

**CHILDREN'S MIGRATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN LOAD  
CARRYING ACTIVITIES: THE CASE OF THE GIRL CHILD IN THE  
KUMASI METROPOLIS- GHANA**

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**FINAL THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT  
NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)  
FOR THE AWARD OF  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES**

**JUNE, 2011**

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that except for what I have cited in this work, for which due acknowledgement has been given, this thesis is my own masterpiece and that it has not being presented anywhere for the award of any kind of certification

## **Dedication**

Special dedications go to my loving wife (Debby) and baby boy; (Edward Nana Poku Jr), for having been without me for the past two years due to the faith they have in my academic pursuits.

Mum, for your unflinching support for my academic success, I dedicate this piece to you as a way of saying thank you for all that you sacrificed for me.

Daddy, your support and encouragement has brought me this far. I say thank you.

To my siblings and love ones, I owe you this work for your moral and material support.

## **Acknowledgement**

A lot people have contributed to the success of this thesis; however, I take responsibility for any inaccuracies in the form of omission or commission.

I am very grateful to the following people for their role in making this thesis a masterpiece:

First my learned supervisor; Anne Thrine Kjørholt, the Director of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research for her immeasurable support in the form of suggestions, constructive criticisms, hard work and time out of her busy schedules.

Again Randi Nelsen needs mention for her support during the master thesis seminars. She provided a platform for me and my colleagues to try our hands on making the writing of our thesis quite enjoyable. I say thank you.

I am equally grateful to all lecturers at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research for their kind gesture during the period of my study at NOSEB. Line Hellen, the administrator at NOSEB needs commendation for her prompt administrative assistance any time I called on her. Not forgetting Tatak Abebe for always opening his doors to me whenever I was confronted with a challenge.

I owe the Norwegian Government lots of gratitude for awarding me a scholarship under the Quota Programme to study in Norway and for financing some aspects of my research. Special thanks to Anette Moen and all the staff at the International Office who helped me in diverse ways.

My research informants need to be appreciated for agreeing to give me some of their time they use in getting a livelihood.

**To you all I say: Tusen takk**

## **Abstract**

### **Abstract**

It is indeed true that one does not have to be old to become wise. This African Proverb provided a starting point for a journey into children's migration and engagement in load carrying activities.

The study explores what goes into the girl child's migration from a rural area in Ghana to the city of Kumasi- the Capital of the Ashanti region to engage in the carrying of load for a fee. This study aims at getting knowledge about the girl child's lived experiences in the phenomenon. These kinds of experiences are deemed relevant in understanding the child's migration and work. The perspectives of the affected children on the phenomenon- they themselves telling their experiences, is the means by which the above aims have been achieved.

The theoretical perspectives mainly rooted in the New Social Studies of Childhood will guide the focus of the study. Against the backdrop of these theoretical perspectives, the study examines the following- the girl child as a social actor in the exercise of agency, the girl child as both a "being and becoming", the social structural child and a host of others.

Several qualitative methods such as participant observation, semi structured interviews, informal focus group discussions, storytelling are employed to collect data. In all, 20 girls will be used as informants. The data will be analyzed and conclusions drawn.

The study identifies that the girl child is a social actor, she is both "being and becoming" however, she has limitations to the exercise of agency. The principal limitation the study identifies is poverty. Poverty at both national, regional, local levels pose a limitation to these girls in the exercise of their agency. . For instance, it has limited them on their schooling. It has also influenced them to migrate from home and has ultimately forced them to do the kind of job they are engaged in. Implications of the findings of this study are thoroughly discussed to serve as a guide for future study

## List of acronyms

CEDEP.....	Centre for the development of people
CRC.....	Convention on the Right of the Child
FCUB.....	Compulsory Basic Education
GDHS.....	Ghana Demographic and Health Survey
GDP.....	Gross Domestic Product
GLSS.....	Ghana Living Standard Survey
GNCC.....	Ghana National Commission on Culture
GPRS.....	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GSS.....	Ghana Statistical Service
HIPC.....	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
HIV/AIDS.....	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO.....	International Labour Organization
KMA.....	Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly
LEAP.....	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
NHIS.....	National Health Insurance Scheme
NOSEB.....	Norwegian Centre for Child Research
OXFAM.....	
PTA.....	Parent Teachers Association
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children’s Fund

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Until recently, whenever I reflected on my childhood days, the only thought that came to mind was “receiving new clothes during Christmas, going to church with my parents on Sunday, visiting my dad or grandparents during school vacations either in the market or on the farm. My grandfather was a timber merchant who had a big farm in the forest about 50 kilometres away from Kumasi the capital of the Ashanti region. I remember receiving new clothes annually that is prior to the onset of Christmas. My parents take me to the supermarket and buy me new items for the Christmas celebration. I wait until another Christmas comes for me to receive new clothes again. I perceive these experiences to mean a good childhood experience since many children in my age group used their experiences at Christmas and other similar occasions to define who a happy child was. I also used being together with the family and receiving what I demanded from them to mean that I enjoyed my childhood days. The above stated fits well into the view of childhood as being: “*Constructed through its telling... that is where there can only be stories and storytellers of childhood*” (Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992: 12).

However, after going through the new sociology of childhood, I now reflect on my childhood days with a different lens and in tandem with what Qvortrup has postulated: “*Childhood is the societal framework or the societal architecture within which all children lead their individual periodic childhoods. All children, when time comes, ‘leave’ their periodic childhoods, but childhood stays and is lived by somebody else.*” (Qvortrup as cited in Nikitina-den Besten, 2009).

I was born to a father who is a trader: selling different wares at the central market of Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana. My mother is a baker specializing in baking bread in commercial quantities. I therefore grew up hopping from the market to the farm and into the bakery. This I mostly did during long vacations and normal days after I have closed from school. The case of the long vacation was especially fantastic for me as much as I can remember. This is because, whenever school was nearing long vacation, I was always yearning feverishly for that day to enable me embark on my journey to the countryside where my grandfather’s farm was located. Anytime I was unable to accompany my grandfather to the farm, I was left with going to the market for the period of the vacation.

I enjoyed going to the market so much; it was a place where I had access to some of the things children enjoy so much. Due to the fact that the market contains various stores selling various items, my presence at the market gave me the opportunity to 'cry' for the things that I was hardly given if I remain in the house. I remember my dad also used to give me what could make me sit down and play without interfering in his trading activities; the toy cars, toffees and biscuits which children left at home did not have the privilege of having. These items kept me busy and happy while watching trading activities go on. This delighted many children who happened to be in the market too.

As a child, going to the market was a way of my dad kept me away from staying at home in his absence and possibly doing something that might be dangerous to me. It was also a way of protecting me from going wayward as many children left at home find their way into the football pitch or going to watch movies at video centres where there is no censorship of what children are permitted to watch or not. I guess it was also a way of socialising me into my dad's profession, with the view that, as the eldest son, it is customary to take over from him whenever he becomes incapacitated.

I was not part of the trading but I remember occasionally picking some of the items for him when he needed them. I remember my dad restraining me from joining the other children who were also in the market and not allowing me to roam about for the fear of getting lost out there.

During this period, the phenomenon of children especially girls who migrated from other parts of the country to carry loads for a fee were not as rampant as what pertains in the market today. As far as I can remember, traders were seen carrying their own goods to the various lorry stations. To talk of the girl-child: it was totally absent. However, it was boys who had completed basic schools who were seen in the market carrying loads. Again, most of these boys were not seen roaming the market in search of loads to carry but were attached to various stores and so carried goods that were bought from those specific stores.

My dad had a boy who was carrying goods for his customers. This boy had migrated from the northern region and had come to seek for a place to carry loads and my dad offered him his customers. These boys in most cases never carried the load on their heads as it pertains today. They had a truck which they used in carrying the load to its destination. The trucks were packed behind the shops and whenever there was load they brought the truck to convey them. I remember that during this period, the truck was pulled by one person in front and another behind pushing it especially when the load happened to be heavy. Girls were not

seen carrying loads on their heads or on trucks during this period. It is not surprising for me that, various researchers have referred to the activity of carrying load for a fee as recent phenomenon or emerging trend (Awumbila & Ardayfoi-Schandorf, 2008; Opare, 2003, Van den Berg, 2007; Whitehead & Hashim, 2005).

## **1.2 The History of Head-Porterage in Ghana**

In Africa and especially Ghana, the act of carrying loads on people's head is a common practice. This is especially so with women and children living in the countryside (villages). For instance, the child wakes up, walks to the stream or tap to collect water in a bucket or saucepan, goes to dispose of refuse and in some instances go to the farm very early in the morning to collect foodstuffs by carrying the above listed items on their head. The reason may be due to poverty or lack of machinery to carry out this kind of activity. It is well known that, the situation recounted appear more serious in the rural areas where poverty is believed to be on the ascendency.

According to Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe and Castaldo, (2007), the phenomenon of carrying loads on the head for commercial purposes was first introduced in Ghana by male migrants from Mali in the 1960s. During the period, it was virtually a male dominated activity. History has it that, after the introduction of the Aliens Compliance Order of 1969<sup>1</sup>, the activity of carrying load for commercial purposes nearly died out as those engaged in the activity were expelled from Ghana to their various home countries. In their absence, the vacuum created was filled by Ghanaians. The only thing worth noting is that, the re-introduction came with a slight difference compared to the one by the originators. Though it was still men who engaged in the activity, they now put the load on trucks instead of on their heads. These hand pull trucks became part of the traffic in the cities and towns of Ghana (Refer Appendix 1).

With the increase in vehicular traffic in most of the cities and urban centres, it became increasingly difficult to use these hand pull/push trucks in the central business districts of Ghana's expanding cities and towns especially those of Accra and Kumasi. It therefore became easier for human beings to carry the loads on their heads and be able to weave through heavy vehicular traffic than to use the trucks. Carrying loads on the head for

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<sup>1</sup> Aliens Compliance Order of 1969: the force emigration/expulsion of Asians and other people from neighbouring west Africa states on the 18th Nov. 1969 in Ghana

commercial purposes thus emerged as a means of transporting goods from one part of the city/market to another thereby providing a niche for the young people migrating into the cities from the northern part of Ghana.

For the first time, this service was provided predominantly by females and this has necessitated the need for Opare, in 2003 to qualify the type of service provided by these girls by combining 'kaya' with 'yoo'. Therefore, the term 'kayayoo'<sup>2</sup> constitutes a migration legacy which vividly brings out the link between internal and international migration. It is international migration that gave birth to 'kaya' and more recently internal migration rendering it female or 'yoo' (Ibid).

The type of load carried by these girls popularly referred to as "kayayei" includes farm produce, meat, provisions (Milo, sugar all in boxes or plastic bags), saucepans, electrical cables, hardware among many others. The main patronisers of this kind of service include shopkeepers/owners, traders, travellers and any other person in need of this kind of service. They usually cart goods from the point of purchase to the point where the means of transport is available.

Opare (2003) argues further that the activity is informal in nature: it requires no special skills and that all the people involved are self-employed. It is dominated by people mostly from the Northern part of Ghana. The tool needed in this activity is mainly a head pan either bought by the girl or hired on a daily basis especially for the new entrant. Again, one's ability to arrive in the city safely and being able to locate people already engaged in the activity that come from the same ethnic group is enough to ensure ones acceptance into the business. Some of these girls have regular customers while others roam the market in search of one.

As a result of the various views expressed on the phenomenon, this thesis attempts to add to knowledge by exploring children's experience with migration, analysing the factors that motivates children to engage in load carrying. It also examines whether the decision to migrate is dependent on the child or the parent. The thesis further assesses what is carried and how far it is carried. Additionally, I want to find out whether there is a historical antecedent to the migration of children today.

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<sup>2</sup> 'kaya' (Hausa word meaning load) and 'yoo' (female in the Ga language of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana)

To arrive at the above stated objectives, interviews were conducted. I also interview with the representative from the Department of social Welfare- a body responsible for child protection in the study area and a host of others were done for children engaging in the phenomenon. I equally held focus group discussions.

The child at the centre of the study is very competent, she has what it takes to provide the study with information and her voice is of great importance to the research.

As a result, a theoretical perspective which espouses the child as being competent and capable of expressing his views on the phenomenon she is engaging in will be used to explain the findings of the study. The theoretical perspective of the New Social Studies of Childhood, Migration as coping strategy, the socio-cultural perspective of child labour will form the basis of analysis and discussing issues emerging from the study.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

An attempt to understand the totality of the girl child's migration and their choice of engaging in load carrying works for a fee is what this study seeks to achieve. The reason is that, in recent times, moving to urban centres has become a common practice among the young generation. However, it is believed that this type of migration hitherto was not common and even when it existed was among particularly males with the case of females virtually unheard of. Of course it has been argued that, the one involving teenage girls especially those from the three Northern regions of Ghana to urban centres of Kumasi has now become an emerging trend (Awumbila & Ardayfoi-Schandorf, 2008).

The phenomenon as it pertains now involves teenage girls who come principally from the savannah regions of Northern Ghana and neighbouring areas like Burkina Faso and Togo. A small number of them however come from other parts of southern Ghana. The migration of girls began with few people when they returned to the village with material goods, money and lots of swagger from experiencing city life. A few more joined in their next trip south and soon more and more people joined in this exodus thus making what started as a "trickle turns into a flood" and everyone who wants to acquire a "livelihood joins the bandwagon" (Appiah-Yeboah, 2007:14). At the end, people who did not have an excuse suddenly have a powerful reason to migrate resulting in the abandonment of schooling.

While in the south, these girls engage almost exclusively in the carrying of load on their heads for a fee. Those who engage in this kind of business are called kayayei. Therefore, a kayayoo is a teenage girl who carries other people's load on the head for a fee. The plural

for yoo is yei; hence kayayei refers to girls who carry loads on the heads otherwise known as head potorage.

Opare has posited that, “because these girls are ubiquitous in the towns and cities of southern Ghana, the terms kayayei and kayayoo have become part of the Ghanaian commercial vocabulary” (Opare, 2003: 34)

The background of the sending areas of these girls- Northern Ghana and the neighbouring areas of Burkina Faso and Togo, present a geographical location bedevilled with scarcity of resources. The rainfall pattern in this area is erratic and has little to talk about in terms of resources. There exist long period of draught which leads to low massive crop failure bringing about low income and abject poverty. The problem of crop rotation and over-grazing of animals in this savannah region as a result of human activity is even more serious. The above among many others have rendered the soil very poor and thereby resulting in low crop yields and ultimately leading to low incomes and poverty. As a result, the young girl finds it more expedient to migrate to the cities of Kumasi and Accra in search of non-existent jobs and finally settle on this kind of activity which requires no special skills and need not be based on someone employing you.

Perhaps the motive of these girls could be fulfilling personal aspirations or to better the lives of their parents and siblings. But this migration to urban centres to engage exclusively in the activity of load carrying could present peculiar challenges and risks that might jeopardize the well being of these girls. For instance, they may be involved in accidents, sustain various injuries, risk losing their lives, bodily pains; suffer sexual abuses like rape and defilement among many others.

Some attempts have however been made to study this kind of migration of young girls from the three Northern regions to the southern part of Ghana to exclusively carry load and the reasons for doing so. For example, *Kayayei: the women head porters of southern Ghana* (Opare, 2003), *The Kayayei: survival in the city of Accra* (Van den Berg, 2007), *An examination of the cultural and social economic profiles of porters in Accra, Ghana* (Adjubi Yeboah & Appiah Yeboah, 2009), *Symbols of Success: youth, peer pressure and the role of adulthood among juvenile male return migrants in Ghana* (Urugruhe, 2010) among many others.

It is however interesting to note that, all these studies concentrated on trying to understand issues related to the whys and whose influence the children migrated not forgetting about an attempt to examine the profiles or backgrounds of these migrant among



others. None of above stated research took interest in studying the historical antecedents, the experiences the girl-child goes through, the challenges involve in carrying loads on the head of a girl-child and ultimately studying this kind of phenomenon from the perspective of the affected children. It is therefore against this background that this particular study is set: understanding the totality of the girl-child's Migration and Engagement in Load Carrying activities.

#### **1.4 Research questions and objectives**

This study aims at exploring the everyday lived experiences of the girl-child who engages in carrying loads on her head for a fee at a market in Ghana and to bring to the fore issues that necessitate priority attention from all partners in the total development of the child not only in Ghana but also in other countries where the same phenomenon exist. At the end, it is envisaged that, the study will aid the planning of intervention programmes for children especially the girls engaged in this kind of activity and in particular those in Ghana especially those who migrate from their hometowns to the urban centres in search of the load carrying jobs.

The main research question the study seeks to answer is: *what sort of experience does a girl-child go through with migration and engaging in load carrying activity for a fee?* The study further focuses on understanding these children's migration to engage in carrying loads from the perspective of the affected children. In addition, even if this not the main focus of my study, I will also include perspectives on child load carrying activities based on interview with the representative of the Department of Social welfare. The reason for including him/her being that, the department has oversight responsibility of all children in the Kumasi Metropolis.

This research question could be answered through the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the extent to which the decision to migrate depend on the girl child?
2. To analyse the girl child's family migration and load carrying history.
3. To assess the factors that motivate the girl child to engage in load carrying activity
4. To examine the experiences the girl child go through with load carrying work
5. To assess what is carried, who carries it and how far it is carried. This will help in assesing the health implications of load- carrying activity on the affected children.

## **1.5 Purpose and Significance of the study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the load carrying works of girls from their own perspectives. The study is meant to contribute to the debates on child migration and the child as a social actor. Children's experience and perspectives on what it means to migrate from one region to another to engage in carrying loads for a fee will be an added advantage.

A careful search through various sources on the phenomenon reveals that, little works have been done on the phenomenal increases in girls migrating to urban centres of Accra and Kumasi to engage in carrying loads. However, it is worth noting that even those that have been done are mostly situational analysis: for instance, *The socio-economic profiles of head porters in Accra* (Appiah Yeboah, 2009), the kayayei: survival in the city Accra (Van den Berg, 2007).

Additionally, research into adolescents' independent migration in Burkina Faso shows their decision to migrate is mostly the outcome of their 'positive aspirations to look for work and urban experiences' (Thorsen 2007: 6). Although the young adolescents girl come to Accra or Kumasi seeking a dream of an improved economic status that makes better life for her and her family, more often than not most of them get disillusioned and their dreams shattered (Awumbila, 2007; Opare, 2003; U. S. Department of Labour, Bureau of International Affairs, 2003)

A study on the historical antecedent appears not to be available as well as what engaging in load carrying constitutes. Therefore, there is very little knowledge available of the lived experiences of girls migrating to Kumasi to engage in load carrying from their own perspective. There is also inadequate information on the historical antecedent as well as the concomitant health risks associated with who engages in carrying loads for a fee among others. It is against the background of inadequacies in previous studies that this study is situated.

In this study, the focus is on addressing the essence of gaining the views and perspectives of the girls engaged in carrying loads, the challenges they face, risks involved and the militating factors for their engagements. Investigating the historical antecedents of carrying loads with regards to their parents and an analysis of the health implication of the children involved would also be prioritised. This is because, I see these children as competent social actors who are able to contribute to any research aimed at them. I hope this insight to be gained from this study would be helpful to government, non-governmental organisations and policy makers as well as researchers particularly interested in children especially girls.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This study is organised into seven chapters. In chapter one, I will present the introduction to the study. Such sub-topics as the problem statement, the research questions and objectives, significance of the study, load carrying in a historical context and the broad outline of the study will be presented. In chapter two, I will be looking at the specific context of the study. This will include the physical and socio-economic background, the demography, national child Policies and some previous studies on the phenomenon together with a conclusion on the place of the child deduced from the information gathered from the study area. The next chapter will discuss the main theoretical perspectives that inform the empirical study and review related literature. The methodology will be in chapter four. In this chapter, I will present a brief introduction, justify the background to doing research with children, show how I entered the field and discuss the various methods adopted on the field to collect the relevant data. My role as a researcher, some ethical guidelines on the field, challenges and possible limitations in the processes of collecting data will equally be highlighted. An analysis of the data collected and a discussion of findings will engage my attention in chapter five and six. I will attempt to relate my findings of chapter five to the theoretical perspective, the research questions and the objectives of the study in a discussion form in this penultimate chapter.

Finally, a presentation of the summary, recommendations and conclusions will be in chapter seven. The main issues arising from the study together with a recommendation for further studies will be given equal attention in this final chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Profile of Country and Context of Study Area**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background to the study area, a review of related literature and an analysis of various policies designed by government to protect and ensure that the best interest of children in Ghana is held paramount. The aim of this chapter is to present a pictorial view of the local context on one hand and to give an overview of provisions made by government to ameliorate the challenges confronting children on the other.

Through the discussion, the place of children especially the girl child in Ghana and the sending area will be highlighted to give us an idea of why the girl child will probably abandon school in search of work. The chapter is divided into three main sections: the first presents the profile of Ghana: a description of the physical, socio-economic, political and demographic characteristics. The second part discusses poverty as it pertains in Ghana and the sending area. A critical look at the definition, causes, dimensions, trends and finally incidence of poverty in Ghana together with the various policies and programmes aimed at reducing the menace of poverty. An analysis of various policies directed specifically at children in the study area and a review of previous studies on the phenomenon under study take the finally section.

### **2.2 Brief description of Ghana**

The Republic of Ghana is located at the centre of the West African Coast. It has a total land area of 238,537 square kilometres and bordered by three French speaking countries: Togo on the east, Burkina Faso on the north and northwest and Cote d'voire on the west. The gulf of guinea on the south forms a coastline extending 560 kilometres (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, GDHS, 2008).

Topographically, the country is lowland except for a range of hills on the eastern border and Mountain Afadjato- the highest point above sea level (884 metres) -which is west to the Volta River. It is divided into three ecological zones: the sandy coastline backed by a coastal plain, which is crossed by several rivers and streams; the middle belt and western parts of the country, which is heavily forested and have many streams and rivers. The northern savannah is drained by the Black and White Volta Rivers. The Volta Lake has been used to create the hydroelectric dam in the east. This lake is one of the largest artificial lakes in the world (Ibid).

Climatologically, Ghana is tropical with temperatures and rainfall varying from the coast and highland areas. The average annual temperature is about 26 C (79 F). There are two distinct rainy seasons, April to June and September to November. However, in the northern part of the country, the rainy season begins in March and lasts until September. Annual rainfall ranges from about 1,015 millimetres (40 inches) in the north to about 2,030 millimetres (80 inches) in the southwest. The harmattan, a dry desert wind, blows from the northeast between December and March, lowering the humidity and creating very warm days and cool nights in the north. In the south, the effects of the harmattan are felt mainly in January (Ibid).

### **2.2.1 Socio-economic Profile of Ghana**

Historically, Ghana gained independence from British rule on 6th March, 1957, and became a republic in the British Commonwealth of nations on 1st July, 1960. The country's system of governance is a multi-party democratic presidential system of government with an executive presidency elected every four years with a maximum of two terms. There is also a parliamentary election every four years, an independent judiciary and a very vibrant media.

Administratively, the country is divided into ten regions; Western, Central, Greater Accra, Ashanti, Volta, Eastern, Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West which are further sub-divided into 170 districts to ensure equitable resource allocation and efficient and effective administration at the local levels( GDHS, 2008).

Economically, the structure has seen marginal changes over the past two decades. Agriculture is the leading economic activity, followed by services and the industry. It contributes 34% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 50% of the population (GSS, 2008). The leading export commodities are cocoa, gold, and timber. In recent times, the economy employs non-traditional commodities such as pineapples, bananas, yam and cashew nuts. Tourism is also gaining much prominence as a foreign exchange earner (Ibid).

Demographically, the provisional result of the 2010 population and housing census put the total population at twenty four million, two hundred and twenty three thousand, four hundred and thirty one (24,223,431). The population has increased from 18,912,079 in 2000 representing an increase of 28.1 % with the Northern region recording the highest increase of 36%. The intercensal growth rate in 2010 stood at 2.4 % with the population density increasing from 79 in the year 2000 to 102 in 2010 ([http://ghana.gov.gh/census/ phc](http://ghana.gov.gh/census/phc), 2010).

Out of the 24,223,431 total populations, it is estimated that, the child population stands at 10.5 million representing about 50% of the total population according to the GDHS (2008). Table1 below presents household population by age, sex, and residence Percent distribution of the de facto household population by five- nineteen year age groups, according to sex and residence, Ghana 2008

Age	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
< 5	13.0	10.8	11.8	15.2	13.8	14.5	14.3	12.5	13.3
5 - 9	13.2	11.7	12.4	16.6	15.0	15.7	15.2	13.5	14.3
10 - 14	12.7	12.3	12.5	14.7	12.4	13.5	13.8	12.4	13.1
15 - 19	10.7	10.3	10.5	10.8	9.1	9.9	10.7	9.7	10.2

Source: GDHS, 2008

According to the latest Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS, 2008), infant and child deaths have decreased dramatically in the last two decades. The survey shows that currently, 50 children per 1000 die before their first birthday down from 64 deaths per 1000 in 2003. The drop in less than five years mortality is even more dramatic. For instance, in 2008, 80 children per 1000 died before reaching age five compared to 111 deaths in 2003, a remarkable 30% reduction. The above stated achievements have been possible due to vaccination coverage which has increased from 47% in 1988 to 79% in 2008. Protection against malaria, a major killer of children has also increased markedly. The data presented above, reveals an improvement in especially health status of children thereby increasing their life.

Despite these marked improvements, the survey has revealed that, children in the study area continue to suffer from poor nutrition and anaemia resulting in stunted growth. For example, about 28% of children under five are stunted or too short for their age, indicating chronic malnutrition. This is widespread in the rural areas and especially among children living in the Northern, upper east, and central regions. Anaemia also affects more than three-fourth of all children. For instance, almost 9 in 10 children living in the northern, upper east and upper west regions are all anaemic.

## **2.3 Poverty in Ghana**

Ghana abounds in natural resources like Gold, Diamond, Timber, Cocoa, Bauxite and Cotton and in recent times the discovery of Oil in commercial quantities. Notwithstanding the abundance of these natural resources, most the people especially those living in the rural areas live below the poverty line. It was estimated that, approximately 50% of Ghanaians were poor in 1991. However, it is believed that, there is a significant drop in this figure to 28.5% by 2006. The dropped rates are believed to be 8.6% in urban areas and 10.4% in the rural ones (<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/ghana>. Retrieved 10.06.2011)

### **2.3.1 Definition and causes**

According to the Ghana poverty reduction strategy paper of 2003-2005, poverty is defined as the unacceptable physiological and social deprivation (GPRS, 2005). The following have been stated by the document as some of the causes of poverty:

- *Lack of micro-economic stability that erodes the resources of the poor through inflation and other variables*
- *The inability of the national economy to optimize benefits within the global system*
- *Low capacities through lack of education, vocational skills, entrepreneurial abilities, poor health and poor quality of life.*
- *Habits and conventions based on superstition and myths giving rise to anti-social behavior*
- *Lack of the capacity of the poor to influence social processes, public policy choices and resource allocation and vulnerability and exclusion*

### **2.3.2 Dimensions of poverty in Ghana**

Three main dimensions of poverty have been identified to be prevalent in Ghana. These are: income and consumption poverty, lack of access to basic services and finally deprivations in human development (Ghana Living Standard Survey 4). These conditions combine to keep households and whole communities in persistent poverty. Poverty in Ghana is basically found in households and communities characterized as poor based on lowness of income, malnutrition, ill-health, illiteracy, lack of access to safe water and sanitation facilities and general insecurity

### 2.3.3 Trends in Ghana's poverty

Ghana has experienced growing and deepening poverty over the last ten years. This has resulted in the intensification of vulnerability and exclusion among some groups and some areas especially in the north of the country. Moreover, population growth during the same period far outstripped the rate of decrease in poverty levels.

The GLSS 4 has it that, five out of ten regions in Ghana had more than 40% of their population living in poverty in 1999. The worst affected being the three northern regions (Upper East, Upper West, Northern regions). Nine out of ten in the upper east, eight out of ten in the upper west, seven out of ten in the northern region were all classified by the paper as poor in 1999. Of equal importance is the fact that, the highest incidence of poverty was recorded among food crop farmers who constitute 59% of the poor in Ghana.

Other results from the GLSS 5 conducted in 2005/6 provided us with the following figures; 28% of Ghanaians were described as being poor in 2005/6, falling from 39.5% recorded in 1998/9. Those described as being extremely poor also declined from 26.8% to 18.25 within the same period. Below is the presentation of poverty incidence by locality and region

**Table 2: Poverty incidence by locality**

Locality	Poverty		Extreme Poverty	
	1998/9/	2005/6	1998/9 /	2005/6
Accra	4.4	10.6	1.9	5.4
Urban Coastal	31.0	5.5	19.0	2.0
Urban Forest	18.2	6.9	10.9	2.9
Urban Savannah	43.0	27.6	27.1	18/3
Rural Coastal	45.6	24.0	28.5	11.5
Rural Forest	38.0	27.1	21.1	14.4
Rural Savannah	70.0	60.1	59.3	45.4
All	39.5	28.5	26.8	18.2

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2007



**Table 3: Poverty incidence by region**

Region	Poverty		Extreme Poverty	
	1998/9 - 2005/6		1998/9 - 2005/2006	
Western	27.3	18.4	13.6	7.9
Central	48.4	19.9	31.5	9.7
Greater Accra	15.2	11.8	2.4	6.2
Volta	37.7	31.4	20.4	15.2
Eastern	43.7	15.1	30.4	6.6
Ashanti	27.7	20.3	16.4	11.2
Brong Ahafo	35.8	29.5	18.8	14.9
Northern	69.2	52.3	57.4	38.7
Upper East	88.2	70.4	79.6	60.1
Upper West	83.9	87.9	68.3	79.0
All	39.5	28.5	26.8	18.2

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2007

### 2.3.4 Reflections

From the data presented above, it is evidently clear that, some localities and regions especially the three northern regions are the hardest hit of the poverty situation in Ghana. It is therefore no surprise that majority of the children especially girls have migrated from here to the urban centres of Accra and Kumasi to engage in load carrying activities for a fee

## 2.4 Poverty reduction strategies in Ghana

Over the past decade, the government of Ghana has embarked upon various economic and poverty reduction programmes that aims at improving the living conditions of its citizenry especially the vulnerable including women and children. From the mid 1990s when such policy frameworks like Ghana Vision 2020 and the medium term development plan of 1997-2000 launched, a number of other interventions have been implemented all aiming at reducing poverty in Ghana. Before 2005, interventions like the following were put in place:

Making people matter; a human development strategy for Ghana (1991), the National Development Policy framework (1995), the first medium term development plan (1996-2000) and Ghana poverty reduction strategy 2003/5 were all pursued in the country's attempt to find

improved living standards for her citizenry. However, since the desired impacts were not felt, new programmes are still being pursued. Among these are as follows:

In 2007, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP) was introduced and in 2008, individuals identified to be poor started receiving monthly allowances.

On the educational front, there have been various changes; at the basic level, pre-school education has officially been incorporated into the educational system and so all primary schools are required to have nurseries or kindergartens. Capitation Grant was introduced nationwide for all schooling going children in 2005/2006 academic year. Capitation grant is whereby government absorbs school fees of all pupils in government basic schools (Darko et al., 2009). As a result all children in government basic schools have free education. There was also the introduction of the school feeding programme during the same period. The programme aims at improving the nutritional status of school pupils by providing each pupil a lunch in the various government basic schools. This has been taunted as a tool which has brought about some amount of increment in basic school's enrolment in recent times. At the secondary school level too, the three year senior secondary school system was changed into four-year Senior High School with massive improvements in the educational infrastructure such as buildings.

It is notable that females in the northern half of the country (the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions) where most of the children under study comes from are seriously disadvantaged. More than half to two-thirds of women in these three regions have never been to school, compared with less than one-fifth in the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions. In addition, 21 percent of females in Greater Accra have completed secondary education or higher, compared with 4 percent or less in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions. It is worth noting that the proportion of female household members who have never attended school decreases with higher wealth status. Sixty-two percent of women in the lowest wealth quintile have no education, compared with only 10 percent in the highest quintile (GDHS, 2008).

## **2.5 Child- Related Policies in Ghana**

According to Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS, 2008), children under 18 constitute about 52% of the population. Therefore, the extent to which government respects children and protect them from harm, abuse, and provide them with opportunities for a healthy and productive life have impact both on the future of the children concerned and the

future of the country. This is because, it has been posited that “A healthy, well-fed and educated child population is a necessary foundation for a modern, productive and knowledge-based economy that can effectively participate in today’s globalised world” ([www.ghanaweb.com/http://news.myjoyonline.com/features/200912/3918 asp](http://www.ghanaweb.com/http://news.myjoyonline.com/features/200912/3918.asp)).

Government, through the legislature formulated policies that sought to help alleviate poverty of the citizenry through Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II an Agenda for Growth and Development, the Children’s Act of 1998, the LEAP of 2007 aimed at reducing poverty and giving people access to education. Due to the importance Ghana places on children: as future leaders and the very foundation of productive economy, when the UNCRC was adopted, she was the first country to ratify the convention on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1990 after the CRC was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989 before it even came into effect in September 1990 (Tuakli et al, 2006:11). This achievement is believed to have been made possible due to the fact that, prior to that date, in 1979; the Ghana National Commission on Children had already been established and put in charge of coordinating the activities of Child related agencies.

The CRC identifies childhood as a distinctive stage in life and provides for the Rights of all children to survival and life, moral and intellectual development, protection from harmful influences and active participation in social and cultural life. In 1992 Ghana drew a ten year plan of Action for her children. The plan was entitled ‘The Child Cannot Wait’. The plan of action was in tandem with the provisions of the CRC (Tuakli et al, 2006). The ministry responsible for children is the Ministry of Children and Women Affairs (MOWAC), the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MoMEY). These ministries work in collaboration with other government agencies (MDAs); like Ministry of Education, Health, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and many others.

According to the Legislative Drafting Division of the Attorney General’s Department of the Ministry of Justice, in 1995 a child law review committee was established to see to the enactment, review, formulation and amendment of various laws related specifically to children in Ghana. A timeline presentation of some government policies on the Rights of the child in Ghana are presented below:

1979- The National Commission on Children (GNCC) was established as the main government agency responsible for seeing to the survival, protection and development of the child.

1989- Ghana became the first country to ratify the UNCRC treaty in 1990.

1990- Ghana finally ratified the UNCRC and ensured that certain provisions in the CRC are adhered to.

1992- The third Republican Constitution came into being and entrenched the Rights of the child.

1992- A ten year National Programme of Action for children entitled “the child cannot wait” was drawn.

1993- The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice Act was established. It came under Act 456 to promote and protect the fundamental human rights in Ghana. It has four activities on the rights of the child: Public Education, Complaints, Dispute Resolution, Counselling and Supervision.

1998- Promulgation of the Children’s Act (Act 560). It presents the basic rights of the child, supports family tribunals, rules for parental duty and custody, labour, apprenticeship, care, protection so that the child can grow to his/her fullest potential and stipulates the minimum age of marriage.

1998- The criminal code amendment (Act 554) which aligns the criminal codes in Ghana to that of the CRC and thereby increasing protection for children against abduction, sexual abuse, protection and many others.

1998- The establishment of the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police to provide information, services and support, to prevent and prosecute crimes against women and children. It has now been renamed DOVVSU- Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit.

2000- Juvenile Justice Act (Act 653) was also established to ensure child protection according to international standards. The age of criminal responsibility was increased from 7 years to 12 years.

2001- The ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs was given Cabinet status.

2001- A presidential programme called National Partnership for children and its fund was established.

2002- The establishment of Child Rights Regulation to operationalize the children’s Act of 1998.

2002- A national multisectorial committee on child protection established following GNCC and UNICEF conference on child welfare and protection for law enforcement.

2002- Ghana participated in a United Nations General Assembly meeting on children and also a campaign of saying yes for children in Ghana.

2005- A national policy guidelines on Orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS was formulated.

2005- The Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) and the National Commission on Women and Development embarked on a sensitisation programme aimed at educating parents and children on the rights in six local languages with 1000 copies in each language.

2005- the establishment of the Human Trafficking Act ( Act 694) which addresses the problem of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, trading and receipt of persons within and across borders by threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or exploitation of the vulnerability.

2006- The formulation and passage into law of an Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (ECCD).

The above stated Laws/Policies, Conventions, Protocols are among the laws that have been passed by Ghana's Parliament; the law making body and given assent by the executive; the law enforcement body. The above gives us an idea of efforts made with regards to protecting the rights of the child and showing the place of the child in the top hierarchy of governance in Ghana.

However, the question that remains unanswered is: whilst government has put in place all these policies, programmes, laws, statues to ensure the protection of the rights children, how enforceable are these laws and what provisions have been put in place to ensure that these laws/ statues are fully enforceable? This is because, despite the ratification of the UNCRC in 1990, a large and growing demands exists for cheap labour in the urban centres thus bringing about exploitation of children while others are caught up in a cycle of poverty and streetism.

A possible answer to this question may point to the fact that, the plight of children in Ghana is not so good despite the numerous and well crafted laws and policies. This could be partly attributed to logistical constraints, lack of political will and poverty which characterises developing countries like Ghana. However, in my opinion, if government could master the courage as they do with resourcing the security agencies, there will be no need to be fighting streetism and the problem of children growing up to become criminals. This equally poses a great threat to the future of a country.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives influencing the direction of this study and the review of related literature.

The relevance of theory is undisputable in research and this has been acknowledged by Mills cited in Kvale. Mills argues that, methods and theories “*are like the language of the country you live in; it is nothing to brag about that you can speak it, but it is a disgrace and an inconvenience if you cannot*” (Kvale, 2009:85). Kvale has also posited that, theory involves the development of a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be investigated to establish the basis in which the new knowledge will be added and integrated (Kvale, 1996:95). As a result, the theoretical underpinnings rooted in the new paradigm-the New Social Studies of childhood which encompasses, children as social actors, children as “being” or “becoming”, the social structural child, together with other relevant theories such as; using children’s migration and work as family/household coping strategy against poverty and the Socio-cultural perspective of work will form the basis for presenting the phenomenon under study.

### **3.2 The New Social Studies of Childhood**

Prior to the 1980s, most of the research on children was basically done in the disciplines; sociology, psychology, psychiatry, education, and many others. These disciplines focused a lot on the socialization of children. In the words of James, Jenks and Prout, the dominance of socialization theory meant that, children were seen as “human becomings” rather than “human beings” who through the process of socialization would be shaped to become fully human adult beings (James as cited in Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Brannen and O’Brien argued that, the above sociological view of the child regarded children as “incompetent” and “incomplete”, as “adults in the making rather than children in the state of being” (Brannen & O’Brien 1995 p. 730). These disciplines paid much attention to “big issues” like class, bureaucracies or political system and hence paid little attention to children (Ambert, 1986).

However, in the middle or sometime later in the 1980s, a number of researchers from different backgrounds became concerned about the near absence of children in sociological research and started writing about the lack of research on children. For instance, Ambert in 1986 wrote about the near absence of children in North American sociological research and

concluded that, that demonstrated the way in which the dominant disciplines were affected by the patriarchal values of the society in which children lived. Brannen and O'Brien argued that the situation is not different from what transpired in Britain. According to them, children and childhood were ignored in British sociology but that they only concentrated on studying about children indirectly through such areas as family and education. Jenks too says that, a review of the multiplicity of perspectives that is and has been adopted in attempting to explain childhood reveals:

*At one level, a continuous paradox, albeit expressed in a variety of ways; the child is familiar to us and yet strange, he inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, he is essentially of ourselves and yet appears to display a different order of being: his serious purpose and our intentions towards him are meant to resolve that paradox by transforming him into an adult, like ourselves ( Jenks, 1982:09).*

The situation recounted above has brought about a cause for concern which necessitated the coming out of a new discipline called the Social Studies of children and childhood whose researchers have attempted to portray children as competent beings in their own right, stable, complete and capable of taken decisions that concerns them and their environment. The new paradigm again tries to give a voice to children by regarding them as people to be studied in their own right and not just receivers of adult teaching (Hardman. 1973).

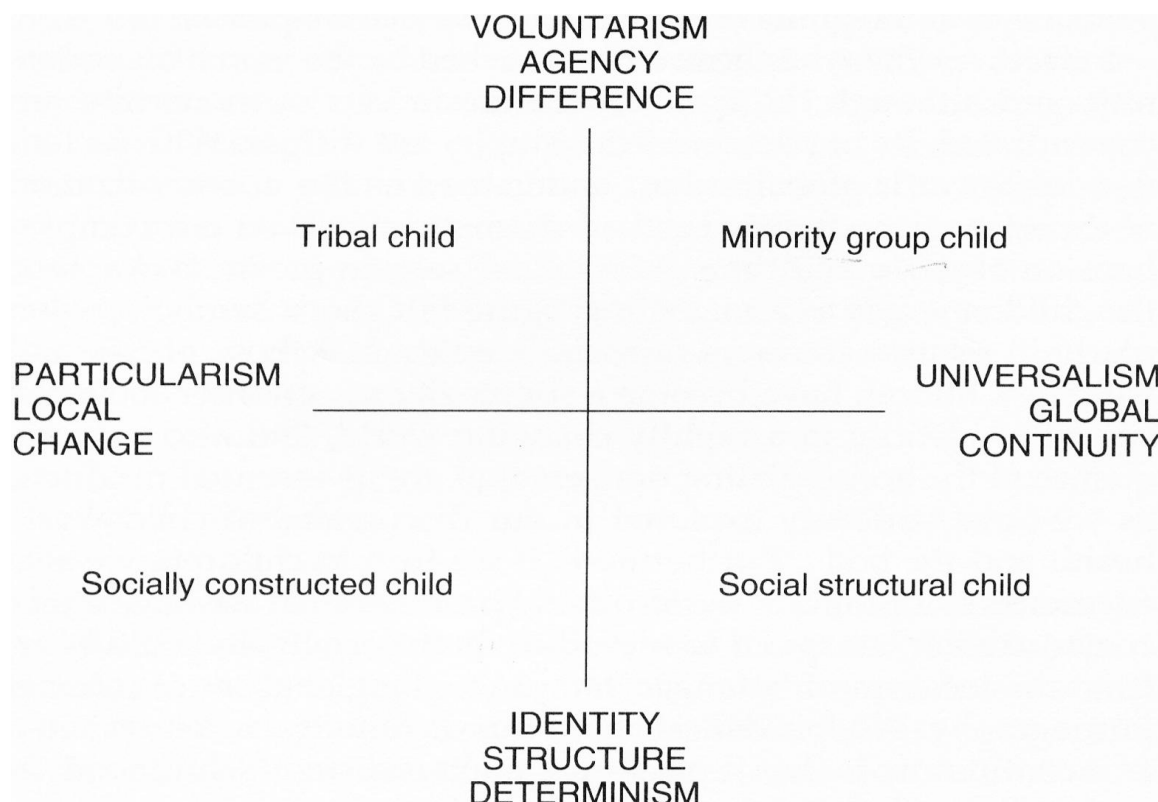
Though the discipline appears to be new; the genesis of it dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: from the works of the antecedents like Ruth Benedict, 1938, Philip Aries, 1960, Robert Coles, 1963-67, Charlotte Hardman, 1973, Lloyd De Mause, 1974, Margaret Mead, Viviana Zelizer, 1985 and of course the contemporary proponents who include William Corsaro, 1985, Jens Qvortrup, 1985-87, Judith Ennew among many others.

According to James, Allison, Jenks, Chris & Prout (1998), the up-to date work done by the proponents of the new discipline focuses on a progressive sense of place and that researchers in the discipline have conceived of children in four different ways; the socio-structural child, the minority world child, the socially constructed child and the tribal child approaches. These are further split into two pairs: the social structural and socially constructed approaches. In the social structural approach, childhood is seen as a “structural category” and an enduring feature of the social structure of all societies. Thus there is an acceptance that, conditions of childhood differ between times and places as culture, social and economic characteristics of societies vary (James et al 1998: 32).

The second pair is the socially constructed child approach. In this approach, childhood is seen to have been socially constructed by the dominant frameworks as being; a “becoming”, “incompetent”, etc. James, Jenks and Prout recommended that we “suspend our taken-for-granted meanings” of childhood by deconstructing the popular notions concerning the child and reconstructing new ones. James et al 1998’27).

Diagrammatically, the focus of researchers in this new paradigm is as presented below:

**Fig 1: A Map/ Theoretical field of the New Social Studies of Childhood**



**Source:** James et al., (1998:206)

The presentation on the new Social Studies of Childhood provides us with a background to this study. However, a focus is made on the social structural arm of the map and this will be a guide for the study. These and many others will form the basis of looking at the girl child who has migrated to work as load carriers in the city of Kumasi-Ghana.



### 3.2.1 Children as Social Actors

From the previous discussion on the New Social Studies of Childhood, I argued based on the Social Theory by Qvortrup, Jenks and Sprout that, childhood has been socially constructed by the dominant frameworks as “a stage”, “a structured becoming” and “never as a course of action nor social practice”; “an absent presence”, “a nominal cipher without an active dimension” (Jenks, 1982: 09 and 13). From the above given theorization, the child is seen not to possess a voice on issues that affect him, he /she is placed at the receiving end of society and have consistently been paired along with the family.

However, Barrow argues that, by seeing children as social actors and agents we transform them from the previous conceptualisations which portrayed them as passive beneficiaries, silent objects of concern who are dependent on adult control and care (Barrow as cited in Skelton 2007: 169). Wartofsky concluded on the above theorization in this way;

*“if children learned only what they were taught..... the species would have ended long ago- perhaps after a single generation!”* (Wartofsky, 1981; 202). However, the new discipline argues that, the child should be seen as a social actor with agency; a “*person*”, a “*status*”, a “*course of action*”, a “*set of needs*” and ultimately a “*social actor*” (James et al 1998; 207).

The concept child agency has been defined in various forms for instance: James and Sprout, refers to it as the active construction and determination of children’s own social life, the life of those around them and the societies in which they live” (1997:08). One prominent philosopher has also described the concept in this way: “*the child is active in its own right, not simply imitatively, but as ..... an agent in its own construction and as naturally an agent as any adult, in the sense of agency that concerns the initiation of action by choice* (Wartofsky, 1981: 199). To Wartofsky, the child is both an “actor” and “constructor” in its own right.

From the above, we see the child as possess an innate capacity to learn, an innate ability to develop and that children are active agents in their own life course. The child has a voice in anything that affects him/her and need to be treated as such. The use of this theoretical position in this study, aims at bringing to the fore, the fact that children have capacity to handle circumstances in their life to bring about the best possible results for them. This is in tandem with what the proponents of the new social studies of childhood argued for when they stated that, the child is a social actor who exercises agency. James, Jenks and Prout have recommended that, for anyone interested in children to understand them and how they handle their unique circumstances, one will need a study that “*focuses on their agency, their life*

*worlds, and their daily life experiences; their experiences and understandings, their interactions with each other and with adults of various kinds, their strategies and tactics of action”* (James et al 1998:138). In this study, the girl child who decides to migrate independently to engage in carrying load for a fee will be put in the perspective of a child who is a social actor exercising agency to change circumstances for the better in her own life. However since my informants are girls, their gender equally influence their role as social actors. For example, they have more responsibilities than boys; they are restrained by cultural practices and appear to be considered least when it comes to taking major decisions (Falola & Salm, 2002).

The term “doing gender”, refers to the social processes and practices whereby girls and boys actively are performing their agency (West and Zimmerman, 1987). I will elaborate more on the gender perspective related to the Ghanaian society under the social structural child.

### **3.2.2 Children as either Being” or “Becoming**

Qvortrup, Jenks and Prout: proponents of the new paradigm posited that the epistemological break for the new social studies of childhood is to understand the child as “being”: To them by regarding the child as “being” imply that:

*The child is conceived of as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences- in sum,.....this new phenomenon, the “being child”, can be understood in its own right. It does not have to be approached from an assumed shortfall of competence, reason or significance 1998 p. 207 in Holloway and Valentine, 2000 p. 764).*

Uprichard argues that, the idea of the child being regarded as a “Being” and “Becoming” is intrinsic in childhood research. To him, the “being” child is a social actor in his own right, someone who is actively constructing his her own childhood and someone who has views and experiences about being a child (Uprichard, 2004). The “Becoming” child on the other hand, is seen as an “adult in the making, someone lacking universal skills and features of the adult that he/she will one day grow to become (James and James, 2004 in Uprichard, 2004 p.304).

UNICEF’s emphasis on children’s participation in decision making is a way of making them assume increasing responsibilities as active, tolerant and democratic citizens. This is in support of the debate of the child as a “becoming”. The reason is that, children are

understood to have a future ahead of them and participation is one of the means that UNICEF has prescribed to enable that future to be positive for them.( Skelton, 2007: 176).

According to Uprichard, the concept of the child as a “Becoming” contains two main issues: first, the child is put in a future perspective; he/she is seen as a future adult rather than as a young human being. This portrays the child in the light of what he/she will be rather than what he/she is now. The second aspect is that, the child is seen as being incompetent in relation to adults. This view according to Young portrays the child as “progressing” from a state of vulnerability to sophistication from an earlier lack of skills to a latter possession of abilities” (1990; 41). The picture the above paints is that, competence is the preserve of adulthood and an adult characteristic. However, this does not hold true in many practical circumstances.

Some authors have criticized the way the new social studies of childhood theorizes the child as “being” rather than “becoming” (Qvortrup, 1994). James and Prout have posited that, the construction of the child as “being” by the new social studies of childhood stand in direct opposite to the construction of the child as “becoming” by the dominant frameworks (1997a in Uprichard, 2007). Strandell has argued that, “by redefining children and childhood from “becoming” to “being”, the theoretical understanding is turned the other way round resulting in a mirror picture of the developmental paradigm” (2005:2). To him, by constructing the being child as a mirror picture of the becoming child attempts to enforce and sustain the hierarchical adult/child dualism which in turn sustains the importance and viability of becoming child perspective” (Ibid. 2007:306). It has again being argued by the same author that, the “being” child is made to neglect future experiences of becoming an adult. But it is believed that, all children will grow to become adults.

However, it has been argued that the critique of earlier child research made by researchers within the social studies of children and childhood is too simplistic, constructing dichotomies of being- becomings as opposite categories. Furthermore, this critique also includes similar dichotomies of children as either vulnerable and dependent, or competent and autonomous (Kjorholt 2004). Children, as well as adults, are in dynamic ways moving between shifting positions of being autonomous and dependent, competent and vulnerable (Kjorholt 2004, Abebe and Kjorholt 2009).

Probably, based on the above criticisms, Qvortrup: one of the main proponents of the new social studies of childhood who argued for children to be regarded as “being” rather than “becoming” has modified his initial stand and concluded that:

*Many adherents of the social studies of childhood overlooked that growing up as an individual was inherently and indispensably a part of childhood as a social phenomenon: in fact, it was not merely psychologists and parents who were looking forward to adulthood on behalf of 'the child'; also children were anticipating adulthood in ways that contributed to forming their childhood in the here and now. (Qvortrup, 2004 in Uprichard, 2007: 306).*

Uprichard posited that, “by looking forward to what the child will become is important part of being a child at that time and by ignoring that imply ignoring the future of children and ultimately preventing children from exploring the ways in which the above stated may shape the experiences of being children (emphasis added).

### **3.2.3 The Social Structural Child**

The New Social studies of childhood has as one of its main themes; children as social actors. This theme has been discussed extensively above. The aforementioned discussion did not in any way attempted to downplay on the effects that are external to children and emerging from the wider society. The discipline rather appreciates and acknowledges the ways in which these forces beyond the girl's able control are capable of shaping their lives. For instance, Abebe and Kjørholt have argued that: Children are social actors whose relative abilities to exercise agency are rooted within 'structures' that can be either enabling or constraining (2009: 177).

Qvortrup also calls this the “*influence of major events that occur outside their microcosm*” (Qvortrup, Jens. 2002: 48). To Qvortrup, this holds true for economic forces, environmental events, physical planning, and political decisions.

The above discussed has influenced the choice of the social structural approach to bring to the fore the other variables of society that constrains the girl child in the exercise of her agency.

The wisdom in the above is that, in looking at the girl-child who migrates to work as a load carrier, careful should be taken in discussing the various variables contributing to the phenomena. This is the broader environmental, societal context in which the girl child lives. For example, Lieten argues that:

*Children under different circumstances are expected to react differently: a child pampered and at the same time in a tightly controlled environment, may have less autonomy and less agency in comparison with a child that has to fend for him/herself*

*on the streets of the third world cities or in the mists of a civil war: where as the first child may predominantly be an object of socialization and compliance, the second child may by his/her resilience and bravely, adjusting the rules of the game ( Lieten, 2005:3-5).*

Social structure according to the New World Encyclopedia refers to the pattern of social relationships in society (<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/social.structure>, retrieved 10.05.2011). It regulates interactions and provides guidelines within cultural norms for achieving the goals defined by the cultural values; it seeks to bring about societal stability. Also, according to James et al (1998), the social structural approach sees childhood as a structural category, an enduring feature of the social structure of all societies. Due to the aforementioned, James and Prout; proponents of the new paradigm have proposed that,

*A more theoretical perspective should be one that could account for childhood as a structural feature of society in the moment of its impinging upon children's experiences in daily life and the reshaping of the institution of childhood by children through their day to day activities. In essence, it would address both structure and agency in the same movement (James and Prout, 1995: 81).*

For instance, the northern part of Ghana is bedeviled with scarcity of resources as a result of bad weather resulting in drought, civil and tribal wars, and is also confronted with some negative customary practices like forced marriages and betrothal of marriage, male domination among many other unfavorable practices.

### **3.2.4 Doing gender**

*Gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category. An understanding of how gender is produced in social situations will afford clarification of the interactional scaffolding of social structure and the social control processes that sustain it (West & Zimmerman (1987).*

The above reveals how powerful issues of gender are and how an understanding of gender production in any given society for example Ghana could be useful when looking at the agency of the girl child.

Within the Ghanaian society, hierarchical roles determine individual responsibilities. This is mostly based on age and gender. With regards to gender, there exist differences the performance of roles for boys and girls. Girls have more domestic roles than their male counter parts. Boys on the other hand have more time for play and having fun. The reason

may be due to the believe that, “*girls need to learn a lot in order to make their future husbands happy*” ( Falola and Salm,2002 p.138). Zimmerman has supported the above with the argument that, many roles are “gender marked” for example, female doctor or male nurse (Ibid, 126).

At a young age, the Ghanaian is made to imbibe the social understanding of gendered activities. For instance, he learns that, “domestic chores are for women regardless of their education, work and wealth. This is seen in the Akan proverb “*obaa to tuo a, etwere obarima daamu*” (this is translated as when a woman buys a gun, it is put in man’s house).<sup>3</sup>The implication of the proverb is that, no matter how powerful a woman or girl may be she still has to submit herself under the authority and control of the husband. With this in mind, most girls are made to sacrifice their education for their male siblings in a situation where resources are scant.

Again due to the Ghanaian worldview, girls are taken through what is termed economic socialisation in the home whiles their brothers are made to attend school (Nukunya, 2004)

Economic socialisation of the girl is believed to instil hard work and resiliency in them.

Again, the males are made to work less compared to the work done by their sisters.

According to Falola,

the girl rises up early in the morning to sweep the house and the outside areas, fetch water from the stream, boil the water and cook breakfast, clean the breakfast dishes and dress her infant brother, all before she goes to school. After school, she prepares fufu; sometimes her brothers help her with the pounding. After cleaning the mortar and pestle, she has to take the food to the father’s house and collect the used dishes for washing- she virtually has little time for other things (Ibid, 138)

### **3.3 Children’s Migration and Work as Household/ Family Livelihood Strategy**

In recent past, a lot of consideration is being accorded the ways in which children cope with the stress of life. These stresses include: famine, hunger, poverty, malnutrition, deprivation illnesses, deaths among many others. This growing interesting in how children cope with these stresses stem from a growing acknowledgement of two main things; first, increasing recognition of the agency of people especially children in the third world countries, and the acceptance of children as social actors pursuing rational strategies in the pursuit of their own

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<sup>5</sup> *obaa to tuo a etwere obarima dan*” (this is translated as when a woman buys a gun, it is put in man’s house).

interest and not simply as passive victims awaiting the state or non-governmental organizations' assistance. Secondly, there is a growing understanding that, people's actions cannot be understood in isolation but in a collectivist way. The reason is that, children belong to households and so their responses to the problem of poverty, deprivation among many others will have to be understood in relation to the household and not simply the individual child (Ansell and Blerk, 2004: 673).

Coping strategy is defined as "actions people take to address their own needs and those of their kin in situations of stress (Ansell & Blerk, 2004; 673).

Migration on the other hand has been described as an enduring theme of human history: emerging as one of the important global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Awumbila et al, 2008). The history of population mobility with migration in Africa plays an important role in the livelihood and advancement strategies of both rural and urban dwellers. The case of Ghana is not different from that of the whole Africa continent. For instance, in the 1960s, most of the migration trends pointed to movements of people within the borders of the country. This included both groups and individuals of different ethnic groups. These movements took the form of rural-rural, rural-urban and urban-rural for a number of purposes (Awumbila, et al, 2008).

Notwithstanding the dominance of internal migration in the early period, international migration also occurred but at the time, on a small scale. It included mostly students and professionals and was the preserve of adults who for one reason or the other needed to pursue a certain agenda. However, the trend has changed given way for other forms hitherto unknown to dominate in the recent debates.

Currently, there is much debate on the role of independent migration of children: according to most of these debates, migration whether spontaneous; resulting from environmental pressures or policy induced, "*help mitigate the impacts of natural and environmental variability and structural adjustment*" (Sporten et al, 1999:442). Again, these authors see migration as an equilibrating mechanism that potentially offers opportunity for populations to improve household food security and reduces poverty. As a result, migration now features predominantly in both "poverty reduction strategies, as a tool for reconciling rural populations with available resources and also in sustainable livelihood debates as a coping strategy" employed in times of livelihood stress. It has also been suggested that by encouraging or coercing populations to move away from over-utilized environments to under-utilized resource-rich areas or planned settlements, poverty can be alleviated and

livelihoods improved. According to Ansell and Blerk, factors that lead to the use of children's migration as a household/family coping strategy include both children's "*needs and their abilities*" to contribute to household survival: children's needs include shelter, food, clothing, bedding, soaps, treatment when ill, adult care and supervision, psychosocial support and ideally the opportunity to attend school( Ansell & Blerk, 2004:675).

With regard to the migration of children from the northern part to the south, various reasons have been assigned from various authors: for example, Black and others have argued that it has been fueled by infertile soils and lack of social services in that part of Ghana (Black et al, 2006). Mensah-Bonsu also has identified employment as the main motivating factor driving the north-east movement of children (Mensah-Bonsu, 2003). Ethnic conflicts that have plagued the north have also been cited as attributing to the migration of these young girls.

The feminization of migration is been described as one of the modern trajectories which within Ghana involves young females who migrate from the northern regions to the cities of Accra and Kumasi to engage mainly in carrying loads on their heads for a fee (Adepoju, 2004). This is because, it is believed that, in the past, women migrated in their capacity as wife and so accompanying their spouses. It is even argued that, it was for short distances (Awumbila, et al 2008). It has also been seen that, many of the female migrants move independently through networks of friends and relations. This according to the authors imply that contrary to earlier studies that identified women as migrating mostly to join their partners making them dependents, "*young females in current migration flow tend to be just independents and autonomous migrants who have made their decision and move despite the fact that, there may be no family member at the destination area*" (Awumbila et al, 2008:19).

In contemporary times, women migrate independently within and outside their country for economic as well as other important reasons. These include education, and career development all as a result of the changing labour market trends and the increasing participation of women in the global workforce (Awumbila et al, 2008).

Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe and Castaldo posit that, the fundamental reason for the migration of children is economic; that is poverty and the hope that when they move away it will bring about some economic relief to both them and their entire household. The desire of the children to be physically independent and have some degree of privacy without any interference in the management of their acquire wealth has also been cited (kwankye et al, 2009).



These authors have concluded that, children's migration is not a new strategy for meeting the needs of children and their family in times of stress but that, it is acquiring a growing significance especially in the context of Southern African's HIV/AIDS epidemic and for that matter, most of the places of Africa where poverty and sickness are on the ascendency. Therefore, this study is not only looking at children's migration as a problem to be coped with or "*vectors of the strategy*" but children being seen as social actors exercising agency in the mist of constraints (Ansell & Blerk, 2004:689).

From the interviews conducted, it becomes apparently clear that, most of the girls who participated in this study have adopted migrating to carry load as a coping strategy in the mist of poverty, deprivation, malnutrition and the shame associated with not being able to get the basic needs of life as a girl-child. This situation is not only imbedded in the individual families of these children but have a structural underpinnings which forces the industrious child who is active and wants to exercise agency not to sit unconcern but to migrate and cope with life. Instead of the socially active child staying in her hometown where she is disadvantaged, she chooses to fulfill personal aspirations through migrating to the south where she has no family, she accepts to sleep in open spaces and in crowded rooms, she agrees it is worth to be confronted with all the dangers associated with unaccompanied minors in the city in order to satisfy a personal goal or aspiration

### **3.4 The Socio-Cultural Perspectives of Work**

Abebe and Bessel have written that, following the growth of social studies of childhood, the child has been "*transformed from the natural category into a socio-cultural construction*". By this, they were suggesting that, any phenomenon associated with the child; work should be inseparably linked to the social and cultural context in which it takes place (2011; 6).

It has also been argued that, "*children's work ought to be understood in the light of different material and cultural conditions that varies according to a range of individual factors including, the age, gender, capability, birth order and sibling composition of the child involved*". (Bourdillion & Nieuwenhuys cited in Abebe & Bessel, 2011).

This study is based on the new social studies of childhood and as such attempt is made to dispel the temptation of universalizing children especially those who engage in the work of carrying load on their heads by just giving a simple explanation of the phenomenon based on some social criteria without taking into consideration their socio-cultural context. The study discusses that, children's work has its own social and cultural meanings which are influenced

by the specific context. The reason being that, culture influences the way of life of people and therefore could not be isolated when looking at a phenomena( load carrying work) which have been described by Agarwal et al. as, *representing something of an ethnic occupational niche for northern females*” (Agarwal et al, 1997:4).

I am therefore borrowing from the typology; *the socio-cultural perspective of work on debates and silences on child labour in Africa and Asian* by Abebe and Bessell (2011) by focusing on the indigenous and the Islamic perspectives. Ali Mazrui; a social historian’s work titled the African Triple Heritage has been acknowledged by these authors as forming the basis of their typologies. They have adopted this from Ali Mazrui in explaining the historical roots of child labour in especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

These same typologies are what this study is also using in bringing to the fore the experiences the girl-child goes through whiles engaging in load carrying work with emphasis on the two stated above.

Abebe and Bessell quoted Mazrui in their explanation of the indigenous perspective to mean that, children’s work in families are a part of the household production, vocational training and socialisation. This they posited to be vital for the maintenance of family subsistence economies and thereby ensuring that there is continuity in certain cultural skills. This concurs with the overall believe of the African that, children are future investment in need of protection for the perpetuation of societal and family values and customs. The Islamic perspective on the other hand is believed to have a focus on the role children play in the maintenance of family livelihoods especially in the context whereby women as a result of Islamic teachings are secluded from public spaces. In this case, children are used by these women to work in order to meet household or family livelihoods. In support of the above, Robson has stated that,

*Hausa children in Northern Nigeria are highly mobile and play important economic roles in supporting married women who spend much time in their walled residences (gida) because of the local socio-religious practice of Muslim seclusion. According to her, secluded Hausa women have low mobility and do not attend local periodic markets, but make essential day-to-day purchases from child house-to-house hawkers while sending children on errands to make purchases on their behalf (2004: 193).*

The above discussed finds expression in other religious practices too. For instance, it is well known that, in some Christian societies children contribute their labour in order for them to receive church education. In many dioceses in Ghana, children are made to contribute their

labour to the development of the church through giving monetary offerings; assisting in church farming, poultry and many others. This may find its root in the Biblical sayings that;

*Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6 NIV) and also the proposition by the Bible that; “a hand that does not work should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV).*

The socio-cultural perspectives of work go without criticized. Abebe and Bessel argue that; while the perspective is useful in understanding the continuity of children’s reproductive roles, it tend to overlook the other structural forces that have the tendency to disrupt the livelihoods of families of these children. Again, they argued that, the insights provided by these perspective is inadequate in presenting children’s changing work patterns which are rooted in unequal power relation and the reciprocity emanating from both local and the international economy that perpetuates the poor conditions of developing countries forcing the child to be engaging in various forms of exploitative labour. Finally, they have argued that, children have a right to the benefits arising from any work appropriate to their age whether paid or unpaid and that in most cases children are rather harmed than protected by being prevented from working.

However, this study believes that, these perspectives cannot provide us with adequate explanation on the phenomenon of carrying load but that it provides us with deep insights into understanding some of the experiences that carrying load has on the livelihood strategies of families in the Global south. When families live in precarious economic situations, they demand that all hands are put on deck in trying to assuage the situation and when this happens, part of the burdens of the family is placed on children who may be expected to labour and raise money by engaging in income generating activities like load carrying. This ultimately sends the unskilled child to the street where he/she may find an activity that fits his/her competencies. This is of course rooted in the cultural values of the Ghanaian.

### **3.2. Literature Review**

This section attempts a review of relevant literature on the phenomenon of load carrying for a fee popularly referred to as kayayei. Various studies have been conducted on the phenomenon and different reasons have been assigned for the engagement of children in this kind of activity. Some of these reasons range from economics, education, the lure of the city or the attractions in the city and many others.

For instance, according to Ungruhe (2010 p.260), the motive of children migration is embedded in “economic interest”, “negotiating social position” and is also a means of reaching social adulthood for the younger generation.” Thorsen added that, the motive is acquiring skills and knowledge in an alien surroundings leading to maturity and caring for the needs of the family motivates children and young people to migrate (Thorsen, 2006: 99). To him, this also helps the younger generation to achieve higher status upon return to their home land. Of equal importance is the fact that, travelling to the city increases the rank of the traveller among his/her peers, returning home with modern goods: a bicycle, stylish clothes or a mobile phone which accords the traveller respect and recognition within his/her cycle of friends (Thorsen 2007)

Various scholars have contributed to the debate and have come out with divergent opinions for the migration of especially girls to engage in load carry works. However, it appears most of this studies are not based on the perspective of the girl- child. For instance, Hashim (2005b) revealed that children migrate in order “to buy modern goods to support the family or to raise money for school fees or dowries” (Hashim, 2005b; Ungruhe, 2010). Apart from the reason being based on economic interest, “negotiating social position” is also cited in Ungruhe (2010). The World Bank has given other precipitating factors as “poverty and economic constraints” (World Bank, 2008).

In addition to the economic factors that drive children’s migration, Appiah-Yeboah (2009) has come out with cultural and social practices prevalent in Northern Ghana that affect especially girls. Among these is the gender bias in education. According to him, the rationale for the gender bias in education is the idea that, “girls grow up to be wives and wifely duties are best taught at home and not in schools” (Appiah-Yeboah, 2009:12). As a result of the above stated, it makes sense traditionally not to spend money on the girl who “eventually ends up in somebody’s home” (Appiah-Yeboah, 2009:12)

Also, some girls migrate to Accra or Kumasi either to run away from a betrothed husband or to work and save money for their wedding. Thus most of these girls who escape from arranged and forced marriages end up in the cities working as porters or kaya. Another cultural practice believed to contribute to girls migrating is especially noted to be common among the Dagombas, that is the practice which allows girls to be raised by their paternal aunts. This practice it is believed was traditionally meant to strengthen the extended family bonding and also give women who are not able to have their own children the opportunity of raising children( ILO,2004). But due to economic hardships, this tradition has been greatly

abused and young girls are now being exploited by their paternal aunties. Very often, these aunties bring the girls to Kumasi or Accra themselves or give them to other adults who force them to work as porters. In either case, the young girls work and their earnings are kept by their aunties who benefits from them.

Finally, there is a social factor that increasingly coerces girls to migrate from Northern Ghana to the south. This has no cultural, religious or economic basis but probably an indirect economic stimulus. Beauchemin (1999) calls this the “exodus factor”, that is to say, everyone is leaving for the city so I must also leave. He believes it usually starts in a simple but subtle way. An analysis of the studies presented shows that, the perspective of the child was not the primary motive. The studies aimed at unravelling the causes of the phenomenon by interviewing significant others like parents, teachers, and guardians of children all in an attempt to get into the bottom of the problem. Since the perspective of the child has not been sought, this study aims at finding out the kind of experiences the child goes through in migrating to carry loads for a fee by examining the motivating factors, historical antecedent of the affected child and to find out the health implications thereof.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

*.....Discourses on listening to children produces a new vision of childhood, empowering a disenfranchised group in society by replacing one essentialist image of child- the vulnerable and dependent child – with another- the autonomous omnipotent competent child who is given the right to have a voice (Kjørholt, 2005:175).*

The above stated introduces this study into the need to do research with children. This will be followed by a presentation on the methods I employed on the research field while collecting relevant data for this study. It begins with how I entered the research site, a discussion on the methods of collecting data; semi participation observation, semi-structured interview, informal focus group discussions, my experiences on the field and how it was mitigated. The curtain will be lowered for this chapter with ethical considerations and finally the limitations of the study.

The above stated aims at attempting to answer the main research question for the study; *what sort of experience does a girl- child go through with migration and engaging in load carrying activity for a fee?*

### 4.2 Research with children's perspectives/ doing research with children

To research imply diligently and systematically inquiring or investigating into a subject like children's migration and engagement in load carrying activity in order to discover or revise facts, theories and applications.

(<http://www//dictionary.reference.com/browse/research/20/10/10>).

On the other hand, doing research with children according to Fraser, Lewis, Ding, Kellet and Robinson; is helping to “advance understanding of how the children develop and live their lives”, the outcomes of which will impact directly or indirectly on the lives of those researched and others in similar situations (Fraser et al 2004:1).

It has been argued by many contemporary researchers that, children have been relegated to the background; denied the rights of participation, and their voices have remained unheard when it came to research (James and Prout 1990). For instance, Hardman in 1973 argued that, children's voices have traditionally been “muted” within the social sciences (in Christensen and James, 2000: 1). However, Christensen has argued that, “changing the position of

children in the social and cultural sciences requires re-examination of the conceptual frameworks that have influenced children's representation" (1994:4).

As a result, the new social studies of childhood was born in the 1980s to give a voice to this muted group by presenting them as social actors with agency. It is believed that, seeing children as active researchers is fast gaining grounds in response to changing perspectives on children's status in society (Hallet and Prout, 2003 in Kellet, 2005:1). However, this has been attributed to the coming into force of the UNCRC in 1989 and probably the introduction of the new social studies of childhood within the same period. For instance, article 12 and 13 of the UNCRC advocated that, children should be informed, involved and consulted on all decisions that have influence on their lives. Some of the proponents of the latter; the new social studies of childhood have also proposed that; the child should be seen as "a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences- in sum as a social actor" (James et al., 1998:207). To Alison James, by listening to what children says about their everyday life and experiences can allow us to both theorized and act in their understanding in relations to larger issues of social and political change ( James, 2007 cited in Tendai, 2009:20).

In relation to the above discussed, getting the perspectives on how it feels like for the girl-child to migrate and engage in load carrying work in the city has been the main focus of this study. This is because, the child in Ghana and many others elsewhere have similar situations of being regarded as not being competent, enough to have a say in anything that is perceived to be for adults. The rational is that, if economic situations render children to go to the street, it is not there child who should be consulted on the issue since he/she does not take of herself. This is very typical of the view of developmental psychology. For instance, Kellet and Ding have argued that, the early years of developmental psychology bequeathed a dominant legacy of children as objects of research, of research being carried out on children"( 2004 in Kellet, 2005"1).

In 2004, Jones argued that, the acceptance that children are "social actors, agents in their own worlds have provided the necessary impetus to propel agendas towards research with children and to the gradual realization that, children could be more than participants in research, they could equally be co-researchers (in Kellet, 2005: 2 with emphasis added).

Though the above stated appear very cogent, there is criticisms against doing research with children. It has been argued that, the child in this new kind of research is tokenized in participation, manipulated by adults; suffer unequal power relations among many others

(Ibid). For instances, it is argued that, in those researches, adults formulate the research questions, choose the methods and take control of the analysis (Ibid). With the above in mind, the study adopted a “reflexive research practice” (Christensen and James, 2001:1).

#### **4.3 The research site and how it was entered**

Ghana is the country where the study was situated. The data for the study was specifically collected from the Ashanti region and in the Kumasi metropolis. All data for this study was collected from this metropolis. The focal locations for the data collection were at the workplaces of all respondents: the individual children and the representative which were all located at the capital of the Ashanti region.

The data collection fieldwork for this study was carried out from 11<sup>th</sup> June- 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2010. The field entry was full of surprises. This is because, prior to going to the field, it was envisaged that, the choice of the market was going to make the process very easy and less tiring. However, the case was different on the ground such that at a point; there were a lot of frustrations. This situation stemmed from the fact that, almost all the initial contacts made to facilitate my smooth collection of relevant data were welcomed with opposition. The above really found expression in what Kvale and Brinkmann said when they argued that “qualitative research interviewers work in an area where it often more important to remain open to the dilemmas, ambivalence, and conflicts that are bound to arise throughout the research process” ( Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 69).

I began by going to the Kumasi Metropolitan assembly to present a letter of introduction from my department: The Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) to ask for permission to go into the market and organize children engages in carrying loads for my studies. When I went to the office, I was met with an unfriendly attitude as most of the people who read my introductory letter were unwilling to be associated with the study. For a period of two days, there was nobody in particularly to grant me permission to go into the study field to conduct interviews. However, due to “complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:62), I made conscious effort to take potential ethical concerns into serious consideration from the very beginning of the study to the end of it. This is also because, according to Kvale and Brinkmann, “qualitative research interviewers work in an area where it often is more important to remain open to the dilemmas, ambivalences and conflicts that are bound to arise throughout the research process”( Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:69). I therefore endeavored to get prior permission before going to the market to observe, select, and conduct any interviews for my study.



Finally, I settle on the Metro Director for the department of Social Welfare. This man though initially uncompromising, became one of the most cooperative respondents for the study. After the initial contact with the authorities concerned, I went on with a non-participant observation. Being at the market place, one could visible see the phenomenon well exhibited. This gave me assurance that, selecting participants was going to be easy. The opposite was rather the case as almost all the children I approached for their informed consent before taking part of the study refused to participate in the study. The above made voluntary participation of children in the study a bit cumbersome such that not even the presence of three different gatekeepers could enable me gets easy access. The reason for their refusal as it was revealed was due to the fact that, the children were afraid to engage in the study because, they feared been identified and sent back home. I was told that, an NGO had earlier attempted registering all the children engage in carrying loads for repatriation and since this children were not ready to comply, they rather adopted avoidance to escape been identified and sent back to their hometown. Through consistent interaction and explaining the rationale for the study, some became interested and volunteered information for the study.

#### **4.4 Methods of Data Collection**

The methods of data collection for this study were; participant observation, focus group discussion, interview with the representative of the department of Social Welfare and an in-depth semi structured interviews for informants. The data collection spans a period of three months- May, 2010- August, 2010. . In all, 20 girls were interviewed for the study. The ages of these girls ranged from 13-16 years. Out of the total number interviewed, 9 were aged 15years, 6 were 14 years, 4 were 16 years and the remainder was 13 years old. The choice of only girls is due to the gender based nature of this activity; the carrying of the load on one's head involves only girls which necessitated the term to be popularly called kayayei as stated earlier.

##### **4.4.1 Participant Observation**

My first engagement during the data collection was semi participant observation. I did this by taking a walk through the market and the kejetia lorry station whiles stopping occasionally to stand in front of stores to observe for myself how the phenomenon in real terms is exhibited. This was very important to the study because, Robson argues that, *“as the actions and behavior of people are central aspects in a virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious*

*technique is to watch what they do, to record this in a way and then to describe, analyze and interpret what we have observed” (Robson, 2002;309).*

As indicated earlier on in chapter one, my association with the market as a child, and having moved out of it for so many years, it was appropriate for me to take a walk in order to observe and locate places where the children under the study could be seen. While walking through the market, I discovered from observation that, the phenomenon of carrying loads on the head with customers following these children had become very visible; with children been spotted at every corner of the market. I also saw how these children weigh their piece of load and after was engage in bargaining with their potential customers for the amount of money to be paid them. These exchanges are very interesting and portray these girls as people who are really doing business without any compromises on price fixing at all. The manner in which you see these girls lift their load to determine how heavy it is and how much deserve to be charged for each of their load is as insightful as possible.

Participant observation has been described as very important technique employed in qualitative studies. Dewalt and Dewalt argues that, “living and working with people that one studies provides a sense of the self and the other that is not easily put in words” (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2001:8). During my observation, I did not participate actively in the activities of the girl-child: I was only part of the people walking through the market in search of goods to buy while I stopped occasionally to interact with some of the children who were carrying loads without necessarily being part of the activities going on in the market with regards to who is carrying load for who and who is paying for the services render by who in the load carrying business. I did not also buy anything to be transported for a fee as a customer of any of these children.

I did not only observe the daily routines, interactions of the children involved but I gained useful insight into the dynamics of the life of the children; that is how they roam the market in search of available load, how they spent their leisure period, how they are exposed to risks as they loiter around the market and not forgetting also how some of them do sleep in the open. This part of the study really gave me a great deal of insight into the interactions, social dynamics and the vulnerability of the girl-child who engages in carrying load for a fee in a market.

The essence of the choice of using this technique is its directness in given information about people. This is because, you do not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes but you watch what they do and listen to what they say and also help in getting the real life in

a real world (Robson, 2002). Among some of the challenges encountered are time constraint; the technique is indeed time consuming and observing in a market setting where a lot of people were going about their duties together with these children made the exercise cumbersome. I however overcame this challenge by taking my time walking through the market and occasionally stopping in front of people's store to observe the phenomenon under study.

#### **4.4.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Following after the participant observation was focus group discussions. In all, three different focus group discussions were held with eight, six and another six girls respectively in each of the groups for a discussion on load carrying activities. The discussions bothered on the experiences that the girl-child goes through in her job; the motivating factors, risk involved, the benefits accrue and the previous engagements of their families in load carrying activities.

Focus groups are used increasingly with children (Davis, 2001, O'Dea, 2003). This is because; they are generally comfortable and familiar with the process of discussing matters in groups (Darbyshire et. al, 2005). Kvale and Brinkmann posited that, "a focus group usually consists of six to ten subjects led by a moderator" (2009:150). This guided me in selecting my participants for the discussions. They argued further that, "the aim of focus group is not to reach consensus about or solutions to the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue. Learning from the above, I guided children to express their various viewpoints without any interference with regards to reaching consensus or finding solutions to the issues under discussions. My research assistants were also made to understand the need for flexibility in focus group discussions. As a result, we were flexible enough to move along with the flow of the group, accepted the dynamics of working with children (girls) and accepted the areas that they moved the discussions into.

The motivation for using focus groups in this study was base on providing this girls a comfortable process that enabled and allowed them to discuss and articulate in their own words, their perceptions, understandings and experiences in migrating from home, settling in the city and engaging in load carrying activity. The discussions took place at the ministries on a Saturday when all the offices were closed and thereby providing us a serene atmosphere for a fruitful discussion.

#### **4.4.3 In-depth semi structured Interviews**

The most frequently used method for the collection of the relevant data for my study was the use of in-depth semi structured interviews. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, the research interview is a “professional conversation”, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:2). In my professional conversation with my research participants, I made use of an interview guide that included a list of questions that attempted to address the issues raised in my research questions and objectives. In order for me to gain insight into the phenomenon of carrying loads for a fee, I inquired from the children issues bothering on their experiences; motivation for migrating to engage in load carrying works, their future aspirations, risks involved, historical antecedent to the child’s migration, and finally an analysis of how much is carried by this children at any point in time. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way; using interview guide with the themes and questions bearing in mind the need for my reflexivity. Whenever a question asked raises issues that are relevant to the study but had not been included in the guide, I formulated a follow up question to solicit for the new information. A lot of informal conversations went on during the interview to make the whole session enjoyable and less stressful but providing the needed data

#### **4.4.4 Interview with the representative**

There was one representative, who is the director of the Department of Social Welfare for the Kumasi Metropolis. He stood in for the government agency responsible for children’s affair in the metropolis. As a representative of the agency responsible for children’s affairs, he presented us with a great deal of knowledge with regards to children who are not only engaging in carrying loads but all children in the Kumasi metropolis who may be in need of government interventions.

The interview with the representative from the department of Social Welfare was very interesting and informative. As the Director of the department in the Kumasi Metropolis, his contribution provided insight into how government and probably policy makers perceive the phenomenon and what is being done about it. He responded to questions that comprises of the perception of government on the phenomenon of the girl-child carrying load, various policies of government on children, programmes in place in the metropolis that are geared towards the upholding of the rights of all children and many others. His general comments on the status on children with regard to their rights and privileges were also sought. The interview with the

individual children equally gave me a lot to learn from the activities of carrying loads on the head for a fee. I am well convinced that, the interview gave me a comprehensive picture of the experiences the girl-child goes through in carrying load on the head for a fee.

#### **4.5 Being in the field: my role and experiences as a researcher**

As a Ghanaian collecting data in my home country, I saw myself to be at a better position to research into a phenomenon situated in Ghana. I envisaged an easy access to gather relevant data especially due to my background experience at the location where the study took place. I grew up in the study area and had my education up to the secondary school level here. I was motivated by the fact that, I had some knowledge of the market and therefore could easily find my way through the market to trace the whereabouts of the children.

Whiles collecting data, I played the roles of the interviewer, moderator, tape recorder, and listener while the gatekeeper and the interpreter assisted me. Fraser has emphasized the importance of elucidating the researcher's reflexivity in relation to his/her motivations for collecting a study (Fraser et al, 2004). In this vein, my motivations for this study derives from my experiences of growing up in Kumasi (the study site) at a time when the phenomenon under study had just began and so not a problem compared to the position it had assume now becoming a major social problem confronting the disadvantage child. This readily brings to mind my childhood memory of a young boy by name Kofi Mambo (Oyebue), who was brought to sit in front of my dad's store to carry the load of dad's customers. During this period, I remember seeing only boys carrying loads on trucks in the market without any girl's involvement. When I went back to collect the data, this boy who is now grown was invited by my dad to assist me collect the data. I guess this guy came with an agenda that might not be different from the ones being expressed by these children today; coming to work to raise money and then go back to find some vocation. He however appear to find his feet rooted in the city and I guess that he has no plans of going back any time soon if he will even go at all. If fact my childhood experience in the market has given me an appreciation of the magnitude of the problem today compared to the days when I was young. I see that there has been a great transformation in the phenomenon: it is now female dominated and child centered. My conviction that, by knowing the market, my entering and accessing the children more easily was equally dashed as it became difficult for me to get children consenting to take part in the study. It took the intervention of my gatekeeper before I could get children willing to participate in the research.

My experience with the phenomenon as it is now, gives a picture of a social problem that requires urgent attention due to the negatives associated with it. From the interviews and discussions with the children, I have come to identify the dangers involved in engaging in this kind of activity. My contact with the Metro Director of Social Welfare has also broaden my knowledge about the various policies and programmes that have been put in place to protect the rights of the child which are being trampled upon.

#### **4.6 Data Gathering and Analysis**

The preparations I made before embarking on data collection exercise in Ghana accorded me a good platform to start collecting data confidently. However, a lot of things had to be adjusted on the field to enable me fit into the reality of collecting data. Due to language barrier, I employed the services of two people; one was a mother figure who also acted as both a gatekeeper and an interpreter for the children and the other an interpreter. The gatekeeper works at the Ghana Immigration Service in Kumasi and provided for us a place in the ministries where the focus group discussions took place. The role of the gatekeeper here confirms what Masson said concerning the gatekeeper: “gatekeepers generally control the places- homes and schools- which provide the safest and most suitable venues for interviews (Fraser et al 2004:46)

Getting the children’s consent to participate in the study was very difficult until I met this gatekeeper who introduced me to the children before they agreed to participate in the study. The introduction by the gatekeeper afforded me the opportunity to cease to become a total stranger to these children who never knew me. This is also consistent with Masson discussions on the legal context of doing research with children and young people. She argued that, “an introduction from a known person (gatekeeper) means the researcher ceases to be a complete stranger” (Fraser et al 2004: 46)

#### **4.7 Ethical Consideration**

According to Fraser et al., though research does not “kill or maimed children, it may upset and worry children and parents, embarrass them or betray them”, therefore ethics in research matter dearly (Fraser et al., 2004:99). Kvale on the other hand believes that, ‘ ethical issues permeate interview research such that the knowledge produced by such research will be dependent on the social relationship of the interviewer and the interviewee where the

interviewee is free and safe to talk of private events recorded for later public use” (Kvale, 2009:16). Research ethics again is about “building up, stimulating and keeping alive an awareness and debate about how one should act’ (Aarsand, 2010). They are moral codes that are supposed to be followed by researchers while carrying out research. Ethics are binding thus supposed to be adhered to irrespective of the circumstances surrounding the research; they remind us of our responsibilities to the researched (May, 2005). Therefore in order for me to safeguard the interest and welfare of my respondents/ informants, the following ethical issues were adhered to:

#### **4.7.1 Informed Consent**

The informants were made aware of the purpose of the study. I took my time to explain to the children what the research seeks to find out about the activity of load carrying. The overall plan and the nature of the study were also made known to them. Again, I assured all the children that, participation was voluntary and that they had the exclusive right to pull out of the study at any time they deemed fit (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:70).

#### **4.7.2 Permission**

I sought permission from the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly or the Department of social welfare before entering the market. Initially, the parent/ guardians of the children were targeted to grant permission by responding verbally if they agree to allow their children to partake in the study. However, due to the unique circumstances of these children: the fact that most of them have migrated leaving their parents in their hometowns, it became impracticable especially getting parents to give their consent; therefore, the children themselves were asked to give their consent verbally because most of them have never been to school or have little education to enable them give written consent.

#### **4.7.3 Confidentiality**

Moreover, the confidentiality of my informants was assured and held in high esteem. I assured my informants that the information was between only us. This I believe gave my informants the necessary confidence to open up and respond to the various issues the study sought to unravelled. To achieve this, the research participants were made anonymous. I again treaded cautiously on issues that had the potential to heighten emotions thus affecting my informants later. This is because, according to Davis, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to deal with emotions of children (Davis, 1998, pp 328).

#### **4.7.4 Some ethical dilemmas on the field**

There were some ethical dilemmas that I was confronted with while collecting data from the research site. This happened as I was on my participant observation. One of the girls carrying load had a problem with the owner of the load. This girl started crying that the woman was cheating her. As a researcher, I was divided between deciding to challenge the woman or letting her go. This is because, I realised I did not have the mandate to start fighting for my informants. I however, felt if I allow the woman to go scot free, the child will think that I was not interested in her issues. I therefore decided to take a neutral position by not taking sides. Also, because the problem bothered on money, I did not also want to assured the girl child of letting the woman goes for me to pay for her. I therefore negotiated with the woman who agreed and paid the amount demanded for.

#### **4.8 Limitation of the Study**

I have been able to conduct successful interviews that have form the basis of the data collected. The focus group discussions were full of fun and the key informant interview was an eye opener in many ways that hitherto I had no idea of. However, all these went on with constraints, limiting the flow of the data collection process. The greatest challenge on the encountered on the field was the difficulty I encountered in understanding the language of most of the people who participated in the study.

The background of most of these children who engage in carrying loads can be traced to the Northern part of Ghana. Most of them have not been to school or have never travelled outside their region before. Others have dropped out of school at an early stage to engage in this activity and have their migration to the south as the first time of moving outside the Northern region. Therefore, most of them could only interact with each other in their mother tongue: Dagbani, Mampruli, and Frafra; the languages of the Dagomba, Mamprusi and Frafra. As a result, they interacted with their customers with gestures and little bit of Twi; the language of the Ashanti's where the market is located. Most of them have learnt about the basics of interacting with their customers in the language of their work but cannot express themselves well in it.

My first focus group discussion was held in Dagbani, the language of the Dagombas with an interpreter. I had to explain the rationale behind the study to the interpreter for her to appreciate the essence of the study to help minimise misinterpretation. Although the focus



group discussion was full of fun and gave me useful information, they were also complicated by several factors.

Firstly, I did not understand what the children were saying after the interpreter had explained what I said. Secondly, some of the children were a bit timid to voice out their experiences. This may be due to their lack of exposure and the language barrier. Another constraint in collecting data was the suspicion that, we might be working for a non-governmental organisation that is trying to repatriate them to their home town. As a result, most of them did not open up to us until the gatekeeper intervene by explaining that the study is meant for school but not for any other purpose. Of concern again to the children was the suspicion that, the answers they are providing will be used to raise money without them benefiting. This is because; the children are of the view that, anyone conducting a research does so for an organisation that will pay them in return for their services. But because these children did not want to be used to make money, they were reluctant to give answers to most of the questions that we tried asking them. The gatekeeper did so well in explaining things to the understanding of these children.

Finally, there was financial constraint during the collection of data. Due to the nature of the work that my research participants were engage in, it was required of me to be able to compensate each child who I interviewed. The reason was that, because these children are engage in work, any stoppage to interview them meant that they were been denied some amount of money. Therefore, I had the moral duty to pay each child for the period spent with me. I however was unable to afford to pay each child how much commensurate with their expected income for the period. Though, I manage to offer something to make up for the time spent, it was woefully inadequate. This actually impeded the smooth flow of the data collection process.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

### **5.1 Introduction**

*“When a child knows how to wash his hands he dines with his elders” (a Ghanaian proverb)*

The main aim with this chapter is to present the perspectives of children on their lived experiences as migrants and what has been done by the state to protect them. The Director of the department of Social Welfare; a department with the responsibility of protecting and providing for the needs of children and the vulnerable in the Ghanaian society was the one who represented the government and for that matter spoke from the point of view of policies and programmes aimed at safeguarding the best interest of the child. The analysis will be presented in a descriptive form based on what the children and the representative said during the interview session. This chapter presents the analysis of the “impoverished, decontextualised renderings of live interview conversations” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:178). It begins with how the oral interview has been translated into written mode to structure it in a form amenable to closer analysis thereby forming the basis of the analytical process. The actual analytical process is based on data about the lived experiences of children as these were communicated in a dialogue with me concerning load carrying work.

I will begin with the presentation of the social context and background of children and their families, as derived from the interviews. I will also present analysis of the interview conducted with the representative from the Department of Social Welfare. This provides the study with vital information relevant for understanding the socio-cultural context and the status of the children who participated. A focus will also be made on the thematic areas in the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees. For instance; the lived experiences of the participants in carrying load, their thoughts about the work they do, their migration history, factors that influenced their decision to migrate, the challenges they face in their work among others. These thematic areas will be discussed in conjunction with the views expressed by the representative from the Department of Social Welfare which foregrounds the focus of policy related to the protection of children in Ghana.

### **5.2 Background information of the participants**

This section presents a description of the background of the girls who participated in the study. A description of their ages, where they migrated from; their hometowns, the length of the distance covered to Kumasi, their schooling and family size

The ages of the respondents in this study ranged from 13 to 16 years. The choice of this age group is based on the interest I have in studying the perspectives of children in their engagement in load carrying work. The United Nations Convention and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child have defined a child as anyone under the age of eighteen (Articles 1&2). The age limit of 18 years has remained the defining limit between childhood and adulthood such that most of the countries that signed and subsequently ratified the convention have adopted it into national and International legislations. For instance, the Children's Act of Ghana equally defines a child as a person below age 18 years. Boyden and Myers argue that, the minimum age standard set by the convention, "expresses an ideal of childhood as a privilege phase of life properly dedicated only to play and schooling and with an extended period of dependence during which economic activity is discourage or actually denied" (1998:195). However, the African Charter, which is context specific in relation to African children, sees childhood not only as a period dedicated only to play and schooling but also a period that comes with responsibility to both family and society (Article, 31).

In terms of where they come from, all of them migrated from the Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana with majority of them migrating from the Northern region followed by the upper East, and upper west. In terms of ethnic group composition, Dagombas form the majority, followed by Frafras, the Mamprusi and the least being Gonjas. The majority of the children migrated from Gushiago, a town that lies in between Bolgatanga in the Upper East and Tamale in the North. The length of the distance covered by these children in migrating to Kumasi is given as follows:

travelling from the Upper East to Kumasi has a distance of 558km. Those who also migrated from the northern region covered a distance of 388km and finally those from the upper west, had a distance of 470km before reaching their destination in Kumasi. ([http://www.ghanatour.us/ghana\\_tours\\_travel/africa/ghana\\_drivingdistance.php](http://www.ghanatour.us/ghana_tours_travel/africa/ghana_drivingdistance.php)) visited 12.04.2011.

It is equally worth noting the number of hours and the type of vehicles these children travel with to get to their destination. The time spent in travelling had an average of twelve hours with not too good vehicles and travelling on bad road networks. This type of travelling typically took place in the night so that they whole of the night is used on the road and the passengers get to their destination the following day.

The backgrounds of these children as revealed by this study goes to support what Opare also discovered in his study : Kayayei, the women head porters of southern Ghana when he stated that " there has been a high rate of migration of teen age girls who.... come principally from

the savannah region of northern Ghana” (Opare, 2003:34). Agarwal et al. also argue that, “the load carrying work/ trade, represent something of an ethnic occupational niche for northern females” (Agarwal et al, 1997:4).

In addition to the profile of the children was that of the representative of the department of Social Welfare who volunteered to represent the agency responsible for protecting and providing the needs of children and the vulnerable in the Kumasi Metropolis. The response of the representative to this question is as follows:

“I am the metro director of the department of social welfare- Kumasi; a body that ensures that all statutory functions and other functions of social welfare are well executed for the benefit of all the people especially children. According to him, he became a district officer of the department in 1989 and has had the chance of working in the Western and Ashanti regions of Ghana. However, he has being in his current position for only two years (representative, fieldwork, 2010). The above stated provides us with the wealth of experience the representative from the department responsible for protecting children possesses in the area of welfare.

In addition to the profile was the background of the children’s schooling. The information gathered from the interview presents the study with an appalling situation. This is because, out of the total number of twenty children who participated in the study, only five have had the opportunity of been in school. The highest educational attainment among these five was however up to basic primary three with the rest only attending up to basic primary two. All the remaining has never been to school. The main reasons given by the children for their inability to attend school, was parental inability to pay for their school fees. Most of them stated that, their fathers did not have money to take them to school while those who were lucky to be sent to school have to drop out of school due to the parent’s inability to provide for the school needs. The above stated goes to buttress what Opare also discovered in his study: that “there have been a high rate of migration of teenage girls who have never been to school as well as those who have limited schooling into leading markets centres in southern Ghana”(Opare, 2003:34). It may be due to the argument that, “ though there are no legal barriers in educating female children, domestic responsibilities often force them to drop out of school” (Fayola and Salm, 2002 p.138).

However, the facts presented on schooling are problematic considering the following:

- that approximately 87% of the primary school aged children in Ghana are currently enrolled in school (UNESCO, 2007).

- Of particular interest to this study is also the fact that, Ghana is among the very first countries to have ratified the UNCRC and for that expected to abide by its provisions. Article 28 entitles every child the right to education and calls on governments to make primary education free and compulsory. The same position is taken by the African Charter on the rights of the child in Article 20.
- Ghana's policy of Free Universal Basic Education according to the supreme law of the land, which states that; all persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realisation of that right – for example, basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all (the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Chapter 5 sub-section 25).

In terms of family size, the lowest was a family with four siblings in which the father is married to only the girl's mother. The remaining ranged from six siblings to as high as sixteen siblings all living in the same family compound. The family sizes according the children, emanated from polygamous marriages since almost sixteen out of the twenty children interviewed had their fathers marrying two wives. There appears to be some religious undertones in the above stated. This is because most of these children are Muslims and their religion allows a man to marry more than one wife (polygamy). The Quran states that:

And if you be apprehensive that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans, you may marry two or three or four women whom you choose. But if you apprehend that you might not be able to do justice to them, then marry only one wife, or marry those who have fallen in your possession. (Surah 4:3)

The large family size coupled with the background of these children- coming from a deprived social context; appear to be the reason compounding their poverty situation. Poverty emerging from both the local context and the unskilled nature of most of the people from this area may be one of the forces causing children to migrate to engage in an activity that requires no skills. Appiah Yeboah and Yeboah have argued that,

“being in a polygamous marriage provides the opportunity to travel to the cities and work as porters” (Adjubi Yeboah M. and Appiah Yeboah K., (2009:13).

To these authors, polygamy enhances mobility for married women, however, the case of children being push to migrate as a result of the stress that comes with polygamous marriages, is worth noting from this study. However the argument that, polygamy provides

opportunity for migration; appear not to be supported by the data. The data portrays however that, being in a polygamous home where you are bedevil with deprivation as a result of poverty may influence a child to migrate which might not necessarily provide any opportunity as such.

On parent’s occupation, with the exception of two children, who stated that their fathers are in the teaching profession, all the others stated that their fathers are farmers. Almost all of the mothers are not gainfully employed but are just assisting their husbands in farming. However, very few of the mothers combine pretty trading of selling foodstuffs in small quantities within family compounds together with the farming. This may be due to what Ali Mazrui called the Islamic perspective in his theory of the African Triple heritage (cited in Abebe, 2007:82). According to Ali Mazrui, due to the Islamic practice of Purdah, women are secluded from public spaces and as a result use children as mediators.

### 5.3 Children’s migration and load carrying stories

Again, as part of my research interest, I explored the extent to which the decision to migrate depended on the child. Therefore such questions as: how did you decide to come to Kumasi, who financed the transportation cost, how did you get to know about the load carrying and family involvement among others were asked. The answer to the very first question revealed that, out of the twenty children, 13 migrated without the knowledge of their parents or other siblings. According to these children, they made the decision based on their circumstances without any knowledge and influence from parents. A 14year old stated that:

“it is better for her to migrate in search of a better standard of living than to continue to stay where she could not go to school, get anything to do and ultimately continue to live in deprivation (Habibatu, fieldwork, 2010).

The above stated has been confirmed by a study conducted in 2007 by the Ghana Statistical Service on the poverty situation in Ghana. In the said study, it was revealed that, the percentages of people living in poverty in the three northern regions stood as:

**Table 4 Poverty incidence in the three Northern regions**

Region	Poverty		Extreme Poverty	
	1998/9	2005/6	1998/9	2005/2006
Northern	69.2	52.3	57.4	38.7

Upper East	88.2	70.4	79.6	60.1
Upper West	83.9	87.9	68.3	79.0

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2007

The irony of the above is that, in Ghana and especially the northern region, it is common knowledge that, due to Patriarchical, Patrilineal and Patrilocal social systems, female migrants have often been seen to be passive in relation to migration. This is because; they are permitted to do so only in response to marriage or following male head of the household. The case of children is not acceptable since children are regarded as being dependent and as such have no formal agency and autonomy because power is vested in parents and guardians'. Therefore, most of the literature on child labour and child migration portrays children as having little or no agency. Iversen in 2002 stated that, in recent times, valuable literature on the decision about child labour supply are typically assumed to be made by parents, or mirror overall household interest in unitary model of household behaviour. Baland and Robinson, (2000) further contributed that, it was a must for parents to decide whether to send children to work or not and Gupta (2000) concluded that, a child labourer is mere an instrument in a bargain between selfish parents and employers and has no autonomy.

Notwithstanding, quite a number of other studies for instance, Punch, 2002, Abebe, 2007 & 2008, Hashim, 2007 and Kwankye et al, 2009 have all shown evidence that the decision to migrate in order to take up paid job has often been made by children themselves. Kabeer posited that, children especially those coming from less privilege backgrounds, "exercise far greater agency in the decisions which affect their lives than is conventionally recognised" (2003:372).

This study considers autonomous migration of children without the company of parents or adults as the exercise of agency. This has been supported by Hashim 2007, Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe and Castaldo, 2007 & 2009 in their studies of: children's independent migration and independent north-south child migration in Ghana: the decision making process respectively. To them, in recent times, young children and particularly females migrate independently from the northern parts of the country to cities to engage in various economic activities including kayayei or portorage. (See also Riisoen, Hatloy and Bjerkan, 2004). Indeed, there is a strong tradition in Ghana of children leaving on their own initiative to find work (Kwankye et al, 2007: 4). This is what the New Social Studies of Childhood have argued for and it appears to be really practical in the life of my informants.

With regards to the question of who brought these children to Kumasi, more than half of all the respondents said they came unaccompanied with very few coming with their friends they refer to as “sisters” (focus group, 2010). A further question to ascertain why the confidence to migrate to where they did not know or have any relations, revealed that, they came with the view of locating their ‘sisters’ who they were told live in Aboabo and the Race Course; suburbs of Kumasi. Therefore on their arrival, they ask for the location of Aboabo or the Race Course to look for their kinsmen living in these places.

Due to the nature of their migration, most of them also have to pay for their transport fares themselves. A question asked to find out how they managed to raise the amount needed for transportation revealed that, some of them had to engage in construction work in order to raise money to board vehicles to Kumasi. Most of them responded that, they had to carry mortar/concrete on their heads on a daily payment basis called “by day” for their transportation. The desire of these children for a better life drove them to migrate to a place they did not know. The above typifies what other children have done elsewhere especially those in Burkina Faso, who equally migrated independently as a result of their “positive aspirations to look for work and urban experiences” (Thorsen,2007:6).

The study was equally interested in finding out if there was a sort of history of migration and load carrying for the informants’ family. Therefore, the children were asked: do you have relatives who have engaged in this activity before? The answer to this question was yes for all the children. This was very interesting to me and so I went further to find out how many of their relations were involved. Most of them said that they could not list all of them because they are numerous and cannot be counted. In other for the study to assess further whether all these children have had their relatives engaged in load carrying before, another question was asked to find out the relationship that the past load carriers had with the current children. Interestingly, most of the children said that, the past load carriers were their ‘sisters’. As a result, it was worthwhile defining who is a sister in the social context of these children?

From the focus group, it became clear that, when someone from the northern part of Ghana refers to someone as a ‘sister’, it implies not necessarily a biological female relative but it can equally refer to an elderly girl from the same town. The reason according to them is that, most of their communities are smaller and that one is able to trace his/her family line to almost all the members of the community. It implies that a sister does not necessarily need to be a biological female relative but it may also refer to people from the same lineage.



Lineage according to Nukunya means a group of people, male and female who descended through one line only from a common ancestor or ancestress (Nukunya, 2003:21).

The study further explored what attracts/ pulls children into carrying loads. A 15 year old responded;

Hahahaha... she laughs; “when they come back home with saucepan, dresses, sewing machines and they also dress nicely we all see them and since we all need these things, we also decide to go to Kumasi too”(Amina, fieldwork,2010).<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent answers to the same question were not different; it included what the girls do see in the life of the returnees (peer influence). As a way of finding out further, I asked about the economic conditions of the past load carriers. This is what one of them said:

“Their economic condition is far better than they used to be, they come back ‘changed’; looking very beautiful and having money”. (Lamisi: 16 years old)

At this point, I wanted to understand, what she meant by when they come back ‘changed’? This was her response:

Hahaha... (laughs), but you know that, we were all living in this town before they left for Kumasi, but when they returned, you see that they have changed in physical appearance and have also acquired money. In addition, they look very nice, come back with sewing machine to go into apprenticeship” (Lamisi: fieldwork, 2010).

The study again wanted to find out why these children prefer load carrying to other activities available to them in the urban centres. The answer to this question was varied. However, the most common responses were that, it is easy and accessible to decide to carry load. Others said, it provided them enough independence since nobody controls their work. Others also were of the view that, load carry requires no skills but strength and it was concluded that, it gave them quick money devoid of cheating and exploitation.

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<sup>3</sup> "Race Course and Aboabo" are all suburbs of Kumasi the same area where migrants mostly live.

<sup>4</sup> "By Day": A temporal type of work that requires payment immediately after execution of given assignment/work

Agency, responsibility and care for their families

I also explored from children their social relations and the support they give to their family. To analyse this, a question was asked about how the children felt migrating to Kumasi without their parents or siblings. The response to this question was unanimous: seventeen out of the total number said they felt very happy while the remaining three said they were very sad. The reasons given by those who said they were happy was based on the conviction that, their leaving home was going to enable them to raise enough money to care for their parents and also buy the things they are in need of which the parents could not provide them. In support of the above, Iversen in a study on autonomy of child labour migrants identified that, “the arrival of children to urban areas unaccompanied by adults is not a new phenomenon. He gave a historical antecedent of this by citing what happened in Britain during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He portrayed how such cities as London, Bristol and Norwich were magnets to young people drawn by dreams of employment, excitement and entertainment (2002: 818). The difference in what happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain was the focus of children migrating for the fun of it since my informants only had employment to raise the money they needed as the fundamental reason.

On the support children gave to their family back home, with the exception of only one child who had arrived less than a year and as such had not been able to raise enough money, all the others have supported their families in a number of ways. According to the children, the type of support given ranged from sending money to sending other items like fish, soap, biscuits, and clothing among many others. The northern part of Ghana is confronted with the problem of economic deprivation due to a number of reasons: it has a sparse population, disadvantaged in terms of natural resource availability, and finally the pattern of development which the country inherited from their colonial masters in 1957 and the subsequent developmental programmes which the post-colonial administration embarked upon further deepened the north's comparative disadvantage position. This is because, while conscious efforts were made to develop the forest and coastal belts for the production of minerals, cash crops and timber for export, facilitated by the creation of transport links, ports and harbours especially on the coast, the north was virtually left behind, resulting in a spatial dichotomy with relatively developed south and a largely undeveloped North (Kwankye et al, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that these children are contributing their quota to the wellbeing of their families bearing in mind that, they have responsibilities to family and the community. According to the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child, children

have duties and responsibilities towards their parents and their society (Article, 31). With this precarious economic condition of most of the people from the Northern part of Ghana, it is good that, these children have accepted their responsibility towards family and acting as such. In 2007, Abebe argued that, children in Ethiopia perform numerous domestic and reproductive activities as a contribution to the survival strategies of their households (Admassie, 2003 cited in Abebe, 2007). Verhoef, 2005 has also argued that, children's labour is not only vital in economic terms; but also comes to the fore in the contribution of societal systems themselves (in Abebe, 2007).

#### **5.4 Carrying load; hard and challenging**

The perspectives of children on their work were also explored. They were asked about their impressions on the work they do; whether it is good for their future, worth continue doing or otherwise. The answer they gave was interesting: this is because, the majority of them stated that the load carrying work was really difficult. An attempt to ascertain from the children the reasons for claiming that the work was difficult revealed that, whenever the children returned home after work, they get extremely tired and experienced neck and body pains leading to sleepless night. I also tried to find out if the load carrying work had any future and also whether they will recommend the activity to any of their siblings. Most of the children stated that, they needed money that is why they were still engaging in the activity but that whenever they raise the money needed they will quit and go back home. They also said that, they will never recommend the activity of carry load to anyone. The reason given for their intentions to quit one day was because of the difficulty and tedious nature of the work. However, others were quick to add that, though they will not recommend it to their siblings, they will equally not discourage them but will leave it up to them to decide whether they will engage in the load carrying activity or not. They were of the view that, if they do tell them not to engage in the activity, it will portray to others that, they were preventing them from also coming to work and raise the needed financial resources. The reason the children gave for engaging in an activity that was dangerous with regards to the difficulty nature of the work was that, there were no alternatives available to make them quit from load carrying work.

The perspective of the representative of the department responsible for protecting children on load carrying was that;

“for some of these children, carrying load for a fee is a clear case of survival strategy while for others it amounts to a case of exploitation. This is because; some of these children only survive on carrying load while other relatives have brought them to work for them to make money from their work. In this case, the child who engages in the load carrying is paid peanuts while the big part of the money is pocketed by the so called employers” (representative, fieldwork, 2010).

After this, I wanted to find out whether the department had inventory or any idea about the number of children involved in carrying load in the Metropolis? He responded yes and went on to give the following as some of the works that have done on the phenomenon. He stated that;

In 2002, CEDEP carried out a research which gave 22% of children in Kumasi to be involved in carrying load in the street, that 28% was involved 2007 and that the last population and housing census in 2000 provided a national child population of 6.2 million with 28% being on the street. Again, in 2008, we had 1/3 of the children in Kumasi being involved in economic activities (representative, fieldwork, 2010).

The study explored based on the above stated figures, what the department consider appropriate to be done to save these children? He responded that;

First and foremost, I think we need shelter homes for these children. We have submitted proposals to the KMA to put up new buildings and renovate the old one. We intend go into the street to educate children and to help parents move their wards out of the street. The national plan of action for the elimination of child labour is also being pursued (key informant, 2010).

### **5.5 Living in poverty and searching for a better life**

One of the focuses of the study in addition to the ones already stated was to assess the factors that motivated children to carry load. Among the dominating reasons according to my informants was the desire to overcome poverty bedeviling their parents and the need for them to raise money to buy sewing machine to learn dressmaking and buy other personal effects for marriage. One of the girls aged 15 years said that,

“I came to work so that I can raise money to buy my personal belongings and also acquire a sewing machine before going back to learn dressmaking, and after I have finished learning dressmaking, I will be able to help my parents come out of their poverty, and use my earnings in my future marriage” (Habibatu: focus group, 2010).

From the discussions on why children carry load, it appeared everybody was mentioning going back to learn dressmaking. When asked why they were all mentioning going to learn dressmaking, one of them said this to explain the reason;

We are Muslims and our religion frowns on uncovering our heads so we cannot go and learn hairdressing to encourage girls uncover their heads. So when will you like to learn the dressmaking instead of hairdressing (focus group, 2010).

I again asked children during the focus group discussions why they prefer to engage in load carrying instead of going to school. From the ensuing discussions, it became clear that, the children preferred load carrying because it provided them with quick money devoid of any manipulation and cheating. To them, their money comes into their own pocket and thereby giving them freedom to decide what to do without any interference.

A girl of 14 years said that:

“I prefer carrying load because, if I stay with my parents, they are unable to take care of my schooling and if I go and work for any of my relatives, I will not be paid, but when I carry load, I get money that belongs to me but nobody else” (focus group, 2010). The above stated portrays that, children desire to have autonomy over what is theirs and also prefer to decide what to do with their own earnings. They prefer load carrying because it gives them money quickly devoid of any adult interference.

In addition to the views of the children on the reason why they migrated to carry load, the expressed opinion and knowledge of the representative from the department of social welfare was also sought, and the director listed the following as some of the reasons. According to him,

the reasons have both economic and social dimensions but were fundamentally rooted in poverty. According to him, poverty was the main factor that influences children to engage in load carrying work. Some other reasons like family breakdown, rural urban migration which results from disparities between rural and urban centre, slums in the urban centre also contributed to the perpetuation of the phenomenon. He further added that, economic and educational reforms have brought about economic hardships which have made people become poorer and poorer. That the breakdown in the social support system; that is the cessation of the support given by everybody in the community because they saw themselves as brothers and so each being a brother's keeper has also contributed to the phenomenon. Finally, he mentioned, the lack of pragmatic child welfare policies to protect children. He

cited the Children's Act, Act 856 as a really good policy that has implementation problem to support his final claim (representative, fieldwork, 2010).

In 2008, Abebe also cited a range of different economic activities that children in poverty situation engaged in Addis Ababa- Ethiopia. It included hawking, busking, shoe-shining, peddling, portaging, daily labour, working as weyallas (filling taxi with passengers and collecting fares). He asserted that, according data gathered from Ethiopia, the above have been triggered by poverty, parental neglect and failure of rural livelihoods (displacement due to drought, famine and war), harmful traditional practices for instance early marriage and uncaring environments (Abebe, 2008:275). Poverty has been cited as the underlying reason that explains why children migrate to engage in carrying load. It is further argued that, the impact of poverty on children's lives is not restricted to only lack of access to food, shelter or other material resources, but entails multiple deprivations manifested in among other things social exclusion and sustained forms of structural inequality.

### **5.6 Earnings, Spending and Savings of Informants**

In order to explore the possibilities of children achieving their aims of carrying loads, a question was asked to find out how much these children earn in a day. Most of the responses pointed to the possibilities of each and every one of them earning something in a day. They however stated that, how much one earned depended on the market conditions. That meant that, on a good market day, children earned more whilst on a bad day, the opposite was the case. The amount earned in a day however ranged from Ghc. 2.00 to Ghc. 15.00. However, very few stated that they have worked without earning a dime before but that that rarely happens.

On how much they spend from their earnings, majority of the children said that, they spend between Ghc. 2.00 to 3.00 a day. There was none who stated ever going to bed on an empty stomach or spending less than Ghc. 2.00. However, nobody equally stated ever spending more than Ghc. 5.00 a (Equivalent to \$3.4). How much children save in a day was also asked. Most of the children stated that, how much they save was equally dependent on how much they earned which also depended on the market conditions. A 16year old said this:

“The amount I save depended on the amount I earned; at times I am able to save Ghc. 2.00 to 5.00. But during festive periods like Christmas, Easter and Ramadan, I do save more” (fumbesi: field work 2010).

## **5.7 Story Telling**

### **5.7.1 A day in the life of a load carrier**

As part of collecting relevant data for my study, I engaged my informants in storytelling: A day in the life of a load carrier. This method was very useful as it created a forum for relieving children of some of the stress in their activity. During this activity, you will see these children recounting the various phases of their day. A 16 year old narrated her story like this:

From Monday to Saturday, I mostly wake up to perform ablution (ceremonial cleansing) before going to the mosque to pray at dawn. Afterwards, I come back home to take my bath and go straight into the central market. I eat porridge and start the days search for load to carry until it is 1pm. At 1pm I go back to pray at the Mosque. However on Sundays, I do my washing and attend marriage and naming ceremonies (Laliba: fieldwork, 2010).

The above extract of story implies that with the exception of Sundays, these children hardly get time to do other things. This view does not support western notions of childhood as being a time of school and play. The above and the children's educational background confirm this notion.

## **5.8 Challenges in carrying load (experiences)**

Having looked at the background, the decision making process and the perspectives of carrying load, I now turned to find out the challenges (risks and the stress) involved in carrying load? The following were listed by the children as some of the risks involved:

- a) Falls resulting in injuries whiles carrying loads.
- b) Raining of insult on both parents and children for instance "mpepefo". Meaning "a degraded group of people".
- c) Difficulties in movement due to human traffic leading to falls and causing children to break people's goods.
- d) Car accidents resulting in injuries and the lost of precious life.
- e) The risk of being murdered for ritual purposes.
- f) Bodily pains.

Ayisha, a 15year old narrated her experienced whiles carrying load as;

“one day, I was carrying load for a woman, while going towards the lorry station, I got tired and impeded by the people moving in and out of the market. So I got stripped and fell on someone’s goods breaking some of them in the process. The owner seized the load and demanded that I pay for the things; I started crying uncontrollably because I could not afford to pay for the things. At this juncture, a Good Samaritan passed by and seeing my plight decided to paid to set me free (Ayisha, fieldwork, 2010).

Another question was asked to explore if there were other kinds of experiences children go through while carrying load? In answer to this, a 15year old responded like this;

“When you are carrying load, you will need a safe passage to enable you walk fast, but since there are lots of people in the market, it becomes difficult so you resort to shouting, ‘agoo, agoo’ meaning give way, give way. But most of the people on hearing the shout instead of giving you way rather resort to raining insults on you and your parents who have nothing to do with the shouting. This is very pathetic for us but we have nobody to come to our aid” (Wajiri: fieldwork, 2010)

Others also indicated that, their customers cheat on them by refusing to pay them at the destination point the amount earlier agreed upon. The children again said that, some of their customers too, when they tell you to carry the load to the station A and you reach there without a vehicle to convey the goods, then you are directed to carry it to station B, but in most cases, they refuse to add any extra money to the already agreed upon amount. The focus group discussions also revealed other challenges these children go through in carrying out their work. These emerged from the discussions; a 16 year old stated that;

some of their customers refuse to pay them the amount of money they charge on reaching their destination, whiles others assault them whenever they demanded that they be treated fairly. She again talked about kidnapping attempt on her life for what is called ‘sakawa’ (trying to murder them for ritual money). Of all the revelations the study brought out, the above stated appear to be the most revealing since it appears to lacking in almost all the literature that have been read in support of this research. This of course is revealing because the phenomenon of trying to murder for money ritual is just a recent phenomenon. No wonder it has not appeared in any of the studies so far on the topic under study.

As a result of the above mentioned challenges, I wanted to know from the children why they were still engaging in the activity of carrying load. Zenabu, a 15 year old responded;



“Hmmm bro, if you go into cleaning dishes for chop bar (local restaurants), you go through tough problems there too. The owners of the chop bars do insult us with the least provocation, and go further to insult our parents. However, you least expect this when carrying load” (focus group, 2010).

Notwithstanding the above stated challenges associated with carrying load, some of the children also commended some of their customers for being good to them. Sakina, a 16 year old shared this;

“I carried someone’s goods to the lorry station and when she realized how tired I was, doubled the amount initially agreed upon and encouraged me to go back to school since that will guarantee me a brighter future” (focus group, 2010).

### **5.9 Health status and care for load carriers**

The health status and health care of the child who engages in carrying load for a fee was also of concern to this study. Children were asked if they had fallen sick and if so where they went for treatment since engaging in the activity. The majority of the children responded that they had fallen sick before and that when they did, they went and purchased drug from the drug store. Buying drug from the drug store constitutes drug abuse since the drug purchased was not prescribed by a qualified medical doctor.

What is interesting about the issue of drug abuse is that, at a time when Ghana prides herself of having implemented a health system (NHIS), which aims at making healthcare accessible to especially the poor and children in society. Thus, if the numbers of people who cannot afford medical care and therefore resort to abusing drugs because medical care after all is not affordable as we are made to understand by policy makers, then it becomes problematic for a country as Ghana. OXFAM: an International non-governmental Organisation observed the following on Ghana’s national health insurance scheme and issued a statement as follows:

“the health Policy introduced in 2003 and touted as the panacea to Ghana’s healthcare problems benefits only but a few, even though majority paid for its implementation”

<http://news.myjoyonline.com/health/201103/62527.asp> visited on the 11.03.2011.

### **5.10 An assessment of what is carried, how far it is carried and the criteria for charging**

Assessing the health implications of load carrying work on children was among one of the main issues that this study aimed at bringing to the fore. As a result, the amount of load children carry at any particular point in time was analysed. The dialogue with the children

assessed the amount of load children carry. According to the children, there is nothing like a standardised scale of measurement for what they carry, rather they have designed their own system of measuring their load. What they do whenever they get a piece of load was to lift it up to determine how much it weighs. According to one of these children, by lifting the load up, she is able to determine how much weight the piece of load has in order to decide whether she will be able to carry it or not. She went further to say that, whenever she realises that a piece of load is too heavy for her to carry, she agrees with the owner either to go twice by dividing the load into two or she is asked to look for another load carrier capable of carrying the load at once to do so( Mari. 15 year old, fieldwork, 2010).

On the criteria for charging, the children stated that, they have no formalised way of determining how much to charge for any particular load. They however have a system designed by themselves which they use in determining how much to charge at any particular time. They use the distance to be covered to get to the destination and the weight of the load in charging. This implies that, the longer the distance and the heavier the load, the higher the price and vice versa.

### **5.11 Policies aimed at improving children's lives and welfare: dilemmas and challenges**

From the response given by the representative above, especially the provisions in the children's Act, (Act, 856); I wanted to find out if there existed any other documents/policies specifically on children in Ghana?

The Director stated that, there exist many policies on children in Ghana and he cited some examples as follows;

- the Juvenile Act (Act 656, 2003) which aims at protecting children who fall foul to the law
- The Criminal Code Amendment Act (Act 554, 1998). It deals with cases of rape, defilement and incest. It has brought about an increase in the punishment for perpetrators of such crimes. Currently, a sentence for rape/ defilement is twenty to twenty five years imprisonment, incest attract five to twenty five years imprisonment due to amendment of the Act.
- Domestic Violence Act, Act 732 (2007) protects children from all forms of abuse.

- The child Trafficking Act, 2002 which protect children from sending areas to receiving areas.

The perspective of the representative of the department of Social Welfare on the load carrying activity was also explored. When asked about the perspective of the department on the load carrying activity, the Director stated that;

“Alright, the situation is a worrying one. It is something which worries all of us (government and of course the department) because if you look at the children’s Act, it frowns upon children who actually go into the worst forms of child labour. If children who are supposed to be in school to develop their talents for the benefit of the country are found in the market carrying loads, then the future is gloomy and as such the government (the department of social welfare) is worried about it. According to him, if you look at especially section 2 of the children’s Acts which talks about welfare principles, the best interest of the child should be paramount (Representative, fieldwork, 2010).

Based on the quotation above, I further explored what has been done by the department about ‘the worrying situation’ that these children find themselves. The Director revealed that, as part of an attempt to tackle the situation head on, the department has been working hand in hand with some NGO’s and the metropolitan assembly to ensure that the canker is actually eliminated from the metropolis by especially the social service sub-committee which is working very hard about it. The sub-committee has presented a proposal to the Metropolitan Assembly for implementation to get rid of the children from the street.

I further inquire from the representative of the department of Social Welfare if there were specific programs to mitigate this phenomenon? He answered in the affirmative and went on to list some of the programs:

First and foremost, the department handles individual cases. The department provides assistance to children who are found to be in difficult circumstances. Those with peculiar problems, the department go to their homes and try to work things out with their families. This is especially done to ensure that some of these children go back to school. This we have done a lot.

In tackling the problem in a wider scope, the department is deficient; in that, it lacks funding and the necessary facilities to facilitate the implementation of its programs. Also, getting these children off the market requires a lot of collaborative work. The department is collaborating with the Metropolitan Assembly, the Labour Department, Ghana Health

Service, Ghana Education Service and many others in this direction. The problem again can be tackled through the provision of shelter for the children. This shelter could equally serve as a reception centre where they could be interviewed to get to know what their real problems are. After this, children whose parents are alive could be integrated with the family. However, due to logistical constraints, the department is unable to tackle the problem on a larger scale. Section 16 of the children's Act, mandates the District Assembly to ensure that all children living in the district are well protected. As a result, we are collaborating with the District Assemblies in trying to bring this phenomenon under control (representative, fieldwork 2010).

Following from the above, I asked if there were specific interventions particularly directed at protecting the children living in the metropolis.

The representative mentioned the following as some of the interventions:

- A collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) to get rid of children from the street vis-as-vis the market for the period 2006-2009. The main aim of this programme according to him was to identify the children, assessing their needs and support them. Those who wanted to go back to school and those who needed some apprenticeship were supported. At the end of the programme in 2009, the following were achieved; two hundred and sixty three (263) children were sent back to school and a total of one hundred and eleven (111) were also sent to learn various vocational skills.
- In addition, the district assembly established child labour committee with the department of social welfare occupying the monitoring role. The department monitored whether the children who have been rescued from the street/market and sent to school or vocational training were still in school or had dropped out of school.

Of importance to this study again is the dynamics between the need for children to work in a bid to alleviate their poverty on one hand and the efficacy of their chosen occupation to do so. This is because, though load carrying provides children with financial resources, it is believed to also have damning consequences on children by restricting them of opportunities for improving their future life chances. This is because, they lose the opportunity of either going to school or learning a vocation that will in the long term provide them with better pay and thereby breaking the cycle of poverty that they find themselves in.

It is interesting to note that, though the majority of these girls wanted to learn dressmaking others think differently. A 15year old said this on the contrary;

For me I have come to raise enough money so that I can go back to school. I have always wanted to be in school but for my parents inability to provide for me school needs I will not have come to the market to carrying people's load for them to insult me as if I am not a human being”( Asana, fieldwork,2010)

I explored why my informants preferred dressmaking to other various career options available to them. To this, it was revealed that, the children's religious believes influences their choice of a vocation. According to them, their preference for dressmaking to hairdressing for instance was due to the fact that, as Muslims, they are not supposed to leave their hair uncovered and so do not need to help other girls uncover their hair in public. For this reason, most of them have decided they will not go and learn a vocation that will be in conflict with their religious believes.

The possibilities of the children attaining the expectations they had before coming to Kumasi was also part of my study. The response was very positive from all the children. They all told me that though they may not be able to tell when their expectations will be met, they still have higher hopes of meeting if not all but most of their expectations. Finally, a comparison of children's preference for Kumasi: the study area and their hometowns were also explored. When children were asked, where they liked best comparing Kumasi to their hometown, most of them responded that, they prefer to be in their hometown than to be in Kumasi. One child said,

“I prefer to go back home to go and contribute the development of my home town after I have raised enough money” (Fati, a 16year old, fieldwork, 2010).

This response by the children suggested to me that, their migration was necessitated by circumstances beyond their control and not necessarily the love of it. The child who thinks about raising enough money to go and assist in the development of her community is a competent child. This is because she has an ambition which drives her to engage in an activity she deems very tedious, causing her sleepless nights but is motivated to persevere in order to fulfil her responsibility to her parents and society. This child exercises agency and should not only be seen as a receiver of adult socialisation. This contradicts some of the dominant views of sociology and psychology which views the child as

“a stage, a structured becoming, not a course of action nor social practice” (Jenks, 1982:13), and supports some of the characteristics of the human being by Nick Lee as;

“being stable, complete, self-possessed and capable of independent thought which merits respect” (Lee Nick,2001:5).

After all the discussions, I requested from the representative of the department of Social Welfare to give me his concluding remarks, and this was what he said;

When it comes to protecting children, the department deems it very important. This is because; the department believes that children hold the key to the future of every country. The greatest asset in every nation is its human population and the child is the most important; therefore, both children and adults need to be self-developed so that they become assets but not liabilities. He rhetorically stated that, it is better to prevent than to cure, because if government can raise money to resource the police to combat crime, then why not prevent the children from becoming criminals in the first place? To him, the problem of increases in crime would have been solved if a major part of government expenditure on the Police and the Army had been geared towards providing for the needs of children in Ghana (representative, fieldwork, 2010).

## Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

### 6.1 Introduction

Having analyzed and interpreted the data in the preceding chapter, I now discuss the findings emanating from my dialogue with the children. This will be in direct relation to the major theoretical perspectives presented in chapter four. This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part summarizes the general findings of the study. The second part will be discussions on some of the thematic areas emerging from the theoretical perspectives and their implications. In the third part, conclusions will be drawn from the various findings emerging out of the discussions.

### 6.2 General findings

The overall findings of this study are hereby presented as follows:

The study has brought to focus the near absence of the perspectives of the child in the various studies undertaken on the phenomenon under discussion. The reason is that, a search through various study on the phenomenon of carrying load, for instance, *Symbols of Success: youth, peer pressure and the role of adulthood among juvenile male return migrants in Ghana* (Urugruhe, 2010) and *An examination of the cultural and social economic profiles of porters in Accra, Ghana* (Adjubi Yeboah & Appiah Yeboah, 2009) among many others have revealed that, though the phenomenon is of concern to researchers, most of them have concentrated on looking at the issues from the perspectives of significant others. The above goes to reinforce the notion that, the dominant frameworks like psychology, social Work, Education and sociology hitherto were the main disciplines that were particularly interested in the issues of children.

The dominant frameworks portrayed the child as incompetent, unstable, incomplete, and lacking adult skills. This theorization is based on the facts of culture that the new social studies seek to deconstruct, construct and reconstruct (La Fontaine, 1979).

Also the study has brought to the fore that, historically (prior to the 1970s in Ghana), there was nothing like children engaging in load carrying for a fee and that during this period the girl child never engaged in the carrying of load. However, due to the Aliens Compliance law of 1969, the originators of the phenomenon were all expelled from the country. Due to their absence a vacuum was created and the indigenous people filled the vacuum created by

their absence and with time it has emerged as a female activity ( Kwankye et al,(2007). The above is in support of the argument that, children's load carrying activity is but a recent phenomenon (Van den Berg, 2007).

Also the study has revealed that, the girl child who migrates to the urban centres of Kumasi and Accra does so in really difficult circumstances. This is because some of the informants stated that due to their desire to migrate to Kumasi, they had to start working in paid jobs like carrying mortar (concrete), weeding on farms and fetching water on "by-day" basis in order for them to be able to raise the needed capital to migrate to the urban centre. In relation to these difficult circumstances of migrating to the urban centre are the number of kilometers they cover on their way to the city, the type of road network they travel on and the nature of the vehicles they use in migrating. The number of hours spent on these journeys is long and usually in the night. These circumstances make this kind of migration tedious.

In addition, the girl who decides to migrate independently due to the constraint of poverty does so in her exercise of agency. This child is regarded as a person, competent, stable and ultimately a social actor (James et al, 1998). In the exercise of his agency, it has come out that, there exist restraining variables. These restraining variables have been identified to be rooted in the socio-cultural context. For example, it has emerged that negative cultural practices like forced marriages, child betrothal of marriage, and the practice of making children go and live with their paternal aunties and many others make the exercise of agency problematic.

Moreover, in relation to the experiences that the girl child goes through with engaging in load carrying, it has been established by this study that, they are numerous and need urgent attention. From the interview with the girl child, she enumerated most of these challenges including falls resulting in damages to people's precious items, bodily pains due to the heavy nature of the load and sexual abuse in the forms of rape, defilements and teenage pregnancy. These have all been identified to be associated with the phenomenon of carrying load by the girl child. Some of the other risks are accidents, ritual murders popularly referred to as "sakawa". All the above and many others have been seen to be militating against the girl child who engages in carrying load.

At the societal level too, the study has revealed that poverty which is a characteristic feature of a developing countries including Ghana influences the girl child to migrate and work by carrying load. Poverty has been seen to be permeating the Ghanaian society especially for those living in the rural areas. The rural areas (northern region) incidentally



appear to be the main sending areas in this phenomenon. From my discussions in chapter two pages 12- 14, I provided data on the poverty situation in Ghana. From the said data, it came out that Ghana has been experiencing a growing and deepening poverty situation over the past decades. The resultant effect of this can be seen in the intensification of vulnerability and exclusion of some sections of the society especially people living in the three northern regions. According to the data, poverty is highest in the three northern regions; no wonder majority of these girls migrated from there. This is due to lack of employment opportunities in Ghana. Most families especially those from the northern part of Ghana have been identified to be living below the poverty line. Statistics show that, in 2008, Ghana's unemployment rate among the youth between 20-24 years stood at 21% (GSS, 2007). The above was attributable to inadequate jobs for the young energetic youths.

Furthermore, at the country level, it has been argued that Ghana has just weaned herself from the Heavily Indebted Poor country (HIPC) tag. This has been attributed to unfavourable world trade, corruption, mismanagement and nepotism.

The present study has further revealed that, Ghana has passed many child welfare laws but most of these laws are dysfunctional, rendering the girl child vulnerable. The girl child is made vulnerable due to inadequate child welfare policies that aim at reducing child poverty. As a result, conclusion may be drawn that the girl child in Ghana is confronted with a lot of challenges ranging from her family's lack of resources, societal and country poverty that force her to migrate and work by carrying load. She is made vulnerable due to the dysfunctional nature of the various laws that are purportedly promulgated to protect her and warrant the provision of her needs.

Another issue raised by the study is the gendered nature of the Ghanaian society. This has been seen to be placing concomitant responsibilities on the girl child compared to her male counterparts. The study has established the nature of role differentiations in the Ghanaian society. For instance an argument has been made that within the Ghanaian social structure, hierarchical positions are determined by gender and age. In terms of age the study revealed that children are at the bottom of the ladder. It also came up that girls have more roles to play than boys and that when it comes to taking decisions with regards to schooling in circumstances where resources are scant, the girl child was seen to be made the sacrificial lamb. These have been identified to put impediments in the exercise of agency of the girl child.

## 6.3 Discussions of specific findings

### 6.3.1 Children as social actors constrained by poverty

The girl child is a social actor in the construction and determination of her life course as she migrates to engage in load carrying activity. From my discussions on the new social studies of childhood: the child as a social actor, I cited a number of authors and what they imply when they refer to a child as a social actor (see pages 23-24) for the discussion. The explanation was particularly important in the face of the data gathered. As referred to earlier, a 14 year old girl stated that:

*It is better for me that I migrated to Kumasi to engage in load carrying work to better my standard of living than to have continued to stay with my parents where I could not go to school, get anything to do and ultimately continue to live in poverty/deprivation (Habibatu, a 14 year old, fieldwork, 2010).*

The quote from Habibatu during the interview session gives insight into the mind of the child who decides to travel outside home in search of a better living condition. She is seen to be competent in taking a decision that will ultimately transform her poor status.

Again when I inquire from the girls whether they support their family, most of them replied that they have been supporting them with various items including foodstuffs and money. When this is situated in a context of academic discourse, it will support the view of the new social studies of childhood that the child is competent, active and capable of making sound decisions on a daily basis. The UNCRC supports the views expressed by my informants above. It portrays children as social actors who actively operate on and within their worlds (James and Prout, 1990). As a result, the UNCRC has advocated the need for children's opinions to be heard, accepted, respected and acted upon in all circumstances where their best interests are concerned.

However, it needs to be noted that, the girl in the exercise of agency does so in a broader societal context. In the Ghanaian social structure it is expected of children to be obedient to their parents. According to Falola and Salm (2002), children are taught to respect age and status and are expected to listen to and also perform their duties without objecting. Therefore, if the girl child refuses to inform the parents or defies the parents warning not to migrate, she does so at the background of disrespecting the parents. This is culturally unacceptable and brings to question the essence of the parents in the life of the child.

Conclusion can be drawn on the above that though under the constraint of poverty, the girl child needs to exercise agency, it should be done in a manner that will not give room for her to break the norms of her society.

The admission that the child is a social actor does not happen in a vacuum. She exercises her agency in a society and ultimately in a country. This places some amounts of constraints or limitations on the girl child. For example, from the interview and the focus group discussions, most of the girls stated that they have migrated in order to improve upon their standard of living, but the socio-political background and the poverty situation their parents find themselves in, restrain them from achieving their ambition early. The socio-political background of these children portrays a region and a locality which is bedevilled by high incidence of poverty (see page14 &15) due to a number of reasons (GSS, 2007). Among them include neglect by successive governments who only concentrated on developing regions endowed with rich natural resources, bad environmental factors like drought, pests and civil as well as tribal wars which have made the place lag behind in terms of development.

A 15 year old further shed light on above with the following:

I came to work so that I can raise money to buy my personal belongings and also acquire a sewing machine before going back to learn dressmaking, and after I have finished learning dressmaking, I will be able to help my parents come out of their poverty, and use my earnings in my future marriage (Abibatu: focus group, 2010).

The evidence emanating from the above resonates the argument by Bourdillion, 2004, Ennew et al, 2005 and Niewenhuys, 1998 that children's work should be situated in the material and the social conditions of society, unequal power relations, and the discourses shaping national as well as international legislation regarding child labour. Black and others have argued that it has been fueled by infertile soils and lack of social services in that part of Ghana (Black et al, 2006). Mensah Bonsu also has identified employment as the main motivating factor driving the north-east movement of children (Mensah Bonsu, 2003). Ethnic conflicts that have plagued the north have also been attributed to the migration of these young girls.

It has further been recommended that, material transformations associated with development not only alter children's livelihoods, but also render them subject to inequality and new forms of exploitation both direct and indirectly (Abebe & Kjørholt 2009: 176). As a result, Kesby et al in 2006 posited that, "Africans should study children engaged in work/labour as both actors in and victims of socioeconomic changes (in Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009:

176). This discussion portrays further that, it is not only poverty that acts as a restraint to the exercise of the child's agency but other societal happenings.

### **6.3.2 The load carrying girl-child: being or becoming**

The load carrying girl child is seen in this study as both "being" and "becoming". From my initial discussions in chapter three pages (24), I indicated that according to Qvortrup, Jenks and Prout: proponents of the new paradigm, the epistemological break for the new social studies of childhood is to understand the child as "being". To these researchers, regarding the child as "being" imply that:

*The child is conceived of as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences- in sum,.....this new phenomenon, the "being child", can be understood in its own right. It does not have to be approached from an assumed shortfall of competence, reason or significance ( James et al 1998 p. 207 in Holloway and Valentine, 2000 p. 764).*

The above concurs perfectly with what a 14 year old argued for when she responded to a question posed to her regarding why she decided to leave her parents and migrate to a place she did not know anybody from. This is what she said,

*It was better for her that she migrated to Kumasi to engage in carrying load in order to improve upon her standard of living. And that, that was better for her than for her to have continued to stay with her parents who could not provide for her needs. She was of the view that, since her parents could not take her through schooling and were unable to provide for her school needs, she had no business continuing to be living in poverty and deprivation but had the option to migrated and work to improve upon her and the family's poor condition (fieldwork, 2010 emphasis added).*

Another girl stated in the focus group discussion that;

*She prefers carrying load because, if she had stayed with her parents, they would not have been able to take care of her schooling and if she had gone to work for any of her relatives too, she would not have been paid, but that when she migrated to carry load, she could raise money that belonged to her but not to anybody else" (focus group, 2010).*

The evidence here shows that, these girls have what it takes to take serious decisions here and now. They choose to ignore all the comfort that they might have gotten from being at home and being with your parents and siblings to rather embark upon a journey that was tedious in order to improve upon their lives. She has demonstrated that she is competent enough to take

decisions on her own. This contrasts sharply with the view of the child as incompetent, incomplete and lacking the skills of an adult.

On the contrary too, the child though is a being with all the skills talked about, she is equally perceived in this study as “becoming”. Refer to page 24 for the discussions on the child as “becoming”. The above finds collaborations with the following quote from Abibatu a 15 year old stated under the discussions on the child as a social actor in theoretical chapter and another one by a 16 year old: *“I prefer to go back home to go and contribute to the development of my home town after I have raised enough money” (Fati, a 16year old, fieldwork, 2010).*

A probable deduction from the above stated quotes is that, these girls have ambitions in life and have decided to work towards the achievements of these ambitions. The first girl desires to raise money and go back to learn dressmaking in order to become a master apprentice and train other children in her chosen profession one day. The other prefers to go back and contribute to the development of her home town. All the above stated find expression in a “becoming” child than a “being” one. The girl child who aspires to be what she is not today is working towards a future. This expresses the ‘to be’ state but at a later period in life.

The above position of the study appears to be cogent in that, Qvortrup, , one of the proponents of the new social studies of childhood who theorized that the child is only a “being” appears to have modified his earlier argument in 1994. He has stated that;

*Many adherents of the new social studies of childhood overlooked that growing up as an individual was inherently and indispensably a part of childhood as a social phenomenon; in fact it was not merely psychologist and parents who were looking forward to adulthood on behalf of the child but that children were anticipating adulthood in ways that contributed to forming their childhood in the here and now (Qvortrup, 2004:269).*

By this new proposition, Qvortrup seems to suggest that by focusing on the child only as “being” implies that, the “becoming” child is lost. However, in order not for the “becoming” child to be lost, the two concepts should be seen as complimenting each other. This is so because, from this study, a child whose parents’ inability to provide them certain basic amenities could cause her to first and foremost drop out of school, and live in abject poverty should be seen as being dependent on her parents and inadequate in some areas of her life.

Again, if she needs to raise money to be able to enroll in apprenticeship and become a master apprentice in her chosen profession, then she should be seen as laying foundations of “growing up”, going through “preparations” which are all metaphors used in discussing the child as “becoming” according to Jenks, (1982).

The discussion that has gone on regarding the child as “being” or “becoming” is not without criticisms. For example, some authors have criticized the way the new social studies of childhood defines the child as “being” rather than “becoming” (Qvortrup, 1994) and this is worth looking at in this study. This is because James and Prout have posited that, the construction of the child as “being” by the new social studies of childhood stand in direct opposition to the construction of the child as “becoming” by the dominant frameworks (in Uprichard, 2007).

On the contrary, Strandell was also of the view that, “by redefining children and childhood from “becoming” to “being”, the theoretical understanding is turned the other way round resulting in a mirror picture of the developmental paradigm” (Strandell, 2005 p:2). As a result, Uprichard has concluded that, by constructing the “being child” as a mirror picture of the “becoming” child attempts to reinforce and sustain the hierarchical adult/child dualism which in turn sustains the importance and viability of “becoming” child perspective” (Uprichard 2007:306). According to him, when this is done, the “being” child is made to neglect future experiences of becoming an adult. However, all children are believed to be in the process of growing up to become adults.

The essence of the above discussed theoretical perspective is to present the child as both a “being” and a “becoming. The reason is that, from my dialogue with the children on their migration and carrying of load, I found out that, these children had aspirations for the future and have therefore decided to migrate to work towards that end. On the other hand too, I found these children as “being” having decided on their own not to allow poverty to kill them but have sought to chart a path that aimed at helping not only themselves but their entire household/family, thus making sense of the active, intelligent girl-child in this study.

The above discussed have implications for some of the cultural practices in Ghana. For instance, the Ghanaian girl child is made to do a lot of work in the home than her brothers with a view that she will acquire the necessary skills and make the husband happy in future (Falola, 2003). This portrays the girl as becoming than “being”. Again she is expected to contribute to household/ community developmental aspirations. She by this has some responsibilities towards family, society and country’s development (African Charter. 1990)

However, in the execution of the roles and responsibilities placed on her and deciding to migrate, that should not be done with gross disregard for the values of society. This needs to be done in tandem with societal values and approval.

### **6.3.3 Migration and work as a livelihood strategy**

In my discussions of chapter three pages (24-25), I presented how migration has been adopted by various children living in difficult circumstances as a coping strategy against poverty. The above is true in relation to the findings of this study too. For example, from my dialogue with the girl-child who engages in load carrying activity, it came out that, these girls have migrated in order to raise money to support their households/families that are consistently living in abject poverty. For example, a 14year old stated that:

*It is better for me to migrate in search of a better standard of living than to continue to stay with my parents who could not provide for my needs, put me in school and to have ultimately continue to live in poverty and deprivation (Habibatu, fieldwork, 2010).*

This girl argues that, instead of staying home without getting any job to do, it was better that she migrated in order for her to work and support her family.

Another girl shows evidence of how they use migration and work as a livelihood strategy when she responded to a question as:

“when they come back home with saucepan, dresses, sewing machines and they also dress nicely we all see them and since we all need these things, we also decide to go to Kumasi too”(Amina, fieldwork,2010).<sup>5</sup>

A third girl also stated that,

but you know that, we were all living in this town before they left for Kumasi, but when they returned, you see that they have changed in physical appearance and have also acquired money. In addition, they look very nice, come back with sewing machine to go into apprenticeship” (Lamisi: fieldwork, 2010).

The argument by this girl points to the fact that, when some girls migrate and come back with the various items listed above; those who remain in the village see them. And since they all need those kinds of items, they had no options than to also migrate and work in order to raise money to acquire those things. The implications of the above, is that, the children have

similar circumstances and so if one succeed by achieving the aims of migrating, then of course, the others would also succeed.

The above has been supported by various authors. For instance, According to Ansell and Blerk, factors that lead to the use of children's migration as a household/family coping strategy include both children's "*needs and their abilities*" to contribute to household survival: children needs include shelter, food, clothing, bedding, soaps, treatment when ill, adult care and supervision, psychosocial support and ideally the opportunity to attend school (Ansell & Blerk, 2004:675). Thorsen too says that, children's "positive aspirations" to look for work and urban experiences drives them to migrate to the city (Thorsen, 2007:6). Iversen even went as far as the 17<sup>th</sup> century to show evidence of children migrating to such cities as London, Bristol and Norwich which were described as "magnets to young people drawn by dreams of employment, excitement and entertainment" (2002: 818).

In 2007, Abebe argued further that, children in Ethiopia perform numerous domestic and reproductive activities as a contribution to the survival strategies of their households (Abebe, 2007). Verhoef, 2005 has also added that, children's labour is not only vital in economic terms; but also comes to the fore in the contribution of societal systems themselves (in Abebe, 2007).

All of the above and many others present the use of children's migration and work as a livelihood strategy. However, the work by Abebe in 2007 argued for how children use their work as a survival strategy for households and family within their own country. This is very typical of the scenario being presented here. Most of the children engaging in load carrying activity only migrated from one part of Ghana to another in search of work. According to Iversen children even travelled outside their immediate countries to the shores of others in their bid to use their remittances to support household, family and the country at large.

#### **6.3.4 The working girl-child in Ghana: protected by law?**

The above comes from the backdrop of the timeline presentation of laws, policies in Ghana presented in chapter two pages 17-19 under the theme child related policies in Ghana and the perspectives of the representative from the department of Social Welfare on what government has done about the protection of the best interest of the child. From these two presentations, the study brought to the fore the various policies, laws, conventions that have been adopted



the law making body (Parliament of Ghana) and how far it has contributed to the protection of children in difficult circumstances.

From my dialogue with the children on their experiences, it came out that, engaging in load carrying is as dangerous as anything one can think of. This is shown in the following conversations with the girls:

Ayisha, a 15year old narrated her experienced whiles carrying load as;

one day, I was carrying load for a woman, while going towards the lorry station, I got tired and impeded by the people moving in and out of the market. So I got stripped and fell on someone's goods breaking some of them in the process. The owner seized the load and demanded that I pay for the things; I started crying uncontrollably because I could not afford to pay for the things. At this juncture, a Good Samaritan passed by and seeing my plight decided to paid to set me free (Ayisha, fieldwork, 2010).

Another girl in the focus group discussions said that;

Some of their customers refuse to pay them the amount of money they charge on reaching their destination, whiles others assault them whenever they demanded that they are not being treated fairly. She again talked about kidnapping attempt on her life for what is called 'sakawa' (trying to murder them for ritual money) focus group, 2010).

The view of the representative from the department on the phenomenon of carrying load by the girl child was that:

*The situation is a worrying one. It is something which worries all of us (government and of course the department) because if you look at the children's Act, it frowns upon children who actually go into the worst forms of child labour. If children who are supposed to be in school to develop their talents for the benefit of the country are found in the market carrying loads, then the future is gloomy and as such the government (the department of social welfare) is worried about it. To him this is because, if you look at especially section 2 of the children's Acts which talks about welfare principles, the best interest of the child is expected to be the most paramount in every decision taken on his/her behalf (Representative, fieldwork, 2010).*

It appears from all the aforementioned discussions that, the load carrying work poses a great danger to the girl's future. As a result, she needs to be protected. This is what the representative said concerning the need to protect children in Ghana;

When it comes to protecting children, the department deems it very important. This is because; the department believes that children hold the key to the future of every country. The greatest asset in every nation is its human population and the child is the most important; therefore, both children and adults need to be self-developed so that they become assets but not liabilities. He rhetorically stated that, it is better to prevent than to cure, because if government can raise money to resource the police to combat crime, then why not prevent the children from becoming criminals in the first place? To him, the problem of increases in crime would have been solved if a major part of government expenditure on the Police and the Army had been geared towards providing for the needs of children in Ghana (representative, 2010).

So the question is, why is she not protected by the law against the dangers associated with her choice of work?

### **6.3.5 Migration, work and education**

With regards to the picture painted in relation to schooling of my informants in chapter (5) page (50), I have decided to take a look at the link between migration, work and education. This is because the background of my informants as revealed by the data suggested that, 95% of my informants have never been to school. This is a serious cause for concern because available statistics on the country's education portrays a different picture. For instance, it is estimated that, approximately 87% of the primary school aged children in Ghana are currently enrolled in school (UNESCO, 2007). Also, Ghana is noted as the very first country to have ratified the UNCRC. If that is so, then she is expected to abide by its provisions. For example, Article 28 entitles every child the right to education and calls on governments to make primary education free and compulsory. The same position is taken by the African Charter on the rights of the child in Article 20. Again Ghana has a policy of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) backed by legislation. According to that all persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realisation of that right – for example, basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all (the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Chapter 5 sub-section 25).

The above is particularly revealing when situated to the children's background on schooling. It appears the country lacks the courage to enforce its laws.

Again the reasons my informants cited for their inability to attend school is the poverty that has caused them to migrate. This observation resonates with what a study by Giani on working children in Bangladesh also came up with. In that study, she observed that abusive teacher's behaviour, bad school performance or simple disinterest in school, force children to migrate to the city in search of work as an alternative to school (Giani, 2006).

The above reveals that, Ghana is yet to implement the provision of the UNCRC on education. This may however be due to poverty at the national level which might have had a trickledown effect on the innocent girl child. This is evident in what UNICEF had to say concerning the poverty situation in Ghana; UNICEF argues that,

*While overall poverty was almost halved in a decade and a half, from 52% in 1991/92 to 28.5% in 2005/06, one-quarter of the population still lives below the poverty line and 18.5% of Ghanaians live in extreme poverty, with inadequate resources even to meet their basic food subsistence needs (UNICEF, 2009).*

Conclusion can be drawn on the above to the effect that, poverty at any level had the potential to affect children's well being negatively. The reason is that, it has caused the girl child to abandon school, cause her again to migrate to the city and is also influencing her decision to work in order to assist self, family, community and the country at large. Poverty is a monster and needs to be eradicated from all sectors of society.

### **6.3.6 Gender perspectives**

Doing gender appears to pervade the Ghanaian social structure. A discussion on doing gender has been presented in chapter three page (27). From the discussion, I attempted to portray how influential gender is. I quoted West and Zimmerman's proposition that;

*gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimizes the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category.* Evidence provided in the aforementioned chapter points to the fact that, in the Ghanaian society, doing gender may be reinforcing one hand and constraining on the other. For instance, this study has revealed that due to doing gender, some girls are made to drop out of school in order for their brothers to have the opportunity of attending when resources are scant. I also mentioned that due to the gendered nature of the Ghanaian social structure, girls are made to have so many

responsibilities denying them of the opportunity of engaging in play and having fun while the brothers have the freedom to do so.

The above discussed gender bias causes the girl child to perform poorly in school. When she drops out of school, the only reason parents assign is her inadequacy in terms of knowledge. The parents turn to forget that by making the girl do all the household chores from morning till she goes to school and comes back to continue, she is placed at a disadvantaged position to pass her examinations.

On the other hand, we have seen that, doing gender has been employed by most parents in instilling the values of hard work in their daughters. This it is believed goes a long way to help the future wife in making her husband happy (Falola and Salm, 2003). It is also argued that, there exist a sort of socialization called economic socialization which when the girl child goes through, imbibes in her hard work and the acquisition of the necessary skills (Nukunya, 2003). Therefore, the girl child who is resilient in the mist of the danger of life in her choice of work by carrying load may be deemed to be exhibiting some of the virtues she has acquired from home through doing gender.

However, the above appear not to be in favour of the girls as compared to the boys. The evidence is seen in the Akan proverb I cited in my discussions in page (28) which attempted to suggest that, no matter how high a woman may go in terms of education, wealth and prestige, she is still subjected to a man's control. This kind of mentality which is rooted in the Ghanaian world view may inhibit talented girls from attaining their life ambitions. Therefore, the study concludes that though doing gender may be good, it should not be made to be projected too much otherwise it has the tendency to constrain children especially the girl child from aspiring to get to the top.

#### **6.4 Conclusions**

From the aforementioned subheadings, it has been revealed by this study that the girls engaging in load carrying activity do so in the exercise of their agency. Also, it has come out that the girl child in the exercise of agency does so within the social structure of a society. This has been seen to bring about some limitation in the exercise of the girls agency. Moreover, the girl child is seen as both being and becoming. The effects of doing gender have equally being elaborated in this study. It is hoped that, the new revelations emerging from this study will help researchers in coming out with various interventions aimed at

protecting the best interest of the girl child who migrates to work in her bid to support household/family out of poverty.

## **Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

**Nigerians have a proverb which states that: “you don’t have to be old to be wise” (UNICEF, 2002a: 23)**

In this concluding chapter, the main findings of the study are presented in relation to the research question and the objectives. This study has as its main focus to explore the sort of experiences the girl-child goes through in the process of migration and engaging in load carrying and also to ascertain the health implications of what is carried and how far it is carried in order to come out with recommendations for safeguarding the best interest of the girl-child.

### **7.2 Summary of Objectives, Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology**

#### **7.2.1 Objectives**

The study examined the following objectives:

- The extent to which the decision to migrate depended on the child
- The factors that motivated the girl-child to migrate and engage in load carrying works
- The history of the girl-child’s family in relation to migration and carrying of load
- The experiences the girl-child goes through with migration and carrying of load
- What the girl-child carries, how far it is carried in order to bring out the health implications of carrying load.

#### **7.3 Theoretical Perspectives**

The above stated could not have been achieved without a guide in the form of a lens with which the various issues discussed were looked at. As I stated in my introduction of chapter three, theories are like a language of a country one lives in.....but is a disgrace and an inconvenience if one cannot speak the language. This implied that, my inability to use the language of the new social studies of childhood will have been a disgrace and an inconvenience. As a result, I employed the theoretical perspectives: the new social studies of childhood, migration as a family/household livelihood strategy against poverty and the socio-cultural perspective of work with a focus on the following:

- ❖ Children as social actors
- ❖ Children as either “being” or “becoming”

- ❖ The social structural child
- ❖ Using children's migration and work as household/family strategy against poverty
- ❖ The African Triple Heritage focusing on the indigenous and Islamic perspectives

### **7.3.1 The New Social Studies of Childhood**

As I have already discussed in chapter four page ( 1), prior to the 1980s, research on children was basically carried out by the dominant frameworks. These disciplines emphasized socialization of the child. This conceptualization of the child according to James et al, regarded children as “human becomings” rather than “human beings” who through the process of socialization would be shaped to become fully human adult beings. Some researchers therefore became interested in looking at the child differently from the way Sociology, Psychology and Education have all looked at the child. This resulted in the coming into being of the new paradigm called the new social studies of childhood.

The new paradigm portrays children as competent beings in their own right, stable, complete and capable of taken decisions that concerns them and their environment. The new paradigm again tries to give a voice to children by regarding them as people to be studied in their own right and not just receivers of adult teaching (Hardman. 1973). It further attempts to deconstruct, construct and reconstruct some of the “facts of culture” (La Fontaine (1979).

The study again analyzed the debate on the child as either “becoming” or “being”; due to the theorization the child has received from both the dominant frameworks and the new paradigm. The dominant frameworks have classified the child as “becoming” whiles the new paradigm also theorizes the child as “being”. However, from my dialogue with the children, it came out that these children are both “becoming and being”. The basis for this argument according to this study is that, from the dialogue with the children, they stated that they are carrying load in order to raise money to help their family and also to enroll in apprenticeship in order to become masters after their vocational training. This put these children in a “becoming” position. On the contrary too, they are considered as “being” because; they took personal decisions to migrate and work in order to raise money to improve upon their life and change their poverty status. They also send their earnings home to argument family livelihood. These children were the main informants, whose perspectives have been regarded as very vital for the successful completion of this study. The girl-child who migrates to carry load has also been seen in this study as a social actor who had freedom of action order to deal with situations of poverty for the betterment of self and family.

The study further looked at how the “*influence of major events that occur outside the child’s microcosm*” (Qvortrup, Jens. 2002: 48) for instance, the socio-cultural context, economic forces, environmental events, physical planning, political decisions, and cultural practices which are external to the child shapes their life. The essence of the above stated perspective is to argue that, in looking at the girl-child who migrates to work as a load carrier, careful consideration should be exercised by discussing the various variables that bring about the phenomena under discussion. This is the broader environmental context in which children live. Finally, the socio-cultural perspective was also employed in this study to explain the phenomenon under study.

### **7.3.2 Children’s Migration and Work as Household/ Family Livelihood Strategy**

The study further explored how the child uses migration and work as a way of contributing their quota to helping family and household out of their poverty situation. In this assessment, it came out from the children themselves that, they chose to migrate and carry load in order to raise money for themselves and their family. This is coming from the background that, my informants are disadvantaged in terms family resources, community endowment and the entire regional precarious economic condition. As a result, the study finds it not surprising that, these children have adopted migration and work as a household/family strategy against poverty. The above discussed appear to make a lot of sense in that, the position taken by this study resonates the findings of Sporten et al when they also argued that: migration whether spontaneous; resulting from environmental pressures or policy induced, “*help mitigate the impacts of natural and environmental variability and structural adjustment*” (Sporten et al, 1999:442).

### **7.3.3 Methodology**

The study employed qualitative research methods as the main methods for collecting relevant data from the field. This is because, the method provides for deeper analysis of data, allows for a richer and an in-depth understanding of how people make meaning out of their situation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). But for a better understanding of the experiences the girl-child goes through with migration and load carrying, it is envisaged that, a technique that is capable of helping to unravel the feeling and thoughts of these girls becomes the most appropriate to use. As a result, the qualitative research method was deemed to be the most



appropriate in bringing out my informants view of their life situation and diverse life experiences (Padget, 1998).

The study again made use of multiple methods; participant observation, focus group discussion, interview with a representative of government (from the department responsible for protecting the best interest of the child in Ghana), in-depth semi structured interviews and storytelling. The choice of multiple methods was influenced by the belief that, in exploring the experiences of the girl-child as she goes through carrying load in the market, no single method would have been able to bring out most of the important issues the study aims at bringing out for the necessary structures to be put in place to protect the best interest of children who find themselves in this kind of situation (Macdougall, et al., 2004). The various methods used complemented each other and thereby brought to the fore the kinds of experiences the girl-child goes through engaging in load carrying work.

## **7.4 Summary of Findings**

Having successfully summarized the objectives, theoretical perspectives and perspectives and concluding reflections regarding the methodology, the summary of the major findings are hereby presented.

### **7.4.1 Background of Participants**

The study attempted to bring out the nature of the background of the children who participated in this study. The backgrounds of the children revealed that, they migrated from the three Northern regions of Ghana; Northern, Upper East, and Upper West. This gave the ethnic composition of: Dagombas being in the majority, followed by Frafras, the Mamprusi with Gonjas being the least so far as the children who participated in this study are concerned. It came out that, majority of the children migrated from Gushiagu; a town lying between Tamale; the Northern regional capital and Bolgatanga also the Upper East regional capital. The distance covered by these children from their hometowns to the study area was estimated to be: 558 km for the highest and the least being 388km with this kind of journey taken place on not too good road network and also in poorly maintained vehicles.

It came out again that, an average of 12 hours was used in travelling to the destination area with this kind of journey taken place mostly in the night. The above portrays the stress children go through as they journey towards their destination to engage in carrying load.

#### **7.4.2 Migration and Load Carrying History**

The study again attempted to establish whether there exist a historical trend in the migration and load carrying of these children and their family members and the extent to which the decision to migrate depended on the affected children. The findings revealed that, majority of the children have had some of their families migrating to engage in this kind of activity before. However, what appeared not very clear was whether indeed the past load carriers are blood related. This is because, as I stated earlier, they refer to people who are related to them by lineage as their sisters. Lineage according to Nukunya refers to a group of people, male or female, who descended through one line only from a common ancestor/ancestress (2003:21).

#### **7.4.3 Social Relations and Support given to Household /Family**

The study was also interested in the social relations and whether children supported their household/family. From the dialogue, it came out that, almost all the children have supported their family in various ways. These ranged from sending money, buying clothes, foodstuffs, fish, biscuits and soap. The responsibility that these children are carrying on their shoulders by supporting their family was seen to have emanated from the disadvantaged backgrounds of the northern region; sparse population, inadequate resources, neglect by successive governments just to mention a few.

On social relations, it came out that, none of these girls had both parents' dead. All of them stated to be having either one or both parents alive. However, it was revealed that, almost all of their parents' economic position is nothing good to write about. This according to the girls has influenced their decision to migrate and work as load carriers. The reason may be due to what Fayola and Salm called the "the dual dependency relationship" that exist between children and adults in Ghana (Fayola & Salm, 2002p.138). This finds expression in the Akan proverb: if your elders take of you while cutting your teeth, you must take care of them while they are losing theirs (Ibid). This show how cultural practices in Ghana deals with the problem of poverty by emphasizing the agency of the child.

#### **7.4.4 Perspectives of Informants and Reasons for Engaging in Load Carrying Activity**

The perspective of my informants on load carrying activity was that, the activity is really difficult to do. They stated that the activity is full of stress and that they always close from work very tired and do experience bodily pains resulting in their inability to enjoy sleep in the night. The perspective of the representing from the department of Social welfare was that, the "phenomenon is an unfortunate one" (representative, 2010).

The main reasons my informants cited for migrating to engage in load carrying were their desire to overcome chronic family poverty, to raise money to buy a sewing machine to enroll in dressmaking and buy personal effects required for marriage. However, the children's preference for dressmaking was due to their religious beliefs and the gender structures regarding girls. For instance, there exist different domestic roles for girls and boys in their Ghanaian society with girls having more responsibilities around the house than boys (Fayola & Salm, 2002).

The view of the representative on the reasons why children migrated to come to the city to carry load was that, the factors have both economic and social dimensions. According to him, they are all fundamentally rooted in poverty. He cited poverty as the dominating factor together with such factors such as: family breakdown, rural-urban migration, the disparities existing between the city and the rural areas, slums in the urban centres. He stated further that, failure in economic and educational reforms have worsened people's hardships making them become poorer and poorer and concluded that, lack of pragmatic child welfare policies to protect children appear to be another motivating factor motivating children to migrate and engage in load carrying activity.

In terms of the perspective of the department on the activity of carrying load, the representative said that it was a "worrying one". According to him, the situation worries government because the Children's Act of Ghana frowns upon children who go into the worst forms of child labour. He posited that, the result of the situation was a gloomy future for the children and the country at large because children are the future leaders of the country.

#### **7.4.5 Experiences of the Girl-Child in Engaging in Load Carrying Work**

The main research question that this study sought to answer was the kind of experiences the girl-child goes through with migration and engaging in load carrying activity. With this in mind, the study explored the challenges children face in their migration and engagement in carrying load. As stated earlier, the journey to Kumasi; the destination area appeared to be very cumbersome and stressful due to the distance, the nature of the vehicles used and the type of roads they travel on. In addition to the above, the children listed a variety of challenges they are faced with in their work. Among these include:

- a) Falls resulting in injuries while carrying loads.

- b) Raining of insult on both parents and children as “mpepefo”<sup>6</sup>.
- c) Difficulty in movement due to human traffic leading to falls and causing children to break people’s goods.
- d) Car accidents resulting in injuries and the lost of precious life.
- e) The risk of being murdered for ritual purposes.
- f) Bodily pains.
- g) Cheating by customers

Ayisha, a 15year old narrated her experienced whiles carrying load as;

*One day, I was carrying load for a woman, while going towards the lorry station, I got tired and impeded by the people moving in and out of the market. So I got stripped and fell on someone’s goods breaking some of them in the process. The owner seized the load and demanded that I pay for the things; I started crying uncontrollably because I could not afford to pay for the things. At this juncture, a Good Samaritan passed by and seeing my plight decided to paid to set me free (Ayisha, fieldwork, 2010).*

#### **7.4.6 Health status and care for load carriers**

The study brought to the fore the fact that, the health of children engaging in load carrying is nothing good to write home about. This is because; they are confronted with situations in their work that always require medical attention. However, it was revealed that, these children are unable to afford healthcare and so resort to drug abuse. This situation according to this study appear to be an unfortunate situation since Ghana prides herself of having implemented pro poor health care policy called the Nation Health Insurance.

#### **7.4.7 Determining how much and the criteria for charging for carrying a piece of load**

Assessing the health implication of load carrying work was one of the main concerns of this study. The girl-child engaging in load carrying it was revealed did not have any standardised way of checking how much was carried. However, it came out that, the girl-child who the

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<sup>6</sup> Meaning “a degraded group of people”.

study sees as a social actor has devised her own means of checking how much was carried: she adopted “lift and see” approach to determine the weight and also used the “distance and the weight” to charge appropriately.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study and the discussions that have gone on, the following conclusions have been drawn: that the girl-child who engages in load carrying activity does so in response to poverty and the desire to overcome it. She is a social actor in the exercise of agency in her choice of carrying load to raise money to combat family poverty. She is however seen to be constrained by circumstances beyond her immediate control; social context, cultural practices, failure of both economic and educational reforms resulting from such policies like structural adjustments, the unequal distribution of resource and the failure of successive governments to develop where these girls are coming from.

Also, the study has shown that, the girl-child is both a “being” and a “becoming” here and now oriented towards coping with poverty, as well as dreaming of a better future (becoming).

Again, it emerged that, these children carry so much load and cover long distances making their health status not too good in the face of the implementation of pro-poor health care in Ghana. This has been attributed to high cost of healthcare beyond the affordability of the affected children. It was again brought to the fore that, these girls have devised their own ways of weighing how much they carry at any particular time and have moreover adopted their own criteria in charging whatever is carried.

In terms of provisions by government in protecting the best interest of the affected children, it has been concluded that, though Ghana has passed a number of bills into law for the sake of the children, the laws have become white elephants. The study believes that, this foregrounds the fact that, those engaging in load carrying work are exposed to perpetual danger of all kinds.

Since this study only concentrated in Kumasi, it is hereby recommended that, the other areas in Ghana and elsewhere where this phenomenon exists, some conscious efforts should be made in future to study what pertains there too. Again since the perspective of the child has been the main focus of this study, it is believed that, those significant others (parents and government) who equally share in the phenomenon, need to have their views heard together with the affected children in future research in order to collaborate on the perspectives of the child.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Load carrying children: Their lived experiences, motivations, migration history and challenges.

Themes:

- 1) Personal information
- 2) Lived experiences
  - Family relations
  - Thoughts about their work
  - Migration history
- 3) Motivating factors for their engagement
- 4) Challenges
  - Risks
  - Morale

#### PART I: Personal Information

1. Age .....
2. Sex Male ( ) Female ( )
3. Where do you come from?
4. How long have you been in Kumasi? .....
- 5) How did you come to Kumasi?

#### PART II: LIVED EXPERIENCES

##### Family relations

- 1) How did you decide to come into this market?
- 2) Could you describe how you felt when you left home for Kumasi?
- 3) Have you been in touch with your family since coming to Kumasi?
- 4) Do you miss your family (parents and siblings) when working? If not why?
- 5) Do you support your family back home? If yes how?

##### Thoughts about their work

- 6) Would you tell me how you got into this activity?
- 7) How long have you been in the activity?
- 8) How did you get your head pan?
- 9) How do you see your work?
- 10) Will you recommend to your siblings to take part in this work? If yes why?

##### Migration history

- 11) How did you decide to come to Kumasi?
- 12) Who paid your transport cost from home to Kumasi?
- 13) How did you get to know of this activity as being in Kumasi?

- 14) Have any of your family members been involved in this activity before? If yes how many?
- 15) Are any of your family members living in Kumasi? If yes what does he do?
- 16) Do you know anybody who has been involved in this activity in your hometown?
- 17) If yes, how is their economic condition?
- 18) Do have any of your family members engage in this activity somewhere else? If yes where?
- 19) What is the perception of your people about this work?
- 20) Do you intend to quit this activity any time soon? Why?

### **Factors influencing their decision to engage in their activity**

- 1) Could you tell me why you have chosen to engage in load carrying for a fee?
- 2) Has the reason for engaging in this activity changed since the time you entered?
- 3) Do you think engaging in carrying loads is the best that you could do?
- 4) How much do you earn in day?
- 5) Are you able to save money?
- 6) How do you do that?
- 7) Do you do any other job besides being in this activity? If yes what do you do?
- 8) What do you like/ dislike most about what you do?
- 9) How do other people perceive your work?
- 10) Could you tell what a normal day looks like?

### **Challenges**

#### **Risks**

- 1) Where do you live?
- 2) With whom do you live?
- 3) What do you eat during the day?
- 4) How is your health situation?
- 5) Have you ever been sick?
- 6) Where do you go when you are sick?
- 7) Have you ever been in an accident while working?
- 8) Is it dangerous to engage in carrying loads? How?
- 9) Do you feel safe when carrying loads?
- 10) How much do you carrying at any particular?
- 11) Does the load become too heavy you unable to carry? If yes, in that case what do you do?
- 12) Could you tell me the criteria for charging the load you carrying?
- 13) Do you feel cheated by your customers? If yes what do you do?

#### **Morale**

- 1) What have been your expectations for coming to Kumasi to carry loads?
- 2) Where do you like better: your hometown or Kumasi?
- 3) What do you want to do in future?
- 4) Do you think that could be possible?
- 5) When do you think you will be able to do that?

## Appendix 2

### Load carrying children: Their lived experiences, motivations, migration history and challenges.

Themes:

- 6) Personal information
- 7) Perspectives of the Department
  - Views of the department of Social Welfare
  - Programs in place
- 8) Possible mitigating factors
  - Policies in place
- 9) Any general Comment

#### **PART I: Personal Information**

5. Age .....
6. Sex Male ( ) Female ( )
7. Position?
8. How long have you been in this position? .....

#### **PART II: PERSPECTIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT**

- 1) Will you please tell me the perspective of the department with regard to this phenomenon (Children engaging in carrying loads for fee)?
- 2) Are there any programs put in place for these children?
- 3) Are there any interventions aimed at protecting these children?

#### **4) PART III: POSSIBLE MITIGATING FACTORS**

- 1) Will you tell me any known mitigating factors for this issue?
- 2) Are there any Policies in place for these children? If yes can you please list some of them?

#### **Thoughts about their work**

- 1) What is your thought about children engaging in Load carrying for a fee?
- 2) Do you have an idea about the number of children involved in the metropolis?
- 3) Does it constitute child labour? If yes or no Why?
- 4) In your own view, is there a way forward for these children?
- 5) Do you have any general comment with regard to the phenomenon?

**Appendix 3 Loads on Truck (Male's activity)**



**Appendix 4 : A girl Child on the move with load**



**Appendix 5: A market scene in Kumasi**



**Appendix 6: Load carriers waiting for Prospective customers by the Road side**

