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# Travel to Uncertainty

A study of child relocation in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali



**Fafo**

Research Program on Trafficking and Child Labour



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## Preface

Over the past seven years, Fafo has developed a research profile on child labour and policies to combat it. Studies of work life are a core research area for Fafo, and our surveys of living conditions have targeted children and youth as a particularly important group to be examined. Fafo's origins in the trade union movement have resulted in a particular interest in developing institutional frameworks for regulating work and labour rights issues in the best interests of national economic development and the work force.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs drew upon Fafo's expertise to assist in preparing and hosting the International Conference on Child Labour in Oslo in 1997. Since then, Fafo has been commissioned by the International Labour Organisation, the World Bank, and others to provide applied research of interest to those combating child labour. The studies have been multifaceted and have addressed such issues as child labour and international trade, child relocation and domestic work, how to identify and measure child labour in national statistics, and how to identify and study child soldiers and the trafficking of children.

In 2002, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs generously agreed to finance a Fafo program on child labour, enabling us to collate and consolidate our research on the subject. International efforts to combat child labour must be knowledge-based; that is, they require a good empirical understanding of its causes, forms, and extent. One challenge is to develop methodologies that can strengthen the planning and efficiency of national programs to counter child labour. It is Fafo's aim to contribute to this goal by providing knowledge and methods to map the challenges and measure results.

The specific objectives of the program are to:

1. Help improve the empirical understanding of the variations of child labour, including their social and family contexts;
2. Improve and validate qualitative and quantitative methods to study and map child labour, with a particular focus on its worst forms;
3. Explore how an understanding of children as actors may help develop preventive measures aimed at improving living and working conditions for children and reducing the prevalence of child labour.

We are pleased to present the second in a series of working papers from this program, which in 2003 has been coordinated by Lise Bjerkan, one of the co-authors of this report. This report attempts to assess the link between child relocation and child trafficking in West Africa, based on fieldwork in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Ghana. I would like to thank the researchers participating in the program - in particular Kari Hauge Riisøen and Anne Hatløy, the two other co-authors of this report - and Jon Pedersen, who provided valuable input during the work. Special thanks also to Mme Sidibé Aminata Diallo from Bamako, Maxime Campaoré from Ouagadougou, and Ernest Nimfah Appiah from Accra, the three researchers who did terrific work in the field in their respective countries. Special thanks also to all the persons and organisations from the three countries who were willing to share their experiences and histories with us.

We are grateful to the members of an advisory group that we have established for the program: Furio Rosati (Understanding Children's Work, Florence), Ousman O. Sidibé (Commissariat au Développement Institutionnel, Bamako), Geir Myrstad (IPEC /ILO, Geneva), Karin Beate Theodorsen (LO, Oslo), Tori Nettelhorst Tveit (NHO, Oslo), Annette Giertsen (Save the Children, Oslo), and Bjørne Grimsrud (Fafo AVF, Oslo).

Finally, we are grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway for its financial support, without which this report would not have been possible.

Jon Hanssen-Bauer  
Managing Director  
Fafo AIS

# Executive Summary

This report presents the results on a study of the link between child trafficking and child relocation in three West African countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali. The main goal of the study was to detect whether traditional forms of child relocation, such as fostering and child work migration, have a preventive effect on child trafficking - or on the contrary whether they increase trafficking, as has been claimed by some actors in the field. By analysing the different relocation arenas and the conditions met by the children in these arenas, the various relocation processes, and the background of relocated, trafficked, and non-relocated children and their families, we should also be able to identify the children at risk of being trafficked and the actions that should be taken to protect them.

We approached our investigation into the link between traditional child relocation and trafficking by conducting in-depth interviews with local and national authorities; international organizations; regional and local non governmental organizations (NGOs); children under the age of 18 (either in the workplace or at home); household members with relocated children living in the household; parents who sent their children to other places; and employers and intermediaries.

Although the proportion of trafficked children seems small relative to relocated children, the risk that trafficking poses to children is real. Children are at risk for various reasons. According to the children we met, becoming victim of trafficking is pure bad luck; all the same it is clear that social or economic problems, lack of perceived opportunities, ignorance, youth, and lack of education makes a child more vulnerable to trafficking. Arguably, the systems of fosterage and sponsorship, when working properly, function as systems of caretaking and supervision and thereby have a preventive effect on trafficking; however, these systems depend on viable social networks, leaving a child without such network puts a child at greater risk of being trafficked. Moreover, we found evidence that these systems can be – and increasingly are – abused.

Principal findings are that all working children in the three countries are at risk of being exploited, regardless of migration status; that the same children that are more exposed to trafficking are also to some extent more exposed to exploitation in general; and that some arenas and employers are more exploitative than others. Our fieldwork indicates that fishery, prostitution, and, to some extent, agriculture are

exposed sectors. These are also the sectors where trafficked children are likely to be found, as children do not relocate on their own free will or upon the recommendation of friends and relatives to sectors or employers with a bad reputation, they need to be forced or taken by fraud. It is also important to underline that the conditions for children working and/or living in the streets are extremely harsh in many ways.

Our overall recommendation is to give priority to children living and working in exploitative conditions that are likely to interfere with their education, or be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, whether relocated or not. Sadly, this recommendation includes most of children and youth in the three countries, as we found most of them to fall into the category of children vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking for one reason or another. It is our firm belief that children in West Africa will benefit more from policies and actions developed in accordance with this recommendation than from a more narrow focus on the elimination of trafficking, as the latter could only lead to being more extended and difficult to detect. NGOs already in place and knowledgeable in the field should, in cooperation with local and national authorities, work to inform employers, children, and parents on the risks of trafficking, and monitor and supervise certain employers and sectors.

# 1 Introduction

The main aim of this study is to explore the traditional forms of movement of children away from their parents - such as adoption, fosterage, and migration for education or work - on the one hand, and whether traditional forms of movement of children can be understood either as preventing or, on the contrary, reinforcing child trafficking, based on a discussion of the mechanisms and patterns involved in child trafficking, on the other hand. In particular, this study investigates which forms of traditional relocation may prevent child exploitation, and which forms might be hazardous for the child; and examines whether new forms of child relocation have been established in recent decades. The study covers the three West African countries Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali.

The term relocation is used to cover the various forms of movement of children away from their parents. Relocation of children and youth is not a new practice in West Africa (e.g. Bledsoe and Brandon 1992, Fiawoo 1978, Goody 1975, Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, Oni 1995, and Sinclair 1972), nor is the movement of other age groups in the population. However, this report only focuses on relocation as the phenomena where children, here defined as the under-18 population, move from their family of origin, and does not deal with cases where the whole family moves.

There have traditionally been different reasons for parents to send their children away, or for children to move voluntarily or by force. Fosterage of small children (0-5 years of age) appears to be primarily a way to adjust the demographic imbalance between households with too few children and those with too many, and can mainly be seen as a child-care function (Serra 2000). In a study from Senegal, it was found that the higher the number of surviving children a mother has, the more likely she is to foster one of them out (Vandermeersch 2002). Households with sterile and sub-fecund women or women in the beginning or end of their reproductive lives, foster significantly more children than other households. This seems to be a widespread tradition not only in Senegal, but also in the whole of West Africa. For the youngest children, grandparents are perhaps the most important recipients, especially when it is time for weaning (Isiugo-Abanihe 1985). Sending children away at this time facilitates the weaning process and frees the mothers' time so that they can work on the farm or go to the market.

As a child grows older, the causes for moving change. There is a longstanding tradition of sending children away for educational purposes, either formal, or so-

cial education (Fiawoo 1978, Goody 1975, Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, Oni 1995, Serra 2000 and Sinclair 1972). Children are also sent from poorer parents in the countryside to richer relatives in more populated areas. This is a phenomenon that is not unique for West Africa; similar moving patterns were also seen in Europe a century ago. Parents let the children move to ensure their access to school or to give them an informal educational opportunity, such as learning cultivation techniques and animal husbandry, fishing, metalwork, sculpture, weaving, Koran teaching, music, etc. (Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, Serra 2000).

A third traditional reason for relocation of children in West Africa is to generate income for the family (Berg 1965, Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, Oni 1995). During less labour-intensive periods in the household, one or more household members are sent away (by force or voluntarily) to search for income. Young boys often seek agricultural work or other unskilled jobs, while young girls end up as domestic workers. Similar phenomenon are also known from 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, when young people went by boat to America to search for wealth and young girls left the countryside to work for rich families in the cities. This practice reduces household expenses and possibly increases household income, should the young ones succeed. In this way, this type of relocation turns into a coping strategy for the household as a whole.

Children's moves may be internal or involve crossing national borders. Commercial migration, across what migrants regard as artificial boundaries, is a feature of movement in West Africa. The West African region has always been an economical zone and especially a trading zone within which goods, services and commercial skills have flowed from one country to another (Adepoju 1983).

It should be noted that the term "relocation", as applied in this report, carries no connotations as to whether the effect of the movement described is to the benefit or detriment of the child. Based on fieldworks in the three countries, we will elaborate on various local forms of child relocation with regard to their effect on the child, i.e. whether they are in "the best interest of the child" or not "likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development" (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The distinction between trafficking of children and other forms of relocation is not always obvious in existing literature (ILO/IPEC 2000, Terre Des Hommes Allemagne 2002, WAO-Afrique 2001). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), for the transfer of children to qualify as trafficking, the following criteria should be present: the conclusion of a transaction, the intervention of an intermediary, and the motive to exploit. The term "transaction" refers to "any institution or practice through which young people below 18 years, are handed over by either or both parents, or by a guardian to a third person, whether for a fee or not,

with the intention of exploiting the person or the work of the young person' (ILO 2000:2). In other words, "there need not be any payment made in exchange for handing over the child. The very existence of an economic motive, i.e. cheap labour for one party and a token sum of periodic payments for the other (parents, or intermediaries), is sufficient to make it a transaction" (ILO 2000:2).

It has been claimed both by national and international actors that child relocation to an increasing extent facilitates child trafficking (ILO/IPEC 2000, UNICEF 2002). For example, a report by Anti Slavery International states: "[A]ll regions are affected by the trafficking [...] those with a tradition of migration are more exposed" (ASI 2003). The same report argues "the initiation of children into work as a part of a traditional system of education has been perverted into a commercial transaction that leads to the trafficking of children from villages to the towns and between countries within West and Central Africa" (ASI 2003). Similarly Terre des Hommes Allemagne (2002) contends: "[A]nother vector of trafficking is migration, with the so-called traditional migration linked to the agricultural calendar having turned to big scale trafficking". This report assesses these claims against the backdrop of our field research.

In addition to exploring whether traditional forms of child relocation prevent or reinforce child trafficking, we will examine the relative importance of the phenomenon of trafficking vis-à-vis the broader system of relocation. Is it in fact the case that "large numbers of children are being trafficked in West and Central Africa, mainly for domestic work but also for sexual exploitation, to work in shops or on farms, to be scavengers or street hawkers", as claimed in the UNICEF Special Report "Protecting Children from Trafficking" (2003). Is Dr. Rima Salah, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, right in arguing that millions of West African youth are affected by trafficking (Salah R 2001)?

Although it is not our intention to question the problem of trafficking in the region and its ramification for the affected children, it is nevertheless important to interrogate the relative occurrence of trafficking as compared to the total number of children relocated internally and across borders for the purpose of work and/or education. In short, we will discuss whether child trafficking in particular should remain as focal point of the international community, or whether children in West Africa would benefit more from a generalised priority to eliminate the exploitation of children, which would include all exploited children and not only those falling into the trafficking category.

The following sections are organised accordingly: First we will describe the main forms and arenas of child relocation, and the working and living conditions identified within each of them. Secondly, we will discuss how and why children end up in the various forms of relocation, and refer to different strategies for leaving. Thirdly, we will examine the issue of trafficking in relation to other forms of relocation, by

indicating what makes children vulnerable to exploitation in general and trafficking in particular. Finally, we will propose some recommendations on how to prevent child trafficking without eliminating the valuable and traditional system of child relocation for the purpose of economic survival, education and socialisation. Our fieldwork in the region forms the basis for all observations and conclusions, and they are described next.

## **Collecting information**

The fieldwork was carried out in Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali by three different Faso researchers, in collaboration with a national expert. The three countries were chosen because of their child migration patterns; we knew that we were likely to find children as internal or international migrants in all three countries. Indeed, a recent study from Burkina Faso shows that in 1998-2000, approximately sixteen percent of all rural households sent a child away for fostering; fourteen percent received a child; and three percent of rural households both sent and received children (Akresh 2003). Internal relocation still accounts for most migratory movements in each of the three countries, as it does in all West African countries (Ammassari and Black 2001).

According to information received from organisations we cooperated with in Bamako and Ouagadougou, Malian and Burkinabe children who migrate across borders most frequently go to Ivory Coast. However, due to the unstable situation in Ivory Coast, it was not possible to carry out fieldwork there, and Ghana was chosen instead because of its similar characteristics as a receiving country. Mali and Burkina Faso, together with Niger and Togo are the main emigration countries in West Africa, while Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Senegal constitute the main countries of immigration (Adepoju 1983).

The duration of the fieldworks varied from ten to sixteen days. The fieldworks were based on a common field manual and interview guidelines, and were well coordinated. The fieldtrips to Mali and Burkina Faso were carried out in parallel, while the trip to Ghana took place a couple of weeks later. To ensure a common approach, daily coordination, including exchange of field-reports and comments, was carried out using the internet and telephones. The point of departure for the data collection was in-depth interviews with international and national organisations working with child trafficking and child labour. Representatives from ILO/IPEC, Unicef, IOM, and Save the Children were interviewed in all three countries; additionally interviews with relevant ministries on different levels were carried out. Local and regional NGOs were also visited. However the main focus was on the contact with

people on the ground: 1) children under the age of 18, either in the workplace or at home, 2) household members with relocated children living in the household, 3) parents who sent their children to other places for some reason, and 4) employers and intermediaries. Altogether, 94 interviews were carried out: 58 with people on the ground, 21 with international organisations and ministries, and 15 with local organisations.

To have access to the children in question, we worked closely with local NGOs in all three countries. The NGOs we engaged with all deal with the rehabilitation of trafficked children, or the prevention or amelioration of child labour. Our intent was not to obtain a representative sample of the child population, so the NGO channel was used merely as a mean of facilitating contacts with the children. That said, we are aware that, in some instances, the children chosen were “the worst cases” or “show cases” used by NGOs to underline the children’s conditions for the media and donors, and that we were potentially getting a skewed picture of reality. To limit the effects of this, we also interviewed people other than those chosen by the NGOs on the sites, and chose to visit some villages and other locations without consulting the NGOs. Our main impression was that it was difficult to identify victims of trafficking when we more or less randomly selected a child (e.g. by asking the village leader if we could talk to children that had been living away from the village). This may be primarily due to the fact that there are relatively few victims of trafficking to be found, but may also be partly due to the fact that having been trafficked is considered shameful and not something that one would talk about. On the other hand, it was never difficult to find relocated children that had not been trafficked. This fact raised the question of the extent of the trafficking problem. Estimating the relative size of the trafficking problem is outside the scope of this report and merits further investigation. For the time being, we only ask the reader to keep this consideration in mind.

## 2 Arenas of Child Relocation

Child relocation is particularly developed and has long roots in West Africa. Although there is considerable geographical and ethnic variation, relocated children make up a significant proportion of all children in the region. For example, in Ghana in 1998, around 19% of children between the ages of 3 and 14, and 25% of children between 10 and 14, did not live with either of their biological parents. Likewise in Mali in 2001, around 12% of children between the age of 3 and 14, and 17% of children between 10 and 14, did not live with either of their biological parents. In Burkina Faso in 1992, 13% of children between 3 and 14, and 18% of children between 10 and 14, lived without their biological parents (DHS 2003).

With regards to the various forms of child relocation, we have identified three main arenas to which children are being relocated:

- 1) Households, i.e. children living in the household of relatives or others;
- 2) Muslim clerics, i.e. tutors with knowledge of the Koran and Arabic;
- 3) Work places, i.e. places for work or apprenticeship.

In the following we will describe each of these arenas in further detail, and through empirical examples illustrate the working and living conditions faced by children relocated to these arenas.

### Households

In this section we will distinguish between children living in a household other than that of their biological parents 1) for the purpose of education or care or 2) for the purpose of work, i.e. as domestic workers. The first mainly refers to the local practice of kin fostering leaving the parental household to live with relatives while the second refers to children living and working either in kin or non-kin households. However these distinctions are not always clear-cut. In a report based on a study in five middle and upper class communities in Ghana's capital Accra, Appiah and Afranie (2001) claim that the distinction between fostering and the hiring of child labour is often blurred, and point out that in a previous study (Apt 1994) it was

found that “the true statistics on the use of girl children as domestic workers was being disguised under the widespread practice of fostering” (Appiah and Afranie 2001). We found that it is normal for children to participate in domestic work, so the question becomes whether children work more in a foster family than they would at home and whether they work more than the biological children in the foster household. In addition, one must ask whether the main purpose of the fostering of the child is the best interest of the child or is purely to have domestic workers. As mentioned above, fostered children can be very young, from 0 years, and in these cases it is clear that the purpose cannot be work, at least not in the beginning.

### **Kin fostering**

Traditionally, one of the main purposes of child fostering among kin is to provide the fostered child with education. However, when the child is relocated at a very young age, it is most likely that the caring aspect is the most important. We found several examples of children raised as biological children when they arrived in the household during infancy. The fostering practice implies allocation of resources among kin and the strengthening of family relations. As argued by Appiah and Afranie (2001), children are given to “well-to-do relatives and friends to be brought up, with the view that the children will benefit from the riches of these well-to-do “parents substitute’s”.

The fostering system mainly relocates children from rural to urban areas, where schools and work are more widely available. However, there are also cases of children being sent the other way – from life in the city to relatives in smaller places (Isiougou-Abanihe 1985) – so as to reduce temptations that distract them from their school work. Moreover, we also found examples of cross-border fostering in the case of relatives being spread across borders, either as a consequence of extensive regional migration patterns or ethnic bonding regardless of national borders.

To underline the importance of the educational aspect of this specific kind of relocation in the region, it is worth mentioning that the word for fosterage (*n'woubi*) in Moore - the language spoken by Mossi, 49% of the Burkinabe population (Les Atlas Jeune Afrique 1998) - contains an element of education. In this context, education should be interpreted as encompassing an element of upbringing, i.e. learning good behaviour, politeness, and coping skills. This shows that educational fosterage is comprehensive, and ideally includes all aspects of the art of raising a child. A good example of a household receiving kin in Mali is that of Fanta and Madou in Koutiala:

Madou is the head of the household. He is the only one in his family having completed any schooling and holds a respectable position as headmaster of a

junior high school. A well-equipped house follows the job. Because of his position Madou is trusted with children of both close and distant relatives and of friends to assure their education. In addition to his own seven children, who are all either currently in school or have completed school, he houses approximately ten other children who either are or have been in school or in apprenticeship. Madou and his wife Fanta provide for all the members of their household: they feed them, lodge them, and pay for school equipment, new clothes and other necessities. In the case of the girls, they also pay for their trousseau. Fanta says she is glad most of her non-biological children staying in the household are boys because they require less financial support than the girls.

Another example that shows how the system of fosterage and allocation of means among kin works is that of the Nikiema family in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso:

Jean Nikiema has taken in all of his younger brother's fifteen children. This is in order to give them the opportunity to have an education that his brother cannot provide them with, partly because he does not have the means and partly because there are no schools in the village where he lives. All of Jean's nine children and the fifteen children of his brother have now reached university level. In addition, Jean has fostered the daughter of a distant cousin, Ludivine, ever since she became an orphan. While he provides her with professional training in sewing, she helps out in the compound. Jean says he will soon call for Ludivine's brother to learn a profession too.

These two cases illustrate the ideal form of educational fosterage, where by relatives support each other in the upbringing and education of children and the fostered children are treated on an equal footing with the foster parents' biological children both in terms of material and emotional needs. The case of Ludivine also shows how relatives, even if somewhat distant, take in children following crises. However, this ideal is not always the reality encountered by children, regardless of whether the receiving household is one of kin or not. The foster family's commitment towards the child and its parents depends both on the relationship between them and on the agreement, if any, made between the parties.

As we see from Claude's story from Ouagadougou, to be fostered by kin is no guarantee of being well treated in any of the three countries:

Claude's biological parents died when he was only six months old and Claude was taken care of by his father's three remaining wives. According to Claude, he was never treated on an equal footing with the other children of the family. For instance, he was only allowed to eat what was left on the plates after a meal, if anything at all. When he was ten years old, he was told to start working for his

food. He went around to restaurants and asked if they needed help with the dishes. If he was lucky, they did. When the restaurant closed, they would give him food. Claude never went to school and is illiterate. He says this could not have been a financial matter because the family was relatively well off and some of the other children have received higher education.

Claude's experience is by no means singular. According to UNICEF, in the northern parts of Ghana (Northern Region, Upper West Region, and Upper East Region), a man's first-born female child is traditionally given to his sister's household, while in the south a man's maternal nephews and nieces are traditionally regarded as his children in terms of material and emotional obligations. These traditions are gradually changing as more prominence is given to the nuclear family, although in the north the change is not occurring to the same degree and a man's sister is still expected to take care of his first-born daughter. This girl is expected to live with her paternal aunt (and uncle), assist in domestic tasks, and take care of their children. In return, the aunt is expected to give the girl out to marriage and provide her with the utensils, and other items that she needs for the marriage. Within approximately the last ten years, economic hardships have turned this practice into a burden for many foster families; accordingly UNICEF says, some are unable to fulfil their duties towards their relatives in a proper way. In this situation there are aunts who encourage the girls to go to Accra to find work: "Follow my friend, go to Accra and make some money, buy the items you need and go home". There are also girls who, rather than live in poor conditions with their paternal aunts, run away on their own initiative, preferably to find work in one of the major cities in the south of the country.

In sum, when kin fosterage works as expected, it represents an important coping strategy for families in general and children in particular, be it to obtain socialization, education or exit a crisis situation. Nevertheless, the description of what is expected by paternal aunts in northern Ghana, and the particular experiences of Claude, demonstrates how the tradition of fostering may fail to function in accordance with the ideal if hampered by financial or social conditions or simple ill will.

### **Domestic workers**

Child domestic workers can be found in the households of relatives, friends, and strangers. For instance, as mentioned above, in northern Ghana girls who are fostered by their paternal aunts are expected to help in the house, look after younger nephews and nieces, etc. There are also children being sent to childless relatives to help perform household chores.

Even in family situations, the way children are treated is entirely at the employer's discretion and is by no means uniformly good. According to the Association

Burkinabé pour la survie de l'enfance, with whom we met in Ouagadougou, treatment can vary dramatically, and often the employers are unaware of the danger they cause the child through overwork or through severe physical and psychological punishment.

The case of the thirteen-year-old Mariam, who is working for a woman in Sikasso in Mali, represents a situation where the working conditions are not harsh and where the girl is well treated by her mistress, as far as we could understand:

Mariam told us the tasks she carries out in her current job are very similar to those she used to be in charge of at home; namely laundry and dish washing. In addition she has to sell ice water in small sacks on the market. Normally she manages to sell two buckets of 25 sacs each day. Mariam says she does not like the work at all, mainly because she is not used to money and finds it very difficult to give back the right change. Frequently she comes home with too little money, but her mistress does not react. She receives a fixed monthly salary of 4,000 FCFA (=6 euro), which is the ordinary level domestic workers are paid in the area.

In the case of Mariam, the workload is not very different from what she could expect if she had stayed at home. Unfortunately, her situation is not representative of the living and working conditions of all domestic workers. Domestic workers - whether in kin or non-kin households - are vulnerable to physical and mental abuse and exploitation. We heard stories of sexual abuse by the employer or other men in the household; refusal to pay the agreed salary; and even false accusations of theft in order to avoid having to pay the salary. Moreover, some child domestic workers are given workloads that do not correspond to their strength or age and risk severe punishments if they cannot execute the tasks given. One seven-year-old girl was reported to have to carry fifty kilos on her head every day.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the experience of bad treatment of child domestic workers has necessitated the help of sponsors in placing children as domestic workers. If the system works as intended, these sponsors can be a genuine support. Unfortunately, when the system breaks down – as it has on some occasions – the children are made even more vulnerable.

Even though the purpose of taking in a foster child may be two-fold - partly to act in the best interest of the child and partly to make use of its labour - this practice is differentiated from the practice of taking in a domestic worker because, in the latter case, the sole purpose is to make use of the child's work force and not to educate or socialize the child. Furthermore, the allocation or assistance aspect is less stressed in the latter setting, which may make domestic child workers more vulnerable to exploitation and bad treatment than fostered children.

## Muslim clerics

Whereas domestic work is mainly an arena for girls, boys dominate the arena of religious education, primarily found in Burkina Faso and Mali. Although the purpose of attending lessons with Muslim clerics is to gain knowledge of Islam, this is also an arena where severe forms of exploitation can take place.

Relocation with the purpose of education includes stays with Muslim clerics who accept students of the Koran and Arabic on an informal basis. While this tradition is robust in Burkina Faso and Mali, in Ghana it has over the last 25 – 30 years gradually been replaced by modern Islamic institutions offering a wider curriculum. In the French speaking countries, these Muslim clerics are called “marabouts”; in Ghana, they are known as “malams”. In general, marabouts are not Imams but have knowledge of the Koran and have often been students in Koran schools themselves. The children are called “talibés”, or students of God, and can be as young as four years old. In Burkina Faso some people call them “Garibouts”, which is slang and derogatory.

The talibés beg for a living or take up different kinds of work that their master assigns to them, i.e. dish washing in restaurants, work in agricultural fields, commercial activities outside the mosque on Fridays, etc. Often the master receives the salary for talibés’ work directly. The system of allocating the profit from begging between the master and his students may vary from master to master. One way the master can assure that he will get his part of the income is by demanding to bless the day’s catch; if this is not properly done, it will mean illness and death for the talibé. Another way is to demand a certain amount from the students every evening, and to punish those who cannot provide it. Likewise, if they exceed this amount they can have it due for another day.

The marabout is not responsible for feeding the students, and sometimes is not even responsible for their lodging. The worst cases we came across were children living in the streets and begging all day for the marabout, without receiving any lessons in the Koran or Arabic. However, according to their marabout, the children’s way of living should be understood as part of their religious education.

Talibés are easily recognizable in their poor ragged clothes, white hats (in Burkina Faso), and with their four – five litre tomato tin cans, begging in the streets from early morning onwards. There are also ordinary beggars disguising themselves as talibés, taking advantage of the position that the talibés have in the Muslim communities and exploiting the fact that Muslims give sacrifices to talibés to be blessed, especially on Fridays.

Common for all the talibés we met is a convincing dedication to Allah Islam, which enables to endure the often-harsh living conditions that they face. The case

of Mohammed, below, is the story of a dedicated talibé in Mali who told us that he would want the same life for his own son:

Mohammed was given to his uncle (his father's younger brother), who was a marabout, when he was only a baby so that he would learn the Koran. The uncle had talibés living in his house, and Mohammed joined them when he was four years old. Like the other children, Mohammed was begging for a living, but his uncle gave him some food and clothes in addition. When he was fifteen years old, his uncle died and he moved back to his father. The following three years he did not receive any religious education. When he was eighteen years old, his father gave him permission to join another marabout. He has stayed with this marabout for seven years now. Mohammed is married to a woman that his father chose for him. They have one daughter. Mohammed earns some money by writing letters for people, an activity practiced by all the older talibés. All other incomes he might have go directly to the marabout.

The life of Mohammed at the Koran schools did not strike us as particularly tough in the West African context; he was happy to stay with the two marabouts and could even have a family life. We also met with a group of talibé boys in Ouagadougou. They came from diverse parts of the country, had differing backgrounds, and stayed with different marabouts in and around the capital. Their appearance was poor and they were reluctant to talk about their situation, instead using verses from the Koran to answer some of our questions. They reluctantly admitted that life with a marabout was tough, but assured us that they felt lucky to be able to gain higher religious knowledge. Below is the story of twelve-year-old Ali, the only one willing to talk to us alone:

Ali described the living and working conditions he has to endure at the marabout as miserable. He admitted that he is not treated well and that he does not get enough to eat. Sometimes there are even quarrels and fighting among the boys over food. Although his family is very religious, Ali said he is sure that his father would not keep him at the marabout's if he knew what the conditions are like. Every day they have Koran lessons at night and early in the morning. Moreover, they all participate in prayers at the mosque. At his marabout's one of the boys is cleaning plates in a restaurant in the morning; another is selling water at a mosque. In addition they are all out in the streets begging for food and money in their tomato cans. On a daily basis they give everything they receive in their cans to the marabout for him to bless it. The marabout will later return to them what he finds appropriate. If Ali one day has got both meat and rice in his can, the marabout will typically take the meat and let Ali keep the rice for himself. They are told that they will fall ill and die if they eat any of the food before the

marabout has blessed it. Despite the hardships, Ali is determined to stay with the marabout until he has completed the education – i.e. normally seven years. When it is time for him to return home, he would like to assist his father who is a farmer. However, he would still go back to see his marabout from time to time.

Mohammed and Ali's stories give an indication of the variations within this form of relocation. Despite his discontent, Ali shows some of the same loyalty towards his master as Mohammed did, in wanting to go back to see him even after having returned home. Although NGOs tend to see the Koranic schools as exploiters of children, people in general, including well educated ones, see these schools as a way for a child to have an education that will make them good Muslims. Nevertheless, the meeting with the talibés revealed that, even if they are not all exploited, these children are highly vulnerable in that they have a lot of respect for, and even fear of, the marabouts and are afraid to lose the important opportunity to have a religious education.

Thus, as is the case in fosterage and domestic work, the overriding impression is that living and working conditions among the talibés are variable and at the discretion of the marabout, as they are to the employer or the head of family in the household arena.

## **Work places**

We will in this section describe the working and living conditions of children in the workplace arenas included in our field work: workshops and apprenticeship centres, petty trade and other businesses in the streets and marketplaces, fisheries, plantations, and farms. The main purpose of children working in these arenas, with the exception of apprenticeship, is to make money. Indeed, in his survey from Niger, Rain (1999) found that the main reason for migration was to obtain money, food, or both. The money that the children earn is needed for various reasons. Many girls go to work in order to save money to buy the equipment they need for their trousseau at the time of marriage; however, a number of girls also told us that they were saving money in order to go back to school and complete their education. A number of the boys we talked to told us they were saving money to pay for an apprenticeship position.

This section demonstrates that education and other forms of qualification for work represent scarce commodities for a huge portion of the population in the three countries. Accordingly, parents and children might be willing to make sacrifices and take risks in order to attain educational and other advantages. As we will see below,

and further discuss in the next chapter, there are people who take advantage of the vulnerable positions of some of these parents and their children.

### **Workshops and apprenticeship centres**

The distinction between apprenticeship/work on the one hand and fostering on the other is not always easy to delineate. Take for example the training provided by a family in a village in Mali, where Oumo, the first wife of the head of the household, runs a restaurant:

Oumo says that her foster daughters are indispensable for the running of the restaurant and that without their help she would have to hire external labourers. She explains that when her current foster daughters reach marriage age, she will have to look for other relatives to foster.

Apprenticeship has a long tradition in each of the three countries of our study. In general, the idea is to learn a trade from a master or someone trained or experienced in a specific profession. In reality the arrangements are extremely varied, and depend both on the general nation and/or regional rules and customs as well as the individual master-pupil relations and the kind of trade being learned. However, normally children have to pay a fee to be accepted as apprentices and are not paid during the apprenticeship period, which typically lasts for two to three years. The most common types of apprenticeships for girls are sewing, embroideries, weaving, tailoring, and knitting, whereas boys are trained in mechanics, carpentering, welding, fishing, tailoring and as assistants on trucks. Sometimes the trainees are provided with food at the work place, but this is at the master's discretion. Apprentices in different trades are also in some cases expected to help out with domestic chores and run errands – all part of learning the job.

During our fieldworks, we observed some extremely poor workplace conditions for apprentices, including some that were dangerous due to lack of security equipment. The description below is from a mechanics workshop for cars, light motorcycles, and trucks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. During our visit to the workshop we observed five boys, 15 – 22 years old, working as apprentices:

The electric welding equipment was in a very bad condition; for example the transformer was not at all secured. There were also no plug on the electric line and the cables were directly attached into the wall outlet. Moreover, the equipment was not grounded. One of the adolescents was welding the petrol tank on a light motorcycle without even using a protection mask. Apparently they had access to an old mask, but this was hardly used by anyone. The boys said that none of them had been involved in any major accidents during work. However,

we could not avoid noticing that they all had a lot of wounds from burnings on their arms and in their faces. The boys had previously eaten at the workshop during their break. However, they were now forced to go home to eat because there were not enough clients to pay for their food. Despite these working conditions and the fact that they were not getting paid at all, they all stated they wanted to stay. This was their introduction to the adult labour market and their ticket to a proper job. They were also well aware of the difficulties in getting a job as apprentice. When asked about their hopes for the future, they first raised their shoulders as if to say “what future?” but later added that they hoped to open their own workshop. When asked about his responsibilities towards the apprentices their master said: “I am educating these boys; I am not involved in child work!” He also said he does not feel responsible for the boys in the sense of having to give them food, etc.: If they have nothing to eat, it is not his problem. The market decides. He added that he might give them something to eat when he earns sufficient money, which is not the case in the current situation.

There is an excess demand for apprenticeship positions. This puts the employers in a powerful position, enabling them to take advantage of the child’s willingness to learn a profession – and eventually gain access to the adult labour market – without having to provide safe and healthy working and living conditions. Likewise, apprenticeship may lead to economic exploitation of the apprentice, as the latter execute tasks that the master would otherwise have to pay salaries for. Consequently, the apprentices may fall victim to many types of exploitation, and yet consider themselves lucky compared to friends and acquaintances.

### **Petty trade and other informal sector businesses**

Petty trade and other informal sector businesses generally attract children who lack any other means of making money; there is typically little, if any, educational component in this kind of work. Young male migrant workers will take up farm work in plantations and farms, herd animals, or take occasional small jobs, such as pushing hand wagons and trucks, shining shoes, or selling vegetables, aliments, ice water, ice cream and other merchandise at the marketplace or in the streets. They move around and take on different types of jobs for varying lengths of time.

Child work migrants often end up working and living in the streets, marketplaces or bus stations in the areas where they find work. Only with luck do they find a shelter or someone to stay with, such as a relative. Some of them end up as beggars, especially if they cannot find any jobs. Often begging is combined with the selling of small objects, such as phone cards, but it is also associated with prostitution.

Child migration resulting in prostitution - either in brothels, hotels, nightclubs, or on the streets - is a phenomenon encountered in all three countries. Prostitution ranges from short meetings (by the hour) to “escorting” one customer for weeks or months. Among street prostitutes, one can meet girls as young as nine. Prostitutes often operate in specific areas of the major cities, and girls rarely prostitute themselves in their area of origin. For example in Sikasso in Mali, there are prostitutes from nearby countries (such as Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin and Nigeria); in Ouagadougou, there are prostitutes from different villages around the country and Nigeria; and in Accra there are girls from the north of the country as well as from Togo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Niger. There are also Ghanaian prostitutes in Nigeria, though it is uncertain whether they are children, or beyond the age of eighteen.

Life in the streets or without permanent shelter is difficult. Children might be beaten and abused or have their savings stolen. Their work burdens are often heavy, and working hours long. Some children take drugs to cope with the hard work. Eighteen year-old Dominique is an example. He originates from Bamako, Mali but after having travelled around seeking work, has settled down in Orodara, in the Kenedougou region of Burkina Faso, considered the country’s fruit chamber:

The first day in Orodara, Dominique had met Bakary, a young boy who organizes the day-to-day work of the children hanging out in the bus station of Orodara, at the bus station and joined the group. Dominique works with the hand wagon. He has staid for more than a year now and he presently rent a house with a friend. For the time being he always has enough money to eat. During wintertime, there is not so much work that needs to be done; so one would always have to save up money for this period. It is also during this period that they go into the bush to cultivate for food. Dominique did not cultivate in the bush last year, because he did not have money to buy grains. There are two other Malians in the group, one from Gao and one from Bamako. They are older than him and he does not know if they came on their own or what. To push the hand wagon is very hard work, so he usually takes a medicine to cope. This medicine that can be bought in the pharmacy, is called Chocorba Biribla. Directly translated it means “the old man throw away his walking stick”. He normally takes it to be able to sleep and to be able to get up in the morning. He does not take it all the time, only when things are bad. A lot of the children do, just to cope. Today for instance, he had a very hard working day at the market place, so he took it.

In addition to illustrating the hard work endured by children taking on day-to-day work, Dominique’s story is an example of how children must undertake various activities to survive, such as cultivating their own crop in the wintertime. On

the other hand, in a fertile area like Orodara, starvation is less present than in less fertile areas.

In Orodara, child migrant workers from Mali, Burkina Faso and other places easily find work during the harvest season. The fruit town attracts truckloads of children from Mali, Ivory Coast, and Niger. Jobs mainly consist of pushing hand wagons with fruit loads and picking and loading fruit on trucks. The children themselves organise at least some of the work from the local bus station. However, the work is sometimes hazardous, as the case of Bengaly (originating from Orodara) shows:

Bengaly was involved in fruit loading onto big trucks. One day he and a number of other children were sitting on top of a truck loaded with fruits when the truck fell over. Bengaly was hurt in the accident and has since been limping. A lot of the other children were hurt as well and six of them died from the accident. Bengali is now pushing the hand wagon in the market place in Orodara.

In Ghana in particular, children face tough conditions in the market places. In Accra and other cities, girls working as porters (kayayee) carry heavy workloads on their heads, and sometimes die premature deaths due to the hazards on the street. An NGO that assists girls working in one of the major markets of Accra told us the following story:

The girl had carried somebody's load on the head when she hit her foot and fell. In order to avoid destroying the goods she was carrying on her head, she sat down on her back while balancing her heavy load unspoiled on top of her head. The madam who owned the goods took it and paid the girl 2 000 cedis (=0.2 euro). It only later appeared that the girl had broken her spine in the fall. Meanwhile somebody carried her to the place they were sleeping. The next day all the girl's acquaintances had to go out working and there was nobody there to look after her. When they returned she was dead.

The female kayayees feature in every marketplace in Ghana. In Accra, the majority of the kayayees from the Walewale district of Ghana's Northern Region live in one of the city's major bus stations, the Tema Station. We visited the Tema Station one night to talk to some of the girls living there. It had started getting dark when we arrived at the station. The station area was huge and chaotic, an impression heightened by the multitude of vendors and mini-buses. We left the main bus area and turned left at a sanitary block in the outskirts of the station. The complex, which consisted of one female and one male department of toilets and showers, was crowded with young girls and babies; a few men could also be observed. At the back of the sanitary block we entered the "residence" area of the young girls. On the walls

there were small plastic bags wherein the girls kept their clothes and belongings. One of the girls we met at the station was 17 year-old Ashia:

Ashia is from the Walewale district, where she for the last six years has been living with her father's sister and the latter's nine biological children. In Accra she works as a kayayee. On good days she makes 30 – 35 000 cedis (=3 Euro) and on bad days she only makes 15 – 20 000 cedis. Last week she worked from Monday to Friday and made 70 000 cedis; out of this amount she spent more than 10 000 for food and for using the bath and toilet (which costs 600 cedis each time). Sometimes she also needs money for a new dress or for medicines. She gets up at 4 a. m. and sets off to the market. When the market closes at 4 p.m., there is normally no more work to be done. A sleeping place is a major problem for Ashia and the other girls who sleep at the station. Ashia does not have a fixed sleeping place, and when it rains they have nowhere to take refuge until the rain stops. In addition to the problems regarding sleeping place, Ashia says she fears boys who disturb her while she sleeps, and thieves who steal her things and the money she has made. However, she does not have a lot of things. All she brought from home were a few dresses. Like the others, she keeps her things in plastic bags on the wall. Ashia was happy in her aunt's household, but left to make some money on her own: "I came to find money". She wants to continue her education and needs money to pay for it. She adds that as she has been staying with her aunt for the last six years to attend a nearby school, she now wants to pay something back to the aunt's family: "I want to help them".

The living conditions for the girls at the Tema Station make the girls highly vulnerable to disease, theft and various forms of abuse. They have no privacy and no fixed place to sleep. When it is raining they have to find shelter under a roof, or spend the night standing along a wall for shelter. It is also well known that boys and men offer the girls "protection", i.e. safety during night, for payment - either in cash or through sexual favours. Unsafe sex, pregnancies, and illegal abortions thereby represent significant health risks to the girls. Moreover, a number of kayayees can be observed carrying their babies on their backs and heavy loads on their heads. This practice is unhealthy for both the child and the mother, because of the heat of the sun and the heavy load.

Mary is another girl living at the Tema Station. She is 18 year-old, and had come to Accra from the Walewale district a couple of months earlier. She told us she planned to stay for two more months before returning home. She came to Accra to "look for money". She is now selling cooked rice and cleaning dishes for somebody:

Mary says she does not like this place, but she sees no alternatives. The main problem she faces at the station is the lack of a proper sleeping place; when it

rains she has no place to sleep at all, and during night there are boys and men who wake her up and bother her. She sometimes has a headache. When this happens or she gets sick in other ways, she buys medicines from selling boys in the area. Mary feels like going home but needs money to pay her school fee. If somebody offers her to return to Accra when she is back home, she will definitely turn the offer down. If somebody asks her how it was like to work in Accra, she will tell him or her to go and see for themselves. She claims nobody will believe her if she told them how bad she finds it: "They will say I am telling lies. They have to go and see for themselves how bad it really is."

A third girl we met at the Tema Station was 16 year-old Amina. She does not live at the station, but comes by on a daily basis to collect and deposit bags of ice water:

Amina said she came to Accra because of money – she wants to save money to go back to school. When she left home she was in Senior Secondary class 2. Amina travelled alone to Accra and she is now living with her aunt and selling ice water for a living. The reason why she is at the station is that she needs to put the five bags of ice water she has left in the fridge. Amina's brother gave her money to cover the transport by bus to Accra. When she arrived she contacted her aunt (mother's sister). Her aunt is divorced and has no children on her own. She sometimes assaults Amina if she has not sold enough water bags. Another problem is that the aunt has no place to live on her own, but is staying in her sister's house. Moreover, the aunt daily gives Amina a number of assignments to carry out. Hence, the day is more or less gone before Amina can start selling ice water. She leaves the house at 3 a. m. and gets home around 10 p. m. Amina saves the money she makes in an informal saving system called "susu". She has managed to save approximately 500 000 (=45 euro) cedis up to now. She needs approximately 2 million cedis to go back to school. She keeps a card where her susu-balance is written. In the beginning she used to keep the money she made with her aunt, but because the aunt would not give her money if she needed any, she started saving in the susu. When addressing the problems she faces being out on the streets, Amina emphasises boys giving her proposals she does not agree to. She also sometimes gets stomach pains and body ache. She says she believes this is due to the hot sun. Moreover, nose bleeding troubles her, but this is something that has bothered her since childhood. She assumes this also occurs because of the hard work in the sun. Amina says she has received other job offers, one of these being from a restaurant. She turned down this particular offer because she neither liked the minimal dress she would have to wear, nor the fact that the job required that she entertain men.

The above examples illustrate the hazardous, harsh working conditions and dangerous living conditions faced by the children on the street, especially girls and the youngest children. Disturbingly, the director of a home for children in Ouagadougou (*Fondation les Enfants de Dieu pour la Paix Universelle*) told us that they pick children as young as two years off the streets. These children can be difficult to reach or help, as there are no organization or records of where and who they are - even though the children themselves have some sort of organising systems, as in the case of Orodara (where one boy organizes the allocation of day-to-day work) or in the case of the money saving system in Tema station. One NGO in Burkina Faso, (*l'Association Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs*) used the fact that Bakary organizes the work of the children in Orodara as a mean of informing and enlightening child workers on their rights; they have introduced Bakary to children's rights, and he passes it on to other children.

In the following section we shall see that living and working conditions can also be unkind also in more organised labour sectors, with fishery as a chief example.

## **Fishery**

Fishery is a sector where child labour is common. Child workers are working either with relatives or with strangers in fishery, both on Lake Volta in Ghana and in the Ivory Coast. On Lake Volta, children are recruited as young as four. Whereas girls are recruited to process the fish, the youngest boys are assigned to fetch water out of the boat and mend broken fishing nets. As they grow older, they are trained to dive and disentangle the nets that are stuck in the water. The work carried out by the boys is extremely hard and hazardous, especially considering the low age of many of the children involved. Moreover, the children are given poor lodging, and little, non-nutritious food. Punishment for failure to carry out the assigned tasks is commonplace, and includes denial of food and clothing. Some of the children suffer physical injuries due to this treatment, and it is known that a number of children have died from drowning while diving in the lake. Diving in the lake also represents health risks in terms of infectious parasites.

The oldest boy we met from the lake was 16 – 17 year old Joshua, who was rescued from the lake last year after having spent almost ten years working there with his paternal uncle:

Joshua left home when he was around seven years old. He cannot remember clearly, but he believes he was in class two at the time. Before he left, he lived with his mother. It was his father's brother who took him to the lake to work with him. During the first years, Joshua's main task was to fetch water out of the boat. When he turned eight – nine years old, he was given the task of diving

into the lake to disentangle the fishing nets. His uncle taught him how to dive. He was afraid to do it, but his uncle forced him to get used to it. Joshua also had to take part in fishing with hook, an activity that takes place from late in the evening and goes on all night. Joshua says he found the hook fishing to be the most difficult job on the lake: He would not get any sleep during night and they were also not given time to rest when they came back to shore. They would be back from the lake around 1 p. m., then eat and carry out other tasks before they had to set off for another night on the lake. Joshua says he often had to work many nights on a row. Joshua found the work very tiring and told his uncle he wanted to go home. The uncle only responded by threatening him, saying that if he once more said he wanted to go home he would lock him up. Joshua asked where this would happen, and the uncle said: "In the police station!" Joshua laughs a bit while telling us about this incident. Joshua is happy to be back, although he is left with nothing besides the bad experiences after his ten years at the lake. He never received any payment for his labour on the lake. The uncle took all the money. Only if he badly needed something, the uncle would give him money or buy him clothes. If he fell sick, the uncle would buy him medicines, but he would never allow him to stay home and take some rest. Joshua used to be troubled a lot with stomach pains and dysentery. Joshua's own father is dead. His mother is a single mother, but has remarried. Joshua is now living with his mother and his stepfather. He has seven brothers and nine sisters, none of whom have been taken to work. Joshua says he would not advise a young boy to go to get involved in the kind of work he did. "The work is too tiring for a child", he says. Another reason for saying this is that during his stay he saw three very young children die. They all drowned while diving. Joshua knows that these particular children were not living with their own fathers but had been brought to the lake by somebody else. One of the boys, Joshua recalls, came back up from the water after having dived to disentangle a net. The boy's master yelled at him, accusing him for having taken too much time to carry out the task, and started beating him in the head with a paddle. The boy immediately died. Joshua claims he has no hard feelings towards his uncle, but blames him for having disorganised his life. Joshua wants to go to school, and he wants his future children to go to school too: "I want to give them what I have lost".

Joshua's story is not unique; in communities related to the fishing industry on the lake, stories like Joshua's were repeatedly narrated. Common denominators among the stories are the hazardous working and living conditions the children are forced into; the dangerous tasks the boys must carry out on the lake; and the maltreatment with respect to both social/emotional development and nutrition.

The recruitment and exploitation of a relative is another common factor. Kofi's story is illustrative. He was taken by his own father to the lake to work and worked with his father during his entire stay at the lake:

The father had promised to take him to a place where he could go to school, but during the three years they stayed at the lake he was never admitted to school. Kofi had wanted to ask his father why he did not admit him to the local school, but he had been too afraid to do so. At the lake, Kofi worked from early in the morning till late at night. He often had to fish with hook all night. Kofi says the work was very tiring. It was windy on the lake and he was afraid the canoe would capsize. Finally he told his father that he wanted to go to school. The father did not like the idea, but in the end he agreed to take him back. We asked Kofi whether he had made friends with any of the other children working at the lake and whether he could talk to them about his fears and longing back to school. Kofi said he did get friends, but he did not dare to talk to them about how he felt about being there. The reason being that he feared one of them would pass this on to his father and he would be punished.

One of Kofi's schoolmates, Paul, was also taken by his father to the lake and given to a fisherman. Paul was rescued last year, when he was ten years old. He is now living with his grandparents and is back in school. We met him in the schoolyard:

Paul tells us he had to dive in the lake to disentangle the fishing nets. When he was out of breath and needed to go to the surface, his master would hit him with the paddle. One time he got a cut. He also tells us about the three children he saw die at the lake. Paul says he was afraid of certain creatures in the water and also the tree stems floating around. He says he was afraid to die. He tells about one occasion when there was a windstorm and the boat capsized. He managed to cling to a tree stem and in this way avoided drowning. After this experience, and also having seen other children drown, he told his master he did not want to do this work anymore. The master punished him by not giving him food for some time.

Paul's grandmother told us that Paul sometimes talks to her about his experiences at the lake; he has told her about the children he saw drown and how he received neither money nor clothes. In fact, at the time Paul was rescued he was still wearing his old and heavily torn clothes, which were in such a poor state that the NGO had to send him clothes for his return journey.

These children were therefore deprived of several years, if not all, of their childhood and forced to carry out tasks of high risk to their mental and physical health, without receiving any kind of remuneration. Consistent with the findings above, kinship is no guarantee of being well-treated, as demonstrated by the fact that only

one of the children in our examples worked for a non-related employer while the two others worked for their uncle and father. Fishery is thus one sector where we know severe exploitation occurs; regardless of how children end up there and with whom they work.

### **Plantations and farms**

The conditions for children working in the agricultural sector in the region vary dramatically from easy work together with the family on weekends to slave-like conditions on plantations. Child work on farms and plantations is prevalent in terms of work migration from Burkina Faso and Mali to the Ivory Coast. Until the outbreak of the war in 2002, Burkinabés (families, adults, adolescents and children) had for generations migrated to work in farms and plantations in the Ivory Coast.

Although Ghana is the world's second biggest producer of cocoa (the biggest being the Ivory Coast), it was convincingly argued for us that child labour is not common on Ghanaian cocoa farms. One of our respondents claimed that the main reason for the absence of child labour is the relatively small size of the Ghanaian cocoa farms – a consequence of the country's land-holding system. Moreover, cocoa harvesting involves tasks that demand precision and should therefore be performed by mature persons. For example, a child may destroy the cushion where the cocoa pod is attached to the plant, a costly error, as there will be no more pods growing from that particular spot of the plant. Another important task in cocoa production is removal of parasite trees growing near or on the cocoa plant, yet a child may not be able to distinguish the parasite tree from the cocoa plant and remove the wrong chunk. Furthermore, the cocoa trees are often very tall and the pods are plucked using a stick with a long, sharp hook attached to its end – not a very child-friendly task. Although children on Ghanaian cocoa farms help out in their leisure time, their tasks are generally restricted to assisting in gathering the cocoa pods from the ground and distributing water and food to the labourers.

The situation that prevails on Ghanaian cocoa farms is unfortunately not the case throughout the region. Indeed, the story of the 19 year-old twin-brothers Oumar and Mohamed is an example of how children are sometimes treated by unscrupulous employers. The brothers were taken from Burkina Faso to the Ivory Coast to work on a farm, where they were severely exploited:

The twins lived in a hut in the fields for six years. The two boys were the only ones living and working in the fields. The fields were situated far from the compound. Oumar said he did not know exactly how far. In the beginning they would get food that was made by the wife of their employer, but after some weeks they stopped getting food. Oumar believes they had got food in the beginning

because the patron was afraid they would run away and after a while, when he saw that they were not able to run away, he had stopped feeding them. When they did get food, they had eaten manioc ragout in the morning, manioc at noon, and manioc in the evening. After they stopped getting food, they had to work at the neighbour's farm before and after work at their master's farm to gain money for food. They bought and prepared rice, or they would find fruits in the forest or steal manioc from their patron. Their master was aware of the fact that they were working for the neighbour to get money for food. Oumar said he thinks the neighbour had an agreement with their master, so that it would not be possible for them only to work for him. An average day for the twins would look like this: They would rise at 5 a. m. to do their prayers, or even earlier if they had work to do at the neighbouring farm. They started work in their master's field at 6 a. m. and worked here until noon, when they had a break of about 20 minutes to eat. The work consisted in cutting hay and making haystacks, harvesting cocoa, grains, coffee, and grains of palm trees. There was no difference in workload between seasons; the patron would always keep them busy. The only relief they had was that of every Friday, when they would clean up and go to the Mosque at noon because their master was a good Muslim. The master did not work in the fields himself, but he came there to control the boys' work. If he was unhappy with what they had done, he would draw a line and say that they should not stop until they had finished everything up to that line, even though it would take all night. It was dangerous to work in the fields both because of the snakes and because of the sharp tools they used. Once Mohamed had got a severe cut from his machete and was ill for ten days. If they were ill and could not work, their master said he would compensate by reducing their salary that he gave to their father. Actually, it later turned out that no money at all had ever been given to their father.

The story of the Malian group of children below, told to us by Jean Claude, shows that the experiences of Oumar and Mohamed are not unique. In this case, the boys were held more or less as prisoners:

There were twenty Malian children on a plantation in Ivory Coast. Usually they started to work at 6 a. m. and returned from the fields twelve hours later. They worked with cultivation of cotton, maize, coffee and yams. Some older workers showed them how the work should be done. Jean Claude told us he found the work very difficult. They did not get enough time to learn how the work should be done, and if they did not carry out the work in the right way, they would be punished. They worked all day without breaks; except for a small lunch break around two o'clock in the afternoon. As there was no breakfast, except for some

green papayas and plantain that they might find in the fields, they did not eat anything before the maize gruel that was served at this break. The second and last meal of the day was served in the evening and consisted of the same maize gruel and nothing else. When the work in the fields was finished, they had to carry water to the women in their employer's household. They could not get water for themselves, but being at the water-source, they sometimes took the opportunity to wash themselves. All of the Malian boys slept in one room. They used banana leaves as mattresses. The roof of the house was not resistant against the rain and consequently the banana leaves were always humid. The entrance door was locked from the outside at night. If they had to urinate during the night, they did so through a small gap in the wall, or they had a bucket. If they urgently needed to get out during night, they had to knock on the door and ask one of the guards to let them out. The guards always accompanied them at night, as the owner was afraid they would try to run away. Even when they were ill, the boys were forced to work. If they were not able to do so, they would be punished. Once one of the boys was seriously ill, but the masters did not believe him and started beating him. The boy stayed ill for eleven days and the employer said he would not pay him for these days – as if this made a difference when none of them were ever paid.

In the first example, it is intuitive to ask why Mohamed and his brother accepted the conditions they were living under and did not try to escape during the six years. The answer given to us by the twins indicated why young children with little education are recruited by exploitative employers and sectors like the fishery and to some extent, agricultural sector: namely, that they are young, ignorant, and at least initially unaware that they might have other alternatives. This was also the general impression of a social worker we met in Orodara. In the last example, it is also explicable why the employer chose to lock in the boys at night, namely that otherwise they would try to escape. In the same logic, it goes without saying that it would be difficult to recruit children to such farms without exploiting ignorance by using fraud or force. We will come back to the recruitment process in both cases in the next chapter, where we will elaborate on recruitment into, and exit from, different arenas.

## **Conditions in relocation arenas**

Thus, it is evident that living and working conditions vary both within, and between, arenas. We also believe that the degree of freedom of movement in and out of the

relocation arenas is closely linked to the working and living conditions therein, as well as to the background and motivations of the children and families affected. Specially, there is a tendency for children to endure hardship if there is a purpose in what they do - either in the form of receiving an education, achieving higher religious knowledge, or attaining other rare commodities. In sum, children enter and leave these arenas according to conditions, experiences, opportunities, and coping strategies, something that will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

It is important to stress that, although we have focused on living and working conditions of relocated children found in traditional arenas of relocation, most findings are also relevant for children that are not relocated but work in similar arenas. Children may face tough working conditions in the compound of their parents, or in workshops, the fields, marketplaces, or the streets while living with their parents. The case of Bengaly, who hurt himself in the truck accident, is a good example although some of the other children involved in the accident were migrants; Bengaly himself originates from Orodara and lives with his father. Similarly, one eighteen-year-old orphan boy we met from Réo, Burkina Faso, had to cultivate his father's land on his own in order to feed himself and two younger siblings. The tough living and working conditions he faced in his place of birth would, perhaps, make leaving - like a lot of children from his village did - an easier solution for him. The most extreme cases of bad working and living conditions of children under the responsibility of their parents that we heard of, belonged to the children living with their parents in the streets around the Mosques of Ouagadougou, who made a living from begging during the day and selling their body during the night. Working children that we met with in Ouagadougou said that, given the chance, they would leave their parents compound without hesitation in hope for a better life.

### **3 Coping with Perceived Opportunities**

Our study indicates that child relocation may be initiated either by the child's parent(s), by the child her/himself, by an intermediary who could be a relative, by an acquaintance or a stranger, or, in some cases, by the employer. In none of these alternatives can it be guaranteed that the outcome of the relocation is in accordance with the best interests of the child, nor can we conclude that any of the recruitment processes are automatically linked to trafficking or bad treatment. The relocation process may be more or less motivated and premeditated.

In this chapter, we will explore the logic behind decisions made with regard to child relocation, as this may have consequences for the child's vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking. It is particularly important to determine if, why, and how recruitment to various arenas of relocation takes place, and how children move both between and out of these relocation arenas. Getting at these crucial questions will enable us to identify children at risk of being trafficked, as well as the arenas or parts of arenas of relocation where children are most likely to be exploited. As indicated in the last chapter, findings suggest that the conditions found within the different arenas are linked to the motives for relocation and the recruitment process, as well as the ability to move in and out of those arenas.

#### **Leaving home**

Most parents who send their child(ren) away for work or education do it for the benefit of the child, and have faith that one day the child will return home better equipped than when he/she left home. In other words, the motivation for sending a child away is based on a belief that this is the best alternative for the child with regards to both current conditions and future prospects. Of course, one must bear in mind that people – both parents and children – act with reference to their specific situation and can only choose from what they perceive as alternatives. Hence, whereas some children and/or parents might choose between different forms of relocation, such as fostering or work migration (with or without supervision), others are forced to accept less desirable offers, out of necessity and/or for lack of viable alternatives. Unsurprisingly, having a narrow set of options may have negatively

impact the chances of obtaining a result in accordance with the best interests of the child in question, in that he or she may have no alternative but to accept bad working and/or living conditions. Our findings indicate that having a narrow set of options may result from knowledge shortage, a difficult social or economic situation, or simply the lack of a social or family network.

It appears that the accumulation of resources and selection of alternatives and opportunities are denser in the cities and regional centres than in rural areas. Accordingly, the majority of child relocation goes from rural to urban areas, and likewise from less-developed to more-developed areas or countries, with the exception of migration to agricultural centres for seasonal work during the harvest. The motivating factor is to have a share of the resources they expect to find in the area of relocation.

In any case, child relocation should be understood in the context of a child's and/or family's given set of opportunities and concomitant coping strategy. Appiah and Afranie (2001) suggest that parental poverty is the main factor pushing children into, e.g., domestic work and argue that this is reinforced by the children's lack of education, as this limits their opportunities to get into other activities - and, in the case of girls, increases the parents' fear that they would get pregnant if not sent away. Moreover, they argue that, for school dropouts in particular, the alternative to domestic work commonly is learning a trade through apprenticeship. Due to the fee generally required for such training, parents might choose to send the child out as a commercial household domestic help in return for some kind of remuneration. The children themselves welcome the opportunity to become domestic workers, due to perceived benefit of this particular apprenticeship training and the absence of other opportunities for self-improvement (Appiah and Afranie 2001).

Where poverty is present, child work migration can be a coping strategy, as a means to feed the child and possibly also the family. Children would go on work migration and send money back to the family, or simply bring it with them upon return. A typical case of going on child migration for purely economic reasons is the case of fourteen year-old Ismaél, who ended up in a child home in Ouagadougou:

Ismaél told us that it was his father who had ordered him to go to Ouagadougou. He had accompanied him to the bus himself. Ismaél wanted to go himself, because he wanted to work. He admitted that there was not always enough food on the table at home and that it was a relief for the parents when he left. First of all he wanted to work to have food, but secondly he hoped to be able to send home money, which he had not been able to yet. His father had had an agreement with a friend in Ouagadougou that would receive the boy and find work for him. This friend had not found any work, and after two weeks in the friend's family, he was taken to the child home, because he had been told that the director

“la vieille” could find work. Later this same friend had brought Ismaél’s younger brothers to the centre as “la vieille” had found work for Ismaél. He had been in Ouagadougou for one and a half years now. He would never go back to the village as life was better here.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, education – considered broadly, encompassing socialisation and social upbringing – also plays a special role in motivating many forms of relocation. A key element in the association between relocation and education is the fact that, for many people, education is a scarce commodity that is difficult to obtain. Hence, parents and children might be willing to make sacrifices and take risks in order to achieve this precious good. Again, the choice that parents (and children) make must be considered contextually. If parents consider education to be in the best interest of their child, they would choose the type of education and the means of obtaining it according to the opportunities, information, and background that they possess; these in turn depend on their geographical situation, standard of living, social network, and own education.

The classic example of relocation for education is educational fosterage, but this is dependent upon the existence of a family network able to receive the child as well as the conviction of the child and/or the parents that this is the best way to obtain education in a wide sense. In some cases, educational fosterage is not considered interesting or is impossible. Obtaining a position as an apprentice is another option, and may be considered more relevant for future prospects than formal education; children will then relocate to obtain an apprenticeship if such positions are scarce where they live. Parents may occasionally choose to send children away even if there are possibilities nearby, in the conviction that their children will work harder that way. Yet, the high demand for apprenticeship positions, combined with lack of advanced knowledge, makes sending a child away without supervision a risky decision that could end up in exploitation.

In still other cases, children relocate to find work in order to finance school fees or apprenticeship positions, where they are again put in a position where they have no choice but to endure possibly harsh work and living conditions. In the special case of receiving religious education from a marabout, living under demanding conditions is seen as part of the education.

A key motivating factor for relocation is the fact that doing nothing is not an option in many families; thus if the child’s work force is not needed at home and no other jobs are available, dropouts from school are likely to relocate either on their own initiative or on their parents’. The earlier a child drops out of school, the earlier he or she leaves. Often a child’s decision to dropout from school and departure is triggered by a family crisis such as death, divorce, or poverty. Other times – like in the case of sixteen-year old Kalifa – an external situation is to blame:

Kalifa had been forced to quit school after 4<sup>th</sup> grade as a consequence of a quarrel between his father and the director of the school. When he was sixteen, he had saved enough money for the transport to a nearby town and left the village on his own initiative to find work there.

The case of Oumar and his twin brother, Mohamed (page 31), is similar. Their father accepted an offer from a stranger, who promised the boys work on a farm in Ivory Coast:

When the brothers came back to school after summer holidays, their teacher stated that those who did not take notes during the lesson would be punished. Oumar and Mohamed had neither notebooks nor pencils because their father could not afford it. Consequently they had no notes to show after the lesson and were severely beaten. When the brothers came home, their father got upset when he saw their bruises and wounds. He confronted the teacher, who got so angry that he prohibited the boys ever to come back to school. The father tried to apologise, both personally and through two mediators, but the teacher had not been willing to forgive him. Oumar and Mohamed had to quit school and found themselves in the vulnerable position of non-activity. This situation lasted for a couple of months, until their father decided that they should go to Bamako in Mali where they had two uncles who could find work for them. However, at the same time a woman came to talk to the boys' father about sending them to Ivory Coast to work on her brother's farm. The boys said they preferred to go to Bamako to live with their uncles. However, their father said they should go to Ivory Coast because this would be an adventure for them; he would like them to travel, see the world, and experience new and exiting things.

In this case the father made the decision by following two events: the death of their mother earlier, and then the exclusion from school.

From a child's perspective, a longing for social and economic advancement, combined with a desire for adventure, often play an important role in deciding to leave home. If these desires are combined with bad living or working conditions, the lack of a meaningful occupation, or precipitating events at home, as in the case of Kalifa above or Marlène (page 47), the incentive to leave is even stronger. A girl we met with in Ouagadougou, even when told about the dangers she risked by leaving, asked us why wouldn't she leave? While she knew about the dangers, she was also working very hard at home - so how could it be worse? In this respect, peer pressure, including friends and acquaintances who have been successful, represent important push factors. Stories of bad experiences are rarely passed on; as Mary argued in the previous chapter, nobody will believe her if she told them how bad

she found her living and working conditions in Accra: “They will say I am telling lies. They have to go and see for themselves how bad it really is.”

The leaving home process can take many forms, and be conducted on the initiative of different actors. Fosterage, more so than child work migration, is a family decision. Indeed, children go on work migration with or without the knowledge of parents or other caretakers, either on their own initiative or on the initiative of a friend or a complete stranger. Sometimes children leave on the spot, without informing anyone or bringing anything other than the clothes they wear. This was the case of the now 15 year-old Madou in Mali:

One day, three years ago, Madou was on his way home from school together with his younger brother and some friends when a stranger stopped them. The stranger offered Madou a new bike if he would come with him in his car. At first Madou refused because – as the man could see for himself – he already had a bike. However, the man convinced Madou by saying that the new bike would be much nicer than the one he had. Madou asked his younger brother to take his bike and his bag home and joined the stranger.

Our study indicates that in Mali and Burkina Faso, the decision to relocate a child, if not taken by the child itself, is often taken by the child’s father, and often follows a social or economic event, or simply a feeling that it is time for the child to leave home – either because of age, lack of occupation, or the general dependency burden in the household. The decision to relocate may be in opposition to the will of the child or the child’s mother, although we also came across examples of the mother agreeing to the departure – especially, it seems, as in the case of Allassane below, if she believes that this will benefit the child in terms of increasing the chances that he will work harder and become a better person. In Ghana, conversely, key informants stated that a child’s mother as often as the father takes the initiative to relocate children. Again, in all the three countries there are strong traditions of children leaving on their own initiative to find work.

What is often characteristic of a child’s departure from home, regardless of who has taken the initiative, is the short notice the child is given until the actual departure. Ten- year-old Allassane from Burkina Faso was only given a few hours notice to leave with an acquaintance of his father:

One day when Allassane came home from school at noon to eat, a man that he had never seen before was in their house. The man introduced himself as a friend of his father and informed Allassane that his father wanted him to leave with him at 2 p. m., the same afternoon, to go to work in Ivory Coast. Allassane’s father entered the house and confirmed that he wanted Allassane to leave with this friend. He blessed his son and Allassane had no choice but to grab his bag

and leave with the stranger. Allassane's mother agreed to him leaving and blessed him before he departed. Allassane was a difficult child (an "enfant terrible") and she hoped that this travel would improve his behaviour and that he would work harder when he was away from his parents.

Acting in the best interest of the child, within the context of perceived opportunities, is no guarantee of the outcome, as the work place, apprenticeship, or fosterage arena may not turn out to be what the family or the child expected, or may not be beneficial to the family's coping strategy. Succeeding in the family relocation project (or the child's own relocation project) is dependent upon many factors - including coincidence, luck, and, perhaps, the way the children are recruited.

## **Good intentions are not always enough**

As we have already indicated, it is not always the case that the initiative to leave lies with the family or the child: employers also take the initiative to recruit children, and sometimes make use of amateur or professional intermediaries to make advances for them. We heard of marabouts touring villages to recruit talibés, as well as employers and intermediaries scouring villages to recruit child workers for the agricultural sector, fishery, and domestic and other work. The decision to send the twins Oumar and Mohamed to Ivory Coast was pushed by an intermediary. In this particular case, the intermediary took the initiative towards a father who was already determined to send away his sons; hence, the recruitment job consisted in persuading the father to let the boys leave with her instead of going to their uncles in Bamako. Money was likely one of the means she used to talk the father into letting the boys leave with her, as well as the enticement of the boys being exposed to adventures in another country.

Oumar and Mohamed's case notwithstanding, the intermediaries do not always go through the parents when recruiting a child - as illustrated by the case of Madou in the previous section - nor do they always recruit children from their parental village. Children are also recruited from streets and marketplaces, once they have already been relocated. It is not apparent that all of the children they manage to recruit would have left on their own or at their parents' initiative.

As mentioned above, relocation involves an intermediary - or at least a transaction - and exploitation to qualify as trafficking. Intermediating take different forms, and intermediaries sometimes have diffuse motives for their actions. Thus, relocation - even with the assistance of an intermediary - is not synonymous with trafficking, and treating them as such could lead to faulty conclusions with adverse

consequences for policymaking. When the system functions, an intermediary may actually represent a security net for the child. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that all recruiters have the best interests in mind.

One particular kind of intermediary is the “sponsor”. A sponsor’s responsibilities go beyond recruitment and transport of the child: he or she is also responsible for finding employers and looking after the children entrusted to him/her. Sponsors are often acquaintances or friends of the families or relatives; they can, for instance, be elder siblings providing jobs or apprenticeship positions for their younger brothers or sisters in the same location or near their own workplace. This type of sponsorship borders fostering arrangements. Joel, a sixteen-year-old boy with whom we met in Ouagadougou, is typical:

Joel was picked up by two of his elder brothers and taken to Ouagadougou. Joel’s brothers had found an apprenticeship position for him as a favour to him and to their father. Joel now lives with his brothers in Ouagadougou and is a trainee in mechanics.

In this case, the elder brothers act as transporters, work agency and care providers in order to help out the child and the family. In the case of Ismaél (in the previous section), the sponsor, a friend of the father, took in Ismaél and tried to help him to find work; when that was unsuccessful he left Ismaél at a child home, indicating that his responsibility did not reach as far as that of close family.

A sponsor can also be someone operating on a more professional basis. For example, it is not uncommon to use sponsors in the special type of work migration undertaken by girls, in which they work as domestics to earn money for their marriage equipment. Danielle is one such sponsor, also called “mamas”. She places girls in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso:

Girls come every year after the rainy season to look for work in the city. Often they go back home to participate in the harvest when it is due. The girls are normally 13 – 16 years old. When a girl is 15 – 16 years old, it is time for her to get married and she will probably not return to the city to work anymore. So far this season, Danielle has placed six girls in families as domestic servants. Her girls come from the two villages: Delega, where Danielle’s mother is from, and Sagia, where Danielle has some uncles. All the girls Danielle places are relatives, and she does this to assist her relatives and to serve God. Danielle says it is the girls themselves who want to come to the city to earn money for their trousseau. They always ask the authorisation of their parents before they leave. Often their fathers or someone else in the family who has an errand in the city accompany them. In some cases the girls also support their family in the village with what they earn. Especially this year, girls want to come to be able to help their parents

in times of crisis, as there is famine in the villages. Danielle says that she is very well respected in the two villages for what she does, in introducing the girls to the employers. Sometimes the employers come directly to her to ask for a servant. Her girls are known to be well behaved and she has a good reputation in the neighbourhood. Danielle feels responsible and is embarrassed if any of her girls misbehave. If a girl has problems, she can always come to Danielle to spend a night or more. Sometimes she has up to twelve girls staying in her tiny house.

Danielle represents a guarantee to the girls' parents, as they know her and trust that she will make sure that their daughters are all right. To the girls, Danielle represents a safety net and a person they can turn to if they are uncomfortable with their working and living conditions. The sponsor arrangements, when functioning, may therefore have a preventive effect, in that they act in a supervisory capacity over the living and working conditions of the relocated children.

Unfortunately, in some cases the sponsors abuse the trust invested in them. Danielle herself told us a story about a woman who took advantage of the girls by taking a large proportion of their salary without their knowledge. We were supposed to meet with this woman, but she changed her mind in the last minute.

### **Relocation turns into trafficking**

Children have always been recruited to work, but previously this has to a great extent been in the hands of the masters and mistresses themselves and not handled by a third person, as is often the case today. This development implies that the link between parents and the children's employers is often distant or nonexistent, and that it is difficult, if not impossible, for parents to know where their children are and what their working and living conditions are like. Traffickers tend to target children who are very young and/or naive, and are less likely to have any independent idea of relocation or raise objections to treatment endured; they also often choose those who are already vulnerable, either at home or previously relocated.

As we have seen, although the family may have the best interest of the child in mind, family problems, lack of networks, and poverty seems to give children or families fewer opportunities in choosing whether to relocate and the type of relocation. These families thereby have less freedom to be sceptical of intermediaries, who may reality be traffickers taking advantage of the fact that families are in search of someone to guarantee a successful relocation.

Parents or caretakers are often ignorant to the risks run by children going away to work or study, sometimes accompanied by complete strangers. In a small town in southern Ghana, we heard of a grandmother who came to the local anti-trafficking project to report her three granddaughters missing. She confided that she had

been in a financially difficult situation a year ago and could no longer take care of her granddaughters; she ended up giving them away to a woman who would take them to work in Cotonou in Benin. Recently she had become aware of trafficking and the risks attached to it, and had come to report her case to try to get her granddaughters back.

We argue that traffickers find their market in cases where the child requires convincing – that is to say, when it has little or no incentive to leave – or where it lacks incentives to go to certain places or sectors. Because children seem to migrate freely, and often follow in the footsteps of friends or elder siblings without having to trust strangers, it is logical to deduct that employers that must rely on amateur or professional intermediaries to recruit children by fraud or force are found in those sectors/profession where the work is known to be dangerous or the working and living conditions unacceptable and/or exploitive. In short, traffickers use force or fraud to attract child workers who lack knowledge or networks - or to circumvent the networks of kinship, sponsoring, and recommendations already in place – as a way to recruit child workers for unpopular employers or branches.

As mentioned above, traffickers use the scarcity of good apprenticeship places and formal education as a manner to tempt children and/or parents into letting the child leave, with the intention of exploiting the child's labour force. In discussing how children might fall victims of trafficking, UNICEF in Accra argued that the lack of access to education enables the trafficking system to work. If somebody offers parents the opportunity to send their child away somewhere to work and learn a profession, e.g. fishing, this is considered extremely valuable: the child will learn a profession without having to pay apprenticeship fees – and on top of that he/she might even be paid. In the same way, we heard that promises of schooling were used as part of the agreement in a recruitment process, as in the case of Dominique (Page 18.). An acquaintance of Dominique's father had promised his parents that Dominique would be admitted to a commercial school in Sikasso. However, rather than keeping his promise, this acquaintance forced Dominique to work in the fields. In the same way, traffickers take advantage of children's want for material goods and sense of adventure, like in the case of Madou in the previous section.

According to several local NGOs involved in combating trafficking of children, there are three ways in which children end up being trafficked: 1) Parents give children away for a fee; 2) A relative comes to intervene when the child's parents are struggling to make ends meet and offers to find work for the child; 3) Children are trafficked by a person who is not a relative, or they run away on their own and become easy targets for traffickers.

It should also be stressed that the best interest of the child is not always a factor even when parents or close relatives are behind relocation. A child may in some cases be trafficked by a relative, or even his/her own parents, which seems to have been

the case when the father did not only take the initiative but physically took Paul to Lake Volta (page 30).

Divorced parents sending their child away without informing their ex-spouse, the child's father or mother, represent one dimension of this problem area. Several key informants mentioned the prevalence of divorced or single parents giving one or more of their children away. One should note that in many of the kinship systems or local perceptions of law, it may be the father (or mother/ mother's brother) who has the ultimate responsibility for the child and does not need to consult with the estranged spouse. In one such case, a divorced mother had given her child to a recruiter who offered to take the child – a boy – to Lake Volta to learn fishing. When this took place, the boy's father was on a journey, and he did not learn about it until he returned. He strongly disagreed with the boy's departure, and wanted to get him back. However, the boy's mother, who was the only person who knew where the boy apparently had been taken, did not want to share this information with her ex-husband. Another example is the Burkinabe twins who were sent by their father to Ivory Coast. Oumar told us he did not believe they would have been sent to the Ivory Coast if their mother had been alive; however, their mother was dead and their father had married a third wife who did not care much about them. In their case, it was the capacity of the trafficker to convince the father to send them to Ivory Coast instead of to their uncles in Bamako, and the naivety or greed of the father, that prevailed.

If the trafficker is not a relative, it is commonly somebody the child or its parents can relate to – such as somebody from the village, or someone who knows the village and the local language. Most often, though, the person no longer lives in the village him/herself. A common scenario is that the trafficker will walk into a household and say he/she is looking for a child to come and work someplace. He or she is likely to bring a photograph that shows the beautiful surroundings the child will live and work in. The parents get convinced, and are given a sum of money to let their child follow the person.

In the next section, we will look into what happens after children have been relocated or have relocated on their own. Specially, what are their opportunities to pick different paths and to move in and out of situations according to conditions and opportunities met, and how is the freedom of movement connected to the recruitment process?

## On the move

After having relocated - on own their initiative or that of somebody else, either as a result of parents' or personal ambitions, want for adventure, hope for personal development, or improvement of personal or family economic or social situation, or as result of force or fraud - the paths followed are numerous. Some children end up moving from place to place and take on small and odd jobs in streets and market-places, consistent with where money is to be earned and where working and living conditions are supportable. This became the situation for Dominique from Bamako after he was relocated to Sikasso in Mali by an acquaintance of his father. When he had the opportunity (after having worked in the fields for some time without payment), he decided run away. The following took place before he ended up in Orodara:

Dominique found work in another town where he stayed for four months. When he left he was given a lump sum of 6,000 FCFA (=9 euro). From this money he bought clothes, shoes, and a ticket for Bobo Dioulasso in Burkina Faso, as he had heard that there was money to be earned there. Crossing the border or not made no difference to him. Arriving in Bobo Dioulasso, he spent two days in the bus station before a man came and offered him work and housing. He accepted the offer and worked for the man for one month, selling ice water for a salary of 3,500 FCFA. The man's wife always shouted at Dominique for not selling enough water, and Dominique decided to leave. With the money he had earned he bought a shoeshine-kit and started working together with another shoe shiner and sleeping in the bus station. After one and a half months, Dominique moved on to Bamfara in Kenedougou because people said there was money to be earned there. At Bamfara he could not find any decent work, so he rented a hand wagon that he paid 200 FCFA a day for. Sometimes he would earn 500 FCFA a day and sometimes 1,000 FCFA. The work was hard, so after two months when people started talking about money to be earned in Orodara, he moved on. He has now been working in Orodara for more than a year, pushing the hand wagon and loading fruit on trucks. He would like to go home to Bamako but he did not have the means of transportation. Somebody had told him that his parents had been in Bobo looking for him, but that he had already left the town.

Dominique was lucky to be able to escape from his employer and to be able to move around freely afterwards. As we shall see, this is not always the case, as some bad employers take precautions to prevent children from leaving the arena. Kalifa who left alone and on his own initiative, was similarly fortunate:

Kalifa started to work in the cotton and millet fields. The work was easy and he was paid 7,500 FCFA (=11.4 euro) a month. Kalifa insisted not to get any payment before the end of the year. After nine months he was paid and returned home for the harvest season, and then he returned again for another year in the cotton and millet fields. He gave all the money he earned for the first year to his father. After two seasons in the fields, Kalifa wanted to get some new experiences. He had heard others talking about employment opportunities in Burkina Faso and was curious to see what it was like. Kalifa did not know anyone in Burkina Faso, but when he arrived he met a man who said he knew somebody who was in need of labourers. He was promised 7,500 FCFA a month. Kalifa insisted again not to receive any payment until the end of the year. At the end of the year he was correctly paid and bought himself a new bike, a radio and some clothes, and gave the surplus money to his father. After two years in Burkina, Kalifa decided he had seen enough of life abroad and returned to Mali where he got another job. Now, at the age of twenty-two, Kalifa is planning to start in mechanic training in Koutiala.

The examples of Dominique and Kalifa show how the routes of child work migrants are sometimes random and improvised: they go where work is to be found and might move on when working and/or living conditions get too bad, or when there is no more money to be earned. Kalifa even returned home for the harvest season, something that we heard others did too, but that was not possible for Dominique as he did not have the means. Indeed, lack of means was the most common reason for not moving freely that we encountered.

The way children move on and eventually end their relocation generally depends on type of relocation, the living and working conditions at their destination, and their possibilities for leaving. There are three main scenarios:

- 1) The relocation is terminated and the child goes home;
- 2) The relocation is replaced by another form of relocation, i.e. another workplace or educational site;
- 3) The child is forced to stay and, if lucky, is rescued by NGOs, local authorities, or others.

Children who have relocated in order to accomplish a particular task or purpose are likely to return home when this is completed, e.g. when their education or apprenticeship period is concluded, or when they have saved the amount of money they intended to.

Some children may leave a concrete relocation situation without returning home, either because they do not want to go home or because there are obstacles to

returning. If the reason for leaving home in the first place was rooted in maltreatment, abuse, or intolerable living conditions, the children may prefer to remake their lives elsewhere. The same may be the case if the reason for leaving home was lack of attractive opportunities, in terms of marriage, employment, education, ways of living, etc., and the situation is not considered having improved. Typically, fostered children find work or marry at their (urban) destination because they do not want to go back to their “remote” village.

In some cases, children can be stopped from returning home because of illness, lack of means for transportation, distance, or because they were so young when they left that they cannot remember where they come from. Some might also undergo experiences that make it difficult for them to return, such as pregnancy or drug abuse. Related to this are stories we heard of children who were reluctant or afraid to return because they had not succeeded in achieving their (or their family’s) aims of, for instance, making a certain amount of money. Children whose labour has been exploited without payment may be afraid to return home empty handed; some children in this unfortunate position produce stories of robberies etc. to explain why they come home without money.

When children return home, their parents and/or relatives do not always welcome them with open arms. The head of an Accra-based NGO working with street children told us how they had given up repatriating children to their homes. There were several reasons for this: one being the personnel and travel costs involved, another being what they considered as the relatively small chance that a child would actually be better off in his/her home environment. He recalled one episode where they accompanied a child back to his mother, knocked on the door, and asked: “Is this your son?” - to which the boy’s mother responded, “Yes, and here are twelve more”. Moreover, there were incidents when the children were back in the streets of Accra even before the return of social workers who had accompanied them.

Marlène from Burkina Faso was maltreated at home and ran away when she was 15 years old. She travelled to Ougadougou, where she lived on the streets and slept with men in exchange for food. When trying to return, she was not welcomed with open arms:

Marlène dared not return home, where her father and stepmother would beat her and not give her any food. She had some aunts in Ougadougou, but they were the younger sisters of her father whom they were terrified of. Hence, Marlène knew they were not in a position to help her. After two months on the streets, she returned home to the village. She addressed her father through a mediator and her father forgave her. He said she could come back and live in the compound, but she would not be allowed to stay in his house. Marlène moved in with an old aunt in the compound. Marlène was very ill at the time and her aunt

treated her with herbs and gave her food. However, the aunt was too old to be able to provide food on a regular basis. Sometimes they had nothing to eat and none of the other relatives would give them anything. Marlène started leaving the compound for smaller trips, one or two weeks, before she left for good and started selling sex. To Marlène, selling sex was a better alternative than living with relatives who treated her like an outcast.

Even though life as a prostitute is both hard and dangerous, Marlène saw this as a more attractive solution than staying in her father's compound, and chose prostitution without being forced.

In some cases, children are kept in a work place against their will, and employers are known to use force or fraud to prevent their escape. In Ghana, we even heard of employers telling young children that their parents had died, so that they would not try to return home. The Malian boy, Karim, worked under harsh conditions on a plantation in the Ivory Coast and was constantly considering opportunities to run away; however, he was deterred by the consequences he might have to face if his escape failed:

Karim once witnessed the escape of eight of the other children working in the plantation. Four of them apparently succeeded, at least they never returned, but the other four were caught and brought back and heavily punished: The boy considered to be the leader of the group was cut up under his feet and forced to work in the fields the day after. He could not walk, and had to crawl to move forward. When Karim had spent nearly one year on the plantation, a Malian journalist one day showed up and witnessed what was going on. He contacted the Malian Consul who came to the plantation and liberated the remaining children.

Restrictions on the possibilities to leave a work place are especially present if someone has recruited the child in question into a job, although sometimes children are able to leave after some arguing and often without being paid (like in the case of Dominique above). Thus, being recruited by someone and taken far away does not necessarily mean that exits are blocked, but it may make return and movement more difficult because routes can be predetermined and/or organised by others, or because long distances and/or lack of money and national border crossings make it complicated to move on. As to the latter, one should be aware of the dangers of restricting cross border migration, as it may increase children's need for assistance and, accordingly, increase the market for intermediaries and traffickers. Traffickers are often careful to recruit children from areas distant from the work place in order to make return a close-to-impossible option for the child on his/her own.

Other methods used to prevent children from leaving might be to hold back their payment under pretext that the money is sent to their parents, or as reimbursement for transportation or other costs. Intermediaries and/or employers may also confiscate the children's travel documents, or indoctrinate them into not trusting strangers that come to see them. A Ghanaian NGO involved in rescuing and rehabilitating trafficked children told us that two of the children they had rescued ran away from the rehabilitation centre and returned to their masters: the masters had apparently told the children that anybody who came to "rescue" them would in fact put them in prison, hence frightening the children and prompting them to run back to their masters.

It should also be noted that some children were so young when they left their parents and started working for their masters that they hardly remember anything from their previous existence. In our study this was particularly relevant in the case of children being recruited to work on Lake Volta in Ghana – where the youngest children were only three to four years old when they were recruited and left their parents. A widespread challenge for NGOs and social workers targeting this particular area is that the masters, i.e. the fishermen, tend to claim that the children working for them are their own biological children. As the child might be too scared to protest, it is sometimes both extremely difficult and time-consuming to have the truth established.

Even if the children manage to run away, sometimes they still cannot return home because they are afraid their parents will send them back, not trusting their story. The latter would particularly be the case if the child is known to be an "enfant terrible". Conversely, parents or other caretakers are also known to make significant efforts to recover the child as soon as they understand that they or the child have been tricked.

Joshua was forced to work on Lake Volta with his paternal uncle, but was rescued by the assistance of his paternal aunt:

Joshua's aunt went to see her brother and her nephew at the lake. After having witnessed the young boy's working conditions and the difficulties he faced, she facilitated his escape through an NGO. Joshua's uncle still quarrels with his sister over her assistance to Joshua's escape.

Paul (page 20) was in a similar situation: His father had taken him to Lake Volta and sold him on to a fisherman for an unknown sum of money. It was Paul's grandmother who initiated his rescue:

The grandmother had got to know about trafficking and its implications from a local NGO and wanted to get the boy back. In collaboration with the NGO, she and her husband succeeded in talking Paul's master into letting the boy go.

Paul now lives with his grandmother. His parents are divorced and his mother has remarried and lives in another village nearby. Paul's father, however, lives in the same village as Paul and his grandmother. Still, Paul has not met his father since he returned one year ago. According to the grandmother, Paul's father walks in big circles around their house to avoid meeting them.

Whenever a child leaves home whether recruited and accompanied by an intermediary, leaving with a relative, or leaving on their own parents tend to believe that their child(ren) one day will come back to them. However, when intermediaries are involved, parents often have only a verbal agreement with regard to their child's work activities and the length of the stay. Moreover, they often have no idea where their child will be taken. Hence, it is not easy to trace the child.

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the diversity of ways to accomplish child relocation, some of which qualify as trafficking and some, which do not. Even where intermediaries are used, in many cases no transactions are completed or no intention to exploit the child is present, all necessary parts of trafficking. Some elements of traditional relocation are clearly in the best interest of the child, and when working, fostering is an example of this both as a way to secure education and upbringing, and also as a way to secure relocation that would perhaps take place in any case. In many cases, as we have argued, work migration is also in the best interest of the child, preferably under the supervision of a trustworthy person.

For parents and/or children, it might be difficult to predict the safe and risky ways of relocation. If we add this diversity to the range of relocation arenas described in the previous chapter, and the variety within them, we are left with a highly complex picture. Bad living and working conditions can be met anywhere, at home or in arenas of relocation. Both parents and children aspire for a better life and might be willing to take certain risks to improve their current and future conditions, something that makes them vulnerable, both in the home and the relocation arenas. The want for education and a better future, combined with the lack of networks and means, results in children on the move who do not have a safety net. Unfortunately, intermediaries and employers take advantage of all of these facts and exploit them into a profitable market. The worst scenario for a child then becomes the inability to move out of an unacceptable situation, either because they are physically prevented or lack the psychological or pecuniary means to do so. Our fieldwork indicates that trafficking is to be found to the sectors and employers offering the worst living and working conditions. This is also where you find restrictions on movement. However, with regards to lack of financial means to exit a difficult situation the problem is broader, and concerns a lot of children taking on odd jobs in marketplaces and streets.

In the final chapter, we will isolate some indicators. These indicators could be used to shape policy responses to the problem of trafficked and vulnerable children.

## **4 The Best Interest of the Child?**

The intention of this study has been to explore the mechanisms of trafficking as compared to other forms of child relocation, in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Ghana. We have established that relocation differs from trafficking as such, and that the latter only makes out a part of the first. However, among the relocated as demonstrated in the previous chapters the outcome of the relocation is not always in accordance with the best interest of the child, even if the intentions were good. Additionally, it was established that exploitation takes place in the workplace or household regardless of the migrant status of the child in question. Given these circumstances, what, if anything, can assist us in pointing out when and what children are at risk of being exploited? Furthermore, is it possible to point out where traditional relocation turns into trafficking, and how exploitation is linked to relocation? These questions are important to answer before introducing new, or implementing existing, rules on child work, exploitation, and trafficking in the three countries. Based on fieldwork and interviews in the three countries, we have reached the following main findings:

### **How and why children end up in various forms of relocation**

We argued in the early chapters that child (and adult) relocation should be understood in the light of a child's and/or family's general coping strategies. Some of the relocated children we met during our fieldworks told us about family backgrounds characterised by financial difficulties, violence, and abuse. Others had lost their caretaker or a close relative following death or divorce, and found themselves more vulnerable than before.

Children living under difficult conditions either at home, in the streets, or at a workplace are more likely to relocate than others. One may also assume that these children are more likely to accept somewhat dodgy proposals in search of a better life.

Another important factor in relocation is non-activity, in terms of either a terminated or interrupted education or lack of jobs or tasks for children to engage in.

Children who drop out of or graduate from school without alternative activities to engage in, seem likely to relocate for the simple reason that children should not be in a position of doing nothing.

Some geographical areas have a much stronger tradition for relocation in general, and work migration in particular, than others. Children in these regions are much more exposed to offers to leave, tempting stories of success, and people willing to facilitate their relocation. In villages in certain areas of the three countries, young boys go on seasonal work migration after the harvest. The same is the case for areas known as less prosperous compared to other areas of the country.

However, not all relocated children can be identified with reference to the above indicators. The aspect of curiosity and peer pressure may tempt children from well off and stable households to leave home in search of adventure. Moreover, a solid socio-economic background may even facilitate relocation, as the family is likely to have both the financial and social means to ensure a safe and sound relocation.

Conclusively, there are many determinants and combinations of determinants relevant to whether and how children are relocated, some of which are related to geographical and socio-economic conditions and some that are more random or connected to personal qualities. Regardless, child (and adult) relocation is a widespread coping strategy with long traditions in the region.

Within the last few years, it has been observed that people's dependency on these traditions have been taken advantage of by intermediaries who recruit children with the intention of exploiting their labour force. For various reasons, it might be difficult for a parent or a child to reveal the intentions of intermediaries, known as traffickers. Even when in doubt, the parent or the child might be willing to take the risk of following the intermediary, as this is considered the only chance to improve one's life. How willing parents or children are to take risks depends on perceived opportunities and choices: whether they can afford to keep the child at home or in school; whether the household is considered by either as a good alternative to leaving; whether they have a social network, such as a receiving family or a sponsor; or whether they have the educational or knowledge base that makes them able to weigh dangers and opportunities.

## **Relocation, trafficking and exploitation**

What makes a process of relocation turn into one of trafficking? All relocated children are not trafficked, but all trafficking, by definition, involves relocation – with the intent to exploit. Hence, one may argue that every child likely to relocate is, potentially, at risk of being trafficked. However, our study indicates that even children

who are not likely to relocate are at risk of being trafficked, the reason being that traffickers may specialise in convincing these particular children and/or their parents to follow them. This concerns, for instance, the very young children, or children who are at school or in work. Consequently, we may come to the conclusion that all children are at risk of being trafficked.

The children we met often addressed the risk of trafficking as a matter of luck. Some children end up working for employers who treat them with respect and pay them fair; others end up in conditions of harsh exploitation.

The extended family network, the traditional fostering practice, and the practice of sponsoring may, when in place and working, prevent exploitation. This implies a need to distinguish between fostering practices and sponsoring on the one hand, and trafficking on the other. Whereas both fostering and sponsoring imply that the child is taken care of by somebody related to or known by the family, trafficking commonly implies that the child is sent to or accompanied by an unknown person. The parents might send away their child to this stranger because they believe this will give some extra income to the family and be a form of apprenticeship training for the child, thus improving the family's current financial situation and the child's future prospects. Trafficking should therefore not be considered as borne out of the traditional relocation system although this can also be abused to exploit children but out of parents' perception that they can make money out of their children. A number of key informants spoke of trafficking as an increased commercialisation of the traditional fostering practices. This development was explained partly by an increased focus on the nuclear family, partly increased by urbanisation and difficult financial situations – implying that because people today find it difficult to enlarge their household by taking in and providing for relatives, trafficking fills a gap where the traditional system stopped working.

There is no clear and easy answer as to where traffickers operate. They are known to benefit from already existing migration routes recruiting children in areas where child migration is a common practice but they also create new “markets” by recruiting children who were not otherwise likely to relocate.

However, in dealing with trafficking, one has to be careful not to harm the positive forms of relocations in such a manner that we interrupt a valuable coping strategy for the entire region. One should be careful not to hit on the valuable system of sponsoring, for example, and by imposing strict restrictions on child relocation one may in fact facilitate the task of traffickers and enlarge their markets by making children more dependent on assistance. If, on the contrary, priority is given to creating an environment where children can migrate safely, traffickers will to a greater extent be restricted to offering their services within sectors and for employers that would otherwise not attract children. In our view, this might be the best option in the fight against trafficking, as it would then be easier to locate and strangle.

We argue that the focus on trafficking, and relocation more generally, is to a large extent a red herring. Although, the problems represented by trafficking in the region should by no means be underestimated, we find it compelling that, in terms of prevalence and numbers, trafficking still represents a relatively limited practice when considering the extensive relocation of children taking place in the region. Again, it is important to keep in mind that children's relocation is motivated by the prospects of having a better life: in other words, relocation, whatever form it takes, may imply a relative improvement in living and/or working conditions. Of course, this does not necessarily imply that all forms of relocation are in accordance with the best interests of children, because clearly they are not. Even though the intention behind the relocation is not exploitation, and even though there is no transaction or intermediary involved, the result may in many cases be that the child ends up in an exploitive situation, living under conditions that are not suitable for a child.

The focus should therefore be on the basic evil, namely the abysmal working and living conditions that children face. Trafficking and relocation may exacerbate these conditions, making a vulnerable child even more vulnerable, but as the cases presented in this report have demonstrated, numerous children work and live under harsh conditions without being victims of trafficking or even without being relocated.

The degree of exploitation can be seen in relation to various sectors. Our study indicates that the risks for exploitation are higher within the fishery sector in Ghana and the agricultural sector in the Ivory Coast than other sectors. One may also argue that the risk of being exploited is higher the further away from home and/or from relatives, or any other form of safety net, a child is relocated. The traditional fosterage system, representing a safety net for children in need of education or employment, ideally has a preventive effect with respect to exploitation and trafficking. Yet in the case of ignorance, or social or financial crisis, any person may be led into accepting a tempting offer from an intermediary. As a general recommendation, it is crucial that education is made more available. The longer a child is kept in school, the older he/she will be at the time of relocation. Through increased school attendance, one will reduce the number of children vulnerable because of inactivity, their young age, and/or ignorance due to an absent or substandard education. In addition, children and parents would, to a lesser degree, have to accept bad treatment in order to have an education at all.

## **Actions to be taken**

In our view, immediate action is required to improve the working and living conditions for all working children, both to enhance their quality of life and to make them less vulnerable to abuse, disease, and tempting job proposals in their arena of work, as well as to make them less vulnerable towards traffickers looking to exploit them. In other words, priority should be given to children living and working in exploitative conditions that are likely to interfere with their education, or to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This recommendation includes most of children and youth in the three countries, as we found most of them to be vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking for one reason or another. It is our firm belief that children in West Africa will benefit more from policies and actions developed in accordance with this recommendation than from priorities more narrowly focused on the elimination of trafficking. Indeed, a sole focus on trafficking could only lead to it being more extended and more difficult to detect, and could ruin relocation systems that do improve children's living conditions.

As mentioned above, there is important work to be done in these three countries with regard to living and working conditions of children in various workplaces. Moreover, there is an urgent need to inform and enlighten parents, employers, and authorities of the dangers faced by children both in terms of working and living conditions and to supervise the implementation of laws on children's rights. We believe that NGOs already in place and knowledgeable about the field should, in cooperation with local and national authorities, work to inform employers, children, and parents, and supervise certain employers and sectors.

By identifying sectors and work places where exploitation of children's labour force is known to take place, one could implement some sort of control system that would force the employers to improve the conditions. In so doing, one would probably also detect trafficking and possibly prevent it, as we found a connection between sectors of bad working and living conditions and trafficking. Self-employed children working and living on the streets represent a particular sector that is loosely organized, and that has huge challenges to be sorted out with regard to working and living conditions for these children. Improving their conditions should have priority, regardless of how children ended up in the streets. The lack of organization makes it easier for traffickers to recruit street children and more difficult for authorities and NGOs to control or intervene in cases of exploitation. Where possible, one should enlist the help of elder children who organize the day-to-day work or savings systems.

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# Travel to Uncertainty

This report presents the results of the link between child trafficking and child relocation in three West-African countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali. The main goal of the study was to detect whether traditional forms of child relocation, such as fostering and child migration, have preventive effect on child trafficking – or on the contrary whether they increase trafficking. Principal findings are that all working children in the three countries are at risk of being exploited, regardless of migration status; that the same children that are more exposed to trafficking are also to some extent more exposed to exploitation in general; and that some arenas and employers are more exploitative than others.

The report is the second in a series of working papers from a Fafo research program on child labour, generously financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



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