

**CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES  
IN SAKUMONO VILLAGE, GHANA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project work is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere apart from the references cited and properly acknowledged. I am solely responsible for any errors and omissions detected.

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*June, 2012, NTNU*

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## **DEDICATION**

*I humbly dedicate this piece of work to my lovely mother-Alice Ewedanu, my eleven siblings*

*And*

*My child- to- be, Junior Victor.*

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, I explored children's perspectives and experiences of poverty and the livelihood strategies they tactically employed to fend for themselves in Sakumono Village, Ghana. I applied qualitative research method and techniques specifically; focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, drawings, photography, and ranking methods in order to gather the data for the study. This methodological approach provided an in-depth understanding of children's perspectives and experiences of poverty and livelihood strategies and thereby highlighting the essence of social studies of childhood, which is about the live experiences of children. As such, I applied three major theoretical frameworks namely; the social studies of childhood, the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the life-course transmissions of poverty. The purpose of using these theoretical perspectives is to highlight the importance of children's agency in the course of their lives and to shed light on how children are affected by poverty as a result of being born into poor families and how its effect move from generations to generations. The study has found out that children have different explanations and understanding of poverty. These multiple understandings depend on the individual circumstances of the child in question setting a departure from the usual understanding of poverty in seemingly monetary term. The study has also shown that there are gender faces of poverty with regard to how poverty affects both boys and girls similarly and differently. This knowledge reveals that in tackling child poverty, gender of the beneficiaries ought to be taken into consideration in order to make a meaningful impact in the lives of poor children. Furthermore, the study has revealed that children's experiences of poverty are connected to the kind of employment their parents or caregivers are engaged in, and the number of siblings that the child has in his or her family as these have to do with the availability of resources at home. The study revealed how children engage in different livelihood strategies as ways of fighting poverty in their lives when family and the government fail to come to their aid, exhibiting their sense of responsibility, agency, entrepreneurship, and contributions to their families. Having considered children's perspectives and experiences of poverty and the livelihood strategies, it is recommended that policies that aim to tackle child poverty should consider the opinions and voices of poor children as well as their family backgrounds. It was also suggested that, in assessing the needs and problems of poor children, the gender faces of poverty and individual circumstances of the children have to be taken into consideration in order to provide appropriate forms of interventions.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAADP.....Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme

FGDs.....Focus Group Discussions

GLSS.....Ghana Living Standard Survey

GSS.....Ghana Statistical Service

IGT.....Intergenerational Transmission of poverty

ILO.....International Labour Organisation

LEAP.....Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty

MDGs.....Millennium Development Goals

NEPAD.....New Partnership on Africa's Development

NGOs.....Non-Governmental Organisations

SFP.....School Feeding Programme

UN.....United Nations

UNCRC.....United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF.....United Nations Children's Educational Fund

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Problem Context

The concern of poverty among children is not strange to both local and international bodies over the years and more so in the twenty-first-century. Indeed poverty among children has long been a great worry to both policy makers, researchers, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is documented by World Bank (2001) that at the global level, 1.2 billion people have been estimated to live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. Coming closer to Africa, out of a population of 580 million in the mid of 1990s, more than 270 million lived on less than a dollar a day. It was further noted that not only the degree of poverty in Africa is gigantic, but that poverty escalated in both relative and absolute terms in the 1990s (World Bank, 2001).

Notwithstanding, it appears that children remain key constituents of societies that suffer to some extent a large proportion of the negative consequences of poverty. In support of this, Qvortrup (2000, p.79) notes that, “childhood is a variable” in society which means they are a part of the larger society who must have a faire share of the national cake.

Despites this acknowledgement, it remains relatively unusual in developing-country contexts to consult directly with children with regard to their views and explanations of poverty (Narayan, 2009). As Abebe (2008, p.271) comments, the views of children in poverty “are seldom heard, but photographs and stories *about* them are very common”. This is not different from how poor children are portrayed in pictures with little views of them. This study therefore aims to fill the significant gap on children’s perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village, Ghana. It is also in the quest of resolving the above problem that I decided to embark on this study to seek the voices, experiences, livelihood strategies, and perspectives of children on poverty. This also implies that the voices of children cannot be relegated when it comes to issues of poverty in their respective communities. Indeed, this is worth considering as children are in a better position to tell policy makers the effects of poverty for instance in their lives. As Wintersberger (1994) further elaborates, state promoted circulation of its national cake between generations is distorted in that the older generation benefit far more from welfare than do children. This statement made by Wintersberger seems to be the case of how resources are

distributed in Ghana among different categories of people with respect to relatively less proportion to children. And it appears that poverty is inseparable with a large number of children in Ghana. It is worth noting that poverty affects children's health, development, achievement and behaviour (Aber et al., 1997; Spencer, 2000). According to Ridge (2002), currently, we know that children's ability to participate in community activities, school activities and peer group activities can be greatly restricted if children are poor. It is also argued that the timing, depth and duration of poverty are significant in the effect of poverty on children's lives (Bradshaw, 2003; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

It is further documented that childhood poverty has physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional outcomes: on self-esteem, smoking, mortality, accidents, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, educational accomplishment, school segregation, youth misdemeanour, alcohol and drug use, suicide, morbidity, pleasure and skewed well being (Bradshaw, 2002; 2001; Morrell et al., 2001). Many studies have been conducted in this area of poverty but with limited voices of children living in poverty and it appears that a good number of economic and health measures have been put in place to remedy this situation without involvement of children. It was estimated by Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS, 1992) that around 28 percent of children from the ages of 7 to 14 years was involved in child labour which was largely due to the presence of poverty in their lives.

The Ghana Millennium Development Goals Report published in 2005 stated that since 1999, six out of ten regions in Ghana experienced increases in poverty or extreme poverty. However, the overall poverty line had fallen to 28 percent in the period 2005 to 2006 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2006). This accounts for 800,000 children in child labour in Ghana. This figure is quite alarming as children who are regarded as child labourers are more often than not poor children. And Ghana with a population of approximately 24 million people with 800,000 child labourers as of 1992, it raises a humanitarian question of who should be responsible for the upkeep of these children? Indeed, this figure should be of a great concern to any well-meaning policy maker and implementer who is interested in children's affairs.

In 1992, out of the total number of children who were working, 66 percent of them were also going to school and 90 percent of them were engaged in household chores (Ghana Statistical Service, 2006). Looking at children engaged in household chores, it speaks volumes of children

agency in Ghana. But more importantly is the question of whether these children are being paid for their services?

It was also noted that 20 percent of boys and 17 percent of girls were working and going to school. However it was observed that 14 percent of boys and 22 percent of girls were doing nothing and these trends are similar to what had been observed in other developing countries where data is available, International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2004). In view of the foregoing, I intended primarily to seek the voices and experiences of poor children of poverty in Ghana and also explore the livelihood strategies that they employ to cater for themselves.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Most studies of livelihood, gender and poverty focus on adult women (and to lesser extent children) (see, for example, Chant with Craske, 2003; McIlwaine and Datta, 2004). The weaknesses of the choice of research participants in this area create the gap for the voices of children to be filled on related issues and for that reason the quest for this research to explore the experiences and perspectives of children living in poverty. Despite tireless effort to eradicate poverty and research on poverty among children, mostly in developing countries, it remains relatively unusual in developing-country contexts to seek children's views, experiences and explanations of poverty (Narayan, 2009). In the face of the mushrooms of projects involving children in Ghana, it seems, as Roberts (2000, p. 225) argues, "we are still not good enough at hearing them, in the sense of taking full account of what they tell us".

Similarly research on livelihoods among young people tends to neglect the household chores perform by children and only concentrates on paid labour and thereby underestimate the importance of informal work that are performed by both boys and girls (see Lloyd-Evans, 2002; Subrahmanian, 2002). Abebe (2008, p. 272) argues that, the way in which "disadvantaged boys and girls respond to multiple impacts of poverty and impoverishment remain unexplored". Though Abebe's studies are mostly carried out in Ethiopia, the socio-cultural and economic contexts have significant resemblance to that of Ghana. Indeed the way in which children experience and respond to poverty in Ghana remains a guessed work. Few studies have to date explored children's own views and perceptions of poverty.

Research into the impact of poverty on children's well-being takes many forms, from hefty scale monitoring and evaluation studies through to in depth ethnographies. International development

efforts to counter child poverty continue to depend on rudimentary indicators and league tables of child well-being which may or may not reflect the priorities and perspectives of children. This indeed may relate to the sheer scale of poverty in developing countries which appears to stipulate an equivalent response in research terms, notably through large-scale survey approaches that support aggregates and averages (Bartlett and Minujin, 2009). Although it is now widely recognised that poverty is multi-dimensional, much poverty discourse remains fixed on income measures and material poverty, for example, as in Gordon et al., (2003) definition of poverty as “severe deprivation of basic human need” (see also Bartlett and Minujin, 2009, p. 3). Contrary to the above, this study was warranted to unveil the perspectives and experiences of poor children by researching *with* them rather than researching *on* them through qualitative research method and child friendly, qualitative research techniques. In this way, the importance of children’s participation in the research process was emphasised and their priorities were highly considered.

### **1.3 The aim of the Study**

The central aim of the study was to explore the perspectives, experiences, and livelihood strategies of children on poverty at Sakumono Village, Ghana. The study also intended to find out the perspectives of these children with respect to the definition of poverty and gender faces of poverty.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study**

In this study, I aimed at achieving the following specific objectives:

- To explore children’s perspectives of poverty in Sakumono Village.
- To find out children’s experiences of poverty in Sakumono Village.
- To identify and examine the livelihood strategies poor children employ in Sakumono Village.
- To seek children’s views on how to alleviate poverty among the rural poor in Sakumono Village and Ghana at large.



## **1.5 Research Questions**

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, some pertinent research questions were posed to the research participants of the study and following are of no exclusion:

- What does “poverty” mean to rural children in Ghana?
- What are the experiences and perspectives of children on poverty in Sakumono Village?
- Which livelihood strategies do poor children in Sakumono Village employ to fend for themselves?
- What are the genders faces of poverty among poor children in Sakumono Village?
- What are the views of poor children on going to school and working concurrently in Sakumono village?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study aimed at contributing to the body of knowledge the already exists on poverty and livelihood strategies of households. But a good number of studies carried out in this area focused on adults and youth and thereby creating a gap for children’s views to be filled. For instance Chant and Jones (2003) carried a study on Youth, Gender and Livelihoods in West Africa, specifically in Ghana and the Gambia. But perspectives from this study for instance were from youth and thereby leaving a space for the perspectives of children to be explored. Adhering to the statement made by Varadarajan (1966) that it is not enough to show there are gaps in the body of knowledge, they must be significant gaps, children’s view on this topic are important facts that society needs in its body of knowledge.

The study was also tailored towards the amelioration of the lacuna created by the relative absence of literature on children’s perspectives on poverty and livelihood strategies in Ghana. The study would also act as a reference document for policy makers in Ghana. For instance, in the formulation of the MDGs, attention had been paid to poverty as indicated in MDG number one: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. Its sub goal was that, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who suffer hunger should be half as compared to 1990 (UN, 2005b). In order to achieve this objective, children’s perspectives and recommendations to remedy and eradicate poverty must be taken into consideration.

It is also important to state here that, recommendations to remedy a problem should come from those suffering from the problem as they seem to know best how the problem affects them. It appears that the voices of children are more often than not relegated in these studies and yet children constitute a significant part of the poor in our society. In this regard, this study was warranted to unearth the perspectives and opinions of children on poverty, experiences and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village that would be useful to both national and international bodies.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

The study was delimited to the children living in poverty in Sakumono Village, Ghana as well as a key informant at the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre in Sakumono Village. The limited time for this study and the year of the study are some of the other crucial factors that need to be considered in this regard.

### **1.8 Organisation of the Study**

The study is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter one** captures the introduction of the study, which consisted of the problem context, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and delimitation of the study. **Chapter two** covers the major theory of the study-the social studies of childhood, review of definitions of poverty in economic sense, understanding of forms of poverty such as relative and absolute poverty, the concept of poverty and vulnerability, the concept of livelihoods such as human capital, social capital and physical capital, the theory of intergenerational transmission of poverty and the life-course transmission of poverty are accounted for.

Subsequently, **chapter three** captures the qualitative research method and techniques applied and adopted in the study, showing clearly their advantages and disadvantages over other research techniques used in the study. In this chapter, qualitative research techniques such as, focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, ranking, and drawings are clearly documented.

**Chapter four** talks about the study context in which the demography of the study area, ethnicity and age distributions of Ghana, the situation of children in Ghana, trends of poverty in Ghana and other related issues are captured. **Chapter five and six**, talk about detailed analysis of the

data and discussions of findings. Finally, **chapter seven** presents the summary of the entire work; conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter elaborates the relevant theories of children and childhood studies, theories of poverty among children and explanations of theoretical concepts. This research on children's perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies is informed by three major theories namely, the social studies of childhood, intergenerational transmission of poverty and life-course transmissions of poverty. The chapter begins with the major theory of childhood which is the social studies of childhood by shedding lights on children's agency in the midst of their difficult situations. Furthermore, definitions of poverty in economic sense are explained into detail, giving an account of understanding of forms of poverty such as relative and absolute poverty, and the concept of poverty and vulnerability are accounted for. Subsequently, the chapter gives an account of the theory of intergenerational transmission of poverty, life-course transmission of poverty-highlighting the key maintainers of poverty throughout the life span and taking into consideration the concept of livelihoods such as human capital, social capital and physical capital.

### **2.1.1 Social Studies of Childhood**

From the perspective of New Social Studies of Childhood, childhood is not a natural phenomenon marked by physical characteristics, nor by transformation from one life cycle to the other. Instead, childhood is a social construction defined by boundaries and relates to a particular social and cultural setting (Jenks, 1996). This paradigm sees children as competent and active individuals in the construction of their own social lives (James et al., 1997). It is in this sense that Prout and James (1990, p. 7) argue that “one can talk of the social construction of childhood, its re- and deconstruction both for children and by children”. It also convenes the notion that both children and adults are actively working together to create this social institution called childhood and that the actions and activities of one social institution affect the other.

In the social studies of childhood, children are seen as competent informants of their own everyday experiences and as social actors who are presently “beings” and not only “becomings” (Qvortrup et al., 1994). This means that research methods must allow children to express their own views, experiences and perceptions and help children to do this in multi-dimensional ways (Ennew et al., 2009). To give voices to children whom the social studies of childhood strongly supports, Hardman (1973, p. 87) adds that, “children as people should be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching”. This means that children are not people to be seen as young and cannot speak on their own, rather they should be given the opportunity to express themselves (and as a basic human right). This project was therefore conducted within the theoretical framework, childhood as a social construction. According to Prout and James (1990), childhood is understood as a social rather than natural phenomenon. They provide an interpretive frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. They claimed that childhood is different from biological immaturity and that it is part of many society’s social structures and cultures. In other words, childhood is not a universal or a natural phenomenon that occurs but it is as a result of social construction. As Jenks (1982, p.12) notes, “childhood is not a natural phenomenon and cannot be understood as such”. Similarly, Jenks (1982, p.12) indicates that “childhood is to be understood as a social construct, it makes reference to a social status delineated by boundaries incorporated within the social structure and manifested through certain typical forms of conduct, all of which are essentially related to a particular cultural settings”. By this, the expectations of children and what they should be are different from one cultural setting to another. For instance

in the major cities of Ghana such as Accra and Kumasi, childhood is to be seen as a stage of going to school and having fun although this is mostly related to the economic statuses of the parents of those children. Parents who have well-paid jobs have such expectations of their children whereas the children who live in the villages in the Northern part are sometimes expected to be working with their parents on their farm lands rather than to go to school. That is not to say that these children are not allowed to attend school, rather they have to combine schooling with other major activities such as farming and market work.

It is further strengthened and supported by Lee (2001, p. 47) that instead of seeing children as the child, “a diversity of childhoods should be recognized, since children’s experiences vary with their ethnicity, social class and gender”. Again, Lee (2001, p. 47) notes that instead of seeing “children in relation to nature, the new paradigm sees childhood as a social phenomenon, as a social institution that is the result of historical, political, and economic processes”.

In an attempt to develop new approaches to the study of childhood, Charlotte Hardman “compared her work on the anthropology of children to the study of women, suggesting that both women and children might perhaps be called “muted groups” or elusive groups in terms of anyone studying a society” (Hardman, 1973, p. 85) cited in James and Prout (1990, p. 7). What perhaps in societies both children and women need is a voice that expresses their needs and worries of life in this sense. What the new paradigm attempts therefore to do is to give a voice to children as a basic human right. As James and Prout (1990, p.7) argue the new paradigm is “an emerging and not yet completed approach to the study of childhood”.

There is however some key features that distinguishes this new paradigm from other approaches to the study of children and childhood. The following are the six key features of the new paradigm:

- Childhood is socially constructed;
- Childhood is a variable of social analysis which cannot be entirely divorced from other social variables, e.g. gender, class and ethnicity;
- Children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right;
- Children are actively involved in the construction of their own social lives;
- Ethnography is particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood;

- The emergence of a new paradigm is a contribution to the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

Source: (James and Prout, 1997, p.8)

As pointed out above, one key feature of the new paradigm- the sociology of childhood, is that childhood is to be comprehended as a social construction. Another feature of the new paradigm is that childhood is a variable of social analysis. By this, childhood is not an entirely separate entity or an island on its own. It is interrelated and interwoven with other social institutions such as the class, ethnicity, marriage, etc. The third key feature of the new paradigm is that children's social relations and cultures are worthy to be studied in their own right, independent of the assumptions, perspectives and concerns of adults. In addition, the new paradigm convenes the idea that children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. The fifth core feature of the new paradigm embraces ethnology as a useful methodology for the study of childhood. The sixth feature however is the one that convenes the idea that the emergent paradigm is an attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct childhood, explained in (James and Prout, 1997)

The essence of adopting the social studies of childhood as the main theoretical framework is to shed light on the importance of children's agency in their own lives. As this study is about children's perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies, the social studies of childhood provides a theoretical and analytical lens through which poor children's daily actions in the midst of their poverty situation can be recognised and appreciated. The social studies of childhood also act as a lens to looking at children's experiences and understandings of childhood poverty. This theory further provides a channel through which the voices, views and perspectives of poor children can be heard and incorporated into programmes that attempt to alleviate poverty among children in Sakumono Village, Ghana. The social studies of childhood is therefore an analytical standpoint through which childhood poverty and livelihood strategies adopted by poor children are understood in this study.

## **2.2 The Definitions of Poverty**

It is quite cumbersome in many developing countries to determine who is poor. Indeed, it is a great challenge to come out with right figures of people who are considered to be poor and needy. Laderchi and Saith (2003) indicate that different definitions of poverty have different implications for policy and practice since they identify different people as being poor. For policy makers to make good policies that will be of benefit to the poor there must be a clear definition and categorization of the poor in any society. And with a particular regard to poor children in Ghana, children's voices are necessary in determining who falls within the category of being poor. In view of this, Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) defined two major types of poverty in the fourth Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) carried out in 1998. These were poverty and extreme poverty.

According to this survey, poverty is identified as the consumption per annum per person of 900,000 cedis or less and extreme poverty as the consumption per annum per person of 700,000 cedis or less (GSS, 2000). In a more general term in another study, poverty has been traditionally understood to mean a lack of access to resources, productive assets and income resulting in a state of material deprivation (Baulch, 1996). Another definition worth considering here is the definition of poverty given by World Bank (1990) which basically says that, poverty is the inability of one to reach a minimal standard of living, which involves personal consumption of food, clothing and shelter. Again, in this study, the discussion chapter revealed whether the poor children studied have similar or different perspectives from the definition of poverty given by the World Bank.

Furthermore, according to Satterthwaite (2004), the way poverty is defined in many developing countries remains entrenched in moot assumptions about what poverty is, and the bona fide needs of the poor. The setting of Ghana's poverty line is no different from this view. Actually, GSS (2000a) acknowledges this, noting that setting an absolute poverty line for a country is not an accurate methodical exercise. In the light of these myriad problems, I decided to find an explanation to the question, what are the experiences and perspectives of children living in poverty and their livelihood strategies employed in the quest of finding alternatively better lives for themselves? Do poor children in Sakumono Village (the study site) necessarily consider this broad definition of poverty or they have divergent perspectives on the definition of poverty? And



if they have different definitions of poverty, what are the policy implications of that to both policy makers and child researchers? Whose voices are used in these kinds of definitions? In other words, who defines ‘the poor’ in Ghana? Is it poor adults, poor children or government officials? These and many are the pertinent questions that should bother any policy maker and implementer.

Baulch (1996) suggests that, the concept of poverty should be broadened to include lack of dignity and autonomy emphasized that the inclusion of the latter in the concept of poverty draws from the insight that being non-poor implies a liberty from the necessity to perform activities that are regarded as subservient and their ability to choose self-fulfilling and gratifying life styles. What are the views of poor children in Sakumono Village with this kind of definition of poverty that talks about dignity and autonomy? Are the poor in this study area lack autonomy and a sense of agency? Or their poor situations rather gave them the opportunity to be autonomous beings? This further revealed inter connection of international and global perspectives of poverty and the rural, poor child’s perspective. In the words Townsend’s (1979) definition of poverty in for instance, poverty refers to; “Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong”. Indeed, my research participants had similar views that were in line with Townsend’s definition of poverty and in particular his idea of lack of resources to obtain the types of diet people need in their lives. My research participants were in consensus of how they had to struggle to find a square meal per day and they also lamented of the poor living conditions such as shelter, foot wears, good drinking water which is customary in their community. These and many are some of the sub themes explored in this study. I strongly suggest that, issues with regard to addressing a problem should be directed to those who suffer the very problem that is being addressed. As such, poor children in Sakumono Village have a voice in relation to poverty issues in Ghana. It is in this regard that, I set out to seek poor children’s voices in this topic area.

In short, taking a look at the economic definitions of poverty helps to draw a dichotomy between what children think in terms of poverty and the economic sense of poverty.

### **2.2.1 Understanding Forms of Poverty**

There appears a world of debate about the definition of poverty. Many fields have engaged in this debate and have advanced their own definitions in line with what their purposes are and what they are looking for in those circumstances. Despite these endless efforts of defining poverty, it is clear that some people are labelled as poor in all societies. It is also worth mentioning that almost all definitions of poverty fall within these two categories:

- Poverty is having less than an objectively defined, absolute poverty.
- Poverty is having less than others in society, relative poverty.

Poverty according to the first category of definitions is absolute; poverty according to the second category is relative. One similarity between the first and second definitions of poverty is that both emanate from an objective point of view.

All poverty definitions in these two categories may result in different estimates of the determinants of poverty and the degree of poverty. Although some definitions can be argued to be preferable to others (see, e.g., Townsend, 1979; Hagenaars et al., 1985), the choice for a particular definition is often considered on the basis of the pragmatic argument of availability of data, as a political decision, or on the basis of historical arguments. Usually, economic research or social policy uses just one of many possible definitions of poverty and disregards all others. What is however lacking is a comparison of the consequences of applying different definitions on the number and composition of the population of poor (see, e.g., Hagenaars and De vos (1988, p. 212).

### **2.2.2 Absolute Poverty (Poverty is having less than an objectively defined)**

This definition in this category is found by defining a person as poor if his total expenditure cannot be paid for out of his or her current income, i.e., if he must borrow money or spend savings in order to get along. In this situation the ratio of total expenditure to current income exceeds one. In both the food-ratio and the fixed cost definition the choice of the ratio defining poverty is more or less arbitrary. Moreover, both definitions have the serious defect that they do not take into account economies of scale of different expenditure categories (Hagenaars and De vos, 1988). Further, all two poverty definitions based on the ratio of expenditures to income can be criticized because they do not take into account that expenditures may vary because of differences in tastes rather than resources (Hagenaars and De vos, 1988, p. 214). This form of

poverty is also based on the question of whether one can meet his or her basic needs such as housing, food and water. If an individual cannot afford these basic needs then that person is considered to be in absolute poverty. With this form of poverty, it can be said that the income that my research participants derive from their labour is far less than their expenditure on their current basic needs and for that matter they can be categorised as children living in absolute poverty. Though it is argued that expenditure may vary according to the taste of the consumer, it is also obvious that, poor children cannot afford basic needs such as water, food, dresses, a pair of shoes and a convenient shelter.

### **2.2.3 Relative Poverty (Poverty is having less than others in society)**

“This category includes two types of definitions based on theories of relative deprivation: one that is defined with respect to income (see, e.g., Abel-Smith and Townsend, 1965; Lee, 1969; Miller and Roby, 1974), and one that is defined with respect to various commodities. This definition by Townsend (1979), based on the concept of relative deprivation, defines households as poor when they are lacking certain commodities that are common in the society they are living in” (Hagenaars and De vos, 1988, p. 215). For instance, where my research participants live, one can see several children riding bicycles to school, some have mobile phones which act as a contact between them and their parents, a good number of children have a good pair of shoes and some of the children live in good accommodation and they have access to good drinking water. These ways of living seem to be the standard in this community. Whereas my research participants walk across the rail way to school, their dresses are torn, their pairs of shoes are nothing worth to talk about and the least said the better. My research participants hardly have access to this way of living which makes them feel that they are poor in relation to the way some other children from rich homes live in the same community.

In this relative definition of poverty, “a standard consumption pattern is chosen to represent society's common practice, and the more aspects of one's actual consumption practice differ from this standard, the higher one's deprivation is assumed to be. Hence a deprivation score is derived as the total number of times such a shortfall of standard consumption practice is observed”, explained in Hagenaars and De vos (1988, p. 215). Though studies have not been carried out in this area to compare the standard of living of children from rich homes and poor children in this same community, a mere visit to the area reveals that there is a vast difference in the standard of

living among children in this community as a good number of rich people and their families are invading the community every now and then. On the other hand, a more embraced definition of poverty has been noted by Boyden (2006, p. 1) that, poverty is,

A complex, dynamic phenomenon that is subject to both contextual specificity and multiple interacting causes. It highlights the contributory role of risk and uncertainty, power imbalances and abuses, rights violations and insufficiency of assets. Thus, poverty is manifested primarily by diverse material deficiencies, susceptibility to risk, uncertainty and infringement, and constraint on choice. Household poverty therefore means having insufficient assets or resources, experiencing insufficient security and having access to insufficient options to ensure the safety, integration and well-being of all members.

The above definition embraces the multidimensional, cultural and contextual aspects of poverty that transcends the traditional, monetary definition of poverty used in many policy documents.

#### **2.2.4 The Concept of Poverty and Vulnerability**

The concepts of poverty and vulnerability are highly debatable. Some people think that the poor are necessarily vulnerable and a vulnerable person is necessarily a poor person (Moser, 1998). This conceptualisation of poverty as vulnerability and vulnerability as poverty is problematic in its core understanding as both are not synonymous and for that matter cannot be used interchangeably. “Deprivation and difficulty can also produce what Rutter and Silberg (2002) cited in (Hardgrove et al., 2011, p. 5) refer to as “steeling effects”, in which coping with challenges produces strength and resilience”. Moser (1998, p. 3) argues that “capturing the multidimensional aspects of changing socioeconomic well-being in poor communities requires identification of both levels of poverty and types of vulnerability. The concept of vulnerability, although often used as a synonym for poverty, is not the same. Because poverty measures are generally fixed in time, poverty is essentially a static concept. By contrast, vulnerability is more dynamic and better captures change processes as”, “people move in and out of poverty” (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992, p. 10). It is clearly noted by Moser (1998, p. 3), that, “although poor people are usually among the most vulnerable, not all vulnerable people are poor, a distinction which facilitates differentiation among lower-income populations”. The point made by Hardgrove et al., (2011, p. 5) is worth noting.

It is important to abstain from a false dichotomy that is often present in discussions of childhood vulnerability; that is, that in situation where children are vulnerable to negative outcomes, adults are not. This is mistaken logic, and it is incongruent with lived experiences of poverty.

In other words the poor are not always necessarily vulnerable people and that a vulnerable child is not also necessarily a poor child, a clarification that is vital in tackling child poverty in the twenty-first-century.

Literature further suggests that the “perceptions and definitions of poverty used by the poor, first, that poverty is not defined solely in terms of income but encompasses deprivation and insecurity; secondly, that any attempt to place monetary values on these aspects of personal, household and social deprivation involves so many arbitrary assumptions that they are likely to be meaningless; and thirdly, that those defined as poor in consumption terms may not capture all deprived and vulnerable households and individuals. Vulnerability is related to insecurity, sensitivity of well-being in the face of a changing environment, and households’ resilience and ability to respond to risks and negative changes (economic, environmental, social or political, including sudden shocks, long-term trends or seasonal cycles) and to opportunities. This does not however mean that income and consumption are irrelevant, but to draw attention to the greater vulnerability to insecurity, impoverishment and reduced self-respect of households which lack assets that they can mobilise and manage in the face of hardship” (see e.g., Moser, 1998, p.3).

### **2.3 Intergenerational Transmissions of Poverty (IGT)**

It is documented by Moore (2005, p.12) that, “poverty is not transferred from one generation to the next as a 'package', but as a complex of positive and negative factors that affect a child’s chances of experiencing poverty. As such, livelihoods approaches can be useful for understanding the intergenerational transmission (IGT) of poverty”. These livelihoods are captured under in subsequent pages.

Moore (2005, p. 4) argues that “in many contexts, poor women and girls, children and older people (especially widows) are more likely to be trapped in poverty”.

Poverty appears to be a common phenomenon among children and more so in developing countries. As indicated by UNICEF (2000), an estimated 600 million children are growing up in poverty in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This implies that children who had better financial

lives from the beginning of their childhood are unlikely to be affected by poverty in their later lives and their off springs. It is in the light of the above that I think that by tackling childhood poverty and the conditions that contribute to transmission of poverty between generations will go in a long way to alleviating and eradicating abject poverty among children.

The ideas about intergenerational transmission of poverty are embedded in the processes that may result in childhood and adulthood poverty rather than the outcomes of a particular period. According to Harper et al., (2003, p. 536), “intergenerational transmission of poverty can involve the “private” transmission of poverty from older generations of individuals and families to younger generations (especially, but not solely, from parents to children), and the “public” transfer (or lack of transfer) of resources from one generation to the next through, for example, redistribution of the taxed income of older generations to support the education of the youngest”. This later statement is particularly interesting as it appears there are outcries of the Ghanaian populace on how the national cake is unevenly distributed. Curtain (2004a, p. 18) cited in Moore (2005, p. 9) also contributes that “young people are more likely to be experiencing a more dynamic form of poverty” and this is “due to the obstacles most face in seeking to achieve adult status”. It is without needing to ask the case of children and youth, however defined, face a set of especially dynamic challenges and opportunities. The transition from childhood to adulthood involves confronting and overcoming a number of qualms. Moreover, young people potentially face a large number of changes at the same time, thus compounding the difficulties they may face. These obstacles are encountered in relation to work, living arrangements and personal relationships (Curtain, 2004a).

There are some key features of transfer of poverty and these are; there are much evidence of correlations between indicators of parental and child well-being and over all levels of social mobility than of the processes by which poverty cycles are reinforced or broken (Solon, 1999).

Literature also suggests that, individuals can break out of intergenerational poverty cycles, but perhaps to a lesser degree than commonly believed (Corcoran, 1995; Solon, 1999; Binder and Woodruffe, 1999). It is also noted that, people who moved out of poverty are likely to move into the ranks of slightly less poor (Yaqub, 2000) and that escape from poverty depends on a number of factors which include, employment opportunities, familial and child’s aspirations, health and nutrition (Glewwe et al., 1999); a child’s position in the family; and when in a child’s life poverty occurs (Duncan and Brooks-Gun, 1997).

Corcoran (1995) finds that over all parental resources play a major role in influencing children's subsequent income and employment outcomes, but that factors such as parental education or teenage pregnancy exert an influence on children over and above that which is related to income, indicating the essence of socialization. Aldersen's (2000, 2001) note that a combination of gender, order of birth, age of parents at child's birth is particularly vital factors as they influence the availability of resources.

Human capital is nurtured and transferred inter-generationally once someone takes care of another person either younger or older in terms of goods and services. A significant proportion of academic and policy documents focuses on the perceived trade-offs between child work and education. The negative and positive outcomes for children both within childhood and over their lifespan, have long been identified as important aspects of intergenerational transmission of poverty (Boyden et al., 1998; Marcus and Harper, 1997; Moore, 1999). It is further documented by Harper et al., (2003, p. 536) that in the intergenerational transmission of poverty, some of the things that are "transmitted includes financial, material and environmental assets (such as land, livestock, livelihoods, equipment, cash or debt)". These are captured under the concept of livelihood in the subsequent pages.

The application of the intergenerational transmission of poverty to this study is to highlight how poverty is transferred from poor parents to their children. Though, through a child's resilience and coping strategies, that child can escape from the trickle down effects of poverty from their parents, it is vital to acknowledge a vast number of children who go through poverty as a result of the poor statuses of their parents and guardians.

#### **2.4 Life-Course Transmission of Poverty**

The life course transmission of poverty can be distinguished from the intergenerational transmission of poverty. According to Harper et al., (2003, p. 536), "in practice, the processes involved in both often are so closely related that in many cases the distinction is difficult to make". As such, Harper et al., (2003, p. 536) note that, "what is pertinent is how and whether the real and felt negative effects can be overcome over a life-course and/or between generations, and, if not, what it is that prevents positive outcomes".

The following discussions on the key maintainers of poverty over the life-course are extensively written and taken from Moore (2005).

However, according to Moore (2005, p. 12), “life-course poverty denotes the ways in which a poor child or young person can grow into a poor – or even poorer – adult”. For instance in the life course transmission of poverty, the poor child grows up to become a poor adult. Thus poverty treks with this poor child throughout his or her life time. This however thus not rule out the similarities that both theories share together. It is also documented by Moore (2005, p. 5) that “not all chronically poor people are born into long-term deprivation. Many slide into chronic poverty after a shock or series of shocks from which they are unable to recover. A poverty related shock experienced at a particular time in an individual or household’s life-course including during adolescence or young adulthood can often exacerbate the effect”. By this, if the child for instance experiences a shock and cannot recover from it, then it stands to reason that that child will continue to live in poverty throughout his or her life resulting to a life-course effect.

One of the key maintainers of poverty over the life-course is “no, low or narrowly-based economic growth. This means that there are few opportunities for poor people to raise their incomes and accumulate assets. The employment effects of no, low or narrow-based growth appear to be most extreme for youth. In most countries, young people are between two and four times as likely to be unemployed as those over 25 (ILO, 2004). This may reflect real or perceived lower skills levels among disadvantaged youth, and more limited social capital networks (CHIP, 2004). Disillusionment, disappointment and desperation can affect young people” (CHIP, 2004) cited in (Moore, 2005, p.6).

Moore, (2005, p.6) also notes that, “in disadvantaged geographical and agro-ecological regions, poor natural resources, infrastructure and basic services; weak economic integration; and social exclusion and political marginality create ‘logjams of disadvantage’. Moore notes that, youth are often particularly determined to escape remote, marginal or stagnant areas, and some are able to build better lives as urban migrants. However, limited skills and social networks, membership of an ethnic or linguistic minority, and a lack of access to information undermine many young people’s urban livelihoods. Disappointment and desperation can affect young people who are unable to out-migrate, because of gender, illness or impairment, family responsibilities and/or



extreme deprivation, further undermining their sense of well-being and increasing the likelihood of recruitment into militant groups or organised crime”.

Another key maintainer of poverty among youth and children is, “High and persistent capability deprivation, especially during childhood – poor nutrition, untreated illness, lack of access to education – diminishes human development in ways that are often irreversible.

Poor health and nutrition during their own childhood and adolescence means that pregnant women have higher risks of maternal and child mortality and morbidity. This is compounded by early childbearing. It has been estimated that in 2004, 17% of babies in developing countries were born to women between the ages of 15 and 19, and are at greater risk of ill health. Unhealthy, poorly educated children can grow into young people with more limited capacity for learning and working. However, adolescence and young adulthood – i.e. when “adult functioning” is being developed – may also act as a “window of opportunity”. Skills, education, and health and nutrition status acquired during these periods may ‘override’ earlier disadvantages” (Moore, 2005, p. 6).

Among the factors that can lead to life-course effect of poverty among children and youth is failed international networks. “Weak and failed international cooperation over the 1980s and 1990s has deepened poverty through structural adjustment and over rapid economic liberalisation, allocated aid away from countries with large numbers of chronically poor people, and blocked off trade opportunities for poor countries. No specific implications for youth, other than an intensification of the processes detailed above” (Moore, 2005, p. 6).

As elaborated from the above, it can be seen that, no, low or narrowly-based economic growth, disadvantaged geographical and agro-ecological regions, high and persistent capability deprivation and weak and failed international cooperation can be major factors that maintain chronic poverty among children and youth. Thus children, who find themselves in a geographical location that favours farming for instance, will have high chances of farming instead of schooling which can lead to a life-course transmission of poverty keeping in mind poor labour market forces that may work against their farm produce rendering them poor throughout their life-span.

In an attempt to conceptualise poverty over the life-course, Curtains (2004a, p. 18) suggests that, youth go through dynamic challenges and opportunities and by this, he notes that,

The transition from childhood to adulthood involves confronting and overcoming a number of uncertainties. Moreover, young people potentially face a large number of changes at the same time, thus compounding the difficulties they may face. These obstacles are encountered in relation to work, living arrangements and personal relationships.

The above quote from Curtains fosters the notion that children and youth have a lot of challenges ranging from relationship with their parents, peers, working arrangements and environments, poor housing and environmental hazards to the uncertainty of the economy in terms of unfavoured market conditions. These dynamic challenges can be great hindrances that keep children poor throughout their life-course.

In summary, the essence of applying the theory of intergenerational transmission of poverty and the life-course transmission of poverty to this study is to highlight both the reality of how poverty has a trickle-down effect on the off springs of poor parents from generation to generation and also to throw more light on key maintainers of poverty among children which are outside the control of their poor parents, taking into account factors that can affect them to a large extent if the child is unable to reverse the existing negative factors through competence and resilience.

## **2.5 The Concept of Livelihood**

The concept of livelihood has been largely expressed and written about in different fields of study about how the poor respond to their poverty situations on daily basis. But the conceptualisation of poverty based on consumption of the poor households has been largely seen in a different light. Literature suggests that a consumption-based conceptualisation of poverty has been greatly disputed on the grounds that the resulting categorisation may not concur with the perceptions of the poor themselves, with respect either to who is considered poor, or to how their poverty and dependence are understood (Jodha, 1988; Rakodi, 1995a). In this sense, poor children do not necessarily see themselves as only consumers but active producers in their daily activities.

For instance it was clear from my research participant's points of views that, though they are poor, they cannot afford their basic needs, they strive hard to find a job or engage in some kind of activity to take care of themselves. For example some of the poor children were selling at the road side to support themselves and their poor household. Some were also engaged in farming activities and domestic chores. It is therefore obvious here that poor children do not sit down with their arms folded to look at their situations and settle for only consumption rather they are

actively engaged in productive activities. Many definitions have been advanced for the concept of livelihood. For Carney (1998, p. 2), a livelihood is defined “as comprising the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is considered to be sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base”. Considering my research participants, it can be noted that they have their own skills and capabilities in dealing with their plights. They may not have access to social activities that require fees but they do have their own means of social engagement. For example they come together to play foot ball, play cards, cook together, eat together, play ampe, and the like. But two pertinent questions emerge from the above definition in terms of livelihood sustainability. One is, are these poor children capable of sustaining and maintaining their present livelihoods?

Two, can their sources of livelihoods be dependable and reliable for their future upkeeps and their off springs in a way that it will not result into intergenerational transmission of poverty? It is obvious that poor children have their own sources of livelihoods which communicate their sense of agency and productivity but looking beyond that is a concern of how sustainable is these livelihoods.

Similarly, Chambers and Conway (1991, p. 5) note that “a livelihood in its simplest sense is a means of gaining a living”. There appears a common saying in Ghana when you ask someone, how are you doing? The answer seems to be, I am managing it or we are coping! Hardly could people talk of living let alone the poor child. Thus the definition of livelihood that talks about gaining a living is inconsistent with the way the poor child sees it. These responses convene the idea and a notion that, though they are living as human beings, they are not necessarily living in relation to their income, resources or livelihoods. They barely survive or manage but hardly gain a living. My research participants could not change this vocabulary either; their responses are the same to mean life is difficult. The concept of livelihoods is instrumental in understanding the type of livelihood strategies adopted by poor children and their sustainability in Sakumono Village, Ghana.

Furthermore, livelihood consists of assets and capital. Different kinds of capital exist, such as human capital, social capital and physical capital. The explanations of these different types of capital are captured in the subsequent paragraphs below.

## 2.5.1 Human Capital

From table 1 below, one of the main things transferred intergenerationally is human capital. And as explained in Moore (2001), at the most basic level, human capital is transferred intergenerationally whenever someone cares for someone younger or older, or provides labour, goods or services. A significant proportion of academic, policy-oriented and activist literature focuses on the perceived trade-offs between child work and education. The negative – and, increasingly, the positive – outcomes for children, both within childhood and over their lifespan, have long been identified as significant processes in IGT poverty (Boyden et al., 1998; Marcus and Harper 1997; Moore, 1999).

Table 1: Livelihoods approach to intergenerationally-transmitted poverty

WHAT is transmitted?	HOW is it transmitted?	Examples of implications for youth
<b>FINANCIAL, MATERIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cash</b></li> <li>• <b>Land</b></li> <li>• <b>Livestock</b></li> <li>• <b>Housing, buildings</b></li> <li>• <b>Other productive/ non-productive physical assets</b></li> <li>• <b>Common property resources</b></li> <li>• <b>Debt</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance, pensions</li> <li>• Inheritance, bequests, dispossession</li> <li>• <i>Inter vivos</i> gifts and loans</li> <li>• Dowry, bridewealth</li> <li>• Environmental conservation/degradation</li> <li>• Labour bondage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the socio-legal context, young women or men may not be able to access, own or manage particular forms of assets, including inheritance, leaving them dependent on older relatives.</li> <li>• Dowry demands can affect recently married young women and their families in particular.</li> </ul>
<b>HUMAN CAPITAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Educational qualifications, knowledge, skills, coping/ survival strategies</b></li> <li>• <b>Good mental/ physical health</b></li> <li>• <b>Disease, impairment</b></li> <li>• <b><i>Intelligence?</i></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialisation</li> <li>• Investment of time/capital in care; education/training; health/nutrition</li> <li>• Contagion, mother-to-child transmission</li> <li>• Genetic inheritance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth are often expected to be making a transition from full-time education to employment, if they have not done so already, potentially affecting parental investment in education or training.</li> <li>• Those living with HIV/AIDS are disproportionately adults of ‘working age’ and youth, with negative short and long-term effects on the sufferer, her household, particularly children and older people, and the economy.</li> </ul>

SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL CAPITAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Traditions, institutions, norms of entitlement, value systems</b></li> <li>• <b>Position in community</b></li> <li>• <b>Access to key decision makers, patrons, organisations</b></li> <li>• <b>'Cultures of poverty'?</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialisation and education</li> <li>• Kinship</li> <li>• Locality</li> <li>• Genetic inheritance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people are often key targets for those attempting to maintain or build social, political, cultural movements. This can influence other forms of capital available to them, and the livelihood choices that they make.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which factors AFFECT transmission of livelihoods?</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norms of entitlement determining access to capital</li> <li>• Economic trends and shocks</li> <li>• Access to and nature of markets</li> <li>• Presence, quality and accessibility of public, private and community-based social services and safety nets</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS pandemic; other diseases regionally endemic; stigma</li> <li>• Structure of household and family</li> <li>• Child fostering practices</li> <li>• Education and skill level of parent</li> <li>• Intent/attitude of parent and child and nature of living space</li> <li>• Nature of living space</li> </ul>		

Source: Adapted from Moore (2001).

**2.5.2 Social-cultural capital**

As an explanation to the social-cultural capital, parental investments in children are undoubtedly related to the characteristics and intentions of parents as well as children. For instance, investment in education can be affected by parental perceptions of children’s intelligence, diligence and interest (Behrman, 1997), as well as by parents’ own experience of education. However, the extent to which IGT poverty is influenced by individual traits is related to the much more controversial and complicated ‘culture of poverty’ literature. The intergenerational persistence of wealth is not explained simply by bequests but reflects as well parent-offspring similarities in traits influencing wealth accumulation, such as orientation towards the future, sense of personal efficacy, work ethic, schooling attainment, and risk-taking. Some of these traits co-vary with the level of wealth: less well off people are more likely to be risk averse, to

discount the future and have a low sense of efficacy, for example. (Bowles and Gintis, 2001) noted in (Moore, 2001, p. 13).

### **2.5.3 Physical Capital**

It is documented by Moore (2005, p. 12) that “while youth face discrimination in many contexts, the extent to which poverty-related capital is transferred to a particular young person depends on norms of entitlement based on their gender, position among siblings and other family members, marital and parental status, health status, as well as on idiosyncratic factors such as the attitude of both parents and youth”. This literature is typical of the notion of sharing family property in Ghana among siblings in a family. In rural Ghana for instance, the first child of parents take a significant proportion of the farm land as an entitled inheritance and the last born is also considered to have much of the resources considering his or her age. With regard to gender based sharing of physical capital like farm lands, buildings etc, in Ghana, it appears that females are less considered to possess some rooms in their family house and this division is based on the notion that the woman marries and goes to the husbands’ house and for the man, he marries and brings home the wife. What is also obvious of sharing family property among siblings is the behaviour of the children. A child that behaves well is likely to inherit more property than the delinquent one and this goes with the common saying that ‘a child who knows how to wash his or her hands well eats with a King’. Thus it can be seen that the transfer of physical capital is based on many factors such as the availability of the physical capital itself, parental attitudes, children’s behaviour and the position of the birth order and these factors can help improve the living conditions of the child or exacerbate the severity of poverty in the life of that child or youth.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this study, I applied a combination of multiple research techniques to attain the objectives of the study. In doing so, I used qualitative research method in gathering the data. I thought that by using different qualitative research techniques, children's perspectives of poverty would be sought out and their livelihood strategies would be explored. The application of qualitative research techniques specifically, focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, drawings and ranking were very instrumental in bringing about the necessary primary data in this study. Moreover, these qualitative research techniques were thought to be useful as they provided an in-depth investigation into the experiences, perspectives and livelihood strategies of children living in poverty. The subsequent paragraphs bring into a full picture how each of the qualitative research techniques mentioned above was applied, their advantages, and the challenges faced in applying each of them.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The power imbalances between researchers and young people in terms of age, social and political position have made some researchers argue that traditional research methods such as questionnaires and one-to-one interviews are unsuitable as they are 'adultist' and unapproachable (Valentine, 1999). Alternatively, the participatory faction within development studies, which is designed to give a voice to marginalised people and promoting their involvement in the research process, has advocated the use of various alternatives to conventional interview techniques (Chambers, 1994). In view of this participatory approach and this study being exploratory in nature, I made use of qualitative research design to seek children's views, experiences, and perspectives of poverty and the livelihood strategies they employ in their everyday lives.

The qualitative research techniques namely focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, ranking, drawings, and the use of cameras were used to gather data on the objectives of the study. This design was considered to be appropriate in gathering the views of children as answers to the research questions. It was also believed that by using qualitative research design, the

research participants would have had better means of responding conveniently to the researcher's questions. The qualitative techniques enabled my research participants to give an in-depth perspectives and explanation to their responses as evident during the data collection. Easterby-Smith et al., (1991) argue that a researcher should attempt to mix methods to some extent, because it provides more perspectives on the phenomena being studied. By combining different qualitative research techniques, children's perspectives on poverty and livelihood strategies were gathered.

### **3.3 Justification for the Choice of Research Participants**

The Glory Assembly of God Church in partnership with Compassion International has put measures in place in defining poor children in the Sakumono Village. This implied that the children presently being taken care of at the Child development Centre are regarded as poor and needy. Children who were regarded as poor and needy are those whose parents' annual income is less than 100 Ghana cedis (Equivalent to 66 Us dollars), parents who cannot afford their wards school fees or send them to school and provide them basic needs such as a pair of shoes, school uniform, tooth brush, decent accommodation, parents who cannot pay their wards' hospital bills etc or parents who do not work at all as told by the project coordinator. These children at the centre have experienced poverty and for that matter have an in-depth knowledge and ideas about the research topic. In this way, it was reasonable to consider these children as the main research participants of the study as this study intended to explore children's experiences and perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies at Sakumono Village.

The children have gone through myriad of problems and difficulties ranging from lack of basic needs such as good drinking water, daily food, social exclusion, and lack of convenient accommodation to deprivation of other basic necessities of life. Their experiences in these areas were thought to bare a significant effect on the outcome of this study, as they possess rich data in this study area. Seeking the views and perspectives of these children of poverty and livelihood strategies made the data collected rich and conveniently relevant to the research participants.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques**

In the study, I employed non-probability sampling technique in identifying the research participants of the study. By non-probability sampling, I mean I did not engage in random



sampling of my research participants as it is in the case of probability sampling technique. For this reason, I applied one type of non-probability sampling technique called purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the research participants are known to have knowledge on the research questions and I knew where to locate the research participants of the study and they were specifically predefined as children living in poverty and have experienced poverty in their community.

In other words, I sampled my research participants with a purpose of poor children in mind. I indeed chose a non-probability sampling method and for that matter a purposive sampling technique over the probability sampling method to avoid researching with children who may not have any experience of poverty in their lives. My research participants were therefore children rescued from poverty by the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre at Sakumono Village; Ghana. These techniques were very instrumental as I used the attendance register at the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre to identify the research participants that were from the age of 12 to 16 years old. A good record keeping at the Centre couple with the use of birth certificates at the Centre to register the children made the choice of these age groups flexible and authentic.

### **3.5 Target Population**

The target population of the study was children from the age of 12-16 years. These are children who have experienced poverty and have been rescued by the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre in Sakumono Village. This consisted of both boys and girls who live in Sakumono Village. These children as a result of being rescued and supported financially by the Centre, they are attending school and at the same time they engage in other menial activities such as selling at the road side after school and performing domestic chores. Some of the children live in uncompleted apartments with untreated mosquito nets and others find themselves in kiosks closer to choked gutters. One can find 6 to 8 children with their parents in a kiosk but that also depend on the size of the family and the number of siblings living around and their ages. Sanitation in this area is nothing worth talking about. The gutters are choked, rubbish is dumped anywhere and a large portion of the area very weedy. Couple with that is the fact that the roads are bad with pot holes here and there. The situation gets worse when it rains. One risk factor in this area is that, children have to cross a rail way before going to school and after. This is

dangerous but they have no alternatives as they cannot afford to take transport to school or visit the Centre. One can also find cluster of churches in this area and it appears there are mushrooms of churches springing out every now and then in this area. Perhaps these churches are to act as beacon of hope for the poor in the area. There are a good number of primary and junior high schools in this vicinity but with sub-standard facilities.

### **3.6 Sample Frame**

The sample frame of the study was poor children ranging from 12 to 16 years at the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre in Sakumono village, Ghana.

### **3.7 Sample Size**

The sample size of the study was 20 poor children from the age of 12 to 16 years. These 20 research participants took part in each of the research tools applied in the study.

### **3.8 Sources of Data**

#### **3.8.1 Primary Data**

Data was gathered from two main sources to be precise, primary and secondary sources. The primary data consisted of data chiefly gathered from the field visits on children's perspectives and experiences of poverty and livelihood strategies. Secondly, information provided by the key informant on the topic served as another source of primary data. The primary data collected was done via the use of focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, drawings, ranking and the use of cameras. These methods of data collection served as the main sources of primary data for the study.

#### **3.8.2 Secondary Data**

With regard to the secondary data, information was gathered primarily from books. Relevant topics in books that have rich information on the topic in question were thoroughly uncovered and used in this study. This secondary source of data provided a rich source of information needed in organizing this piece of work. It also served as an insider for me when designing this study. Furthermore, information was gathered via internet. This source of information also provided an easy access to relevant information that I needed in writing up this piece of work.

Other relevant sources of information were gathered from journals, periodicals, and articles written by well-meaning academicians.

### **3.9 Instruments of Data Collection**

Here, I provide a meticulous explanation of the various methods I used in the study. Solberg (1996) notes that, as in all research, what is important is that the particular methods chosen for a piece of research should be appropriate for the people involved in the study, considering the cultural context, its social and the kinds of research questions that have been posed. Taking precaution from the above, and for that reason considering the Ghanaian cultural context, I thought it effective and apt to apply the following research methods in exploring the views of children of poverty and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village, Ghana.

Different tools were used to collect data from the field. These tools were thought to provide the essential data needed to achieve the objectives of the study. The proceeding pages give an in-depth explanation of a combination of research tools that was used in gathering qualitative data in this study. Childhood Studies Research is quite different from the main survey studies and as such the adoption of participatory methodologies can bridge this gap as they claim to reflect respondents' worldviews more closely than the normative, 'scientific' approaches used in monitoring by recognising the cultural, social, and subjective scopes of human understanding. Researchers employ these methods to exemplify the multifaceted dynamics behind poverty and well-being and draw out culture, location and social group specific understandings of the dimensions of well-being (White and Pettit, 2007). In addition, the methods are explained with their respective advantages and weaknesses over other methods applied in the study. It is also worth noting here that, weaknesses of a method do not necessarily render that particular method inappropriate and useless rather it reminds the researcher to make use of other available methods that will overcome such weaknesses. This further strengthens and boosts my flexibility in the application of assorted methods that are relevant to the research questions.

### **3.9.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are very useful research techniques that are employed in qualitative research. Focus Groups are primarily a way of listening to people and learning from them as it opens a line of communication between the research participants and the researcher. It can be used within a main study for an in-depth exploration. It turns to open up more discussions and explores different views of research participants on the topics in question. However, there are varied opinions about the optimum group size of focus groups; however one essential criterion is that the groups reflect the characteristics of the research participants in the main study as well as the topic being discussed (Bloor et al., 2002).

“A focus-group discussion requires eight to fifteen children with the same characteristics (gender, age, work, education, etc”) (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 5.29). In this study however, 20 research participants actively took part in the focus group discussions of which 10 were boys and 10 were girls. The research participants were aged from 12 to 16 years old. Out of this number, there were 5 members in each group resulting to 4 sub-groups. The sub-groups were mixed-sex sampling consisting of 3 girls, 2 boys and in some cases, 3 boys, and 2 girls. The discussions took place at the basement of the Glory Assembly of God church auditorium in Sakumono Village. The combination of both boys and girls in the group was to ensure gender balance and equal opportunities for all. In doing so, I took the major research questions of the study and asked the research participants to discuss them one by one. For instance, my research participants took two thematic areas of my research questions and that were; ‘children’s experiences of poverty’ and ‘children’s perspectives of poverty’.

They took these thematic areas into a lively discussion. The research participants shared their personal experiences in this area with a mixed bag of laughter and silence depending on their own emotional responses. It was observed that the research participants took turns in addressing the questions themselves. At one point one research participants was playing a leading role and then another took over from her and then it went on that way during all the discussion period. One challenge however was that, my research participants were quite fast with their discussions and I needed to quickly keep a pace with them by asking them related and leading questions. Another challenge was that, I observed that a few of my research participants were dominating the discussion which of course was a sign of leadership role among them. One research

participant remarked, “We are leading our own discussions” and others responded with nods in agreement with him. This reminded me of how children feel to be in a position to channel their own course in matters that concern them. I also played different roles as a researcher in these instances. I facilitated the discussions among the research participants by monitoring what was going on during the discussion. I took field notes whilst they were doing the discussions and from time to time I asked questions for further explanation and clarifications. The discussion led to heated debates on different issues as the research participants have similar and divergent views on different issues. This tool was very useful as it made my research participants remembered long time experiences which would otherwise have been forgotten. The outcomes of these discussions led further to asking some other relevant questions that were in the interest of the study.

This research tool was thought to be appropriate to travel around children’s perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village. It also provided the platform for my research participants to express themselves freely in a more elaborative manner. It also gave an alternative opportunity to my research participants who were not able to write or draw to express their views, this was particularly necessary as it fostered and strengthened the quest of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children to give children freedom of expression. Christensen and James (2000) assert that, though some research techniques might sometimes be thought to be more appropriate for use with children, with regard to particular research context or framing of particular research question, there is; they argued that nothing particular or indeed peculiar to children that makes the use of any technique imperative. This method therefore was really relevant with regard to some particular research questions in this study.

### **3.9.2 Ranking**

Ranking is another major child-friendly research technique that I applied in exploring children’s perspectives on poverty and livelihood strategies. Again, the same 20 research participants were actively involved in this activity. This tool provided an opportunity for my research participants to prioritize their definitions of poverty for instance. My research participants admitted that they have different ideas about definitions of poverty which included both material and non-material perspectives such as not being able to attend a friend’s birth day party. It was however challenging for them to rank or prioritise these definitions as one research participant said, *Sir,*

*all the definitions are important to me, lack of money prevents me from going to school and I cannot buy food and not going to participate in social activities too is bad.* This method failed with this research question because it was not appropriate for my research participants to do so. To overcome this challenge, I applied a sense of flexibility on my part to try another research question in this area. It was interesting however when I asked my research participants in these three sub-thematic areas to list all the materials that they lack for instance and the recommendations to be made to alleviate poverty as well as some of the major livelihood strategies that were detrimental to their social and educational lives. It was clear however that, ranking was appropriate in these areas as my research participants enthusiastically went about this task with ease. This reflexivity with the methods was an eye opener to me as it made my work much easier.

As Ennew et al., (2009, p. 5.6) note, “ranking methods are used to find out about people’s preferences and priorities, using a variety of techniques”. Indeed ranking was useful in the three sub-thematic areas listed above. Ranking has an advantage over focus group discussion and unstructured interviews as it gave my research participants the opportunity to flexibly prioritise what was important to them and what was not.

However one challenge was that, some of my research participants thought all they listed were important to them and that there was no need to rank them. This may be partly due to the fact that, prioritising things in our lives is not always an easy task and in this instance the children also found it a bit cumbersome. Regardless of these, ranking was a very important and useful tool in this study, as it facilitated the exploration of what children saw and considered as vital in their lives.

### **3.9.3 Unstructured Interviews**

Interviews are deemed appropriate for gathering data on children’s perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies. As noted by Irwin and Johnson (2005), there is a growing tendency to see children as experts on their own lives and for that matter the use of qualitative individual interviews with children has increased dramatically. The purpose of using this method was that qualitative interviews are particularly suitable to gain information about children’s perspectives and subjective experiences of their life (Punch, 2002). Comparing it with structured interviews, it

has an advantage of giving the research participants the opportunity to elaborate their stories and experiences in a more flexible manner as the questions were not closed ended. However, the contents of the interview guide were thoughtfully considered with the aim of avoiding biases and irrelevant questions. In support of this, Christensen and James (2000, p. 1) purport that,

One can find out about something in a number of different ways. However, in any kind of social research, knowing what question to ask and the ways in which it is best to ask them, as well as knowing which question *not* to ask and how *not* to ask them, is recognized as one of the keys to a successful research outcome

Considering this statement by Christensen and James, the questions were carefully framed in accordance with the thematic area in question. In interviewing, Ennew et al., (2009, p. 5.36) argue, “the interviewer is free to phrase the questions, and ask them in any order as long as they follow the broad themes of the research”.

The research participants were interviewed on their positive and negative experiences of poverty. I took each of the above thematic areas and I asked them related questions. The questions were open-ended and listed under each thematic area in an interview guide that served as a guide during the interview. This opened a line of communication between my research participants and me.

Using this method made me see my research participants as co-researchers and children having the abilities and capabilities to research with without underrating their capabilities. It was also interesting to know that this method really made my research participants felt that they had vital pieces of information to provide on this topic. They also felt at ease to speak about their situation, experiences and challenges in life. Another crucial advantage of this method was that, it did not provide a limited room for responses and the research participants were conveniently positioned to go back and forth in their responses. This has an advantage over the structured type of interview. However one challenge was that, it took so much time to collect the data as research participants spent much time to delve into one thematic area.

### **3.9.4 Drawings**

Another participatory tool that I used in exploring children's views on poverty and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village was drawings. It has been used as a channel for young children to express their views and experiences (Clark, 2005). Children usually enjoy making pictures, but they must be asked about their drawings instead of adults using their own interpretation. Ennew et al., (2009, p. 5.13) argue "Children's drawings are particularly useful when children cannot, or do not want to, express themselves by talking or writing". This is particularly interesting, as it appears that adult researchers tend to interpret children's ideas on their own.

In using this method, I asked my research participants to draw for instance how "a poor family looks like in their views" as it was related to my research questions. Analytically, I deemed this method appropriate and convenient for the study because it was fun for my research participants to draw at one point in time and it also gave them the opportunity to reflect on how their own families back home looked like. The drawings were however without further interpretations which was a major challenge to me. In order to overcome that, I asked them to tell me what the drawings speak about and quite a good number of them were able to give me further explanations which I noted down. It was also obvious that some of my research participants were not good at writing nor speaking, therefore the application of drawing as a method was very helpful to them. The drawings brought about other dimensions of children's perspectives of poverty which would not have been discovered if I were to limit myself to only the methods explained above. It therefore opened a non-verbal line of communication between me-the researcher and my research participants.

One challenge and problem however, with this method was that, it took a long time to complete the drawings and I had to ask my research participants to get it done at home and bring them the following day. I also noticed that the older children around 15 to 16 years were particularly not interested in drawing. And the reason may be that, at an older age, it appears children do not find drawing interesting any longer in the Ghanaian context. Secondly, drawing seems not to be a major part of the research participants' school curriculum and therefore it was cumbersome for some of them to draw as evident in the drawings provided.



### **3.9.5 Tape Recording**

Tape recording though not a method of data collection, I employed it as a means of storing the information provided during the focus group discussions and unstructured interviews in this study. The recording enabled me to recall all the discussions that went on during the study. It is sometimes difficult to recall what happens during a study and therefore recording the information during the study served as a way of storing information that could be used during the subsequent stages of analyzing the data. The recordings were later transcribed and interpreted where necessary to make sense out of it. This also was thought to ensure that vital information on the topic was not missing. Indeed, recording was interesting to my research participants as they were happy to know that their voices were recorded. It also inspired some of them to speak about the topic under discussion during the data collection period. Unlike interviews, field note taking, focus group discussions, recording seems to be the surest way of retrieving vital information during data collection. It really helped me to store the information necessary for my study. Nevertheless, one thing that was challenging and problematic coupled with the fact that children were my research participants was that, there were too much noise at the background and it was difficult to manage my research participants voices whilst the recording was on going.

### **3.9.6 The use of Cameras**

The use of cameras, Clark (2005), notes, Mosaic approach represents the bringing together of different views in order to create an image of children's worlds, both individual and collective. Taking precaution from this, the use of cameras in this study was deemed appropriate to capture some aspects of the study. For instance, I asked my research participants to take pictures of the things in their rooms and their houses as well as the surroundings in order for me to have an idea of the physical conditions of them. But the challenge here was that, I was not able to buy disposable cameras for my research participants, however I asked a few to take pictures with my camera in their surrounding and this seemed to have worked out well. Another problem was that, not all research participants were able to have access to the camera and took pictures and was partly due to the fact that, I was not having enough money to afford disposable cameras for them. Thirdly, not all research participants were interested in taking pictures of their life conditions and this may be due to a reason that some of them did not want to show case their plights.

In another instance Clark (2005, p. 31) purports that, “children use cameras to document “what is important here”; they take the researcher on a tour and are in charge of how this is recorded, and make maps using their photographs and drawings”. This study further affirms the fact that children are capable of using cameras to explore different issues on their own such as taking pictures of where they fetch water, their animals’ pen and where they prepare their food.

Similarly, children aged 3 to 8 years used cameras and conducted surveys and interviews about children’s views on improving their housing estates (Miller and Roby, 1974). These practical studies carried out by children by involving them fully in the process give us a departure from the old notion that children are innocent, ignorant and unproductive in their involvement in adults’ activities. In another instance, I asked my research participants to take pictures of their toilets, where they drink and fetch water from, their kitchen etc. This data was meant to provide further information on the living conditions of some of my research participants.

In summary, the use of the above tools brought about detailed information on the topic as it provided more room for the research participants to give explanations to their experiences, perspectives and livelihood strategies. These qualitative research techniques gave my research participants the opportunity to find alternative ways of expressing themselves in more convenient ways as they opened more channels of communication to them. Using mixed research techniques like these, also helped provide wide-ranging perspectives and insights on poverty and livelihood strategies adopted by children in Sakumono Village. These techniques were also helpful as they supplemented and overcame the weaknesses of other techniques applied in this study. Indeed, these carefully selected tools helped me achieve the objectives of the study and the outcomes of these are featured in the proceeding chapters.

### **3.10 Field Work**

It is argued by Neuman (2007, p. 282) that, “It is ethically and politically astute to call on gatekeepers. A gatekeeper can shape the direction of research”. Before and during the field work, I tried to reduce any hostility in the field by gatekeepers through humility and modesty. The gatekeepers can serve as a blockage during the data collection period and therefore it was very thoughtful to get them informed with due respect before arriving in the field. For this reason, I duly orally informed the parents and the research participants of the study and also sought an

institutional consent in a form of a letter submitted to the management of the Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre before I started the field work.

I also developed rapport with the gate keepers and sought an informed consent from a key informant in the community in order to easily carry out the study without any hindrances in the community. These built trust in them that I was in to carry out a harmless study that could be of help to them in future. Coupled with that, the attendance register of the poor children was also used in identifying the research participants. This further helped to reduce the ambiguity that is usually associated with children in developing countries in terms of age and experiences of the research participants. And this was done the first day I arrived in the field. This day was welcomed with enthusiasm as my research participants were aware that I was coming to meet them for interesting discussions.

### **3.11 Data Handling**

When I came back from the field, I thoughtfully and painstakingly sat down to do an in-depth analysis of the data collected. I first and foremost sorted and sifted out the data and arranged them into different themes taking into consideration the main objectives of the study. Issues with regard to children's perspectives of poverty were for instance categorized and labelled for analysis. With regard to livelihood strategies employed by children, information provided in this area was also sifted and labelled. Similar strategies were used in identifying other objectives of the study. Subsequently I considered the data in terms of types, patterns, and sequences and identified similar and different themes together. I subsequently read through the data provided and made meanings out of them. It was an interesting task and at the same time it was time consuming. In making sense out of the data, I transcribed the data provided by each research participant as a separate entity and later brought them together in terms of similarities and differences. Where necessary, I generated tables and figures to make clearer the understanding of the information provided. Similar and different perspectives and experiences were brought together and when necessary, I made a few corrections in terms of the grammar of the English language written or spoken by my research participants. Names of research participants are not used in the analysis as a measure to ensure confidentiality of the information provided by them but their respective sexes and ages are used. I finally concluded the chapter with the summary of the major findings as a result of the analysis of the data from the field. The channel of

communication during the data collection was in English language and for that reason; there was no need for a translation. Since my research participants communicated in the English language, it helped me to avoid the biases and challenges that are often associated with translation in terms of the context that it had been used and the culture within which the language had been used (Birbli, 2000).

### **3.12 Validity of Data**

Data gathered from the field indicated that the research participants had an in-depth knowledge of the research questions. Indeed, the data collection tools applied in this study was child-friendly and it was therefore thought that the appropriateness of the tools was an indication of the validity of the data collected. Each tool was designed for a specific set of research questions that was convenient and appropriate for its maximum function.

For instance, research participants were asked to draw how a poor family looks like and in this instance, drawings as a tool was applied. In addition, subsequent analysis had shown that the research participants provided rich data on the topic that informed me that, the data gathered was authentic couple with their life experiences in poverty over the years. In short, the knowledge and experiences of the research participants in the field of poverty and the child-friendly, participatory instruments of data collection used had to a large degree provided a sense of authenticity of the data collected from the field.

### **3.13 Ethical Issues**

It is important for every researcher to adhere to ethical principles taking into consideration the research participants in question. Ethics in research as Sieber (1993, p.14) puts it, relates to “the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair”. An “ethic” is a moral principle or a code of conduct which ... governs what people do. It is concerned with the way people act or behave. The term “ethics” usually refers to the moral principles, guiding conduct, which are held by a group or even a profession (though there is no logical reason why individuals should not have their own ethical code)” (Wellington, 2000, p. 54).

There is a world of difference between child's perspective and children's perspective. Child's perspective is more often than not described as an adult's or outside perspective while children's perspective is often described as an inner or inside perspective (Ljusberg, 2009). Similarly, as Robert (2000, p. 225) asserts, despite the proliferation of projects involving children in Ghana, it seems, that "we are still not good enough at hearing them, in the sense of taking full account of what they tell us". It is clear therefore that, this study was about children's perspective and for that reason the quest to listen to children. Furthermore, what is unmistakable in research is the stress on Article 12 of the CRC, concerning children's rights to express their opinions about issues and problems distressing them and to have their voices heard (UNCRC, 1998).

And as this study focused on children, I orally informed my research participants and also explained my intention to them about the study. I told my research participants that, I was a student in the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and that I was in to collect data on this topic. I also assured them that the information provided would be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. "Researchers must recognize that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process and must take all necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion and to put them at their ease. They must desist immediately from any actions, ensuing from the research process, that cause emotional or other harm." (BERA, 2004, p. 6). This further helped me to ensure privacy and anonymity of the research participants. I also explained to my research participants that, this study was purely an academic one and that none of the pieces of information provided would be used for any other purpose apart from being used in the academia. In doing so, I assured my research participants of confidentiality and feedback on the research outcomes in the near future. This boosted their desire and willingness to provide the necessary information needed in this study.

### **3.14 Challenges and Experiences from the Field**

Considering children as my research participants was a cumbersome task as I was a neophyte in this field of child research. As Hansen (2005) experienced, getting young people from poor economic backgrounds to speak is not always straightforward. She explained that the issue is not getting young people to talk about their situation rather it is about asking the wrong question. Punch (2002) also shows that research with children is different, not because they are intrinsically different, but because of their marginal position in society and adult researchers'

perceptions of them. To overcome this challenge however, I set off to the field with the thought that children are independent, capable and knowledgeable in this study and could provide the necessary data on this topic.

It was a great feeling however when I sat down to design the study with children in mind. Setting out to the field with my data collection tools in a bag was a great experience full of vim and vigour. One major challenge was how to address the power imbalance between my research participants and me. As Langevang (2007, p. 269) puts it, “children are not used to being treated as equals. They have much of their life controlled by adults, and it can be difficult for researchers to let go of their presumptions of what childhood is all about”. I realised that my research participants might perceive me as an adult who knows it all and for that matter might have some high level of respect for me as well as some degree of in-approachability.

As such, I saw the need to address this power imbalance so that the reliability and validity of the data would not be compromised by my research participants. As well known, power imbalances exist between adult researchers and children-research participants and the need to tackle this have been largely written about in the methodological literature on research with children (see, e.g., Christensen and James, 2000). On the first day of my field visit, I engaged in creating rapport with my research participants by asking them how they were coping with life and studies. These discussions took us for some time and in the process I noticed that the chairs were arranged with my research participants in front of me and this was not surprising though as this sitting arrangement appears to be the norm in the classroom situations of my research participants. In addressing this perceived problem of them seeing me as their boss, I first and foremost saw the need to rearrange the sitting arrangement of my research participants. And for that reason, we rearranged the chairs in such a circular manner that, I was in the same line with my research participants. My observation had indicated that my research participants were happy at this arrangement though it was a kick in the teeth to some of them.

Another challenge was that, the children were fully ready to meet me with a huge set of questions about where I came from to research with them. Questions were directed to me in terms of how Norway is like, what is particularly interesting in Norway, how can I help them to see Norway, what about the culture of Norway. It was a long list of questions and the least said the better. Indeed, these questions diverted my attention from the main objectives of going to the

field but I thought it was a good engagement as it broadened the horizons of my research participants of where I was coming from and the creating of rapport with them. This discussion also emphasises Punch's (2002) claim that, when doing research with young people, it is important not to impose 'adultist' conceptions on one's research subjects. In other words, it was not good enough for a researcher to only predetermine what ought to be discussed, children have their own interest. To resolve this, I assured my research participants that, if they study hard, one day they will have the opportunity to come to Norway for studies. These were the first experiences that I had during the field work.

The third challenge and experience had to do with how I used the research tools in the field. For instance, when my research participants were having the focus group discussions, I asked them to note down what they were discussing but my observation had shown that, that dual role of talking and simultaneously writing was not a favourable and convenient way of researching with children and even adults. In solving this problem, I asked them to do only the discussions whilst I was actively engaged in doing the write ups. This turned to work out well and my research participants were relieved. Another experience was that, when I asked the children a question, they had to find out again from their co-research participants further explanation and this led to a lot of discussions during the period of gathering the data and also it was time consuming. I personally allowed this conversation to go on in order to give them the freedom of expression and clarification as much as possible. The daily duration of the data collection with my research participants as I further noticed was that, working for two to three hours per day was too much for the children and therefore I had to reduce the number of hours as much as possible. Subsequently, these experiences and observations broadened my horizon that children living in poverty serve as rich source of information on this topic. It also made me see children, my co-researchers, at the other end of the spectrum as *known* and myself as *unknown*. All in all, it was a mixed bag of great experiences, learning period, field adjustments, re-organization of tools used, and finally strategizing to meet the objectives of the study. I had as a matter of fact, learned so much from my research participants from the field experiences and challenges when researching with them. It had also informed me that, there is much to learn about researching with children.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE STUDY CONTEXT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present a succinct description of the study area. The chapter takes account of the demography of the study area by showing the geographical location of the study area Tema, in Ghana and captures a short description of Ghana. Subsequent paragraphs and pages elaborate on key issues such as the population and age distribution of Ghana, ethnicity, religious compositions and Regions of Ghana, a brief description of the study area, poverty trends in Ghana, educational attainment of children in Ghana, and the situation of poor children in Ghana. Finally the chapter captures some of the major programmes put in place to alleviate poverty in Ghana and also comments on whether these programmes have achieved their aims and if not what might be one of the causes of its failure.

#### **4.2 A Brief Description of Ghana**

Ghana is a country located in the western part of Africa. It is located between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. It has a total land area of 238,537 square kilometres (GSS, 2006). It is mostly warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast; hot and humid in southwest; hot and dry in the north. Its terrain is mostly low plains with dissected plateau in south-central area. With a population estimate of about 22 million people, children under 15 years constitute 44% (GSS, 2000). Ghana is proud of the highest mountain in West Africa which is called Mount Afadjato and its height above sea level is 880m. With regard to the economy of Ghana, Ghana has several natural resources which range from gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver, salt to limestone. The climate condition is a tropical one as Ghana is just a few degrees north of the equator and it is mostly dry and humid in the south-western part while its northern part is mostly dry and hot (GSS, 2003).

##### **4.2.1 Population Structure and age Distribution of Ghana**

Ghana's age structure is 0-14 years: 37.1% consisting of male, 3,946,326 and female, 3,862,390 (GSS, 2003). From 15-64 years accounts for 59.1% which consists of male, 6,203,035 and



female, 6,235,107 (GSS, 2003). From 65 years and above accounts for 3.7% which consists of male, 366,472 and female, 416,523 (GSS, 2003). It does mean that Ghana has a young population structure which is a prerequisite for its technical and human development.

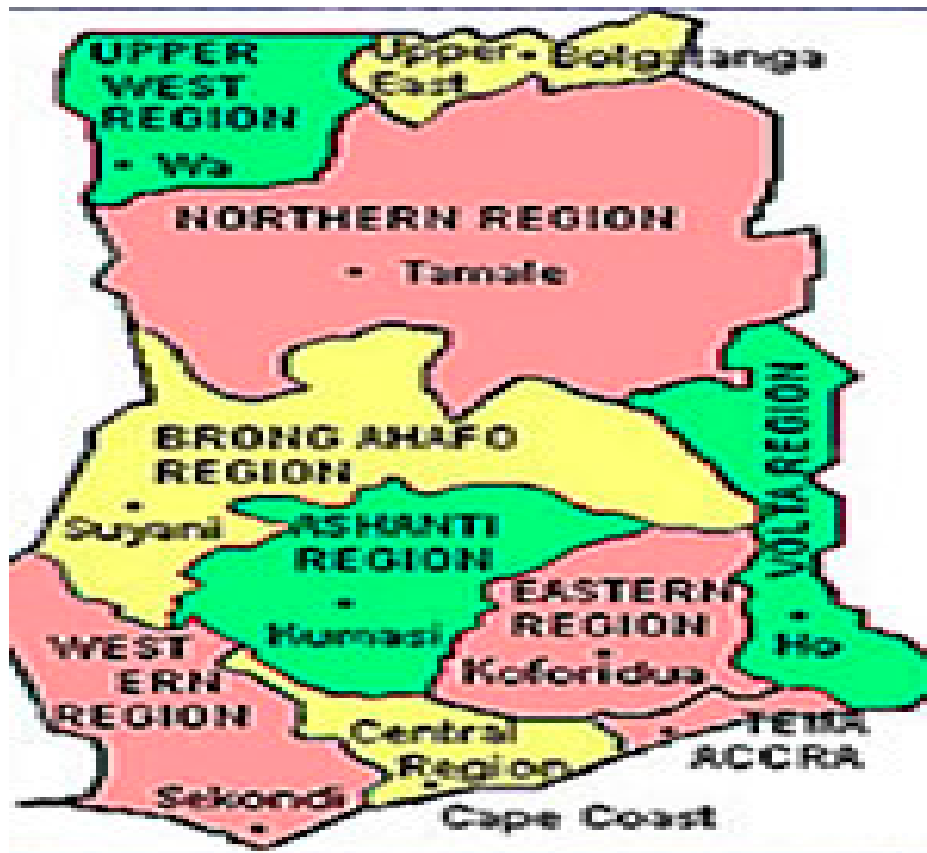
#### **4.2.2 Ethnicity, Religious Compositions and Regions of Ghana**

There are many ethnic groups in Ghana. These are black African 98.5% (major tribes - Akan 44%, Moshi-Dagomba 16%, Ewe 13%, Ga 8%, Gurma 3% and Yoruba 1%); Europeans and other repatriates are 1.5% (GSS, 1995). In terms of religion, Christians account for 63%, Muslim 16%, and the indigenous believers 21%. For life expectancy rate, expectancy at birth for total population is 58.47years, whereas male account for 57.7 years and female 59.26 years (GSS, 1995). There are currently ten regions in Ghana namely, Volta Region, Central Region, Greater Accra Region, Northern Region, Eastern Region, Western Region, Ashanti Region, Upper West region, Upper East Region, and Brong Ahafo Region (GSS, 2003). These regions have links with the various ethnic groups mentioned above. For instance, those in the Volta region are Ewes.

#### **4.2.3 A Brief Description of the Study Area**

Tema city is located in Southeast Ghana, near Accra. The City was built in 1960 as a manmade harbour. Its port, developed in the 1950s and opened in 1961, is the busiest in Ghana. The total population of Tema was 180,600 people (1990 est.) in (GSS, 2000). The distance from Accra, the capital of Ghana to Tema is about 25 Km. With the opening of an artificial harbour in 1961, Tema developed from a small fishing village to become Ghana's leading seaport and an industrial centre. Most of the country's chief export, cocoa, is shipped from Tema. The city has industries producing aluminium, refined petroleum, chemicals, food products, and building materials. Though Tema can boast of good drinking water, a few rural settlements in the locality of which Sakumonon Village is a part still depends on stream water, rivers and boreholes (Ghanadistricts.com).

A Map Showing the Location of the Study Area, Tema, Ghana



Source: [www.Ghanadistricts.com](http://www.Ghanadistricts.com)

Sakumono village is a suburb of Tema community located in Ghana and a good number of children are living in poverty in this village. These children live in dilapidated kiosks and uncompleted buildings either alone or with their parents or guardians. Some are orphans and therefore bare solely the responsibility of caring for themselves. A large number of the parents are seasonal farmers and some simply do not engage in any economic activity. The village is becoming heavily populated as more poor children and their families encroach this area. This village is therefore thought as a good place to seek children's views on the above topic.

### **4.3.1 Poverty Trends in Ghana**

The Ghana Living Standard Survey (GSS, 2000) classifies about one-third of all Ghanaians as poor or very poor. In general, poverty decreased in Ghana from 52 percent in 1991/92 to 40 percent in 1998/99 (GSS, 2000). However, extreme poverty fell from 36 percent to 29 percent over the same period (GSS, 2000). In terms of urban and rural poverty, there has been a sharp decline of poverty among rural population than urban population, but there has been a wider spread of poverty in rural areas than in urban areas (Canagarajah and Portner, 2003). This is further seen as documented in GSS (2000) that poverty is basically a rural phenomenon of which 80 percent of persons considered to be poor are located in the rural areas.

With regard to the geographical areas, poverty is more dominant in the Northern sector whereas Accra appears the least poor sector though there has been increase in poverty level in Accra over a decade ago. In terms of economic activities, statistics show that, poverty more prevalent among food crop farmers and the informal sector workers of which children are of no exemption (GSS, 1995). In spite of these declines in poverty levels in Ghana, it was evident that there was a great sign of vulnerability and exclusion among the three Northern and Central regions which experienced increases in poverty over the same period of the study. Another survey by GSS (2000) has shown that in the three Northern regions of Ghana namely, Upper West, Upper East and Northern region, poverty kept increasing between the 1991/92 and 1998/99 surveys. Evidently, eight out of ten persons in the three Northern regions are poor and extreme poverty exists in the regions and in the urban areas (MOH, 2007). A good number of the respondents of this study that have been identified as children living in poverty have been rescued from the three northern regions. As a matter of urgency and care for these children, the Glory Assembly of God Church decided to take care of these children as a social responsibility in order to inculcate into them a sense of love, care and a fruitful future.

### **4.3.2 Educational Attainment of Children in Ghana**

One of the major constraints in Ghana's growth challenge has been the lack of adequate human capital development. The non-school attendance rates in Ghana are very high with wide gender disparities. The 1992 GLSS data for instance indicated that one in every three girls and one in every four boys does not attend school. In addition the rural non-schooling is higher, with 37

percent for girls and 28 percent for boys (GLSS, 1992). In Ghana 2000, in its strategy for accelerated growth in Ghana, argued for massive investment in primary education as a way of building the necessary human capital for sustainable growth and development (World Bank, 1993).

#### **4.3.3 The Situation of Poor Children in Ghana**

It is documented that, at the global level, 1.2 billion people have been estimated to live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. Coming closer to Africa, out of a population of 580 million in the mid of 1990s, more than 270 million lived on less than a dollar a day. Literature further suggests that not only the degree of poverty in Africa is gigantic of which Ghana is of no exemption, but that poverty escalated in both relative and absolute terms in the 1990s (World Bank, 2001). The Ghana Millennium Development Goals Report published in 2005 states that since 1999, six out of ten regions in Ghana experienced increases in poverty or extreme poverty. However, the overall poverty line had fallen to 28% in the period 2005 to 2006 (GSS, 2006). An overview like this revealed that poverty exists in Ghana and children are of no exemption.

Indeed, children are the main sufferers of the consequences of poverty and examples of which are lack of access to basic necessities of like such as food, shelter, clothing, social exclusion and other non-material needs. Why are some children poor and they cannot find helping hands? To answer this, Wintersberger (1994) maintains that we commonly think of children in terms of the costs they impose on society. Alternatively, he suggested that we should think about children as one population cohort among several – which may not) be treated favourably in terms of redistributive income security and other social policies. Considering the financial and social security of poor children in Sakumono Village, Wintersberger's suggestion may be worth considering. In this economic school of thought is a major problem of overlooking and underrating the potentials of children and not considering them as people who deserve care and love from the society.

In March, 2008, Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) was launched to tackle the problem of poverty and the idea was to make cash transfers to poor households of which children are main constituents, as a means to alleviating poverty and giving them access to basic social services. Despite this programme to alleviate poverty among households of which

children are key constituents, it appears that poverty among children remains a paper work and the solutions a mirage as poverty keeps escalating among both the rural and urban children in Ghana. This may be largely partly due to a reason that, the poor in this programme were not fully involved in designing the programme that was thought to lessen the severity of their plight.

As a response to the failure of this programme in tackling poverty among children, children have employed their own livelihood strategies to fend for themselves, their needs and experiences. In support of this, one positive trend in researching children's well-being in the milieu of their everyday lives is the inclusion of more balanced accounts, with much greater spotlight on what poor children have, including their competencies, inventiveness and their interaction, as well as what they materially lack or need (see, Camfield et al., 2009). Some of the livelihood strategies may not be compatible with their daily lives and some may be detrimental to their health and school life. With these ideas in mind, I intended to find out some of these issues during the study order to establish a concrete knowledge in this area.

According to Chant and Jones (2003), low-income people in Ghana become caught up in a multiplicity of work activities from a relatively early age. This they do almost customarily while they are still studying at primary school or have just entered secondary education. As a result of low incomes of households and for that matter the hunt of poverty, children are compelled to find themselves in assorted kinds of works ranging from farming, quarrying, hawking, begging along the major roads in the cities mostly, engagement in household chores to selling food at road sides. These activities are some of the livelihood strategies employed by poor children among others. It is also worth noting that, a good chunk of these activities performed by children goes unpaid for and even those that are paid for are relatively financially stumpy.

There are variations in the roles played by both females and males or girls and boys. These divergent male and female roles and responsibilities, especially with respect to labour have been clearly noted by researchers (Awusabo-Asare et al., 2004). They distinguished that females were responsible for household chores while males were responsible for other chores such as farming. These gender roles are not so different among young males and females in Ghana today though there may be some changes in some aspects of these activities. Some poor children engage in these activities as a result of the traditional extended family inability to assist them in providing them their basic needs of life. This may be partly due to what according to Nukunya (2003);

refers to; that traditional institutions in Ghana such as the extended family are being destabilized because of rapid urbanization and amplified mobility. There is a drive from communal towards more individualistic lifestyles. The question is, are some of these activities compatible with the physical, social and educational lives of these poor children at an early age?

#### **4.3.4 The National Programmes Directed at Alleviating Poverty among Children in Ghana**

It appears there are varied definitions and perspectives of what poverty means to adults and what it means to children and the dichotomies in these views will have a significant, resultant effect on the kind of programmes that are put in place to remedy the problem of poverty among children in Ghana. One key aim of all nations in the United Nations (UN) to address the challenges and difficulties emanating from increasing globalization inspired the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. In the formulation of the MDGs, attention had been drawn to poverty as indicated in MDG number one: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. Its sub goal was that, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who suffer hunger should be half as compared to 1990 (UN, 2005b). In addressing the problem of poverty and hunger, Ghana was the first of 10 countries in the Sub-saharan Africa implementing School Feeding Programme (SFP) which was tailored in line with the guidelines of the New Partnership on Africa's Development (NEPAD) as indicated in the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), (Ghana, 2006a).

It is not enough for a nation to put measures in place to solve different problems. Rather, the voices of the beneficiaries are most paramount if they are meant to make the best out of the programmes designed. Ghana as a matter of fact has implemented a good number of SFPs and the formulation of the SFP began in 2004 and it was to run from January 2006 to December 2010. The SFP aims at increasing enrolments in schools and the retention rates by providing these school children with a daily meal. This was however preceded by a pilot programme which was implemented from September to December 2005 (Ghana, 2006a). Subsequently, in the year 2010, the programme was to serve an estimated figure of 1.04 million children in all 138 districts of Ghana (Ghana, 2006a; Ghana, 2005; Ghana, 2006c). The long term objective of the Ghana SFP is to contribute to poverty reduction and to boost school enrolment and attendance and also to ensure food security. Another programme put in place to reduce poverty among households and children in Ghana was the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). In March,

2008, Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) was launched to tackle the problem of poverty and the idea was to make cash transfers to poor households as a means to alleviating poverty and giving them access to basic social services. Despite this programme to alleviate poverty among households of which children are key constituents, it appears poverty among children remains paper work. Having taken a look at the situation of poor children in Ghana and the various programmes and Schemes put in place by the government to alleviate poverty among them, it appears to some extent that, these programmes have failed to a large extent in addressing the poverty situation of children in Ghana. This failure may be due to the notion that children's voices were not fully incorporated into the programmes or their voices were not sought after when designing the programmes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY**

##### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the analysis and discussion of the data gathered from the field on children's perspectives of poverty. It begins with the presentation of the socio-economic backgrounds of my research participants' parents and guardians. The chapter presents data on children's perspectives of poverty which covers; what poverty means to rural children, children's perspectives of features of poverty, gender faces of poverty, children's views on the effects of poverty, poor children's perspectives on overcoming poverty, is there any motivation for children in the midst of poverty, and other related issues. The analysis has shown that children have different definitions of poverty that is in line with the circumstances in which they find themselves. Thus their views were related to their individual situations and gender implications. The subsequent paragraphs and pages give an in-depth presentation of the analysis.



### 5.2.1 Socio-Economic Backgrounds of Research Participants

Figure 1, shows the profile of research participants who were aged from 12 to 16 years. Those who were from 12 to 13 years were three, 13 to 14 were eight, 14 to 15 were five and 15 to 16 were four. Out of those who were at the age of 12 to 13, 2 were girls and one was a boy. For 13 to 14 years, girls were 5 and boys were also 5, for 14 to 15 years, girls were 2 and boys were 3 and finally from 15 to 16 years, girls were 2 and boys were 2 as well.

### 5.2.2 Ages of Research Participants

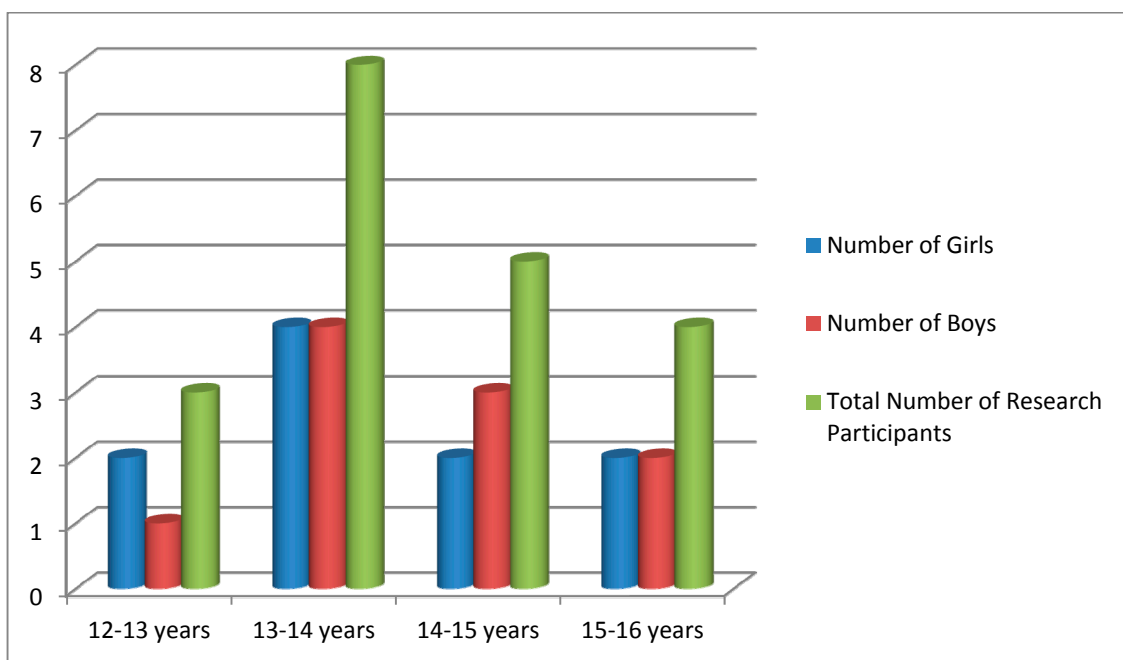


Figure1: Ages of Research Participants

It was noted during fieldwork that some of the children were not sure of their exact biological ages and therefore it was thoughtful to group them so they could fall within broad age group they belong. This problem could have popped up as a result of lack of proper documentation of the birth dates of children or the mere negligence on the part of the children themselves. That is not to say that my research participants were not aware of their ages but some of them thought that a day after their days of birth means moving to the next birth day and for that matter it was wise for them to say they fall within a year rather than saying they are exact year old when that was not their exact birth day. And to avoid this confusion of saying, “I am 12 years, 2 months old, it

was good to say, I am from 12 to 13 years. Though these were the controversial views of my research participants, I used their exact years during the analysis and the discussions that followed.

### 5.2.3 Occupation of Research Participants' Parents

From figure 2, all the research participants were able to provide information on the occupation of their parents or guardians. My research participants provided this information as responses to the question is your poverty partly related to the occupation of your parents? The research participants responded in unison, “yes”! I then asked them to give me an overview of what their parents or guardians were doing as their sources of employment. Out of the 20 research participants, 7 of them indicated that their parents were petty traders and drivers. Out of this number, 3 of them noted that their mothers were petty traders and 4 of them indicated that their fathers were drivers representing seven (35 percent) of the entire research participants.

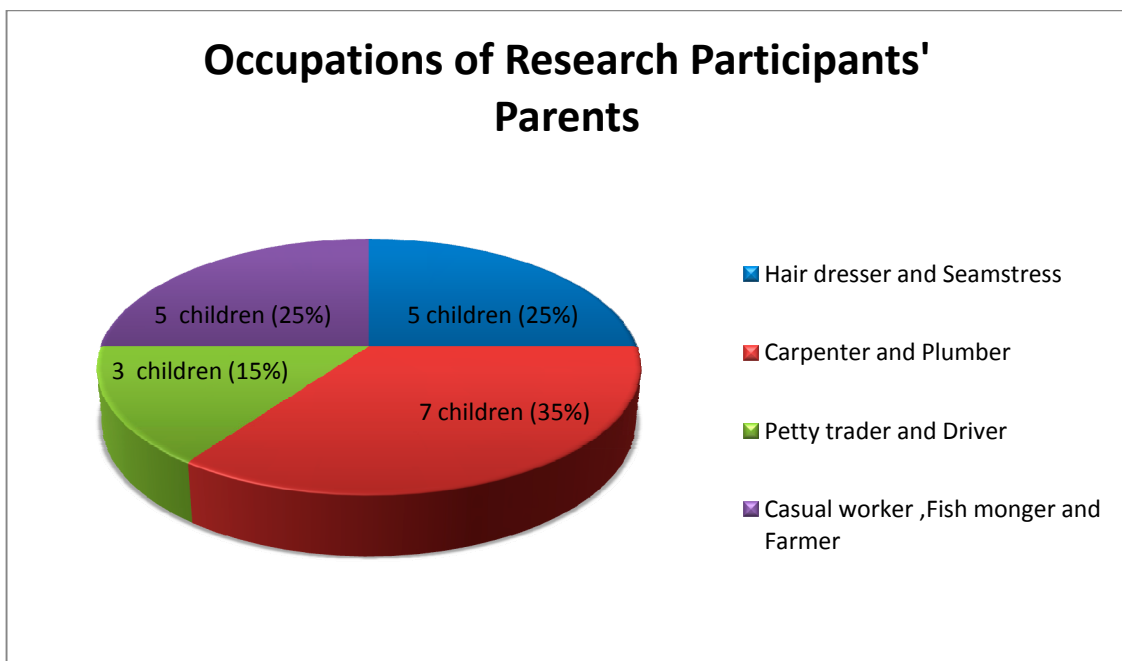


Figure 2: Occupation of Research Participants' Parents

Similarly, five of the entire research participants mentioned that only their mothers were working and they were hair dressers and seamstresses. Out of this number, 2 of the research participants mentioned that their mothers were hair dressers and the rest 3 stated that their mothers were

seamstresses representing 25 percent of the entire research participants of the study. In another instance, 5 research participants indicated that their parents were casual workers, fish mongers and farmers. Out of this number, 1 of them stated that his father was a casual worker, 2 noted their mothers were fish mongers and the rest 2 indicated that their fathers were farmers and this represents 25 percent of the entire research participants. In terms of parents of research participants that were into petty trading and driving, 2 of the entire research participants stated that their fathers were drivers and 1 research participants indicated that her mother was a petty trader representing three (15 percent) of the entire research participants. It was clear however that a good number of the research participants' parents or guardians were not working or were into businesses that brought minute earnings home. It could therefore be assumed that, this background information on the research participants' parents' or guardians' occupations as illustrated has a significant effect on the poverty situation of the research participants. In a country where the onus is on the parents to cater for their wards, it is obvious that if the parents do not engage in well- paid jobs, their wards will be wobbling in poverty. The perspectives and experiences of my research participants have indicated that, they view poverty in juxtaposition with the occupations of their parents and guardians.

#### **5.2.4 Income Levels of Research Participants' Parents**

The subsequent paragraphs present the views and explanations of the research participants with regard to the income levels of their respective parents and guardians. It was clear from the analysis that most of the research participants were not able to tell exactly how much their parents or guardians earned per month. However, some of the older research participants were able to give the average income of their parents per month. A boy, 14 years noted that, "My Dad earns Gh ₵120.00 per month as a farmer"- (This amount in Ghana cedis is approximately equivalent to 80 US dollars per month). Similarly, a girl at the age of 15 said that her mother earns Gh ₵ 100.00 per month on the average which is equivalent to 66 US dollars per month as a seamstress. In another instance, a 13 year old boy noted, "As for me, my father earns Gh ₵ 40.00 per month as a taxi driver"- about 26 US dollars. A critical look at the income levels of some of the research participants' parents has shown that, their income per month on the average was small and this could further be analysed that these low income levels of my research participants' parents and guardians had significant effects on the financial upkeep of their

children. There was therefore the need for these children to find alternative livelihood strategies to cater for their needs. During this discussion, a girl at the age of 14 remarked, *with these kinds of small, small monies, why won't our parents be poor?* This child's quote concurs with Bourdillon (2006, p. 1206) that, "in less developed countries, besides the greater burden imposed by numbers, it is more difficult for adults to access good and reliable incomes, which affects both their ability to care for children and the tax base for government services". With her response to the question, is that how you view your poverty situation? She noted that, that was not in her view to justify the poverty situation in their families rather to alert that, low incomes of families could be one major escalator of poverty among families. It suffice to say therefore here that, the usual blame-game was not what this research participants had in mind rather it was more of her perspective and thought about the question of poverty.

### **5.3 CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY**

#### **5.3.1 What Poverty Means to a Rural Child**

What does poverty mean to rural children? Children have different views and understanding of poverty. The analysis of the data had shown that all the research participants suggested that poverty means *a lack of an item eg. school bag, a pair of shoes or money*. One research participant, a 14 year old boy, remarked;

It means not getting time to do things one needs, I dropped out of school when I was in class six and had to spend a lot of time to look for money to take care of myself. If you cannot pay your school fees then you are poor.

It is documented by Beegle et al., (2004) that children who work are less likely to attend school and to have lower educational attainment. As this child is working, his ambition to go to school seems a dream rather than a reality. My quest to find out what that definition means to him, he explained that, he spent a lot of time looking for money to fend for himself and if resources were available to him, he would have spent that time learning in school. He added;

I was born in a family of ten siblings and I am the eighth born and none of us ever completed Junior High School because my parents can't afford the school fees.

To this research participant, poverty means, spending time working for money and neglecting learning and schooling. This child's quote on time constraints resonates with Bartlett et al., (1999) view that "significant expenditure of time and effort are necessary to access essential resources such as safe water, latrines and waste disposal facilities among the poor in developing countries" cited in. It is a common phenomenon in Ghana to see poor children working for money while school is in progress. Though basic education is free and compulsory parents have to provide some basic school needs such as school uniform, bags, a pair of shoes for their children and in the absence of money to afford these items, children work to provide for their selves. On the other hand, according to a 12 year old boy;

Poverty means not having money to attend a cinema. When my friends are going to the cinema, I feel sad because I cannot go with them and when I asked my parents for money they say, *mele o*.

*Mele o* literally means, "we do not have it" in the local dialect. This child's understanding of poverty is in line with Townsend's (1979) definition of relative poverty which is based on the "concept of relative deprivation and defines households as poor when they are lacking certain commodities that are common in the society they are living in" cited in (Hagenaars and De vos, 1988, p. 215). Two other research participants shared the same ideas with this research participant highlighting the relative feature of poverty as they cannot afford to attend a cinema compared to their friends in the same community. Similar to the above research participant, though the difficulty of getting things done without money is added here, a 12 year old girl pointed out that, *poverty is finding it difficult to do things without money, no money to support education or anything to rely on*. The notion of poverty is also linked to not having cash on oneself for personal expenditures such as food as a girl at the age of 16 narrated during an individual interview that;

To me, poverty means having no money on me; I cannot even buy pens and pencils to school. During lunch break at school, I cannot buy some food while I watch my friends eat kenkey with fried fish; I can only buy kenkey with no fish.

This child's views confirms Peter Townsend's (1979) definition of poverty; "Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities

which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong". In this instance, children are not only concerned about what to eat but the quality and quantity of it are at the core of their hearts and another research participant finally said, *May I add, it means that one does not have money to take care of him or herself*. Another view of understanding poverty linked to not having a convenient place of abode was expressed by a 13 year old girl that, *poverty means a person who does not have anything, no food, no good drinking water, living in a kiosk with mosquitoes*. On the other hand, during focus group discussions, a boy, 15 years old elaborated;

Poverty is when one is in need and cannot supply basic needs such as water, shelter, and cloth. Every day, my younger sisters and my elder brothers and I have to walk far to the river side to get some water. During Christmas, my parents cannot buy me a new dress and a pair of shoes. We live in two kiosks near that gutter, my three brothers and two sisters and I live in one kiosk and my parents and my other two sisters live in the other kiosk.

This definition by this child relates to the literature that a person is poor if his total expenditure cannot be paid for out of his or her current income, i.e., if he must borrow money or spend savings in order to get along. In this situation the ratio of total expenditure to current income exceeds one (Hagenaars and De vos, 1988). Some other research participants in focus group discussions nodded their heads in agreement with the response from the above research participants. Major effects of poverty are that children are unable to attend school as a result of lack of money, live in an unhygienic environment and the unhappiness that goes with it. A 15 year old girl who could not continue her education as a result of her parents' inability to pay her school fees noted during an individual interview that;

What poverty means to me as a child is not having money to support myself in my education or don't have anything to rely on and also don't have any food or shelter. Our toilet [place of convenience] is not good and when I need something like a school bag or a text book, and I tell my parents, it will never come but you will see other children with things they need and so I become so unhappy.

To her, her unmet educational needs become the centre of her definition of poverty. The above quote by this child resonates with a study that; poverty has been traditionally understood to mean

a lack of access to resources, productive assets and income resulting in a state of material deprivation (Baulch, 1996). This is a typical picture of their place of convenience (toilet) as illustrated in figure 3. She noted, this is our toilet, when it rains the place smells and you find it bad to go there. The use of cameras to capture children's every day's life situation such as their environment is applied here.

Figure 3: A picture showing a place of convenience by a 15 year old girl



A picture illustrating a place of convenience of a poor child

The above picture confirms documentation that, “in developing countries..., poor sanitation and inadequate access to safe drinking water compromise poor people's health” (Calderon et al., 1993).

Lack of employment opportunities and low level of income by parents and guardians contribute largely to the poor status of their children. With regard to this, during focus group discussions, a 14 year old boy whose mother is a seamstress and the father a taxi driver defines poverty as,

My family is poor, because they are not employed in [well-paid] job even as they are working, they cannot take care of me and themselves. I live with my six siblings and my parents in someone's uncompleted building. Every time, the owner comes to give us warning to leave his building, I feel bad but we cannot rent a new place...

Corcoran (1995) finds that over all parental resources plays a major role in influencing children's subsequent income and employment outcomes. For this research participant, even when her parents are working, their income level is very low in such a way that, they could hardly take care of him and themselves. It is therefore clear here that, a job is not a guarantee that one will be rich but a well-paid job is securer in this child's point of view. The understanding of poverty is circumstantial to children. A 14 year old girl who lives in a locally made container with her family of six siblings narrated during an individual interview that;

Poverty means a family that cannot provide basic needs such as buying a dress or paying school fees; a person does not go to school or cannot take a bus to school. I walk to cross the railway everyday to school. I live with my parents and my other six siblings in a container, which is about 3 kilometres from my school.

Considering where this child lives, she has to cross the rail way to school every day as she cannot afford a bus. For some children, poverty is connected to living in poor housing. A girl at the age of 13 who lives in a dilapidated building with her parents, two sisters and three brothers noted that,

Poverty to me is not having electricity at home, my parents cannot pay my fees, I attend a [less endowed] 'cyto school' and I eat only two times a day. Our house is not good at all; when it rains the place becomes [muddy].

For this girl the definition of poverty revolves around her needs as a child, which includes lack of electricity, not having enough daily meal, her poor school and her place of abode. Her idea of *Cyto School*, which literally means a less endowed school with lack of numerous logistics and facilities, is suggestive of the wider impacts of poverty on children's lives, beyond the household. Cyto School is a common term used to describe such poor schools by local people in Ghana. Another research participant, a girl aged 13 who dropped out of school at the age of ten years defined poverty as,



Poverty means, I cannot pay my school fees, no good place to live, I cannot buy my dresses and [a pair of] shoes, difficult to get food to eat. I live with my friend in a [wooden] kiosk and my father is a fisherman but my mother is not working.

This view of understanding poverty convenes the ideas that housing and lack of shoes and dresses are major concerns to poor children.

In summary, these were the divergent perspectives expressed by my research participants on the question, what poverty means to them as rural children. The analysis has shown that children have different understanding and views of poverty. The common features of definition of poverty by rural children are related to lack of food and balanced diet, poor housing conditions, inability to attend school, lack of basic needs like a pair of shoes, dresses, school items, drinking water, and a place of convenience. However, lack of money though not in specific amount has been a key feature of understanding poverty by rural children. The data also indicated that the rural children's definition of poverty is related to the individual circumstances in which they find themselves.

### **5.3.2 Children's Perspective of Features of poverty**

The research participants were able to state the features of poverty. This was to provide answers to the research question, what are some of the features or characteristics of a poor family? A girl 16 years described the features of poverty during focus group discussion as;

There is no money in the family, children in a poor family [more often than not] do not find themselves in a school, we have to work and get money. We cannot go to school and learn because you will be looking for money.

It was therefore obvious to find children in such poor families loitering about for means of survival rather than being in school. "Fighting during meal's time"- is one of the main features of poverty among children. A boy at the age of 14 concluded during an individual interview that;

Our parents fight a lot and we the children fight as well when it is time to have something to eat. My elder brothers and I have to fight over a bowl of food because everyone wants to eat enough of it. The food is too small so we have to carry the bowl and run around while eating

the food in it and my elder brothers eat more than me. We are seven in the family, three girls, four boys and I am the fourth born.

This child's perspective on features of poverty is in line with Baulch's (1996) suggestion that, the concept of poverty should be broadened to include lack of dignity. The above quote on fighting was interesting to me and so I asked him to explain why they fought when they were eating. The explanations given to me had shown that, in such families, more often than not the food provided to be shared among siblings was relatively insufficient and that there was the need to fight for oneself to get enough to eat. And this explanation was similar to the common notions of survival of the fittest. He concluded by saying that, *we laugh and joke together [thereafter]*. What this statement meant was that poor children in these families are not necessarily at logger heads with one another but they did that out of necessity. Again, I asked this research participant to explain why parents fight in these poor families as a characteristic? He and a girl at the age of 16 noted that parents in these poor families also fight as result of lack of resources at home. It was a question of who should be responsible for what as there was so much burden to bear in the family. Where families lack resources to cater for themselves and their wards, fighting, more often than not was the resultant effect. One major feature of poverty is that parents of poor children do not have an education. This was narrated by a boy at the age of 14 that one feature of a poor family is;

Parents have no or little education, my father dropped out of school at the age of 12 years and my mother said she could not continue schooling at the age of 11 because their parents cannot pay their fees and buy their needs for them. When I bring my home work home, my father and mother cannot help me to do it, they always say, *miafe nufiala me fia mi oah?* Because my parents did not go to school, they do not find good jobs. My mother is a seamstress and my father is a taxi driver. My elder brother is not working or in school and my sisters too are struggling.

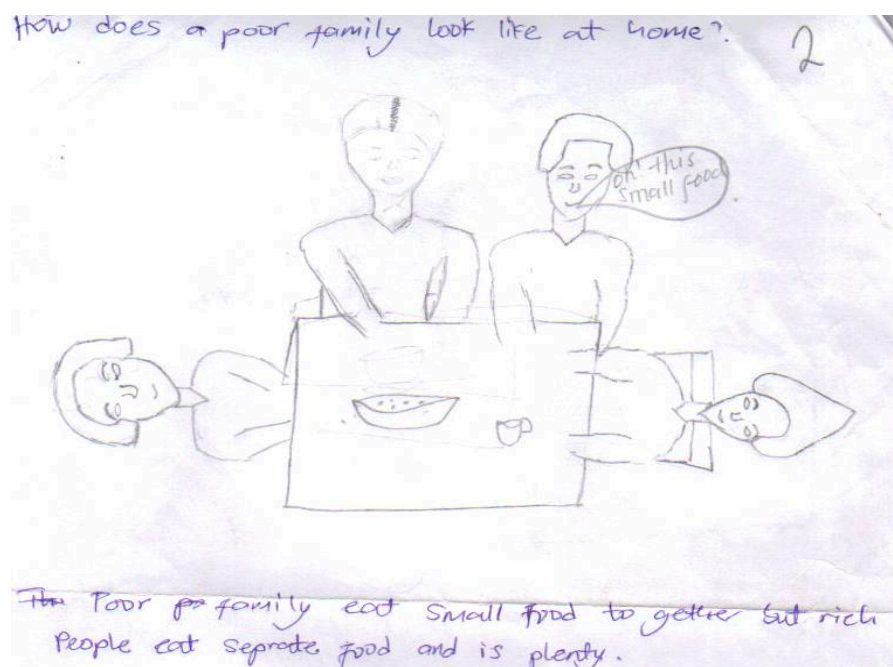
The above quote resonates with what Solon (1999) notes that there are some key features of transfer of poverty. There are much evidence of correlations between indicators of parental and child well-being and over all levels of social mobility than of the processes by which poverty cycles are reinforced or broken. [*Miafe nufiala me fia mi oah* literally means, didn't your teacher

teach you what you brought home?] What the above quote indicates is that there is a positive correlation between the levels of education one attains in life and the income level of that person. Though this notion may be shared by many especially in developing countries, it may not always be the case in some parts of the world. But obviously, this child was presenting his views and perspectives of how his family looked like and for that reason as one of the features of poverty. Similar views were shared by other research participants in this direction. Lack of adequate food at home is one of the key features of poverty express by children. A 14 year old boy who lives with his parents and five siblings in an uncompleted building elaborated during focus group discussions that;

In a poor family, parents and siblings are not happy at all, every day, my parents talk about how to get us food and money. Even when we eat, the food is too small to [satisfy] us.

He illustrated insufficient food at home by this drawing as shown in figure 4. The drawing illustrates how four of the family members sit around a bowl of food and one of them complaining about how scanty the food was for four of them.

Figure 4: A drawing by a 14 year old boy



Source: Field Work, 2011

As one can see from Figure 4, which the child explained, the family is not happy. He also made a comparison with the amount of food a poor family eats and that of a rich family as noted beneath the drawing. In this child's view, ones' happiness is partly related to the number of basic needs that a person can afford. And this in my view could be true to some extent as experienced.

On a more general note, more than half of the entire research participants indicated that, one major feature of a poor family is that such a family has no member fully employed or they are simply underemployed. What this means is that, if members of a family are not working, then obviously there will be no income to support the children and on the other hand, members who are underemployed have little resources to fend for themselves let alone other members of the family. Many problems are associated with poor children and their families. These range from lack of jobs, low prices of farm produce and inability to afford children's school fees. A girl at the age of 13 during a conversation with me narrated that;

My father is a farmer but he does not have money. He said the crops are spoiled by birds and the price of the maize is very low. As for my mother, she sells fish in the local market but she always says, '*asia me me nyo ooh*' whenever she comes back home. My brother is 25 years old now but he is not working, he is always playing cards with his friends, no job for him. I am lucky to be in school now as this church takes care of me. As for my younger brother, he is at home and cannot go to school because my parents cannot pay his fees.

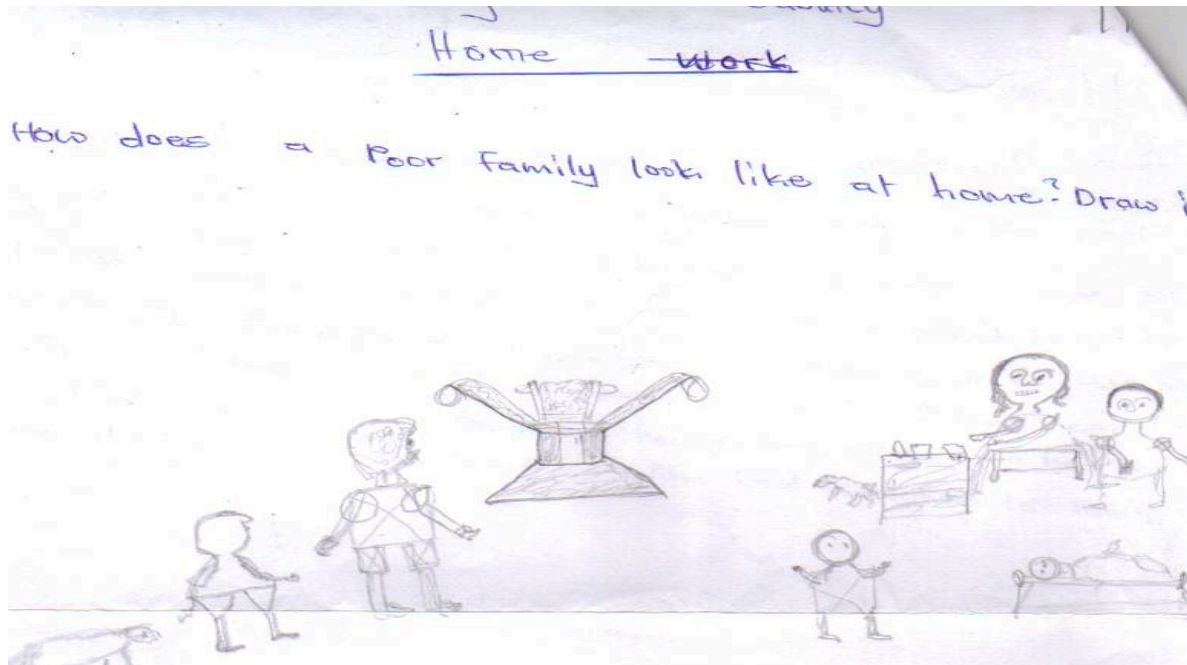
This child's quote is in support of GSS (2000) that, poverty is most prevalent among food crop farmers and informal sector employees. *Asia me menyo ooh* literally means, the market is not good today or I could not sell much today. Local farmers suffer a lot in the hands of animals and the market forces and the resultant effect is that they benefit little in terms of their income.

One common perception of a poor family is the production of children per second, per second. A girl at the age of 15 years whose sister is sick of heart disease and lives with her parents and eight siblings pointed out during an individual interview that;

A poor family has many children. They do not have their needs like dresses, bicycle, they cook in their bed room, and they use charcoal to cook. And when the children are sick, they cannot pay their hospital [bills].

She illustrated how the poor family looks like at home by this drawing;

Figure 5: A 15 year old girl showing how the family looks at home



Source: Field Work, 2011

She explained that the family is cooking food on a coal pot outside as can be seen in the drawing and a child is sick lying on a bed. This she thinks is how a poor family looks like at home as one of the features of poverty.

From the analysis above, children have different perspectives of the features of poverty. It is clear that these features range from fights among children during meal's time, lack of adequate resources at home, inadequate food for the family, many children in a family, inability of parents to pay children's school and hospital fees, poor farm outputs to lack of employment opportunities. It can be concluded here that these features of poverty affect the livelihoods of children and their families.

### 5.3.3 The Gender Faces of Poverty

The ways one becomes affected by poverty were related to education, respect, ability to buy food and the development of a difficult and aberrant behaviour. With regard to a question that I asked;

who are mostly affected by poverty between boys and girls; one boy at the age of 15 strongly voiced out during focus group discussions that;

It affects boys more than girls because the girl will have a man to come and marry her and take care of her through marriage and this is not the case with males. We are eight in the family. My eldest sister [though] she dropped out of school was married to a man who works in the bank and they are living in a city, she now has a shop. But my elder brother is still at home and he has to work and marry a woman.

This notion was shared by a couple of research participants as well. The implicit idea in this argument is that, some children think that, it is easier for the females to come out of poverty or more likely to be less affected by poverty as a result of the culture of the society that portrays men as bread winners in the family . They think that in their community, girls are mostly assisted at the later stage by well off members in the society. And this is not different from the common notion in the Ghanaian society that, females find more favour in terms of job acquisition and assistance from rich men. This idea by this research participant can also be explained in a sense that, in the Ghanaian societies, it appears that males mostly provide the needed resources at home while the females take care of the resources. Indeed, this notion shared by this research participant is an indication that, children do observe, learn and practice from adults in their vicinities.

Conversely, a 12 year old girl highlighted the gender dimension of poverty as follows;

As for me, I think girls are mostly affected by poverty. We girls need a lot of things to keep ourselves good and we are not so strong like boys to find jobs as well, when we are growing, we need a lot of basic things to [keep] going. For example, I need under wears, lipsticks, shoes, heard [gear], brassier, tooth brush and skirts.

Literature suggests that, in Ghana and other African countries, women have a higher incidence of poverty than men, and that their poverty is more severe than that of men and this is especially associated with the rising female headed households (GSS, 2000). The above quotation is therefore suggestive of literature that captures the severity of poverty in the lives of women and girls. This quotation shows a divergent view from the one presented by the boy (above). The female research participants in the focus group discussions were in favour of this idea and they

nodded their heads as the girl spoke. Here, some children believe that, females are mostly affected by poverty. They think that, they are not so forceful and strong enough to find jobs on their own as boys are likely able to do. Moreover, they think they need more resources to take care of their basic needs than boys need. Looking at the two major views presented by these research participants, it was clear that they all have good reasons for saying what they did say and that what is important is to respect their views in that direction and also to recognise that the most important thing here is that both boys and girls are affected by poverty in various but different ways. It is also worth noting here that, there is a general notion about the low socio-economic status of girls and women in Ghanaian society than boys and men and this data strengthens that notion.

Common perceptions of gender faces of poverty indicate that girls' needs are more often than not provided than those of boys'. In the course of the focus group discussions, a boy at the age of 14 living with his mother and six siblings of whom two of them are girls narrated;

Poverty affects boys more than girls. In my family, we are seven, five boys and two girls and my mother is a [petty] trader in the local market. She sells tomatoes, fish, pepper and onions. We live in one bed room with two beds. My mother sleeps on one bed and my two sisters use the other bed. But we the boys sleep on a mat on the floor. My mother sometimes buys my sisters pants, shoes and under wears but I do not get anything like that.

He explained further that, in his family, the needs of his sibling sisters are met by her mother though not all but he and his brothers hardly receive such things from her parents. Even the sleeping arrangement tells it all as the boys sleep on the floor and the girls sleep on the bed. This is also typical of the way Ghanaian Parents appear to spend more resources on their daughters' welfare than their male counterparts. It also connotes with the idea that, girls are likely to enter into prostitution at an early age if their basic needs are not met by their caregivers.

Children whose needs are not met sometimes engage in an aberrant activity to meet their needs. A 14 year old girl who lives with her friend in a kiosk and dropped out of school at the age of 12 years as a result of her parents' inability to care for her emphasised during an individual interview that;

We girls are affected mostly by poverty. I sometimes have to go to town to ask men for money and if they ask you to sleep with them, you cannot say no because you need money to buy food and your dresses.

This child's quote confirms Wessells and Kostelny (2002) claim that, poverty and associated socio-political and economic contexts may expose children to extreme forms of risk, including military recruitment, separation from their families, child labour and child prostitution. This is a common notion that, girls who go round to ask for arm are sometimes exploited by men as a result of their plights. And this girl thinks that, one way that poverty affects poor girls is that, it leads them into prostitution which is not the case of her male counterparts.

The analysis on the gender faces of poverty has indicated that children being males or females are affected by poverty. However, boys and girls are affected by poverty in different ways as boys think that they are more prone to poverty as a result of cultural expectation of more responsibilities from them and the girls on the other hand think that they are mostly affected by poverty because they need a lot of things to keep them as girls and the temptation of getting into prostitution.

#### **5.3.4 Children's Views on the Effects of Poverty**

The impacts of poverty on children's well-being are complex and multi-faceted. Children stated many effects of poverty on their lives. A 16 year old girl who could not continue her education as a result of her parents' inability to afford her fees and other basic needs pointed out during focus group discussions that;

One way that I am affected by poverty is that, I do not get what is needed for my education such as money to pay my school fees, buy my text books, when I am sacked from school and I cannot finish school, then I may become a failure. These days, without [high level] of education, [one] cannot find a [well-paid] job and you cannot afford even the basic needs of life that is failure to me.

This child's quote resonates with GLSS (2000) that, the non-school attendance rates in Ghana are very high with wide gender disparities. The 1992 GLSS data for instance indicated that one in every three girls and one in every four boys does not attend school. In addition the rural non-



schooling is higher, with 37 percent for girls and 28 percent for boys (GLSS, 2000). This seems to be the case in Ghanaian society; education is rapidly becoming the corner stone of success. The problem however with this notion is that, it appears people go to school with a purpose of getting a good job without thinking much about the skills they need to learn while they are in school. As the discussion went on, a boy at the age of 14 who dropped out of school on two occasions and presently lives with his five siblings and his parents in an uncompleted building remarked on the impact of poverty that;

The way I am affected by poverty is that, I do not have money to [afford] my basic needs including text books to learn and pass my Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E). Sometimes when I am sick, my parents cannot take me to the hospital because they cannot buy the medicines for me or pay the hospital bills. My father and my mother do not have any good job. My mother sells charcoal and my father is a driver.

The above quotation is typical of the intergenerational transmission of poverty. According to Moore (2001), intergenerational transmission of poverty may include the personal transmission of poverty from older generation of individuals or families to younger generations. This child's poor parents' situation has a significant trickledown effect on his education and health.

In another response to the effects of poverty in the lives of rural children, a young girl at the age of 14 years who was repeated in the same class for not being able to pay her school fees and as a result was not allowed to write her promotional examination told me, that;

I was sacked from school because I cannot pay my school fees during the examination period and so I was not able to write the promotional examination and so I was repeated. I see my mates move to the next class while I remain in the same class, I feel bad I live in a compound house with my daddy's friend.

In this girl's situation, not being promoted to the next class as a result of not being able to pay school fees is obviously not a good experience to her especially when she sees her colleagues being promoted to the next class. This as one way that this research participant is affected by poverty is shared with some research participants too. What this means is that education is a priority in the lives of these children and their inability to afford basic things that will enable them pass their examinations is a great worry on their minds. Lack of requisite resources at home

compels children to find alternative means of survival which may be labelled as bad character in their society. A 13 year old girl indicated during an individual interview that;

Poverty can make me [develop] a bad character. I may not want to steal or smoke cigarette or even find a boy friend at this age, but lack of [resources] as a result of poverty can [force] me to do all these. I do not steal but sometimes I feel like in order to buy some food. I sometimes go out in the evening to ask men to give me money to buy food, I feel bad.

This child's quote connotes with the documentation that childhood poverty has physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional outcomes: on self-esteem, smoking, mortality, accidents, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, educational accomplishment, school segregation, youth misdemeanour, alcohol and drug use, suicide, morbidity, pleasure and skewed well being (Bradshaw, 2002; 2001; Morrell et al., 2001). Smoking cigarette for instance is something that is not welcomed by Ghanaian communities let alone the involvement of children in it. The implication of this is that, children, from their perspective, can be forced into bad behaviour as a result of not finding better livelihood strategies.

One impact of poverty in the lives of children is the inability to afford a balanced diet. This was elucidated during focus group discussions by a 15 year old boy that;

I am not even able to buy food even if you buy food; it is not a balanced diet, 'sakora food'. You can only buy kenkey with hot pepper.

By *sakora food*, it literally means, food without a slice of meat or fish on top of it. According to the World Bank (1990), poverty is the inability of one to reach a minimal standard of living, which involves personal consumption of food, clothing and shelter. The above quote is typical of not meeting basic standard of living such as basic consumption of food. It is a common notion that poor people hardly eat a balanced diet, even in cases where they rear animals; they end up selling them for money rather than feeding the family with them. And in this instance, it suffices to say that poor children hardly have a square meal per day with necessary nutritional compositions.

A similar response to the effects of poverty in the lives of children was narrated during the discussions by a 14 year old boy that;

I cannot hide my hunger; it is a [terrible] experience. When it is a break time in school and my friends are going to buy ice- cream and food, I sit at the corner of the classroom looking at them while they eat because I cannot buy some. I feel bad and I wish I can also buy some.

Food then is a daily worry to poor children as they struggle to find a meal on the table. Break time in school therefore appears a time of sadness to some poor children.

A feeling of losing respect in one's community is one of the major effects of poverty in the lives of children. For a girl at the age of 16, she noted;

Poverty makes one to lose his or her respect. People do not respect you in this society if you are poor. They simply [look down] on you and talk to you anyhow.

Baulch (1996) suggests that, the concept of poverty also should be broadened to include lack of dignity. Poor children think that they lose respect and dignity in their communities because of their low socio-economic status as compared to rich children. This appears to be a common experience in Ghanaian society, when people talk you down simply because of your low financial status. Here I share my own experience that, during family meetings, no one listens to you when you are not well off, it is only the elderly and the rich that are respected. From my research participants' perspectives, poverty is in negative correlation with the respect that one earns in society.

Not having enough time to complete school assignments and lack of dresses and pair of shoes are some of the impacts of poverty in children's lives. During an interview, a 12 year old boy who is presently living with his cousin in a container said;

Poverty affects me as I cannot [concentrate] on my lessons in school. I am always thinking about what to eat or wear when I am in school. When I close from school, I go round to fetch water and wash plates in a chop bar for someone. It is difficult because you do not have time to learn hard when you are poor.

Time management is a concern here. Children have to struggle to make time for many activities as they have to be shuttling between two or more activities. These were the major findings on how poverty affects children. The effects of poverty on their lives were similar in a sense that, they all need some basic needs like shoes, dresses, school materials and school fees to attend

school. Overly engagement of children in economic activities while they are in school does not give them time to perform their school activities well. However, some of the effects were gender specific as the girls talked about how they can be forced into prostitution as a result of poverty.

### **5.3.5 Things Lacked by Poor Children**

Many things were mentioned by children as lacking in their lives. Most of them were purely material things and gender specific. As a response to the question; what things you lack in your life, a 12 year old boy mentioned during an individual interview that;

I lack shoes for school and church programmes; I need a bicycle and money to buy food in school. Sometimes, I do not want to go to church or school because my shoes are not good and my school knickers are torn.

The above child's quote illustrates what Boyden et al., (2003) write that shame and humiliation may be just as significant in children's experiences of poverty as poor nutrition or financial lack. For this child, a pair of shoes was his major concern as that will enable him goes to school without shame and also participates in church activities with confidence of being properly dressed up. Children find it difficult to go to public places where all are dressed up neatly and they are looking odd among them.

A 15 year old girl also responded to the above question that;

I hate wearing a worn out shoe to school, it is embarrassing. My friends laugh at me sometimes and they say things like, *aforkpa me nyo o, kor damgbe*.

*Aforkpa me nyo o, kor damgbe* literally means, your shoes are not good or they are in a bad shape, throw them away. For very young children, deprivations can have physiological and neurological effects that last into adulthood (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007), whereas for older children, the psychosocial impacts of poverty are especially important, as the sense of stigma and shame and resulting social exclusion become more acute (Bartlett and Minujin, 2009; Ridge, 2002) cited in (Children and Society, 2010). This literature confirms the above child's quote of her worn out pairs of shoes and the embarrassments that goes with it.

These statements by children have shown that dressing is a priority to them especially if they have to show up in a public place. Indeed, children hate to be seen as not having something when other children seem to have that thing. A 14 year old boy lamented that;

*my parents don't buy me dresses, or give me money to buy food, or to buy my under wear, as well as my books, bicycles and a school bag.*

When I asked my research participants to list all that they lack in their lives, it was a tall list of material things such as school bags, text books, pen and pencils, shoes, dresses, mobile phones, computers, games, accommodation, food, bicycles, etc. I further asked them to rank these things in order of importance during group interview. The list had shown that, a 15 year old girl had a list of these material stuffs in order of importance;

A balanced diet per day, shelter, school bag, text books, a pair of shoes, and dresses. Food is very important as it enables me to go to school and work very hard. I also learn hard because I do not have to worry about what I will eat.

Ranking as a tool was very instrumental here as children tried to prioritise their needs. As a response to the same question above, a 14 year old girl noted;

When you are back after a hard day's job, you have to rest in a [cosy] environment. I live in a kiosk with my parents and four siblings. We have to [struggle for a space] all times during evenings when we are all back home, *Miafe mlofe me nyo kroa o.*

*Miafe mlofe me nyo kroa o*, in the local dialect literally means our place of abode is not good or convenient at all. Good housing condition therefore is a priority for poor children as they struggle to find a place to lay their heads after a hard day's job.

As for a 16 year old boy, the most important on his list was a mobile phone. He explained that, a mobile phone is needed so one can connect to others for a job and other issues. For a boy and a girl, 14 and 12 years old respectively, a computer or laptop was their most pressing need. They want to have a laptop so that they can browse at anytime without going elsewhere to pay for one. Other research participants prioritised their needs as shoes, text books, shelter etc. One thing that was obvious when I asked the research participants to prioritise their needs was that, it was difficult for them to do as they thought; all that they mentioned they were lacking were of great

importance to them. Nevertheless, a few of them did so as I present above. What has emerged out of this analysis was that, food, dresses, and shelter are most important to poor children.

### **5.3.6 Important Aspect of Childhood**

Important aspects of the research participants' childhood were attention from their parents, advice, and items needed and provided by parents. With this, a 12 year old girl noted;

I was grateful for parental decision of giving me education. My dad always says he did not attend school but I am lucky to be in school so I should learn hard.

In other words, she was grateful for her parents' decision to send her to school. This she thought was the important aspect of her childhood. Indeed, this is in line with what Ennew et al., (2005) talk about that childhood is constructed as being reserved for learning and leisure outside the market forces of adult world. This child thought she was lucky as a child to have been given such an opportunity to go to school. This child however sees education as a privilege rather than as a right. For a 16 year old boy, the important aspect of his childhood was when he needed not to think about work and a job to fend for him.

He explained, *but as I am growing, though still a child, I have a [burden] to work to take care of myself*. Again, this seems to confirm what UNICEF (2004) noted that, childhood is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from work and exploitation (UNICEF, 2004). Indeed, this research participant thought that, he was free from the market forces at early childhood and was also free from fear and insecurity that engulfs him now. It therefore suffices that, children enjoy their childhoods if they do not have to work and just go to school. For research participants a boy and a girl at the ages of 13 and 14 respectively, they were pleased with the fact that their parents provided for their needs when they could not during their early childhood. This was particularly important to these research participants. The Explicit implication of this is that, children feel it is the responsibility of their parents or guardians to cater for their needs as they are young and feeble. For a 14 year old girl, *it was the ability to express myself since much attention is not gained from my parents*. She explained that, the parents were always out looking for their daily bread and for that reason; she had the opportunity to decide what to do when she was left home alone. This in her view gave her a sense of autonomy and self-reliance.

Moreover, a 15 year old girl lamented that one important aspect of her childhood was;

The lack of electricity at home in the evenings. We have to light kindles and lanterns [every now and then] and it was difficult to study with these lights.

She later told me that, the moon at night was their saviour and therefore it was their expectation all months to see the moon appeared! In view of this, some of the research participants, told an interesting story about how they play *hide and seek* games when the moon was almost at its full circle. They children thought this was one interesting and a memorable aspect of their childhood that could not be forgotten. Others added that they even played football at night when the moon was shining. During these later group discussions, one boy at the age of 14 said;

Yes I remember, when the ball is kicked, though the moon was shining, you never see the ball before it reached you and in this [way], you are most likely to be scored by your opponents.

This was a lively discussion. I personally do not think that, the children were happy when they lack electricity at home rather they made the best out of their circumstances as they turned a moment of melancholy to fun and adventure. This also implies that, children living in difficult situations do not just remain in such situations rather they act on their own to bring a change and make life more bearable for themselves. This discussion brought us to another important aspect of the study that looked at the perceptions of poor children on overcoming poverty.

### **5.3.7 Poor Children's Perspectives on Overcoming Poverty**

Looking at the perspectives of poor children on overcoming poverty was one of the major themes of my study. The discussions on this sub topic were interesting and lively. Children were able to discuss the various ways they thought could help overcome poverty in their lives. In the light of the above, I asked a question;

### **5.3.8 Can Children Come out of Poverty?**

Studying hard at school and working as a child is one of the ways children think they can overcome poverty. In response to the above question, a 16 year old boy said that;

Yes, children can come out of poverty by studying hard; a [philanthropist] may help one to come out of poverty as well. If I work hard, learn hard and I finish my schooling, I will get a good job and I will be rich.

Literature suggests that escape from poverty depends on a number of factors which include employment opportunities, familial and child's aspirations, health and nutrition (Glewwe et al., 1999). Considering this, the research participants had shown that, the role to be played by the poor child is the first step. That is the poor child must study hard when he or she is in school. This means that, the research participant thought that, there is a positive correlation between the qualification one attains through schooling and the resources that person gets in return. As such, the higher one's qualification, the more likely one will get a well-paid job as he explained. In this case learning hard school should be a priority for a poor child.

Nevertheless, he mentioned that a philanthropist can come to the aid of him as well and get him rescued out of poverty. It can therefore be analysed from this research participant's point of view that, in overcoming poverty in people's lives, the onus does not only rest on the victim of poverty alone but the society at large. This indeed is what I call inside-outside perspective or micro-macro perspective. This is highly informative as it tells us that, the society and for that matter, the government have roles to play in eradicating poverty. As a response to the same question above, a 15 year old girl who lives with her parents and seven siblings in someone's uncompleted building commented that;

I can come out of poverty by working hard and save money. Every day when I work and save some money, I can use it to [open] a shop and sell some items like coca-cola drink, sugar, pens and pencils and other things like that.

This statement by this research participant is also worth noting as the culture of saving appears to be a cumbersome task for a lot of people. This is line with the common notion that saving is an attitude that has to be developed if one wants to get out of poverty and it was interesting when this young girl made mention of it. One cannot for sure say that poor people have bad attitudes towards saving but it appears to be the case.

Children's engagement in petty trades and working for others in their community are one of the ways in which they overcome poverty. A 14 year old boy believed that;



I can come out of poverty by doing some jobs or selling some items to raise money after school. I can sell some oranges, banana and apples when I close from school. But I need some money to start it.

This child's quotation connotes with the perspective of the social studies of childhood in which children are seen as competent informants of their own everyday experiences and as social actors who are presently "beings" and not only "becomings" (Qvortrup et al., 1994). Thus this child did not see anything wrong with selling or working after school as a child. In other words, schooling and working are compatible for this child. Other research participants agreed with him. Children's agency and entrepreneurship highly highlighted in the above child's quote.

Similarly, a 13 year girl who dropped out of school at the age of 10 years said during focus group discussion that;

To come out of poverty, I sell pure water [sachet water] and save some money. I also go outside to help people or wash for them to get some money. I also go to chop bars to wash bowls, fetch water and sweep the place for them, and they pay me. I earn 30 Ghana Cedis every month.

This is a typical epitome of children's agency in their difficult financial situations. Other studies have shown that in the face of declining economic status of children and young people as well as rapid change, young people and for that matter children are not passive recipients of their difficult situations rather they are "agentive in achieving what they desire for their lives, they are forging new ways forward in socially and economically difficult circumstances. They are living their present and making the most of the time they have" (Skelton, 2002, p. 105). She spends much of her time going to chop bars to wash bowls for them and returns in the evening to sell sachet water at the road side. These she thought will help her overcome poverty in her life one day as she saves some of the money she earns.

In addition, a 14 year old girl, whose mother is a fish monger and the father a fisherman and has seven siblings, all living in an uncompleted building said that;

I can sell, go out and work for someone who is rich and can give me money. I can help people by carrying loads for them so that they can give me money. I do *kayaye* after school and this helps me to overcome poverty.

*Kayaye*” is a term used locally to mean helping people to carry their bags and baggage.

Convincingly on this matter, the rest of the research participants talked about how they have to learn hard while they are in school, work after school and should be paid well; get some assistance from the government and non-governmental organisations. But more importantly in all these was the notion that, yes, children can come out of poverty. Thus my research participants expressed a sense of possibility in this matter.

### **5.3.9 Can one Remain Poor Forever?**

Again, my research participants could not answer this without drawing my attention to the role that God can play in this matter. A boy and a girl concluded that, God has a plan for everyone and that God knows how to make a family come out of poverty or remain in it. It appeared to me during this discussion that, almost all my research participants were having the same school of thought. However, I think that this may be a dangerous perception as it can make one think that poverty is ordained by God and nothing can be done about the situation. This is quite a religious perspective and for that matter I reserve my further comments as a researcher. Some of the research participants think that, if one does not do things differently from one’s parents, chances are that, one will remain as his or her parents. The subsequent chapter gives account of the ways children go in and out of poverty and how they fight it.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF POVERTY AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

##### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the analysis of data on children's experiences of poverty and the livelihood strategies they employ to cope with poverty in everyday life. The chapter commences by taking a look at some of the negative experiences of poverty by children. It then discusses the experiences of poverty that make children resilient, lessons that poor children learn as a result of working. This is followed by discussions of major livelihood strategies that children adopt to fend for themselves, which is the ways children fight poverty in their lives. The last section discusses children's views on going to school and leisure and appropriate ways of improving their living conditions.

##### 6.2.1 Some Negative Experiences of Poverty by Children

Although children's experiences of children are interrelated, they are dependent upon individual experiences. One of the experiences of poor children at home is how they do not receive care from their parents. During focus group discussions, a 15 year old boy said;

I face a [perpetual] experience of my parents not taking care of me. I stopped going to school because my parents cannot buy me my school needs.

The educational background of this child's parents is linked to the neglect of their child's school needs though other factors like their level of income and the number of children in the family are significant contributors. The above child's quote is in line with the social-cultural capital, which postulates that, parental investments in children are undoubtedly related to the characteristics and intentions of parents as well as children. For instance, investment in education can be affected by parental perceptions of children's intelligence, diligence and interest (Behrman, 1997), as well as by parents' own experience of education. This he thought was one of his memorable experiences with his parents at home. This statement by the research participant did not go without, similar responses and nodding of heads from other research participants. Another experience of poverty

among children is related to the postponement of their needs by their parents as a result of lack of resources and order of birth. This was narrated during the discussions by a 15 year old girl whose father is a plumber and the mother a seamstress;

My parents do not complain but they always postpone [the satisfaction of my] needs. I have eight siblings and I am the sixth born. We live in a compound house with other people. My father said because the place we live is too small, my brothers should find a place to sleep at night. They live with their friends in the [neighbourhood].

This child's narrative concurs with Aldersen's (2000, 2001) view that, a combination of gender, order of birth, age of parents at child's birth is particularly vital factors as they influence the availability of resources. Indeed, experience has shown that, to complain has been the main focus of poor people, nevertheless, in some cases; some poor people have learnt not to complain in the midst of financial handicaps.

Far from the above children's experiences, feeling of shame and living in poor housing conditions are other experiences of children as a boy at the age of 12 years who stopped schooling including his six siblings shared with me during an individual interview that;

I went through the experience of not having a dress to wear to school and a place to sleep. My school uniform is torn and when I wear it, my friends laugh at me and I feel ashamed. When the sun is hot or when it rains, we cannot stay in the [dilapidated] wooden kiosk. My mother always put a bowl on the floor to collect the water that [drips down] when it is raining. The place becomes wet and we cannot sleep well at night.

He said this was one of the hard times for him and the parents. They had to be shuttling between kiosks of people and on some occasions, the owners had to kick them out from the kiosk. Eight other research participants presented similar experiences of how they were sacked from their accommodation as a result of not being able to pay their rents. These experiences are common phenomena of poor households in Ghana. Lack of adequate food at home and wearing worn-out shoes and dresses are great worries to children especially if they have to appear in public places. An experience shared by a 13 year old shed light on these;

When I was young, I could not go to church on Sundays because I did not have nice dresses to wear and I had no pair of shoes. We eat sometimes two times in a day and the food was very small. My brothers and elder sisters go out to look for their own food because my parents cannot feed us all, we are six in the family.

Children struggling to get a square meal a day is a terrible experience as children shared with me coupled with their out fits. It is a common thing to find poor children dressed up in tattered dresses and sometimes without a pair of shoes or sandals.

It can be concluded from children's experiences of poverty that; feeling of shame, lack of adequate food at home, living in kiosks and dilapidated buildings, wearing of worn-out shoes and tattered dresses, and the neglect and postponement of their needs by their parents were the dominating experiences and views of children.

Some other negative experiences of poverty by children range from societal neglect to inability of parents meeting their children's needs. I asked my research participants during focus group discussions to list down and share with others some of the negative experiences of poverty. A 16 year old girl said;

Experience of poverty makes me not to show compassion to others. I said this because, I think if I share things with others, I may end up being poor as I can see rich people around who do not have [compassion] on me.

This particularly is a matter of concern. This child has made an observation that the rich in his vicinity appear not to be of assistance to them and for that reason, he thinks following this foot step may keep him also rich one day. Though this child shared this notion with me, she knows that it is a negative perception. Thus, children learn a lot from adults in their society and they make some decisions based on those experiences. On the other hand, s by a 13 year old girl shared with me that;

I think it will be difficult for a poor person to rise to the top in society. All politicians, business men and women are from rich homes and how could the poor also rise to that level.

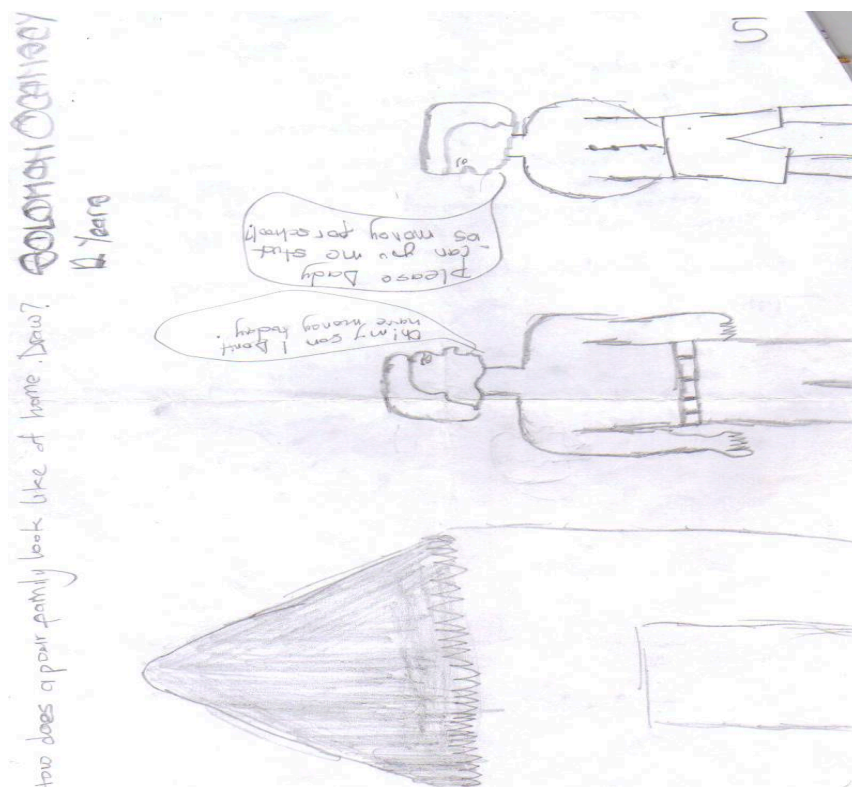
This child's quote agrees with the literature that suggests that, individuals can break out of intergenerational poverty cycles, but perhaps to a lesser degree than commonly believed

(Corcoran, 1995; Solon, 1999; Binder and Woodruffe, 1999). Though this child believes that she can break out of poverty, experience has shown her that, the poor hardly does move to the top as she later during the discussion admitted that some poor people also achieve these levels in life but *a few* as she concluded. There is sense of conviction in what this research participant said and many other research participants agreed with her.

For another research participant, a 12 year old boy, he experienced that the term *I don't have it* is a vocabulary among the poor. And he explained that this way of life is bad as it keeps one down all the times. He demonstrated this by a drawing when a child was asking his father to give him money to go to school but the father was not able and the term *I don't have it* came in automatically as the last resort.

It can be observed from Figure 6 that, this child had shown how a conversation between a child and the father ended up being as a lesson he learned.

Figure 6: A drawing by a 12 year old boy demonstrating a conversation at home



Source: Field Work, 2011

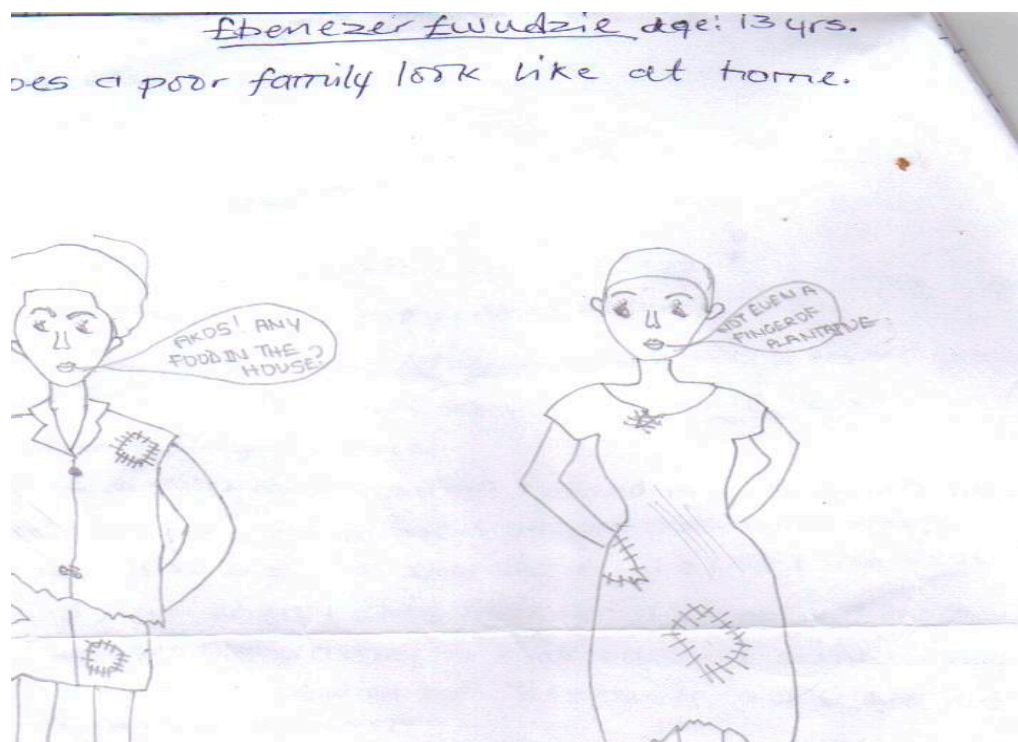
The drawing tells it all as one can see the type of building this family has and the normal conversation outside room as there is no hall for discussion. The picture of the child with his hands folded at his back is also an indication of politeness of children to their parents at home in the Ghanaian context.

As the discussion went on, another boy at the age of 12 years said that;

I experience that poverty makes people don't have food at home. When I wake up, I think about what to eat and when I ask my mother for food, she will say, there is no food at home now.

He later showed me a drawing where a daughter asked her mother if there was any food at home and the response was nothing, *not even a finger of plantain*. This drawing in Figure 7 shows how the conversation between a young daughter and the mother ended up with regard to availability of food at home.

Figure 7: A drawing by a 13 year old boy.

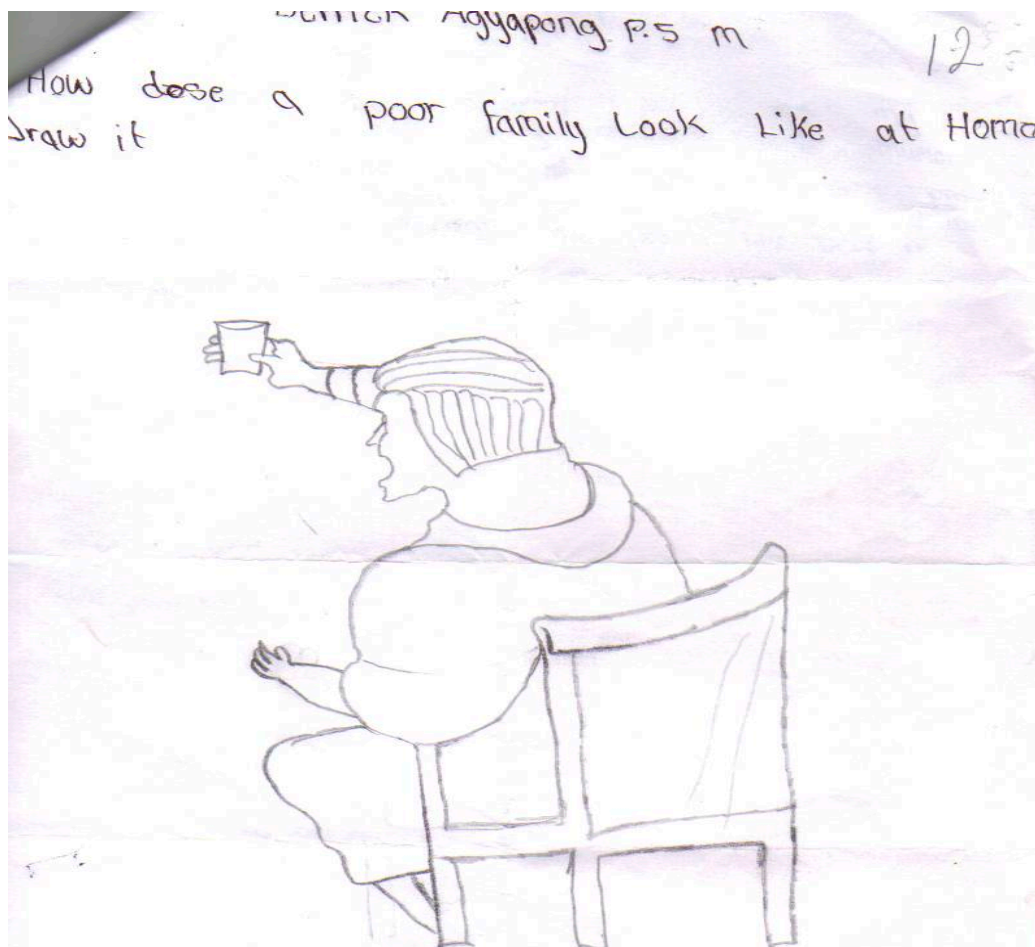


Source: Field Work, 2011

He said that this experience is bad or negative because, without food life is difficult to live each day.

Another research participant noted that one bad experience of poverty has to do with the drunkenness of his father. He admitted that, sometimes he tastes some of the drinks on the way home and this he considers as a bad experience of a child. This drawing illustrates in Figure 8 shows how his father drinks alcohol and gets wild at home.

Figure 8: A drawing by a 12 year old boy



Source: Field Work, 2011

He explained that, his father abuses alcohol regularly in order to forget about life problems. This in his view, he said was very bad experience as his father always asks him to go get him the drink.



In summary, children have shown that the habit of drinking alcohol and complaining about not having enough food at home, the-“I don’t have attitude”, lack of compassion to assist poor people, among others are the major negative experiences of poverty.

### **6.2.2 Experiences of Poverty That Make Children Resilient**

The opening of the discussion of this topic began with a question that I asked; does your experience of poverty make you strong or resilient? I felt it engaging how my research participants responded to this question. This I said because, more often than not, it appears we think there is nothing positive from experiencing poverty. One of the major experiences of poverty that make children resilient is the strong mentality that they can overcome any challenge in their lives. This was demonstrated by an experience shared during focus group discussions by a 15 year old girl who currently lives with her peer and both sleep in someone’s wooden kiosk shop. She noted;

I think poverty makes me think that I can overcome any problem in my life by myself. If I can struggle to take care of myself now, then it is [possible] to be strong enough to overcome other situations in my life. I buy my own dresses, food and school needs and I think I can make it later in life.

I think this child felt deep down her that, she had good satisfaction in fending for herself and that if situations in future turn out to be even worse, she can overcome them. In support of the above, it is known that exposure to risk does not necessarily always result in negative outcomes. Among children growing up in poor circumstances some cope better than others (Luthar et al., 2000; Werner and Smith 2001). These children are tacit to be competent or resilient in the context of adversity (Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1985). And indeed, some of these poor children have to large extent confirmed this literature on children’s resilience to effects of poverty. Understanding what are the sources of support and protection for children and how these can be strengthened to improve life chances is also fundamental for policies aimed at preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Likewise, a 13 year old girl who could not further up her education as a result of her parent’s inability to meet her educational needs and for that reason ended up selling oranges at the road side said that;

Sometimes I believe I can do anything on my own. At my age, I feed myself and do other things, so if nobody is there for me, I can still make it.

According to Boyden and Mann (2005, p. 10), “adversity is as much a matter of perception as of situational fact”. The above child’s perception of possibilities of a successful life in the midst of her poor situation testifies to this. Similar responses were shared by other research participants and the discussion held on this had shown that, these children think that they are strong enough morally, spiritually and in their small financial way to face any condition in their lives head on. In other words, my research participants do not think only that they are victims of poverty but also they are resilient to poverty. Another boy at the age of 14 shared with me that, he works and goes to school concurrently and this he considers at his age as a great achievement that makes him to overcome any difficult situation in his life later on. Working at this young age to cater for oneself is a great sign of resilience on the part of my research participants.

### **6.2.3 What do you learn from Your Poor Friends?**

Children learn diverse things from their friends as they move together in their course of life. *We learn to forgive and forget*, as a 13 year old boy said to me during group discussions. Moving with peers brings about arguments, lively talks and sometimes fights among children as my research participants told me. And in cases of fights and heated arguments, a 15 year old boy said, *we fight, insult but we forgive one another and move together again [thereafter]*. This is very important as poor children’s relationships are based on negotiations, struggle for space and food that more often than not lead to fights and arguments. In support of this, a 14 year old boy said that;

A man one day asked us to help him to his house with a luggage as I moved with my friend and we knew that he would pay us for that when we reached his home.

He further explained how hard they fight for a space to see who would help carry the bag. This drama is a common thing that occurs among children who engage in *kayaye*, which literally means, carrying loads for people for money. Poor children also learn to be entrepreneurs on their own. They form *Susu* groups with their peers. *Susu* groups are people who come together to contribute money and give it to one member and it goes in turns for other members. It is documented that, “not only do supportive relationships with family and nonparental adults help

to protect children from the negative effects of stressful situations, there is considerable evidence that social support from peers can greatly enhance children's resilience" ( Boyden and Mann, 2005, p.7). A 16 year old girl noted that they form a *Susu* group of three members in which they contribute money out of their livelihood savings each month and give it to one person and it goes in turns;

We contribute fifteen Ghana cedis each month, each of us contributes five Ghana cedis and we give it to one person at the end of the month. And everyone gets her own in [turns].

This is vital in children's lives as it builds trust among them. It also sets as a basis of entrepreneurship among them. Coupled with that is a sense of savings that these children are trying to cultivate. Apart from these learning experiences shared by these research participants, other research participants said they learnt from their friends how to dress up neatly, acquire the skills of playing football and working with friends in groups. Studies documented that, "positive peer relationships provide an arena of support outside the family in which they can experiment, develop attitudes, skills, and values and learn to share, help and nurture one another" (Boyden et al., 2005, p. 8). Working with peers in group helps to build team work and makes them become good team players now and for the future. These were some of the learning experiences that children shared with me during the discussion. The importance of a good relationship among poor children and their well being has being largely supported by studies carried on children and poverty (Percy, 2003; Willow, 2002).

### **6.3 Livelihood Strategies Adopted by Children Living in Poverty**

#### **6.3.1 Ways That Children Fight Poverty**

Children's strategies of responding to their poverty and deprivation vary. The responses varied as to which livelihood was available to each child though similarities are always there to look up for. Liebel, (2004) cited in (Bourdillon, 2006, p. 1206) argues that "children from the south teach us a different perspective on children's work from the one that arises in Europe". The following children's work add layer to this perspective. Engagement of children in income generating activities such as selling items in the market is one of the ways that they fight poverty. For example, a 16 year old boy explained during group discussions that;

I help myself by working for money. I work after school every day by selling chewing gums and key holders at the road side. I move along with the cars in traffic in the nearby town. Sometimes I make some money but sometimes too, I come home empty pocket. I sell coconut over the weekends for an old man and I make some money out of it as well. I sometimes make 5 Ghana cedis on Saturdays and sometimes 7 Ghana cedis. I spend 2 Ghana cedis and keep the rest for my needs.

This he does as weekend job to buy his basic needs like dresses to church, food and a pair of shoes. Mortimer's study as noted by Bourdillon found that children who did "not find paid employment during high school were less likely seven years later to be in jobs that they considered to be career oriented, and usually had lower incomes than children who had worked" (Bourdillon, 2006, p. 1217). Thus this child's working experience is likely to land him in better work in future. Likewise, a 13 year old girl who lives in a compound house with other relatives shared with me how she engages in petty trade that;

I sell with someone, smoke fish, and wash to get money. We go to the sea side on Saturdays and buy the fish and come back to smoke them. I then carry some on my head and go round to sell it to people in my area. But I am sad to say this, I don't know where my mother is living and I don't even know her.

Though she lives with her relatives, she takes up this casual job with her neighbour to supplement the assistance she receives from her relatives. She does all these jobs in order to earn some income. When I asked her whether she does all these jobs over the weekend, she replied that, mostly she does wash the dresses for rich people around after school and even smokes fishes after school sometimes. Thus, this child shuttles between school and job activities.

Similarly, another 12 year old girl noted;

I sell iced cream to take care of myself. Someone gave me the money to buy the iced cream and when I sell them, I [account to her] and she gives me my part. I make about 15 Ghana cedis a month and sometimes more than that.

This child sells iced-cream on commission basis and the more she sells the more she earns. Children also engage in household activities as domestic workers to earn a living. This was illustrated by 14 year old girl who resides with one of her church members presently that;

I pray to God for help to [overcome] my poverty situation. I wash dresses for some people in my area and they pay me some money. I keep 5 Ghana Cedis each month.

This child's quotation resonates with Abebe (2007, p. 82) that "children's productive and domestic works within household constitute the core of social reproduction in rural areas". As for this child, though she does some other jobs to fight poverty in her life, prayer to God to overcome poverty in her life is a priority. This implies that, prayer is a major fighting tool against poverty in some children's lives. Indeed, other research participants shared the same view alongside their other livelihood strategies.

Likewise, working for the wealthy is one of the livelihood strategies adopted by children as a 15 year old boy noted during focus group discussions that;

I train a dog for the rich and earn some money. I go to a local chop bar to find some [leftover] in the afternoon and in the evening. Sometimes during weekends, I go with some friends to look for plastic and metal containers at a refuse dump; we sell them and make some money.

I also asked my research participants if they receive anything apart from money from those they work for. In an answer to that, most of the research participants commented that they receive food mostly from their employers and in some cases; food is the only thing they get in return for their labour. This is a common scenario with children who work for adults. They only get some food from their employers and money becomes a secondary matter.

Working on farms of people for money was also one of the livelihood strategies adopted by children as a 15 year old boy pointed out;

I weed people's farms for them over the weekends and I also serve as a gardener for a rich man in a nearby city. Sometimes I get 30 Ghana cedis a month.

The above child's quote is in agreement with children's engagement in subsistence farming. He said, not only does he work on the farms of people but also takes care of their lawns at home

which confirms the crucial aspect of children’s domestic work. As Nieuwenhuys (1996, p. 242) notes that, “there is more and more evidence that poor children who are not employed perform crucial work, often in domestic arena, in subsistence agriculture, and in the urban informal sector”. Animal rearing is one of the farming activities children employ as a livelihood strategy as a 14 year old boy said during focus group discussions that;

I rear goats and sheep for money. I have my own animals that I take care of them. When I sell one goat, I get 40 Ghana cedis but it is difficult to take care of animals.

He said he does this work as his major source of income as he pays his school fees and buy other stuffs for himself out of this work. He took this picture to demonstrate his animals’ pen.

Figure 9: A picture by a 14 year old boy



*Source:* Field Work, 2011: This is a typical picture of where a research participant takes care of his goats and sheep.

Learning handcrafts is a common livelihood strategy that children adopt to fight poverty in their lives. A 13 year old boy who left his parents in a nearby village and presently resides with her aunt said that the ways he fights poverty are by;

Weeding, running errands, basket weaving, and throwing refuse away for people. I also [fetch] firewood for some of my neighbours and they sometimes give me money and food.

This child engages in basket weaving and selling of firewood to earn a living. Working on Saturdays in the main markets in the community is rampant among these poor children. A good number of them admitted that they visit the markets in the community regularly over the weekends.

Similarly, children will do anything to get a moving vehicle to stop and buy items from them. A 13 year old boy said he does this to selling chewing gums and chocolates at road side.

What we do is that, when the vehicle is in traffic, we chase it with the goods and as it starts to move, we move with them. It can be difficult because, the car can [knock] you down and kill you.

What this implies is that, these children also learn risk management and they are adventurous. They take risks and they win the potential customers.

Likewise children engagement in daily market activities and retail trade has been narrated by a 15 year old girl whose mother is a petty trader in the local market that;

I help my mother to sell tomatoes, pepper, palm oil, onions, fish and okro mostly during weekends. My mother does not pay me but she takes care of me. I also sell oranges and banana at the road side in the evenings.

She acknowledged that, she does not receive pay for her services when she works with her mother in the local market but benefits from the care that her mother gives her. Begging is one of the livelihood strategies that children adopt to fight poverty. A 12 year old boy admitted that;

I stand at the road side in the [nearby] city and ask people for help or money. They sometimes give me and sometimes too, they ask me to go and work for money. Some people give me 1 Ghana cedis and some people give me 50 pesewas.

Begging is one of the commonest livelihoods and coping strategies of poor children and this child does beg to make an end means in his locality. My research participants mentioned various amounts of money they earn per month from their jobs. And out of this various amounts earned,

the average amount earned by them was GH ₵ 30.00 per month which was equivalent to 20 US dollars per month.

In summary, similar and different livelihood strategies were expressed by children as means of fighting poverty in their lives. These livelihood strategies range from income generating activities such as selling items in the local markets eg tomatoes, onions, fish, oranges and banana, engagement in farming activities like animal husbandry and farm helps, learning of handicrafts, begging at the road sides, to working for the wealthy as domestic workers.

### **6.3.2 Working and Schooling Concurrently- Views Shared by Research Participants**

Divergent views were shared by my research participants with regard to working and schooling at the same time. I asked; what are your views on going to school and working as a child? A 12 year old boy noted during focus group discussions that *I think, working and going to school at the same time is good but [challenging]*. He explained that, when back from school, he had to go and find something to do in order to earn some money. Another research participant, a girl at the age of 13 said, *working and schooling in my view is good so long as we are paid well*. This view expressed by this child appears that a lot of children work hard for adults and yet they earn far below what they deserve to earn for their work done and this is in line with the common notion that children earn less than they deserve when they work. Thus working and going to school per se for this child is not a problem rather the problem has to do with meagre remuneration for the work done. Another child outlined that schooling and working is not good since it will not make a child has time to learn and rest. A 14 year old boy said however that;

For a lazy child, he may complain that he does not have time to learn on the [notion] of working for self and the family.

To this child, incompatibility of working and schooling is attributed to laziness of the child.

Difficulty in combining working and schooling was noted by a child as a 16 year old girl noted, *it is difficult to work and School and that it will affect a child's education*. This child thinks that education should take precedence over working as a child as this is the preparatory stage for the child to work later in future as she elaborated to me. Dissimilarly, a 15 year old boy said, *as for me, I think that it is healthy because one will be healthy through that process*. Thus this research



participant thought that working and schooling keep the child healthy as a form of exercise. According to a 13 year old boy, it is fun to work and school at the same time as one earns some money in return for the work done.

Working and schooling at the same time is thought to be good for clever children. This was expressed by a 14year old girl during focus group discussions that; *working and schooling is good for those who are intelligent*. As for this child, it may be very difficult to combine schooling with working if the child is not all that clever. Thus intelligent children can work while they are in school.

In general, more than half of my research participants were of the view that schooling and working are good for children. They however emphasised varied reasons such as; it is only good for intelligent children, it is a form of exercise, it is sometimes difficult to combine schooling and working, and it is a good combination when they receive good pays for their work done. They were also of the view that, working as children helps to contribute to the family's income.

### **6.3.3 Weekend Activities That Children Perform**

Focus group discussions have shown that, weekend activities by children were characterized by watching movies, performing household chores, making money and others. On Saturdays, my research participants work in the house, cook and Sweep the compound. There were others that go to estates to wash plates and bowls in hotels and restaurants. A 15 year old boy said;

I wake up around 6am on Saturdays; brush my teeth, bath and head towards a nearby hotel to wash bowls for them.

For some children they go to the market and help carry loads for people to their houses. Some get food and dresses to wear by scrubbing the bath houses of some people around their neighbourhood. While some children go to farm with their parents and come back to sell pure water in the evening at the road side, others had training on Saturdays as can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Some Weekend Activities That Children Perform

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Some Weekend Activities that the Children Perform</b>
<b>Four Children</b>	Sweeping the main compound and the rooms, taking care of the younger siblings, working on farms, pounding of fufu.
<b>Five Children</b>	Working in a nearby hotel, playing of football, selling pure water at the road side, fetching water for the home.
<b>Three Children</b>	Taking errands for parents and guardians, cooking for the family, watching movies in friends' houses.
<b>Eight Children</b>	Feeding animals at home, washing dresses both for themselves and for their parents, taking Bible lessons, doing their school homework, singing in church choir etc.

Source: Field Work, 2011.

For some of the children, they do their home work and go to study at a school nearby apart from helping their mothers prepare an evening meal. Some of them also assist their younger ones to do their homework and then go for a Bible lesson. These were some of the main activities my children noted they engage in during the weekends.

## **6.4 Alleviating Poverty among Children**

### **6.4.1 Responsibility of the Government**

Much of the work on alleviating poverty among children rests on the government of my research participants, as they alerted me. In line with this, a 15 year old girl commented that, *I want the government to construct a stand pipe in our community*. This she thought will help solve some of the water problems in the area and thereby improving their living conditions. Children seem to be people responsible for fetching water at homes for the family and lack of water in the area becomes a major hindrance on their ways of life. The picture in Figure 10 below shows one of the numerous places that poor children fetch water daily.

Figure 10: A picture of where poor children fetch water



*Source:* Field Work, 2011: This picture shows a child fetching stagnant water for drinking

Another research participant at the age of 14 years noted, *we need welfare [packages] from the government to take care of us financially*. Currently, there are no obvious welfare packages to assist children financially in Ghana, and if there is, it is limited to only a few children. The government of Ghana must be responsible for the needs of children irrespective of their parents' financial capabilities. In this way, every child in Ghana will have equal opportunity to go to school, eat every day and look up to a colourful future. For a 13 year old girl, the government and non-governmental organisations should try to provide a free community library for them, so that those of them who cannot afford to pay to attend a library can take this one as an alternative in the community. In addition, another research participant, a 12 year old boy said, *we need classroom blocks and computer laboratory block in the community*. The children thought that the

current school facilities are weak and dilapidated and therefore the need to replace them with new ones is a matter of urgency. A visit to their school had shown that, they really lack good, educational infrastructure and learning logistics such as computers, mathematical sets, pens and pencils, projectors and the least said the better. For another research participant, he wanted the government and non-governmental organisations to come to the aid of their parents and guardians to establish petty businesses that can help them earn some reasonable incomes. This other research participants recommended strongly as it will act as a pillar of breakthrough for their families.

In the same way, a 13 year old girl indicated that, *I want the government [and any well meaning individuals] to assist us pay our hospital bills.* This is particularly important, as we often hear of children crying in hospitals for financial assistance in order to go through health related issues. Though the government of Ghana is presently implementing National Health Insurance Scheme, a good number of serious and complicated illnesses are not parts of this scheme and for that matter; children who suffer these exempted sicknesses they will have to foot the bills themselves. In another instance, a research participant wanted the government to provide school pupils with exercise books, dust bins, first aid box, story books, and dictionaries. These he thought will reduce the work load on their parents in relation to their education.

It can be concluded here that children's ideas about how to eradicate child poverty need to be considered as their experiences of poverty put them at a good position to recommend what is good for them in order to improve their living conditions.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. First, the chapter takes a quick look at the qualitative research method and techniques applied in this study and then the presentations of the major findings followed. In terms of the presentation of the key findings of the study, I consider the main objectives of the study and the main findings under each of the objectives. The second half of the chapter draws conclusions from the findings of the study. Finally, the chapter presents major recommendations based on the key findings about potential for future research.

#### **7.2 Summary of the Objectives**

This study aimed to explore poor children's perspectives and experiences of poverty, examine the livelihood strategies they employ to get by and suggest ways of improving their lives from their points of view. The following section address key findings linked to the research objectives.

##### **7.2.1 Methodological Consideration**

The study explored children's perspectives and experiences of poverty and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village, Ghana. The research method applied in the study was qualitative research method. The qualitative research method chosen for the study was appropriate as it brought out an in-depth understanding of children's perspectives, experiences and livelihood strategies of poverty and thereby highlighting the essence of social studies of children which is about the live experiences of children in this study. Four qualitative research techniques were however used in gathering the relevant data on the main objectives of the study. These research techniques were; focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, drawings, the use of ranking, and finally the use of cameras as explained into detail in chapter three. Twenty research participants took part in providing the data for the study and they were aged from 12 to 16 years. Out of these twenty poor children, ten of them were boys and ten were girls as presented in chapter five.

### **7.2.2. Summary of key Findings**

#### **7.2.3 Children's Perspectives of Poverty**

The major definitions of poverty by children were related to lack of food and balanced diet at homes of children. Poor housing conditions and lack of electricity in the homes of children, lack of money to pay children's school fees, lack of good pair of shoes, low family incomes, high level of unemployment among family members and siblings, lack of good drinking water, children lacking enough clothing and dresses as well as lack of a good place of convenience (toilet). Furthermore, fights among siblings of children during meals' time, inability of parents to pay their children's school fees and hospital bills, and many children born into one family were the main features of poverty that children provided.

With regard to the gender faces of poverty; both boys' and girls' views were in line with the local perceptions and expectations of responsibilities demanded by society as well as their gendered needs. Time management was a key problem to poor children as they have to be shuttling between working and schooling. Some of the children thought that it would have been better if their basic needs could be provided for them while they are in school whereas others thought that combining schooling and working is good thing but for intelligent children. Losing of respect and human dignity in the community of poor children was one of the major ways children thought they were affected by poverty. They thought that, poor people are not regarded and respected by others in their vicinity.

#### **7.2.4 Children's Experiences of Poverty**

Experiences of poverty by children were related to the individual circumstances in which they found themselves. Children struggling to get a square meal a day is a terrible experience as children shared with me coupled with their tattered dresses. It is a common thing to find poor children dressed up in tattered dresses and sometimes without a pair of shoes or sandals. It can be concluded from children's experiences of poverty that; feeling of shame was one of the major experiences that children had as they had to be wearing worn-out shoes and tattered dresses. Children felt that it is disgrace to put on torn dresses while other children dress up in nice attires. Coupled with the feeling of shame was living in kiosks and dilapidated buildings. It is a great worry for poor children when it comes to place of abode. In addition, the neglect and

postponement of children's needs by their parents was one of the experiences that children encounter in the course of their lives. One negative experience of poverty by children however was the chance of getting into drinking alcohol as their parents do send them to buy liquor for them. Children were positive about how they can overcome the myriad of problems they face as a sign of their resilience and agency. They thought that no problem was too big to let them down and that they have the ability and capability to overcome it now and in the future.

Furthermore, children have learnt a lot of things from their peers. For instance, some of them have learnt how to forgive and forget about the misunderstandings that happen among them. Some of them also admitted that they formed small groups in which they contribute money to assist one another in turns. These strengthen their socialisation and foster their economic growth.

#### **7.2.5 The Livelihood Strategies Adopted by Children Living in Poverty**

There are different ways that children fight poverty and these various ways depend on the child's capabilities and the livelihood strategy available to him or her in the community. In an attempt to explore some of the livelihood strategies employed by poor children as a means of fighting poverty; the following came up:

First, children were involved in several income generating activities. These income generating activities were related to selling of basic items in the local market such as oranges, banana, tomatoes, onions, and fish, just to mention a few. Some of the children sell these items after school and some during the weekends. Secondly, children were engaged in farming activities such as rearing of animals and working on farm lands for some people in their community. Goats and sheep were the main animals reared by some of the children. Activities that were carried out by children on farms ranged from weeding, raising of yam mounds to fetching fire wood.

Another livelihood strategy that children employed has to do with learning of handcrafts. Weaving of baskets, caps, shopping bags were some of the items they learnt to weave. Engagement of children in domestic work was also one of the major livelihood strategies that children adopted. These household chores ranged from, washing of bowls, cooking, washing of dresses, tidying up the house and the rooms to taking care of the pets at home etc. The latter activities were done for the wealthy who could afford to give them some money or food for the services provided. Begging at the road side for money and the temptation of engaging in prostitution were

also some of the ways that children fight poverty (livelihood strategy) in their lives. Though these livelihood strategies were not prevalent among my research participants, nevertheless, they were adopted by a couple of them.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Children's perspectives of poverty varied to a large extent from one child to another. Their perspectives of poverty had to do with the individual circumstances in which they found themselves rather than a holistic perspective. For instance, the study has shown that, the definitions of poverty, features of poverty and how a poor family looks like at home were related to the specific child in question and therefore it can be concluded that poor children have their own perspectives of poverty that may be similar or different from other poor children, and the later has been indicated in the gender faces of poverty. From the study, it suffice to say that, the assessment of individual poor child's circumstance takes precedence over looking at the whole picture of poor children. And this will go in a long way to eradicating child poverty as the views and opinions of children are considered.

The study has also indicated that, children's experiences of poverty were in integration with the family background of the individual child. And this family background has to do with the education, occupation and income level of the child's parents or guardians. For instance, it has been shown from the study that, children's whose parents earn meagre amounts of money monthly could not take care of the basic needs of their children. Thus these children had to drop out of school at an early age which they consider a bad experience as they see other children from wealthy homes go to school. Thus parental finances and other resources are major bases of the child's continuity or discontinuity in schooling.

Furthermore, conclusion can be drawn from the study that, children face the feeling of shame that emanates from the ways they appear in public. These have to do with their dresses and pair of shoes. These basic necessities of life cannot be overlooked, as lack of them can lower the self esteem of children. Children have good skills that they can exhibit in public arenas from which the society can benefit, but preventing children to attend public events as a result of lack of decent dresses and a good pair of shoes is an experience that children consider shameful and



abysmal. It also acts as a major hindrance to the development and improvement of children's social relationship.

Finally, it can be concluded that children like to engage in livelihood activities to assist their parents and guardians but it can be stressful to them if these activities become routine and act as the main source of their livelihood while they remain school pupils. Thus the livelihood strategies that children employ from this study are not in themselves necessarily harmful and detrimental to their physical, social, educational, and health growth but employing them as a means of their survival, coping strategies and livelihood strategies is what can be considered inimical to their education as no one can underrate the relevance of children's education in the twenty-first century.

#### **7.4 Recommendations for Working with Poor Children and Future Research**

The study has provided an insight into poor children's perspectives, experiences and livelihood strategies in Sakumono Village. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

- ❖ Programmes and projects that are meant to alleviate and eradicate child poverty in Sakumono Village should endeavour to incorporate the voices, views and opinions of poor children into these programmes and projects. This attempt will contribute to the sustainability and great impact of the programmes on the lives of poor children and thereby making judicious use of the scarce resources available.
- ❖ The need-assessment of children and poor children should take gendered perspectives. Boys and girls have different needs and aspirations as well as societal expectations. This approach of the assessment of children's needs will provide a better insight into their needs rather than a holistic approach.
- ❖ Children's needs and problems are integrated and interwoven with their family backgrounds. Thus any attempt to alleviate child poverty among poor children in Sakumono Village, should consider supporting the parents, guardians or caregivers of children in income generating activities in order to avoid the replication of the same problem in the near future.

- ❖ Policies that are formulated to provide the basis of quality lives for children and for that reason poor children, need to factor in and respect the perspectives of poor children as a major process of the policy formulation itself. This involvement of the perspectives of poor children in the formulation of policies has to do with international, national and local institutions or organisations. And this will act as one of the key reasons why the policies will make a great impact in the lives of children.
- ❖ It is also recommended that children's agency in their own lives and in the lives of people around them should be respected and recognised as a major contribution to the development of society now and in the near future.
- ❖ Future research should consider an in-depth investigation into urban children's perspectives of poverty and livelihood strategies in the major cities in Ghana.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

**Focus Group Discussions and Unstructured Interview Guide for Data Collection on the topic:**

**Children's Perspectives of Poverty and Livelihood Strategies in Sakumono Village, Ghana.**

**Research Site: Glory Assembly of God Child Development Centre, Sakumonon village.**

This is an academic research being carried out on the above topic in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of an MPhil in Childhood Studies degree. The researcher is currently a student of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Your views are being solicited to make this study a success. I assure you that any information given will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

#### **SECTION A: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Research Participant and Their Parents.**

1) Name: .....

2) Age: .....

3) Sex:

Male ( )

Female ( )

4) Level of education:

Primary school level ( )

Junior High school level ( )

Senior High school level ( )

5) Parental Information:

Is your father alive?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

Is your mother alive?

c) Yes ( )

d) No ( )

6) What work do your parents do? .....

7) What is the average income of your parents? .....

**SECTION B: Focus Group Discussions and Unstructured Interview Guide on Children's Perspectives on Poverty**

1) What does "poverty" mean to you as a rural child?

2) What does it mean to say your family is poor?

3) Is there anything good or positive of being poor?

4) What are the negative aspects of poverty to you as an individual?

5) How do you define poverty?

6) Is it possible to remain in poverty forever?

7) How does poverty affect boys and girls differently?

8) Can children come out of poverty?

9) Do you make any attempt to come out of poverty?

10) What do you think that brings about poverty?

11) What makes you think you are poor?

12) Can poverty motivate you to work harder in both school and at home?

13) Do you wish to be like other children who do not experience poverty at your age? Why?

**SECTION C: Focus Group Discussions and Unstructured Interview Guide on Children's Experiences of Poverty**

- 1) Can you share some of your experiences of poverty?
- 2) Which of your experiences of poverty has most lasting effect on you?
- 3) What are some of the material things that you lack that make you think you are poor?
- 4) Which of the material things you lack are most important to you? List in order of importance.
- 5) Does your experience of poverty make you strong/resilient? What about those that make you weak?
  
- 6) Is there any difficulty in going to school and while being poor in your community? Give reasons.
  
- 7) How does a poor family look like at home? Draw it.

**SECTION D: Focus Group Discussions and Unstructured Interview Guide on Livelihood Strategies adopted by Children Living in Poverty**

- 1) What are the livelihood strategies you employ to fend for yourself? List them.
- 2) Do you find any conflict between working and going to school? How?
- 3) What are your views on going to school and working as an individual?
- 4) Do you think it is good for children to go to school while they work as well?
- 5) Do you receive money or any material thing for working? How much on the average?
- 6) What do you learn from working with your peers or friends?
- 7) Is it good for you to work after school and holidays? Explain your answer.
- 8) What do you do during weekends? List them
- 9) Do you think you should be paid for doing household chores? Explain your response.

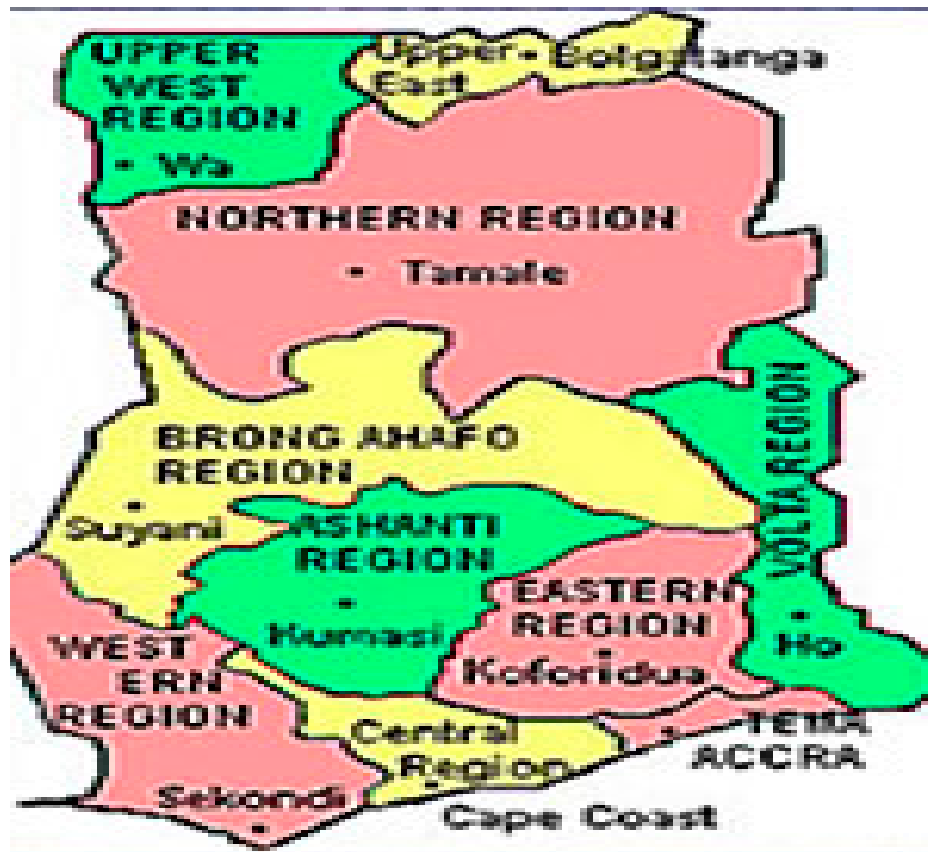


### **SECTION E: Children's Recommendations to Alleviate Poverty**

- 1) What should you do to help improve your, a) social, b) health, c) educational, d) and economic life conditions?
- 2) What do you suggest your parents should do to help improve your living condition?
- 3) What do you suggest your community should do to reduce poverty among children in the community?
- 4) What should the government do to alleviate poverty among children in your community or Ghana?

## APPENDIX II

A Map Showing the Location of the Study Area, Tema, Ghana



Source: [www.Ghanadistricts.com](http://www.Ghanadistricts.com)