The children however were acutely aware of the social and moral responsibilities their parents have in shaping their lives. Some were therefore worried about the reactions of their parents to their bold choices and the assertion of their agency. At the same time, they seemed secured by the physical distance separating them and the realisation that the parents' anger would subside by the time they returned home. The children therefore blatantly disregarded the parents' orders to return home. These quotes from Otuo and Josh illustrate the point.

Otuo My father has sent messages for me to come home but I have just come here and I need to get money and some things before I go home again. That way I won't have to come here again...I can't return until I have acquired those things.

YK Are you not disobeying your parents?

Otuo [Long pause] Yes, but I'll do what they want when I go back but I am here now so I will just try and get some money and go back.
[13-year old wheelbarrow pusher]

*

Josh My father wants me to come back to the village but I can't go now because I've just come, I need to get some money first before I can go home...

YK Even as your father is asking you to come back?

Josh I can't do anything about going home now. I will go back but I need to get some things first.
[14-year old truck pusher]

The conflict of interest in both views lay in the recognition of the parents' authority in relations to the children's own plans. There was a sound logic to their argument, if the necessary balance could be found between the two contradictory expectations. They, after all, initiated their actions as a result of lapses in the economic roles of their parents. These lapses are in turn attributable to the lack of employment and stable sources of income. Thus, their determination ("I can't return..." – Otuo) and ("...I can't go now"- Josh) diminished the significance of any immediate response to the wishes of their parents to return. It could be argued that the parents' reactions to their responses would depend on the relative degree of impoverishment and the significant difference their work in Accra would make to the family. Parents who considered their children's earnings and remittances to be marginal and irrelevant would place more emphasis on the issue of disrespect. On the other hand, if the earnings and remittances made significant differences to the family's survival, then the children's reluctance to obey would be treated as a case of the end justifying the means.

In any case, most of the parents were practically incapable of asserting their authority to influence their children to return home. Many of them have never been to Accra, while only a few could consider the adventure of travelling to Accra in search of their children. The financial difficulty and the uncertainty of

locating them precluded that as a viable response. There was also the added dilemma of whether the children would heed their wishes even if they located their whereabouts in Accra. Bietu exemplified this line of argument.

Bietu ...my father doesn't want me to be here. My elder brother came to trade here and when he told my father about the conditions in which I am living he ordered me to return. He even sent my brother to come for me because he feared for me...Well, I didn't pay any heed.

YK And your mother?

Bietu My mother also disapproves of my presence here and wants me to return to Tamale. My brother told me that she is worried that I will fall into the wrong company and maybe get pregnant... But now that I am here I must get something before I return, I can't stop everything here simply because they want me to return...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Such direct refusals to heed the demands of parents would be interpreted by most people as disrespect. However, within the context of the risks and uncertainties children sustain in Accra, the desire to pursue their aspirations was powerful enough to justify such behaviours. Theirs were single-minded convictions that in most cases were impervious to the wrath of their parents.

Against this background, it is arguable that the impoverishment of families has diminished the authority of some parents but elevated the economic and social potential of their children. The influence of parents is no longer dependent on simple authority and power traditionally rooted in their ability to monopolise economic resources. The children indirectly contest that power and authority if parents lack the economic resources to back them up. The dearth of such resources as has been shown throughout the thesis, is the bane of both parents and children.

6.3 Thinking ahead: The value of work for the future and in relation to school and education

This section considers the question of how children value their work in terms of skill acquisition and experience for the future. Some studies have shown that children take pride in their work and value the experiences they gain from doing it (White, 1996; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Woodhead, 1999). The argument in this section is that while this is certainly the case for certain types of activities like peddling, shoe-shining and working as drivers-mates, other activities the migrant child labourers engage in are incompatible with how they expect their friends and relatives back home to perceive them. For such children, the work itself fails to instil pride or equip them with directly transferable job skills. What it offers is the simple opportunity to earn money. This ties in with the general argument that the *adjustment generation* of children have few choices and that they undertake work as a matter of necessity and not one of choice.

6.3.1 The value of work: “For me this is just for the money...”

The general view, as noted and argued earlier, is that there is little child labour in the formal sector in Ghana (Ashagrie, 1993; Blaphora and Heady, 1999). This contrasts with other developing countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where children work in carpet mills or garment factories within the export industry (White, 1996). The possibility of long-term employment in the factories exists while any experiences the children gain can be transferred directly to other formal sector employment situations. In Bangladesh for example, 14-year old girls who worked in garment factories were found to value the experience and skill acquisition (White, 1996).

The main activities children in the study engaged in were peddling, off-loading, head-carrying, truck pushing, stone-chipping, *chopbar* work and being guides to beggars (Chapter Four). If we evaluate these activities as a source of experience for a possible future employment in the formal sector, only peddling offered such possibilities. The other activities like off-loading, truck pushing, stone chipping and begging offered no direct skills or experience that could be considered as an advantage for future employment in that sector. However, in relation to most children's objective of finding money for trading or apprenticeship, the resilience and social skills gained would enhance their personal development and self-employment in future.

However, for the majority of the children, work was valued for its instrumentalism, as an opportunity for "getting some money". The value of work in terms of skill acquisition and experience was secondary, often even irrelevant. In this regard, the children considered their present work to be unrelated and at variance with their future aspirations. Apart from the boys peddling sweets and handkerchiefs, none of them expressed the intention of developing a career in their present work.

Money as the instrumental value of work

The instrumental value of work then was simply the opportunity it provided for them to earn money. Steve expressed this point in the following way:

Steve It is not something I can build a future on but I like it now because it gives me money... For me this is just for the money, I need to enter a trade but I need money first, that is why I am doing it. I don't know if any of the children here likes the work they are doing but we all have reasons for being here.

[15-year old truck pusher]

Steve's emphatic references to money underlined the importance the migrant child labourers attached to the 'quick money' syndrome. Most of them worked on the assumption that they could raise money quickly to establish themselves in ventures such as trading or apprenticeships. This motivation was so strong that the uncertain, competitive and strenuous environments did not deter them. Bietu also stressed the urgent need for money this way.

Bietu ...I like it here, it is difficult but I like to make money. I expect to return in three to four months' time to the village... I don't think I will come back here again, but try and find something to do back there with the money...

YK I thought you said earlier that you enjoy doing it?

Bietu It is a difficult work and you can't do it forever, but it's the money. Every one of us here is dreaming of getting enough money to go back home to do something else...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Most of the underlying factors in child labour – the difficulty of work, the belief that money can be obtained quickly, the desire to do something else in the future - were brought to a personal level in this extract. A significant contrast however existed between the expectation of quick money and the reality. Bietu, like the others, made no reference to skills acquisition as part of the long-term goal. She saw her status therefore as a transient one. Dan too emphasised the connection between money and whatever conditions they had to work in.

Dan This work? I have just started it, but the way things are going if I get another job I will stop it. It is too demanding yet you never get enough money...

YK Why don't you quit to do something else?

Dan It's difficult to get another job so I have to pray to God so that He will give me another chance... but now I don't like it but I am doing it for the money, maybe something better will come along...

[14-year old off-loader]

Dan's desire to change work because it was hard and low paid pointed to the general source of dissatisfaction for child workers. However, the general lack of alternatives, both at Accra and upon his return home, implied the need to continue in the same job. Ala provided further insights into their predicaments.

Ala We all think of things differently...The boys may be working to earn money to travel abroad... The girls may be looking for the necessary things for their future married life. While some girls come to Accra with a view to going into prostitution, some boys come here to steal from others...

There are many things happening here and there are many reasons why we are all here...As for me I wish I could make enough money to travel abroad, but it is a difficult wish...

[14-year old off-loader]

Ala's account provided another dimension to money beyond simple survival. While his long-term goal of saving money to travel abroad was unrealistic because of the amounts of money involved, it nevertheless showed the instrumental value of money rather than skills acquisition for example. Some girls, on the other hand, had more modest aspirations of acquiring the necessary things for a married life. In Ala's estimation, the need for money was so paramount that some children would risk their lives by engaging in prostitution or theft, both of which carry a heavy stigma. Muti also reiterated the significance of money in the following way:

Muti We came here for money and you can't go without any.¹ Me, I want clothes, utensils, and many things before I can return...

[14-year old *kayayoo*]

In effect, none of the children in this study set out from the village to work in Accra for the sake of work experience. It was the sheer necessity of the money

¹ The demonstration effect and the need to uplift themselves from rural impoverishment were discussed in Chapter Four as part of their motivation.

work provided that underlined their migration. The instrumental value of money in relation to the children's future can also be related to the nature of the labour market in Ghana. Against the background of excess supply of adult unskilled and semi-skilled labour, children who expect to enter mainstream employment in future must possess some form of formal education. Besides, it is unlikely that prospective employers will take into consideration their experiences considering the widespread public perception of street children as 'deviants' possessing 'abrasive demeanour' (Korboe, 1997: 6). In this sense, their possible exclusion from future mainstream employment, for lack of education or recognisable skills, provide a strong motivation to earn money as the ticket to self-employment.

As people in search of the basic needs of life, the children were confronted with two important realities in Accra. The first was basic survival (primary need for food, shelter, and clothing) while the second was the need to fulfil the fundamental objective of saving money for the future. The former had to be fulfilled at all costs and on a daily basis through their earnings, savings or the generosity of others, while the latter demanded time and persistence. In either case, children were confronted with sufficient reasons for enduring the streets and work. In this sense, skills and experience were subsidiary to the basic motivation to generate money. The significance of work therefore lay not in its intrinsic qualities or in its developmental importance but the immediate monetary returns it offered.

6.3.2 Work, education and future aspirations: "I know only A, B, C..."

Educational systems in Africa are often considered to be part of the child labour

problem (UNICEF, 1997a; Boyden, *et al.*, 1998; Lange, 2000). Among the various problems facing schools in Africa are the shift system, irrelevant curricula (UNICEF, 1997a) and the lack of opportunities after completion (Standing, 1982; Eldring, *et al.* 2000). Others are poor school infrastructure, the abusive and exploitative behaviour of teachers (Beauchemin, 1997; GNCC, 1997; Lange, 2000) as well as the high pupil-teacher ratios (Loforte, 1994). In spite of the high costs of education and the scepticism associated with it, schooling remains the main activity for the majority of children even if they have to combine it with work. Even though these problems are crucial, they assume greater significance only when they are viewed in isolation from the authority and responsibility parents have over their children. In *the* Ghanaian households where parental authority is supreme, parents and not children make decisions about school and work. Hence, not only can adults coerce children to work, they can also encourage them to attend school if they have the financial means and desire to do so.

Efforts at staying in school

It is commonly argued that formal education in the developing world is irrelevant and that families have no confidence in it because it provides neither proper training nor qualification (Standing, 1982; Bonnet, 1993; UNICEF, 1997d; Eldring, *et al.*, 2000). Education and school generally represent a considerable part of childhood in Ghana, in spite of the problems. It is also an important determinant of the extent of the children's future inclusion in the economy, especially under conditions of dwindling opportunities. This then raises the question of how children themselves perceive their work relative to education and their future and how the family economy bears on this.

In the first place, there were overall expressions of regrets about the loss of school opportunities by most children in the study. Fathers were usually blamed because of the view that they were responsible for children's education even when the mothers, as was often the case, financed it. All participants who had dropped out of school wanted to go back if possible, while those who had finished one stage claimed to be saving money to go back. The overall desire to seek some education, even when their age excluded them from re-entry to formal education, contradicted the view that children see no ostensible benefits of education or find it irrelevant. The participants rather were appreciative of the difference being able to simply read and write could make in their lives.

Steve, for example had been going to considerable length to learn to read and write at the CAS refuge because he needed the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to enter into apprenticeship.

YK Are you worried by your inability to finish school?

Steve Oh yea, a lot. When I came to the centre [CAS Refuge] I begged the teacher to allow me to come a bit early everyday so that I can learn to read and write. I have been trying to do that... When I think of all this I blame my father because if he had given me the chance I'd be in the senior secondary school by now.
[15-year old truck pusher]

The effort of combining the strenuous activity of truck pushing with learning to read and write showed the importance of education to Steve. The realisation that this could have been done several years ago if his father had lived up to his responsibilities, however, raised the issue of negligence. Ala also presented similar impressions about missed opportunities and the negligent role of fathers in

all that. He had never attended school before but noted:

Ala I blame my father because he was supposed to put me in school. I would have been serious if I had been given the opportunity... I think he wanted me to work on the farm with him...

YK Are you bothered by the missed opportunity?

Ala I worry about that and I am prepared to go to school if I get the opportunity now. But look at me now, at my age that's impossible, that is why I want to become a trader...
[14-year old off-loader]

While his father might not have had the financial means or perhaps considered education as irrelevant, Ala's own interpretation hinged on the possible exploitation of his labour. Like the other children, he was aware that some years of education could make a significant difference. His drive to earn money to enter trading was therefore governed by the belief that he was effectively excluded from opportunities relating to formal education.

Another participant, Ayes reminisced about school and also put the blame on her father, whom she believed had motives other than financial for withdrawing her.

Ayes I know only A, B, C... for me I finished at primary one, I was just a child. My father didn't want me to go even though I think I wanted to. He says he didn't have money but I think he only wanted to give me away to live with his sister.
[15-year old *kayayoo*]

It is traditional in Ayes' community for fathers to "give" away one of their daughters to their sisters. The care-taking responsibility then shifts from the father to the sister. In Ayes' case, that action represented an effective termination of her schooling opportunities since she was expected to serve her sister at all times. She was simply a victim of shifting social responsibilities that have its origins in tradition but have been given a sharper edge by the experiences of poverty. Even

though in all the three cases cited, the children blamed their fathers, their withdrawal from school had been aggravated by the broader financial constraints the educational reform under SAP had inflicted on parents.

The high costs of education

The frustrations expressed by children relate to the very high costs of education. In principle, basic education is free and compulsory under the Education Act 1961. However, under the cost-sharing principle of SAP, some subsidies on education have been removed while various cost components have been introduced. As a result, there are increasing demands on parents for the provision of school infrastructure, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) dues, reading and writing materials, prescribed school uniforms as well as daily lunch money (Brown and Kerr, 1997; Verlet, 2000). The situation is even worse in the transition from basic to secondary schools. For example, it costs between ₦700,000 and ₦1,500,000² in fees, textbooks and school equipment to enrol a 15-year old child for the first term at a senior secondary school. Thereafter, a similar amount needs to be paid every term for school fees and child maintenance. It is noteworthy that all these extra demands take place within a weakened family economy, with its high unemployment, inflation and interest rates. In spite of this adversity, some parents make considerable efforts to put their children in schools (Verlet, 2000).

It is argued that high costs of education increases the opportunity costs of educating children and so motivate parents to find alternative uses for children's

² This is more than the annual income of most people in the rural areas. For those in the urban areas, one needs a good job to afford the child's school fees every three months.

time (UNICEF, 1997d). This view is confirmed by the fact that some of the children were withdrawn and placed in full-time work situations or had their time divided between school and work. Even though work was an inevitable part of their lives, the parents also were aware of the significance of school, as Gabby commented:

Gabby ...I think my father would prefer us to be in school, but he is unable to afford the financial responsibilities that go with it. That is why we had to work on the farm instead. In the raining seasons we end up spending more time in the farm than in school.

[15-year old off-loader]

Gabby dropped out of school in the village to come to Accra even though there was a willingness on the part of his parents to keep him in school. For Gabby however, the sheer effort of combining school with work and the constraints it imposed on his ability to learn was a push factor in his migration. Again the inevitability of work argument could be raised for these children, but the point here is that the impoverishment of families by SAP exacerbated the problems surrounding such existence for children. Some may be attending schools, but the associated problems also meant more work for all the family.

Thus, while the promise of instant money fuelled the decision of some participants to quit school, the parents' additional financial constraints brought upon by adjustments were the ultimate catalysts. Gabby therefore claimed that their decisions to quit school were more related to the difficulties involved, than any belief that work was infinitely better.

Gabby My brothers and I are not in school not because we don't like school or think school is useless but because it is difficult to pay all the money they ask for. All of us cannot be there at the same time. Maybe it is good that one or two of us go while the rest try to help father look after those in school...

[15-year old off-loader]

In this case, the parents' inability led to a social selection process to determine those likely to benefit from school. This however is not a new phenomenon since poor families attempt to educate boys, while girls are socialised in the domestic environment (Assimeng, 1999). In managing scarce resources, such families assume that the girl will sooner or later marry, begin her reproduction roles and so does not need formal education. Asmao, a girl head-porter noted in this regard:

Asmao It was not a new thing [not going to school]. Many of my father's daughters are not in school in the first place, only the boys go... I want to find some money for the things that I will need for my future life that is why I came to Accra...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

The perception of education in her family then was something boys did to the exclusion of girls. As a result, she had already patterned her behaviour on acquiring what she considered to be the necessities for her future, which were preparations towards marriage. Her behaviour was therefore consistent with the traditional socialisation of girls towards domesticity, with a life of marriage and reproduction rated highly. Even though governments over the years have tried to modify this thinking and behaviour, culminating in the appointment of a Minister for Girl-Child Education, the discrimination still persists. At a broader level however, it underscores the failure of these governments to provide a truly free and *compulsory* education to all children.

The children's desire for some form of education

As noted earlier, the children often related their future to saving money or learning a trade. The preferences were usually hairdressing, dressmaking and trading for the girls but fitting, electrical or welding apprenticeships for boys. At the same

time, they expressed their intentions of going back to school if circumstances were different or some mechanisms were in place to make that possible. These extracts from four participants point out the children's desire to acquire some education in spite of the constraints.

Muti Now if somebody is prepared to finance me I will readily go back to school...
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

*

Ayes I will also like to go if there is a way, but look at us. How can we fit into any school? They will just laugh and laugh at us. We'd be like old ladies in primary school...
[15-year old *kayayoo*]

*

Bietu I went to school as a little girl. I stopped even though both my parents wanted me to go but I didn't like going to school... But now that I am older I think it wasn't the best thing to do and sometimes I wish I could go back.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

*

Steve I am hoping to become a motor mechanic one day, that is why I come to the centre [CAS]. I hope to get in their classes to learn to read and write, that way I can get into their apprenticeship programme.
[15-year old truck pusher]

A common theme in these quotes was the regret of lost schooling opportunities. However, while there was a willingness to return to some form of schooling, there was also the realisation of age as an excluding factor. At 14 and 15 years and without any basic reading and writing skills, the normal schooling system was unsuitable for them. Their desire to return to school is consistent with the significance some working children attach to education when its relevance becomes apparent in their work (Anderfurhen, 2000). As a result, there have been

calls for school types that can accommodate the demands and schedules of such children. Alternative schooling systems, essentially traineeships that incorporate reading, writing and numeracy skills would enhance their functional knowledge and skills. Josh and Steve variously commented on their hopes and the reality of the situation in the following way:

Josh I think they should help us to learn some trade or those who want to go to school but cannot afford to should get the chance to go to school. You know it is good to get some education then you can be anything you want but it costs too much to go especially in the city here. There is nothing else to do if we can't continue in school because of that costs...
[14-year old truck pusher]

*

Steve It is better when you go to school and especially if you are good you can go anywhere... sometimes an opportunity will come and they will say we are looking for someone with education, it will not matter how small you are they will just give it to you. This is how some people get opportunities in life and they do well...
[15-year old truck pusher]

Again, the issues of poverty and the costs and benefits of education were contrasted in Josh's extract. He recognised the value of education but realistically situated it in the context of the impoverishment that excluded children like himself. Steve also had a clear conception of the benefit of education in relation to the mainstream economy. For example, in a labour market where every single job opportunity would be highly contested, people like him might be effectively excluded. Generally, life in the urban areas, particularly Accra, operates as a literate society. Even though millions of people cannot read and write, the print media, radio, television, as well as social, religious and business practices are dominated by those who can. The rest are expected to be functional within these limits if they are to fully benefit from the economic, political, social and in fact,

most aspects of society.

Muti Education is essential now, without it you can't do anything. Look around you in Accra, even if you have money and you don't know how to read and write it is useless.
[14-year old *kayayoo*]

Work in this sense had no benefits over schooling, but was the convenient replacement when nothing else was possible. As a result of this realisation, the essence of education was being built into the future child rearing practices of some participants. For instance, Ayes who had a six-month old baby talked about the need for her daughter to attend school at any cost.

Ayes Yes, she'd have to go to school even if she doesn't like it. If it means forcing her to go I will do it because I am sure she will thank me for that one day...
[15-year old *kayayoo*]

She might be confronted with her own impoverishment as a parent at a later stage, but the desire and realisation that education was superior to early entry into work was clearly formulated in her mind.

As should be expected, some participants did not find their experience of school to be particularly pleasant. Aba for example recounted her experiences:

Aba They were always beating us and we also had to go and work on their rice farms all the time... But now some of the children I play with here go to school and they talk of their schools and the things they want to do when they are older. It makes me think of school again...
[13-year old stone chipper]

Two issues – abuse and exploitation of children's labour by teachers and schools – come to the fore. This confirms Lange's (2000) research of working children in some rural areas of Togo. Aba however did not quit school for these reasons; she was brought to Accra to assist in her sister's stone-chipping job, ostensibly to

boost her output. Nonetheless, the fear of teachers, as a result of physical and verbal abuse, are known to cause some children to drop out of schools (GNCC, 1997). Child labour naturally replaces the children's time.

6.4 Conclusion

We have seen that the process of work itself is not the source of motivation for children to migrate but naturally the freedom and authority derived from their incomes. The children are more concerned with this than gaining skills or experience that can be directly transferred to other more stable work situations in the future. The centrality of money in work further supports the thesis that children are driven into such intensive work situations because of poverty and its ramifications. Work represents their own pursuit of strategies that will mitigate the worst circumstances instead of the persistently ineffective government solutions. Consequently, the children are more concerned about preparations towards self-sufficiency for the future by striving to acquire things that will tackle their relative deprivation, especially if their return to the rural area.

The children's financial and related contributions from Accra can be crucial to their families since they represent a real source of support. This direct economic role elevates the children's capacity to assume responsibility for themselves and others in their families. There is therefore a clear case of children exercising their agency and determining the course of their lives and those of others in the family, especially among the relatively older children. However, the growing importance of such roles in the family undermines the traditional authority of some of the parents. In cases where the provider role of the child is crucial to the family's

survival, the parents cannot afford to assert their authority in the usual paternalistic way. This can be productive for the child's development if the parents have been abusive in the past. It might on the other hand amount to neglect of parental guidance if parents decide to place the child's remittances and contributions above their natural duties, for fear of alienating the children. In this sense, it is notable that SAP has minimised the significance of paternal control, consequently threatening traditional family relations.

Though the majority of migrant child labourers have lost their chances at school, many of them regard education as crucial to their capabilities in the future. Perhaps, the way Accra operates as a national capital has influenced their views of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Besides, there are practical benefits of these skills for entry into the more organised apprenticeships, a future many of them have set for themselves. In addition, the relevance of this to their success even in simple trading activities is not lost on them. The relevance of education is not an issue for the children, since they were clearly interested in gaining some functional education to enhance their future economic and social potential.

There are several factors to child labour; however it is possible to conclude that these are mediated by the centrality of poverty and the influences in the background of SAP. The unfavourable conditions are in themselves existing because of the parental inability at the micro level to organise the family in ways that maximise positive developmental alternatives for children. At the national level, the continuing failure of the political economy through critical adjustment policies only serve to underlie the helplessness of families. Collectively, both

parents and the governments are failing children and therefore projecting the alternative of migration and work as viable solutions to this generation of children.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: THE DILEMMA OF CHILD LABOUR AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Child labour as a development problem

I set out to develop the broad thesis that child labour is the product of political and economic forces that impoverish families. In the case of Ghana and other African countries, the culmination of these forces into several years of structural adjustments has been instrumental in shaping the behaviour of children. While the impoverishment in African countries provides the basis for child labour, the failure of specific but draconian economic and political policies to alleviate these hardships also exacerbates the problem. In fact, they provide the legitimacy for the exploitation of children under social and cultural practices. As a result, based on summaries of the discussions in Chapters One and Two, I will argue in this first concluding section that child labour is a development problem, which will eventually get better with sustained economic and social development. But because of the dismal nature of African economies, child labour will get worse before it gets better.

In this regard, the ILO (1999a) estimates that 56% of boys and 44% of girls aged between 5 and 14 years old in Africa are economically active in one form of child labour situation or the other. This is just the tip of the iceberg since most of the rest also engage in non-economic activities that are not always beneficial to their developmental needs. Yet there is inevitability to the legions of child labourers because of the stagnation of African economies, the ensuing poverty and the pressures of the globalised economy.

In the first place, the optimism of the 1960s and 1970s practicalised in import substitution strategies and the big push for economic take-off never really materialised (Kiely, 1998b). The cumulative decline is manifested in a number of structural problems in contemporary African economies, which in turn are argued to precipitate child labour across the continent. The antiquated and labour intensive production and distribution structures, largely in the informal sector, create a demand for cheap labour. But the high population growth rates sustain a constant stream of this labour from both adults and the millions of children who do not attend schools or combine that with work. The low life expectancy and the host of life-threatening diseases have turned millions of African children into orphans who must find a way to support themselves or contribute towards their upkeep. Besides, the scarcity of employment opportunities that guarantee reasonable incomes for the family generates the need for children to work in or outside the family. Moreover, the politically induced economic and social instability in Africa provides powerful structural barriers to development. The endless wars and social tensions not only stifle Africa's development aspirations but impact on children through the disintegration of families and further impoverishment. These problems and factors generate and sustain poverty, which in turn accentuate the productive value of children.

Africa's overwhelming poverty has the tendency to reproduce itself in future generations. On average, more than half of the population do not have access to \$2 a day (World Bank, 2000), which therefore underlines the need for all members of the family to work. This results in the denial of school opportunities for many

children. The implication however, is that they grow up without the skills to exploit the few opportunities and for that matter reproduce poverty in their own families. Their children then will have to work as a matter of necessity thereby maintaining the cycle of poverty (UNICEF, 1997a; Wahba, 2001).

Globalisation is a double-edged phenomenon. It can offer Africa tremendous trade and growth potential if the terms under which it operates are much more stable and amenable to its development needs. The evidence so far shows that it is largely driven by the interests of multi-national corporations, whose views of profit maximisation at any costs are sacrosanct. With the terms of competition framed by the demands of the same companies, Africa's competitive weaknesses on the global scale dissipate its ability to fully benefit from the process. At the same time, its role in the international division of labour as primary producers is entrenched by trade policies and tariffs that close access to its value-added exports to the developed world. Yet, the prices of these primary commodities are unstable and therefore undermine revenue accumulation. This in tandem with the other structural problems undermines development and sustains poverty. Thus to the extent that poverty is argued in this thesis to be the central factor in child labour, and globalisation is a further notch on Africa's cycle of poverty, it plays a significant role in the child labour problem.

The demarcation of child labour as a problem arising from the structural problems of underdevelopment and poverty does not mean that it is exclusive to Africa or the developing world. The argument in the thesis has therefore been that child labour must be treated as a *relative phenomenon*, in both intra country and international

considerations. Within countries and families, the poorer they are the more significant child labour is to their survival. In such cases there is more pressure on children to work in high-income and therefore dangerous work situations. However, while there is child labour in the developed world, the extent or its nature is incomparable to what pertains in Africa. Besides, there are effective policing structures to check these if developed nations truly wish to combat the worst forms of child labour within their boundaries. This is not the case in Africa.

In the case of Ghana, this broad thesis is grounded in the specific policies of structural adjustments as part of the development process and cause of further impoverishment. On this basis, it is argued that Ghana's post-colonial economy, epitomised by the implementation of SAPs since 1983, has burdened families, *monetised* social relations and increased the pressure on children. These are the generation of children whose lives have been shadowed by both the opportunities and consequences of SAP. Out of this generation, children are being transformed into new categories of labour that migrate from the rural to the urban areas to work. However, the cities are not always able to provide the opportunities they yearn for because of the general failure of the economy in addressing critical issues of inflation, unemployment, educational provision and access, urbanisation, and the general welfare of most people. In view of this, there is the need to forge closer links between the economic and political process and child labour. It is therefore arguable that efforts to control child labour arising from such impoverishment through national legislation and the UNCRC and ILO Conventions are bound to fail. Though useful in generating a sense of commitment to children they are irrelevant to most people, considering the scale of deprivation.

On this basis, the direct role of the government in generating and sustaining child labour lies in the implementation of the IMF/World Bank instigated adjustment programmes and its failure to lift families out of poverty. Part of the legacy of SAP then has been some of the worst forms of child labour, but in particular the need for some children to travel to cities to earn a living or prepare for the future. In this regard, I have argued that the redundancies in the public sector, the privatisation of public corporations and the failure of the state to generate employment have pushed millions into the informal sector. While the majority of actors here make a legitimate living, it however provides a scope for child employment. Child labour at this stage is driven purely by profits so children are overused and abused. Other children are attracted by the opportunities the sector offers and are motivated to find their own way there. But the marginal nature of the sector implies considerable subservience to the wishes and demands of adults they work for. Furthermore, the rising costs of living through the removal of subsidies, rampant depreciation of the national currency and the inability to control inflation have increased the pressure on families. The most significant implication of SAP for children has been the rising costs of education. It has been assumed throughout the thesis that attending school is what any child should do in ideal circumstances. It is not beyond the capacity of Ghana to ensure this and indeed in the 1960s, this was close to reality because of a truly free education system. However, SAP has introduced various cost components in education to the extent that the present costs of education to most poor families far exceed any perceived benefits in the future. It is therefore rational for families to push their children into full-time work if they do not attend schools. Children are also motivated to work for similar reasons.

The attempt to resolve Ghana's development problems through SAP certainly generated some benefits but mostly to the advantage of the educated, the middle class, politicians and the power brokers. For the majority of Ghanaians, it exacerbated the already dismal conditions and therefore demanded ingenious, but often desperate survival strategies. With Ghana still mired in the after effects of SAP and the intractable problems of development, basic survival through every conceivable means is what drives most people. In this sense, it can be concluded that the years of adjustments have contributed significantly to the *monetisation* of family and other social relations. Central to this is the value of children's ability as labour. Their economic value has been elevated, become more critical to some families and indispensable to others. Some children are aware of this potential themselves and are therefore motivated to translate their time into money. In this particular case, by migrating to work in Accra.

7.2 Who are migrant child labourers? A summary

The forty-five children in the study are migrant child labourers who form part of the *adjustment generation* of children in Ghana. They represent the category of children who migrate to the cities for the ostensible purpose of earning incomes for themselves or adults who control them. This section summarises the characteristics of children in the study to enable us make some generalisations and to draw some conclusions on how SAPs have shaped the lives of children.

The children originate from rural areas across the country, although the majority comes from north-eastern Ghana. These districts are noted suppliers of child labour for southern Ghana since the colonial period. The significance of this in

relation to the relative poverty argument of child labour presented in the thesis is the extent of deprivation in these areas. They lack basic amenities and employment opportunities for the simple fact that neither markets nor infrastructure exist to attract investments. As a result, the extent of poverty, school attendance and enrolment and the consequential effects of SAP are worse than in the urban areas. The tendency for children to migrate, as this research has shown, is therefore a reaction to the lack of opportunities and the desire to escape that deprivation.

The children are aged between 11 and 15 years old, with the majority being 13 or 14 years old. This conforms to the general trend of the age of migrant children in the cities (Korboe, 1997; Apt, *et al.*, 1997). An important explanation for this is the high cost of education, especially during the transition from basic to secondary school. Many children (around 13 years) who are unable to continue basic education as a result of the costs are drawn into full time work situations and eventual migration to the urban areas. They are therefore uneducated, with only a few years of school attendance. The girls are most disadvantaged, since none of the twenty in the study had completed basic education. Most of the children, though untypical for their age, appeared underweight and stunted. This is not a surprising observation since stunting and underweight among Ghanaian children is quite high (UNICEF, 1998). The children probably eat better than would have been the case in their villages; nonetheless their work and social environment significantly impact on their development and affect their appearances.

It is common for children to talk of a time frame for their work, because they see themselves as temporary inhabitants of Accra. The evidence however points to a

prolonged stay for many of them. There is generally a significant difference between the children's expected time frame in Accra and the reality, which eventually is contingent on the achievement of their objectives. How long they stay in Accra is therefore functionally related to how quickly they can save money, stay disease-free or in the case of the girls not entangle themselves in pregnancies. However, uncertainties, work pressures, low pay and the surrounding exploitation prevent many from achieving these objectives quickly. Consequently, the relatively older migrant children are the longer the period they have spent in Accra. For example, all the 15-year olds in the study had already spent more than a year there. In effect, even though Accra presents relatively better opportunities, it offers no ready solutions. Instead there is a strong tendency for them to stay longer than they expected if what represents reasonable success for a return home has not been achieved.

The only way to achieve their objectives of generating money relatively quickly to return home or pursue something else is to work very long hours. The children are hard working, in most cases working longer than the government stipulated eight hours per day. As a result, they can earn relatively well on what they consider to be the 'good days'; with most of them exceeding the national daily minimum wage. But age and consequently physical ability are the main determinants of their earning potential since the relatively older ones can earn more than \$1. This is the income threshold that millions of Africans do not have access to on a daily basis (World Bank, 2000). However, there is no consistency to their earning potential because of the competition and uncertainties that surround their lives.

Not surprisingly, migrant children work in marginal activities like *portering*, peddling, begging, shoe shining and other supportive roles that are the traditional preserve of children. In this regard, boys and some girl porters (*kayayooos*) usually work for themselves. However, the younger they are, especially the girls, the more likely they are to be working for the so-called 'aunts', most of whom initiated their migration to Accra. What the children do is also largely differentiated according to gender and ethnicity. Boys exclusively undertake the more physically demanding jobs like off-loading, truck and barrow pushing. Equally, only girls do the type of head *portering* in which aluminium pans are used as the means of carriage. Peddling however is gender neutral. There is further work specialisation along ethnic lines. Children from the northern regions often specialise in *portering*, while those from the south usually work as peddlers, drivers' mates and shoe shiners. The ability to speak and comprehend the predominant language in Accra gives the southern children an advantage, hence their specialisation in the latter jobs. The conclusion in this instance is that migrant children are attracted to particular activities people they are familiar with do. As the trend continues, children from particular areas of the country develop occupational niches.

The backgrounds of the children who took part in this research point to the underlying issue of poverty. The study therefore confirms the fact that migrant children come from poor households. Such families have no regular sources of income and therefore engage in the economy at near subsistence levels. Basic survival is the test of their existence. Migrating to Accra is therefore an appropriate response since there is a far greater potential there than in the villages. However, what they do in Accra involves long hours in strenuous conditions and

unpredictable environments. Significantly, the children's migration are reactions to the failure of the state to provide truly free education, employment for families and to be accountable for the plight of children and vulnerable people, aggravated in recent years by SAP.

7.3 The children's motivations: Reactions to poverty and deprivations

Against the background of the constricting effects of SAP, I set out to find the primary motivations that cause the relocation of children from the rural to urban areas. Three substantive themes emerged. These were the pervasive influence of poverty, children's lack of confidence in the rural economy and the demonstration effects of returning migrants.

In the first place, the children have a well-constructed notion of poverty and how it shapes their lived experiences. The children therefore cite general poverty, parents' inability to assume their care-taking responsibilities and the need to supplement that effort as part of their their motivations. While children place some blame on their parents, they also concede the economic problems confronting their families. That fathers receive most blame is not surprising since they are considered to have been more marginalised by the adjustments in Ghana (Verlet, 2000). The children also have a perceptive appreciation of what their responses to the constraints should be. In this sense, their decisions to migrate represent conscious efforts to overcome the rural poverty and deprivation evidenced in the helplessness of their parents.

However, Accra does not offer the ultimate solutions to their problems since it is

engrossed in its own urban poverty. Though some of the children can earn well, that ability is not sustainable. Their jobs are not permanent, incomes fluctuate while they have to deal with the basic issues of survival in terms of high costs of living, risks to their health and the generally harsh social and work conditions. In spite of this, Accra offers more realistic hope for the children's future. It is therefore predictable that more children will follow suit because the unresolved problems of the economy sustain the grinding poverty and reproduce this category of child labourers.

Secondly, the children's motivations are rooted in a lack of confidence in the potential of the rural economy to alleviate their suffering. In this case, children's experience of the rural life is closely linked to farming and the lifetime achievements of their parents, particularly fathers. They use their fathers as reference points in elaborating the futility of farming as a future occupation. The children are aware of the potential but are discouraged by the related problems. The most pressing of these are the rising costs of inputs, privatisation of produce buying and seed agencies and the high cost of capital. All these originate from specific policies of structural adjustment in Ghana. Inevitably, the declines in agriculture, epitomised by the collapse of the rice industry in the Northern region, contribute significantly to the process of impoverishment. Children's solution is to exploit the liberating experiences and opportunities of Accra in order to lay their foundations for the future.

Thirdly, the influence of returning migrants to the villages provides a strong motivation for children to migrate. The impact of their actions and words trigger

incipient factors like parental negligence, poor schools and relative poverty. The returnees provide information about work, places of residences, ethnic clusters and the necessary survival strategies in Accra. This represents a major way for the children to concretise their thoughts of migration and work. Decisions about migration are therefore not spontaneously taken but constitute part of a systematic evaluation of the costs and benefits of alternatives in their lives. It can therefore be argued that even at their age, the children do not travel in complete ignorance of Accra. Instead they plan to the best of their abilities to reduce the level of uncertainty and risks and at this stage are more risk-averse. Moreover, to be able to absorb the shocks and uncertainties of Accra, they travel in the company of returnees or join friends and relatives already established there. The very young ones however either submit themselves to adults who require their services or are coerced into such situations under the guise of the extended family relations.

However, the power of the demonstration effect can also be argued to motivate children to lie when they return to their villages. People are less prepared for failures and expect positive experiences and images from Accra to justify the trips. In view of this, it can be concluded that selective information dissemination exists since the returnees attempt to create positive images of themselves. At the same time, it is possible that prospective migrants in the villages undertake selective information processing by absorbing the positive ones and suppressing the negative ones. As a result, those deemed as failures by others or by their own criteria of success are reluctant to return home. The anxiety and fear of derision can therefore drive many to the extreme with some even stealing or engaging in cheap prostitution, as indicated by participants like Ala, Bietu, Muti and Tima.

Others are motivated to tell lies or embellish their experiences when they return to create an aura of success or sophistication. In this sense, the actions and words of the migrant children sustain the myth of Accra as the panacea for their problems.

7.4 Managing the environments: Coping and surviving

Even though it has been argued in the preceding section that the children plan their trips in order to minimise the risks and uncertainties in Accra, the research shows that the majority of them abandon this risk aversion. They become bolder, more adventurous and enterprising individuals in Accra. There is no room for timidity if they are to survive and earn any money at all. In this regard, three crucial themes emerged from the study. These are the hazardous nature of their environments, the power relations that lead to exploitation and children's defensive and responsive strategies for survival.

As children, the work environments in Kaneshi, Agobloshie, CMB/Railway area and the Mandela stone quarry are all hazardous and unpredictable. Yet, the primary motivations pressurise them to take risks like crossing roads at the wrong places, jumping fences that separate opposite sides of the highway, meandering through moving vehicles, running after or hanging on to them. Apart from the physical danger, there is also considerable pollution in all the areas. The environment in which the children work can therefore be argued to have considerable impact on their behaviour. For example, the uncertainties associated with work dominate the thoughts of some children since they readily talk of their anxiety in achieving their work targets. They are therefore forced to discard the risk aversion that characterised the planning stages of their trips in order to be more aggressive and

competitive. Such aggression however is a source of abuse and exploitation for the weaker and younger ones. In the absence of policing structures or adults to moderate the behaviour of the stronger and older children, a survival of the fittest mentality is integrated into their sub-cultures.

Exploitation is an integral part of child labour so I set out to examine how the children's relations with others can lead to that. A major finding in this regard is that children do not fully benefit from their labour and work because of the paternalistic relationships with others. Three dimensions to this emerged. The first is through their interactions with guardians and/or proxy parents, particularly in the case of the very young iced-water sellers. As a result of the difficult conditions many families face, there is a tendency for them to shift the care-taking responsibilities to others in the cities. Parents may have good intentions, but the evidence shows a pattern of deceit when the children are recruited or taken from their families by the 'aunts'. The point in this instance is that children have limited agency or none at all and are therefore manipulated to the advantage of adults who bring them to Accra. As a result, promises of school opportunities in Accra or better living standards are hardly fulfilled.

In addition, the brief encounters the children have with people who give them work are often based on unequal relations that generate considerable levels of exploitation. The employers unilaterally determine the terms and conditions under which children operate. The older children however are more aware of the power relations and the resulting imbalances it brings to their interactions with the employers. The obvious solution is for them to decline work offers under

unfavourable conditions. However, the primary motivations prevent them from acting to the contrary.

The third dimension is interpersonal relations at the peer level. This can also be exploitative, even though in most cases cordial, friendly and supportive. However, there is an inherent street paternalism in which the relatively bigger and longest staying children assume leadership. While this may be essential for children's survival in Accra, it also turns out to be violent and oppressive in a number of cases. As a mirror image of the seniority structure inherent to society generally, the older ones bully and use violence and intimidation as instruments of compliance. Such behaviours generate insecurity, fear and pressure to succumb to the stronger ones.

Even though the children internalise the exploitative relations as the price for success, they are nevertheless, not passive recipients at all times. They therefore evolve their own coping and survival systems in response to the problems. Out of their socialisation have emerged support networks, group savings schemes and communal accommodation among others. Some of the strategies result in social clusters that are ethnically based by reason of language, sub-cultures traceable to their places of origin and shared concerns. There is therefore a spatial distribution of children with different ethnic backgrounds in particular areas of Accra. This is a reasonable expectation since the children's process of migration begins from the familiar social circle to the unfamiliar in Accra. An extension of this ethnic bonding is communal living in which children with similar backgrounds rent rooms or sheds together, share foods and assume some responsibility for each

other. Another important manifestation of their ethnic bonding is the establishment of informal savings and insurance schemes that guarantee some level of economic and social stability in times of contingencies. In conclusion, while the relations with employers, peers and proxy-parents can be counter-productive, the children's ability to design strategies to neutralise the uncertainties and exploitation demonstrates a capacity to negotiate the environment to the best of their abilities. It also demonstrates some level of resilience in coping under stressful conditions.

7.5 Beyond work: Implications for the present and future

Two issues that emerge, once the migration process has taken place and children have established themselves in Accra, are firstly, how they use the work opportunity to play a role in their families and secondly, how they relate their work to the future.

The benefits of the children's migration to the family are two-fold. First, the mere act of migration is a cost saving for the family since the children are no longer an immediate responsibility. Secondly, any contributions they can make from Accra help in dealing with the rural impoverishment. The finding in this case is that they make reasonable contributions to their families in the rural areas. It is also the case that they take considerable pride in being able to help their siblings and even their parents.

In Ghana, there is a social obligation on people to care for their parents (Assimeng, 1999). Responsible adults therefore provide food, clothes, medical care, and even housing for their parents. This is the social insurance that motivates some people

to have more children because the state offers no support in old age. Against this background and the finding of the children's contribution towards the upkeep of their families, it can be concluded that the children prematurely assume adult responsibilities. As children they are not under any social obligation to do so, but are personally motivated to try because of the dismal financial constraints in their families. Their efforts therefore demonstrate considerable altruism since in spite of the risks, hazards and the unpredictable conditions, many of them are willing to help alleviate family poverty. However, the children's responses to family poverty can also be argued as a compensation for the loss of their direct labour to the family as a result of the migration.

The children place money as the instrumental value of work. This is not surprising since everybody works for money. However, the importance of this point lies in the fact that skill acquisition and work experience are not important to them. On the contrary, they consider their work as temporary activities to help them enter apprenticeship or trading in future. Their present jobs are therefore largely unrelated, and in most cases, at variance with their expectations of the future.

However, there is a strong desire to get some education. Children have a clear idea of the benefits of education as well as the financial constraints that exclude them from getting one. Their views do not support the thesis that Third World children dislike school because of its problems and the scarcity of jobs. Instead, it can be argued that the few formal sector and well-paying informal sector jobs in Ghana elevate the importance of education. It is not just that as unskilled and functionally illiterate adults they cannot get jobs, the point is that there is no motivation for

prospective employers to even consider them. There is no shortage of labour, a fact, which presents employers with considerable opportunities to discriminate between applicants and to be particularly selective. The children's own desire to go back to school or get some training demonstrates their appreciation of the situation. Beyond this, they have to go into self-employment as adults, mostly as farmers with little or no capital. This is the plight of their parents and the source of the poverty that generated their initial motivation to migrate.

7.6 The changing structure and dilemmas of child labour

On the basis of the findings and conclusions summarised in the preceding sections I will argue that child labour as a product of family and national poverty arising from underdevelopment poses a considerable dilemma. To begin with, child labour undergoes considerable structural changes as the Ghanaian society and economy evolves. Work, as noted in the earlier chapters, is culture-immanent and for that reason represents an important and inevitable aspect of child socialisation. However, what children do for a living when they migrate to Accra goes beyond simple socialisation. Work is transposed from the home environment to a more dynamic social environment in which children's physical effort and activities are shaped by demand and supply conditions. Work in this case represents a primary purpose of income generation as children engage in various activities. The opportunity to socialise with other children and adults may be present but the primary motive is to participate in the vibrant informal economy of Accra. In this sense, the ability to bargain and manage the daily interactions with others represents a crucial aspect of survival.

The tendency for children to migrate to urban areas in Ghana is not a new phenomenon, but one that has trailed social and economic changes since the colonial times. The consequent development has been an extension of domestic child labour to the more commercial situations presented in the study. The motivations of children that have emerged in the study are all embedded in the recent economic changes generated by SAP. Thus for the children, child labour as a form of occupational socialisation is not the issue because it cannot address their needs and expectations. Their transition to migrant workers however occurs on a steeper curve, with very little opportunity for learning from parents/adults. Yet, for most children in such situations, it is an opportunity that offers more potential relative to their previous experiences in the villages. In this sense, their migration and decisions to work are clear reactions to changes and adjustment in society as a whole.

The changing structure of child labour is evident in their increasing role in petty production and at the retail end of the chain of distribution, instead of being on family farms. Children apparently are most suitable for personal selling and ancillary services, particularly in the informal economies of the cities. In spite of the high rate of unemployment for adults, what is considered as child work is abundant in Accra. The rapid expansion in the informal sector (ISSER, 2000) and the propensity of actors here to exploit cheap resources create and sustain the demand for uncomplicated labour. In meeting some of this demand, children are transformed into carriers, loaders, shoe shiners, peddlers, stone chippers, couriers, domestic servants and even prostitutes. In this instance, child labour has transcended the domestic family-oriented activities located in traditional

socialisation into relative commercialism. The most lucrative are found in the cities and is what the *adjustment generation* of child labourers aim at.

The very nature of the informal sector however does not ensure that children are fully *proletarianised* into the relationships existing between capital and labour in a properly functioning capitalist mode of production. There can only be a false sense of employability since as minors, and marginal workers, they have no legal authority to enter into contracts. In addition, they usually work on a piece-rate basis and over short time spans. Furthermore, their minority status and lack of full agency debar them from unionisation and national minimum wages. Hence the more migrant child labourers coming to the cities, naturally the cheaper their services have to be, a simple case of supply outstripping demand. In spite of the rudimentary nature of activities, the study has shown that children still prefer the labour processes and social environment in Accra to those of the rural areas.

The changing structure and increasing significance of child labour are also evident in its role in the generation and sustenance of profitability in some informal sector activities. Children are crucial sources of revenue and expenditure even if not formally acknowledged as such. To the extent that the informal economy constitutes an indispensable segment of the national economy, the role of child labour is vital. Not only do these children provide essential labour services, they also provide custom for goods and services and therefore enhance the productivity and profitability of some enterprises. For example, they represent essential sources of patronage for the *chopbars*, iced-water sellers, owners of shacks, kiosks, and rooms used as sleeping places, used-cloth sellers, drug stores and occasionally

relatively expensive items like sewing machines.

In order to elaborate the significance and dilemma of child labour to the Accra economy for example, we can situate a simple computation in the conservative headcount of 10,420 streets and markets workers by the Catholic Action for Street Children in 1998. In this study, the daily average earnings of participants were ₵6,000 with the majority of participants spending at least ₵3,000 on daily maintenance. If we assume that about 10,000 of these children spend ₵3,000 each, they will be injecting approximately ₵30 million a day or ₵900 million¹ a month into the Accra economy. At the socio-economic levels children operate, this spending represents a substantial boost to people's activities. Yet the amount here is a gross underestimation of the children's economic contribution since their daily average savings of ₵3,000 will also boost future consumption. In addition to this, the remittances to their parents and siblings also contribute to spending and income generation in the various rural economies. Consequently, the nation benefits from migrant child labourers in two ways. Firstly, they represent a cheap source of labour, particularly for marginal operators in the economy. Secondly they are a source of substantial savings and consumption. This boost to the economy will not have materialised if their labour and potential had remained locked up in unpaid and near subsistence family work. This paradoxically feeds the migration and work in Accra since it provides a justification for child labour. It is also a dilemma to be confronted by policy makers.

At the rate of ₵7,000 to £1 at the time of the fieldwork, this will be approximately £128,600. This is quite substantial considering that per capita income is about £290 and foreign grants or donations less than the children's economic contribution frequently make national news.

Another way to look at the dilemma of child labour on the basis of their economic contributions is to relate it to the impoverished conditions of families. Apart from children's direct economic contribution raised in the preceding section, they also represent important substitute labour for their families. This generates both direct incomes if they undertake paid employment for the family and indirect or saved incomes if parents do not have to employ resources to perform those activities. Similarly, children's decisions to migrate minimise the pressure on their families while their remittances contribute to the reproduction of labour at the family level. Again we find that through child labour (some of which may be illegal), children free or minimise government's responsibility to some rural households. For example, children's support to siblings helps to maintain some of them in schools, a responsibility the Government has a dismal record in performing. Thus, even though children are not formally employed, their contributions in the informal economy have a significant impact for economic activity in Ghana.

If children contribute so much to the economy, then the policy implication begs the question of whether some minimum wage or legislation has to be designed to compel employers to treat children better. The basis of the study is that child labour is inimical not only to the long-term development of children but also is an irrational economic and social strategy for Ghana. There is an abundant supply of adult labour hence there is no justification for flooding the labour market with those of children through a formalisation of their employment. Secondly, long-term labour development and overall labour productivity clearly demands a policy that provides children with learning opportunities for skills acquisition. This

provides a more progressive basis for future development than easing children into labour situations. Then, there is the moral issue of encroaching on childhood space with the demands of work. The onus of children's development clearly rests on the government to deliver opportunities and for parents to utilise those opportunities to meet their responsibilities to children.

The answer to the question then lies in the circular path of workable development policies. By generating growth and employment the economy will further modernise and render the extreme forms of child labour incompatible with the modern production and distribution structures. The ensuing economic and social empowerment of parents will increase their own economic activities and generate reasonable revenues for families. All parents in Ghana can be assumed to be rational decision-makers as far as their children are concerned if they have the necessary information and resources. In this sense, the economic and social pressures that motivate them to project the economic value of their children will lose some of its significance. Predictably, if poor parents get a small fraction of the resources available to the middle class through employment and economic opportunities, the implications of child labour vis-à-vis children's education will be better appreciated.

7.6 Policy implications: The case of education for all children

The study has also developed the argument that child labour is a social and cultural issue that is given greater urgency by the poverty and pressures of SAP. If child labour is integral to Ghana's development effort, then there is an inevitability and hopelessness to it because of the underdevelopment. In fact, this inevitability to

child labour complicates the effort to protect children generally and to regulate the excesses. There is virtually no effective national policy in this regard. Instead, Ghana has signed the less problematic UNCRC but not the more binding and restrictive ILO Minimum Age Convention. Clearly, some of the indifference of various Ghanaian governments to child labour stems from the dilemmas argued in the preceding section. For example, we know already that at the family level, child labour is often justified in terms of socialisation.

If child labour is assumed as both culture- and economy-immanent then its inevitability can also be argued to motivate policy makers and enforcers to be less urgent. In fact, there is no evidence that anybody has been prosecuted for using child labour illegally in Accra. Yet, there are live testimonies to violations of the laws and conventions on child labour in all aspects of life. Children's interests are clearly subjected to opposing ones from the family, informal sector and even the government. Some children are crucial providers for themselves and their families and for that reason further complicates efforts to control child labour, especially if viewed against their poverty and lack of support from the government. Moreover, the socio-economic problems of the country in themselves render the search for solutions problematic.

Nevertheless, the view in this study is that childhood is a period for schooling and socialisation towards a full development into more capable and productive adults. In this sense, it is essential to examine the social policy option of the dilemma of child labour from education and school's point of view for four reasons. Firstly, within the constraints of the economy, government policies on the family and

children are largely unachievable. Secondly, the level of parental illiteracy generates a reasonable amount of ignorance of laws on children. As a result, they do not comply with the laws or ensure that others do so in order to protect their children. Thirdly, the spatial distribution of children and the lack of reliable data on them effectively exclude millions from the protection laws and conventions offer, even if they were fully enforceable. Fourthly, the government lacks the infrastructure and political will to effectively enforce its own laws and international conventions. In view of this I will argue in this section that the most effective way to control (and not the impossible task of eliminating) the worst forms of child labour is to provide educational opportunities to all children.

Schools are readily available in all parts of the country and provide simulated environments that can be properly managed and controlled to protect children. Children's time budgeting arising from their obligations in society will imply less time for work if they were to attend school for the seven hours that is standard in Ghana. While this does not eliminate child labour, it reduces the residual hours for work. Besides the economic benefit of providing some minimum education to all children, is the compelling case of social benefits of education. Throughout the preceding chapters, the discussion on child labour has highlighted the role of ignorance, outmoded cultures and social barriers that are impervious to change. These problems were noted to be greatest in the rural areas where most parents are illiterate. As a result, most of them are bounded by the social and cultural practices that are often inconsistent with efforts to protect children. It is therefore possible that by firmly placing education at the centre of policies on children and ensuring that it becomes the first alternative, Ghana will also be breaking the cycle

of illiteracy and ignorance. The social and economic benefits of a near-literate Ghanaian society are incalculable, even if jobs cannot be created for everybody.

However, it is frequently claimed, as Standing (1982), Boyden, *et al.*, (1998), Eldring *et al.* (2000) and others have done, that work for many children is preferable to schooling in developing countries like Ghana, because schools offers no practical skills. There is even an emerging caution not to 'idealise' education in the developing world². Such conclusions and suggestions however are problematic because they are neither placed in the proper age nor school context. The arguments apparently are based on the assumption that the aims of basic education (5 to 14 years) in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa are to prepare children for an *immediate* entry into the labour market. This is an unsustainable assumption since children below 16 years are legally excluded from the labour market by Ghana's own legislation and its obligations under various international conventions. In reality, basic education in Ghana is the prelude and elementary foundation to further education or training programmes that will equip children to enter the labour market at a later stage. As a result, it is only when education is evaluated at the post-15 years level (senior secondary school) does its relevance in terms of skill acquisition become an issue. The irony however is that graduates of this level (18/19 year-olds) are hardly children thus rendering redundant the issue of child labour in their case.

² At a conference in Bondy, France in August 2000, some participants from the developed world were cautioning against 'idealising' education as the solution to child labour, because of the lack of jobs. This may be tenable only if the acquisition of education is viewed as meant for jobs created by others. It neglects the potential of even minimally educated people to create jobs for themselves and most importantly its social benefits for societies of the developing world.

The irrelevance of education argument then is valid to the extent that post-basic education fails to provide children with practical skills. However the most compelling child labour problem in Ghana is basic education-age children (6 - 14 year olds) who are placed in commercial labour situations like selling iced-water, domestic servitude, *portering*, peddling and stone chipping. For instance, 80% of working girls in Ghana are domestic servants aged between 10 and 14 years (ICFTU, 2001). It can hardly be the case that these girls are placed in domestic servitude because of the merit of that work experience over education at their age. Neither can it be that the majority of children in this situation have had all the information to rationally conclude that education offers no skills and that their future lies in work at that stage. There is also the presumption in the argument that children enjoy what they do. However, the social reality of domestic servants (UNICEF, 1997a), the long hours, uncertainties, pressures and conditions in which children work in the streets, markets and quarries, as extensively portrayed in Chapter Five, do not support this assumption.

The real reasons lie in family impoverishment central to the study and how they affect social behaviour. The majority of children are withdrawn from schools for financial reasons (ICFTU, 2001). Survey evidence together with the findings from this study in fact show that children have a strong preference for education in spite of the problems. Beauchemin (1999) for example, found only 7% of children to be attending school because their parents wanted them to. Most importantly, 80% were there to learn to improve their lives, while 13% considered education necessary for reasons of prestige. On the other hand 57% disliked school because they were not getting *support* from their parents (as some participants in this study

had indicated). Again, essentially, only 4% of the children considered education to be a waste of time. In view of this, the irrelevance of schooling attributable to parents may only be a red herring. It is the present gains of the child's labour to mitigate family poverty that is of crucial importance to those who place children in labour situations. As Beauchemin (1999: 17) concluded despite, 'the poor educational standards in the rural areas...most pupils are convinced that education is their ticket to a better life, away from the village'.

Even then the relevance of the basic skills of reading and writing is increasingly evident in the informal sector. While the ubiquitous roadside apprenticeships still dominate informal skill acquisition, there is a gradual transition to a more formal apprenticeship where literacy and numeracy constitute part of the process. This is exemplified by Steve's difficulties in joining the CAS training programme discussed in Chapter Six. Hairdressers, dressmakers, welders, electricians, and other artisans have increasingly unionised into trade associations. They have also devised certification systems that demand that those who undergo training pass written and practical examinations as a way of regulating training and the quality of their members. In effect, the justification for not acquiring the basic minimum education is becoming more and more difficult to make.

The potential of education for the individual, family and society as a whole and the sanctuary school offers children for some hours of the day make it the most effective organised external influence on children's lived experiences. In view of this, the policy of free and compulsory basic education should be pursued with greater vigour. Poverty will continue to limit the choices parents and children have

with regard to work and school. However, while national policies of development and poverty alleviation are long-term goals, which in most cases still appear problematic in their attainment, education for all children can be an immediate and achievable objective. Such a goal however, will be achievable only if the IMF and World Bank are made to factor a truly free and compulsory basic education into their policies for the developing world. This will be one of the basic steps in reclaiming the common good for every family and redressing some of the injustices of SAPs on vulnerable people.

APPENDIX I

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING THE CHILDREN

The aim was to gather in-depth information from the children so that we can understand the social process and their experiences in order to relate that to the orthodox positions on child labour. To do this, the interview process treated the children as social actors who have constructed their own ideas, interpretations and motivations in the social and economic world in which their experiences are formed.

The interview guide was designed around the six research questions raised in Chapter Three. The questions on their personal and family backgrounds were asked in a routine manner. There was no sequence to the rest, but were asked in relation to the trend of conversation with a child. The guide was:

1. Personal and family background
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Origin
 - Educational background
 - Time spent in Accra
 - The educational background of parents
 - The parents' occupation
 - The number of siblings
2. The work environment
 - The type of work they do in Accra
 - Working hours and time use
 - Work patterns
 - Daily incomes
 - Work experiences
3. The social environment

- Their relationships with others: families, friends, employees, etc.
 - Their family life
 - Their lifestyles in the villages and in Accra
4. Motivations
 - Their personal motivations
 - Pressures in the family and other sources
 - Their long-term aspirations and how they expect to reconcile that with their present lives
 - Their survival, coping and co-operation strategies
 5. Their views on the economy
 - Their interpretations of the economy
 - Its impact on them
 - How they relate their motivations to the economic conditions
 6. Views on power, authority and control in the work and social environments.
 7. Responsibilities to the family in terms of:
 - Work
 - The provision of incomes and other items
 - Support for siblings
 8. Views on education and school experiences in relation to their jobs.

APPENDIX II

Map of Ghana



APPENDIX III

THE BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

Coded names	Gender	Age (years)	Types of work
Ama	Female	11	Peddler
Kojo	Male	11	Beggar's guide
Dorothy	Female	11	Iced-water seller
Mama	Male	12	Beggar's guide
Max	Male	12	Peddler
Agnes	Female	12	Iced-water seller
Felix	Male	12	Stone-chipper
Ajo	Female	12	Peddler
Araba	Female	12	Iced-water seller
Fuse	Male	12	Stone-chipper
Laura	Female	13	Iced-water seller
Aba	Female	13	Stone-chipper
Azo	Female	13	Peddler
Adam	Male	13	Apprentice
Mary	Female	13	Stone-chipper
Maggie	Female	13	Iced-water seller
Fati	Female	13	Chop bar worker
Kwaku	Male	13	Shoe-shine
Sama	Female	13	<i>Kayayoo</i>
Otuo	Male	13	Truck pusher
Chris	Male	14	Off-loader
Asmao	Female	14	<i>Kayayoo</i>
Abe	Male	14	Truck pusker
Richmond	Male	14	Shoe-shine
Hawa	Female	14	Peddler
Dede	Female	14	Iced-water seller
Frank	Male	14	Truck pusher
Buta	Male	14	Wheelbarrow pusher
Tom	Male	14	Off-loader
Karimu	Male	14	Off-loader
Ala	Male	14	Off-loader
Owu	Male	14	Peddler
Kpong	Male	14	Stone-chipper
Dan	Male	14	Off-loader
Bietu	Female	14	<i>Kayayoo</i>
Muti	Female	14	<i>Kayayoo</i>
Tima	Female	14	Chop bar worker
Josh	Male	14	Truck pusher
Kofi	Male	15	Peddler

Afua	Female	15	Iced-water seller
Kwam	Male	15	Peddler
Ekow	Male	15	Peddler
Gabby	Male	15	Off-loader
Ayes	Female	15	<i>Kayayoo</i>
Steve	Male	15	Truck pusher

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