Child Domestic Workers

Evidence from West and Central Africa

Dr. Dorte Thorsen
April 2012

unicef

Contents

Note: The numbers in square brackets refer to the references at the end of the briefing paper

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF

Contact:
UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office
BP 29720
Dakar-Yoff
Senegal
http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/overview_6585.html

Acronyms and abbreviations

ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENDA	Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde
ICI	International Cocoa Initiative
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO-IPEC	ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
LUTRENA	Lutte contre le Trafic des Enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre
MAEJT	Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs
UCW	Understanding Children's Work
WACAP	West Africa Cocoa Agriculture Project

Preface

A third of all children in West and Central Africa are estimated to work full- or part-time, paid or unpaid. Many of children are involved in hazardous and harmful economic activities, such as working in mines. Some are also exploited for sex and trafficked. Even if the work itself is not hazardous, many working children do not have access to education or drop out of school due to the opportunity costs for parents of keeping children in school and out of work. However, some children do combine work and school and earning an income may enable children to continue their schooling. Where the quality of education is poor or children are exposed to violence in schools, some children may prefer work to school. In some contexts, children derive a sense of meaning and responsibility from their work and the contributions they make to the family. To take them away from work without replacing the meaning and status they may receive can result in worse outcomes.

The prevention and response to child labour and exploitation in the region has fallen short in terms of quality, impact and scale. Over the past decade, much has been learned about what works and what doesn't in relation to child labour, exploitation and trafficking. Internationally, Understanding Children's Work (UCW) has done much to strengthen the evidence base. Many other organizations and researchers from different academic perspectives have contributed to a more differentiated analysis of children's work and of prevention and response efforts (e.g. Bourdillon, Myers, White, Boyden, Liebel, Woodhead).

Reviews and evaluations of anti-trafficking efforts have highlighted the need to distinguish between child migration and child trafficking and to avoid labelling all forms of child movement as child trafficking. These evaluations also emphasise the need for a better understanding of child mobility and the cultural, social and economic foundations of children's work in a broader context of social and economic mobility. A regional child mobility initiative was launched in 2008 to improve understanding of the cultural foundations of 'child labour', 'child migration' and 'child trafficking' and the role children's work and mobility plays in children's socialisation. The work done by the child mobility initiative is an important effort to rethink and redevelop prevention and responses to child labour that take social and cultural concepts of child development and education, social mobility and social protection into account. From this perspective, children and migration are linked to transitions within the life course and to rites of passage, whereby migration is part of becoming an adult, to earn cash and to get married. This perspective complements, and to some extent challenges, other approaches to child labour that focus more narrowly on poverty reduction, human resource development, or the application of international labour standards.

Five thematic briefing papers have been developed for types of child labour that have particular relevance for children in West and Central Africa. The focus is on the most pressing forms of child labour in the region, types of work that are receiving the greatest level of attention and have seen most resistance to change: Children in artisanal quarries and mines; Talibé children (Qur'ānic school pupils who are begging) in Sahelian countries; Children in commercial agriculture; Children in the informal urban sector; and Child domestic workers.

The purpose of the child labour briefing papers is to synthesise the empirical evidence of effective approaches to child labour and exploitation and identify approaches that have not worked or are unlikely to work with the current levels of human and financial resources. The briefing papers are aimed towards professionals working on child protection, education and social policy in countries in West and Central Africa. Each briefing paper presents evidence on the following aspects: description of the phenomenon, situation, trends, scale, impact on children; effective approaches to preventing child labour and exploitation.

Introduction

This briefing paper focuses on both boy and girl domestic workers, keeping in mind that the vast majority of children working in domestic service in West and Central Africa are girls. Most children in the two regions are involved in domestic chores at home; starting with small tasks and gradually increasing in complexity and workload. The educational purpose is to teach them the necessary practical, economic and social skills for adult life. Work in the home may consist of light tasks that are combined with schooling, but for those not in school it may also involve tasks taking most of the day, work in family businesses and commercial crops, and they may begin working for a wage outside the home.[11, 66] Parents and children, and often also employers, see child domestic work as part of this process of learning. Girls, in particular, relocate to a relative's house to help out with domestic chores. Both girls and boys do domestic work when staying with relatives to pursue education, and teenaged girls and boys seek paid work as domestics.

International agencies and non-governmental organisations have drawn attention to the fact that children's work in domestic service often is among the worst forms of child labour due to the health risks for children. Accordingly, the ILO Convention No. 182 states that all children under the age of eighteen must be protected from such work. **Protecting child domestic workers is challenging because of the hidden nature of domestic work inside private homes, because children often work for relatives and because domestic work may be socially and culturally accepted as appropriate work for children**.[37] It is often difficult to gather evidence of when domestic work is benign and when it is harmful.

Based on a review of a broad range of literature – spanning from newspaper articles, to reports of commissioned research, to Master and Doctoral theses, to peer reviewed academic publications – this briefing paper focuses specifically on children's experience of doing domestic work and on their aspirations for the future to bring to light a nuanced perspective of children's dreams, strategies and tactics whether they have looked for domestic work themselves or have been put to work by their parents or guardians.[86] Some of the reviewed literature contains detailed information on children's work in domestic service but lacks depth in the analysis, in which case the empirical findings are presented here and are re-analysed comparatively in conjunction with other studies.

Situating Child Domestic Workers in the 2000s

National statistical surveys have only begun to include questions about children's domestic work in the past five years. The ambiguous boundaries between helping out a relative and being an employee makes it extremely difficult to obtain reliable information about the exact number of children working as domestics. Girls who are fostered informally to help out in a relative's house are generally slightly younger than girls who are employed: some start at the age of seven or eight years and most are under fourteen years, whereas the employed girls often are in their mid- and late teens. Many girls remain in domestic work well beyond the age of 18.[6, 48, 55] [1]

Child domestic workers generally work long hours. They sweep the courtyard, collect water, wash dishes, do laundry, look after younger children, go to the market, help in food preparation or take charge of the cooking. Children working in low-income households often engage in income-generating activities in addition to the household chores assigned to them, especially if the woman of the house is a trader or runs a restaurant.[6, 13, 34, 35, 48, 61] **Girls who are labelled - and label themselves - as domestic workers may thus spend a significant amount of time vending in the street for their employer or relative**.[48, 51] However, **when boys spend significant amounts of time street vending they are usually labelled as street vendors and not as domestic**

---

[1] In many African countries a fifth to a third of children ages 10-14 do not live with their biological parents (MICS/DHS data).

workers.[66, 86] Another and perhaps more invisible group of domestic workers are students in secondary schools. They are rarely categorised as domestic workers but often shoulder a number of tasks, sometimes at the expense of their studies.[6] These differences in labelling impact on who is enumerated as domestic workers in a census and thus constitute another uncertainty in statistics.

Notwithstanding these uncertainties, estimates suggest that between one-third and two-thirds of all working children engage in domestic work, and that the majority of rural girls who relocate in search of work, leave for the city.[1, 19, 25] In fact, the large majority – 80 per cent or more - of the young domestic workers in West and Central Africa are girls, whether they are employed or work for relatives.[6, 48, 61] Their relocation is frequently within the district in which their village is located but may also be over considerably longer distances and across borders.[6, 56]

Reasons Why Children Work in Domestic Service

Poverty is the single most important factor in pushing children into work. For child domestic workers, the explanations of how this happens range from children being sold or given to traffickers,[29, 82] to children being sent out to work for household survival,[1, 61] to children being fostered by kin as a result of crisis, to fill a labour gap in the receiving household or to pursue education[3, 26, 44, 64] and, finally, to children travelling on their own accord with or without their parents' or guardians' approval.[1, 11, 13, 68] Spanning over a continuum from perceiving children plainly as victims to acknowledging that they may have a say in, or even initiate, their work trajectory, these explanations often make an implicit link between child migration and child domestic work.

> **Benin.** Eight per cent of all rural children aged six to 16 years had left their household of origin to work in the late 1990s; of these children, the majority of girls looked for domestic work in Benin or Gabon, as did a few boys.[3]
>
> **Guinea.** 61.4 per cent of all working children do domestic work.[28]

The variety of explanations of children's entry into domestic work addresses mainly the reasons for rural children to leave home and to a lesser degree the urban demand for children's work. In cases where a child's parents or guardians are the primary decision-makers, reasons range from crisis management to trying to meet what the adults consider in the best interests of the child. Crisis management refers to the need to reduce household consumption to tide over a particular difficult period and may involve the withdrawal of one or more children from school, the relocation of one or more children to kin - often the parents' siblings or parents – or to a trader or a person from the village with whom the parents have established a relationship. Girls are often the ones to be withdrawn from school if the family experiences financial problems.[35, 37, 51, 54]

At the other end of the continuum, rural parents are concerned with giving their children a range of skills that will help them overcome poverty in adult life. At home, both boys and girls carry out a number of domestic tasks related to the running of a household, as well as to farming and the rearing of livestock. Frequently, girls provide invaluable help to their mothers not only in the household but also in trade activities, and therefore they are sometimes withdrawn from school to learn practical tasks considered more important in securing a livelihood in adult life and a good marriage.[6, 36] **Adult perceptions of children's domestic work have to be understood within a process of learning: by working in an urban household children are perceived to learn additional skills, which give social status and allow for economic diversification later in life.**[73, 74]

Parents may forego their children's help at home and send one or more children to urban relatives to study or work, or accepting a kin's request for a child.[83, 85] Children's urban migration is part of strategies of poor families to mitigate risks and to diversify economic opportunities and to broaden and consolidate social networks and to meet children's needs for clothing, shoes and other material items.[54, 74] **Although part of long-term household strategies, in West Africa children's wages are rarely direct contributions to the household budget but indirect contributions in the sense that older children work to meet many of their own needs.**[40, 85, 70]

Children's entry into domestic work in cities and rural towns, however, is rarely the outcome of neat household strategies. First, many rural households are large and composite, implying that adults other than the parents may influence decisions about a child. Second, children may disrupt adult plans by running away from home to find work. It is difficult to generalise on the grounds of household composition or gender and sibling order, which children are more likely to become domestic workers. The dynamic between moving upon own initiative and being sent is an important one to highlight. **All too often, children's relocation is described solely in terms of being sent, despite the fact that children as young as ten years play a part in shaping their lives whether this is to pursue an education, a life in less poverty, a wish to help their family or to escape a high workload.**[31, 51, 57, 58, 60] One reason for this bias, is the difficulty of gauging the degree to which children of different ages are able to act upon their own wishes, especially in societies that privilege the decisions of elders and, in particular, of male elders.[2]

A prime motivation for child domestic workers is to earn money but often they are also motivated by the desire to do what is expected of them. In other words, they strive to be 'good' children. Furthermore, girls wish to learn skills not readily available in their home communities such as more languages, trade in a broader range of goods, urban cooking, as well as more formalised vocations. Many children see the learning aspect as a preparation for the future, just as their parents do.[54] **In general, rural children do not drop out of school to become domestic workers, but travel to urban areas to work because they are no longer, or never were, in school.** This may be because there is no school in their village, the quality of teaching is low, corporal punishment and other practices demotivate children or their parents, or the children and/or their parents do not value formal education. **For some children, however, domestic work is a means to continue school education,** because the relative they work for enrols them in school or they use their earnings to pay school fees and utensils. For others, promises of schooling are not honoured by their employer.[9, 18, 37] Finally, **working as a domestic is an acceptable way for girls to postpone marriage and carve out a little time to be a youth by demonstrating that they work towards marriage and collect a trousseau.**[56]

While it is clear that poverty and insecurity are primary reasons for children's relocation to cities and rural towns in West Africa, they do not explain why children enter certain types of work. Here we need to look at the types of work that are available to children, the demand for child domestic workers and contemporary recruitment mechanisms. The prolonged economic decline since the late 1970s has transformed urban economies and instigated a proliferation of small businesses focusing on food preparation and minor services. Statistics of urban employment in seven ECOWAS countries between 2001 and 2003 document that of all workers, 76.2 per cent found jobs in the informal economy[84], and for children, informal employment is, by and large, the only option. Employers prefer cheaper, low qualified labour.[53] Levels of remuneration for domestic work depend on supply and demand but also on locally-applicable standard rates.[3, 38, 49, 80] In both low- and middle-income households, children are usually brought in to carry out some or all of the domestic tasks because their employer does not have sufficient time to do all the domestic work, she wants cheap help at home and/or her own children go to school and are not available to do housework.[6, 34, 35, 48, 61]

Ways in Which Children Become Domestic Workers

Some children doing domestic work are recruited through fostering arrangements between relatives. Such arrangements include girls recruited specifically to do domestic work, as well as boys and girls who come to learn a trade or to study but also are expected to do domestic chores. Other children are employed as domestic workers and a few are taken in as non-kin household members.

For several decades, census data have shown a relatively higher proportion of girls aged five to nineteen years in places, such as Abidjan and Bamako[32, 48, 49] and qualitative research shows that many rural girls become

---

[2] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain research papers focusing on children working in domestic service in more individuated metropolitan societies, hence it is difficult to say anything about the constraints and opportunities children experience in such societies.

domestic workers in urban households. Given the paucity in statistical data on children's work, this data is important but it does not provide sufficient information on the origin of child domestic workers. Even though migration flows for work and education often are from rural to urban areas,[4, 78] **little information is available on children's relocation within larger cities or from villages that are close to towns or cities. As a result, programmes targeted at addressing child domestic work may be biased towards children coming from distant places while overlooking children who relocate over short distances to be live-in domestic workers or who travel from their home to their workplace on a daily basis**. This has a number of implications in that explanations of child domestic workers' suffering may easily become inscribed in the relocation itself. It is believed that they suffer because they do not live with their birth parents in a nuclear family, despite the fact that this family form is not the norm in much of rural West and Central Africa. Secondly, children from more distant places are portrayed as solitary and lost, thereby invoking a rural/urban dichotomy where the dense social linkages between urban and rural dwellers are disregarded. Finally, the lack of information about non-migrant child domestic workers prevents us from understanding whether their more extensive knowledge of urban ways and possibilities makes them act and react differently than do children from rural areas who have just arrived in the city.

In addition to fostering arrangements, girls may be recruited by women who have links with their village through kinship or trading activities and either require a girl to work in their own household or mediate a job with someone else who looks for domestic help.[13, 34] Such recruitment may sometimes amount to child trafficking, especially if the recruiters earn money on placing girls in domestic service,[33, 35] and sometimes it is a socially embedded way of ensuring that rural children find work and do not end up on the streets when they migrate to urban areas[51]. In fact, **very little is known about recruitment processes and children's active involvement in these**. Children may indeed be cajoled by family members into relocating[6, 49, 51] but older children often wish to find work and actively engage with relatives and other social contacts to work for them.[35]

> **Guinea**.   Just over half the Guinean girls working in domestic service in the mid-2000s had been sent by their parents to close kin in fostering arrangements, while the rest worked with unrelated employers. Many of these girls had been recruited by women linked with their village through kinship or trading activities. Girls also came to Conakry on their own account and then went to a woman from their home region who would host them until they found work and tried to find them a job.
>
>   Malian girls working in Conakry were, according to the same study, recruited by Malian women with contacts in both countries who lured girls to travel to Guinea with promises of higher wages. These women received money for every successful recruitment they had brokered.[35]
>
>   Interestingly, Malian girls were not credited with the same level of agency in making decisions about migration for domestic work as Guinean girls.

Finally, **both boys and girls travel to the city on their own account. Upon arrival they frequently contact established migrants from their home community or kin to have a place to stay until they find work and to receive help finding work**. Reflecting the common gender division of work within households, girls are often directed to domestic work while boys are introduced to a wider range of jobs but may find employment as 'house boys'. The more experienced girls who have already worked as domestic workers for a while may find waged work by approaching potential employers themselves, through friends and, in some countries, through placement agencies.[3, 35, 48, 49, 68] No simplistic and causal links between age, experience and recruitment type can be made.[49] Established migrants who help newcomers find work, operate in the twilight zone between networks of extended kin and informal placement agencies. They do not actively recruit girls for domestic work from rural areas but are well-known points of contact both for children of all ages coming to the capital with their peers or relatives, and for people looking for young employees.[35, 68]

Terms of Employment and Working Conditions

Children's work in domestic service is shaped by the type of household they enter. Some are the only employee in the household; others work with one or two other child domestics. Some work along-side their employer and/or their employer's children, others are given the responsibility of doing certain tasks.[51]

Cognitive development and the stature and sex of a child may affect the allocation of tasks, as may the availability of labour within the household. Younger girls often do childcare and street vending whereas older girls are responsible for the cooking.[35, 48] Boys tend to spend more time vending in the streets, while girls are likely to shoulder more tasks within the households despite the fact that they are also significant actors in street trade.[35, 49, 66]

For child domestic workers living in the household where they work a boundary is rarely set between what constitutes work and what does not.[78] It is therefore very difficult to judge how many hours they work. The problem of distinguishing between work and non-work is further exacerbated because child domestic workers sometimes are treated as protégés and thus as household members and sometimes as employees.[18] The status of family labour and paid labour is negotiated, and children and their relatives/employers do not always agree on what type of relationship they have.[73] **It is important to examine whether child domestic workers, who potentially are on call most of the day, adopt strategies for making themselves less available and whether such strategies resemble those of children of the household.**

As domestic workers are recruited primarily through informal channels, written contracts rarely exist but this does not mean that implicit contracts do not enforce certain standards. A person employing a child may make a small symbolic payment to seal the arrangement and show appreciation to the mother, father or a sibling involved in facilitating the recruitment. This practice should not be associated with selling a child or trafficking,[6] but with an elaborate gift economy that consolidates social networks and informal protective mechanisms. Children working for a relative, generally stay longer than waged workers do.[6] Many of the girls employed as waged domestic workers only remain in the same employment for a short while when they first begin to do paid work. This fluidity in employment may be linked to advice given by the intermediaries who facilitate the employment,[61] or to the preference of female employers who fear their husband will have a sexual relationship with a young domestic worker.[3] It may also be related to the way in which child domestic workers are treated by their employer.[13]

> **Ghana.** Live-in domestics more often do the dishes (33 per cent), help vending various goods (24 per cent) and prepare meals (21 per cent), while domestic workers living elsewhere more often engage in vending (39 per cent), do the dishes (16 per cent) and prepare meals (16 per cent).[36]
>
> **Mali.** A former migrant had quit working for a woman who sold rice after just one month because she found the work too hard. Her older sister had then found a placement for her where she looked after a young child and she remained with this family until she returned home. When she left she was given clothes and bowls.[12, p. 52]

The way in which children enter a household influences if and how they are remunerated. Whether children are fostered and therefore carry out domestic work of young household members or they are live-in employees, accommodation and food is part of their compensation. Fostered children are not paid a monthly wage but are normally given a gift in cash and/or kind as well as the costs of their transportation at the time of their return home.[48] Children employed to do domestic work are not guaranteed a regular wage. Age and skills play important roles in determining whether child domestics get paid. When children are perceived as learning domestic tasks, they are less likely to be paid at the end of their stay. Girls with greater experience and skills expect a higher wage, although sometimes part or all of the wage is paid to the broker.[25, 35, 48, 66] Both boys and girls commonly experience being paid less than promised, if they receive a payment at all.[35] They are subjected to wage cuts as a punishment for breaking things, wasting food or stealing, whether these accusations are justified or fabrications on the part of the employer.[61, 66] A large number of domestic workers also experience non-payment for no particular reason.

Risks and Abuses

The treatment of child domestic workers is linked to the way they were recruited and their relationship to their employer. In the mapping of children's domestic work, positive dimensions of their work include the

pride children take in holding a job, acquiring a number of skills, earning money,[11, 31, 48, 74] as well as living in better-off households, sometimes with electricity and easier access to water and cooking fuel.[54] However, a number of problematic implications of the work are also identified. These include long working hours, sub-standard sleeping places, corporal and psychological abuse and, in the case of girls in particular, sexual advances made by male household members.[55, 62, 78]

Guardians and employers sometimes punish child domestic workers physically or verbally for not doing work quickly enough, for breaking dishes, for failing to account for the revenues from vending and for being rude.[6, 13, 35] Food deprivation is also very common.[35] An early report by Human Rights Watch mentions severe beatings with blunt objects and electrical wire as well as threats of death which frequently made girls escape and subsequently live in the streets.[34] This link between maltreatment and street-living has become rare in recent reports and several case studies of individual girls' trajectories show that they mostly return to a relative's household until they find new employment.[51]

Adults use the same methods to discipline their biological children, fostered and employed children and generally find the sanctions they inflict have a positive effect on the children's behaviour, with the exception of punishment for breaking an object. Employers often feel it is their moral duty to discipline young employees to teach them to work hard. In addition to deprivations and corporal punishment, employers shout at domestic workers, use insults, threats, and obscene language to make them obey. Some employers ask the impossible of the children, administer severe retribution and render life very difficult for the children working in the house.[5, 62] Child domestic workers, on the other hand, adopt strategies of taking breaks when outside the view of their employer, of remaining at the market a little longer or working slowly or rebelling against having to do work without having eaten.[35, 61] Punishment is not always contained within the private sphere and adults in the neighbourhood regularly intervene to reduce corporal punishment and to ensure that deprivations of food and health care do not become excessive.[66]

> **Nigeria.** A 13-year-old girl who worked as domestic in Ibadan explained "I only rest when my madam is not around; if she is around, I have no choice but to continue working, just any work … to ensure I am not idle. She must never see me resting or idle. The only time I do rest is if she sends me on an errand either to grind tomatoes or beans. I use the opportunity to rest a bit before returning home. Sometimes she would beat me for wasting time while on an errand". [61, p. 179]
>
> **Mali.** One girl told her friend that she was not allowed to leave the household, she did not eat sufficiently, she was not given any clothes and she was falsely accused of being a thief. However, many rural girls perceived suffering to be an integral part of working as domestics in urban areas that simply had to be accepted, as the financial benefits outweighed the potential problems.[12, p. 34]

As these issues can cause children great stress, it is important to look at local practices of child rearing to understand the underlying ideologies for administering various types of disciplining. Equally important is to get a better understanding of how children and young people perceive and navigate adult behaviours. Do they, for example, call on the assistance of relatives? Do they resist ill treatment by doing their work less well, by 'stealing' time for a break whenever they can, or by stealing from the employer? Do they run away? Or do they become subdued victims of harsh conditions? Children's tactics are likely to differ from one individual to another while broader commonalities may exist based on age, gender, length of working experience, or the density of their support networks. Unpacking child rearing practices in each context help to understand the dynamics between adult supervisors and child domestic workers and to develop effective ways to address abuse.

Finally, the issue of sexual abuse has received some attention recently but still remains an under-explored theme because of the sensitivity, moral discourses and stigma surrounding girls' sexuality and sexual abuse. Limited evidence of the implications of being live-in domestic workers points in different directions. On the one hand, girls may be pressurised into sexual relationships with adult men and adolescent boys living in, or visiting, the household in which they work, or they are violated by these men. On the other hand, adolescent girls may be lured into engaging in relationships with young men of their own age and with older men.[55] This latter possibility reflects the point made above regarding women worrying about domestic workers 'stealing' their husband. The these relationships are described as 'bad sexuality' when they do not last, and especially if they result in pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted disease; both are associated with stigma for the girls.[82] One theme that has not been explored in the literature, is that older girls are of an age when they explore different aspects of adolescent or adult life, and some of them may be looking for a marriage partner or a boyfriend.

> **Mali.** Girls stress the learning aspect of migrating to work in domestic service. They learn Bambara, see how other people live so that "their eyes are opened" and they gain know-how about housekeeping. Although they want to return home with clothes and kitchen utensils, an important goal is also to be seen as "broadminded".[32, p. 13]
>
> **Côte d'Ivoire.** An 18-year-old former migrant from Mali had worked for her sister and explained that her sister had allowed her to go into business on her own account. "I sold macaroni and meat to make some money for myself, and I helped my sister wash up and run all the little errands for the household".[12, p. 48]

Long-Term Implications of Domestic Service for Children

Due to the varied nature of the relationship between child domestic workers and the person who recruited them to work, it is difficult to generalise about the implications of such work. Knowledge is also lacking about local norms that may protect children from a variety of risks in places of work, play and residence. As a consequence, **policy recommendations** emerging from research **tend to use long working hours, sub-standard sleeping places and abuse as a measure of exploitation without exploring what the children themselves perceive as unacceptable and how they address such problems.** The hazards should not be ignored but the failure to see children as social persons who navigate their circumstances as best they can, for example by calling on relatives, looking for work themselves or working to pay school fees, prevents agencies from identifying the best ways to protect and support children and their families.

Child Development, Education and Learning

It is important to look at local practices of child rearing to understand adult expectations of boys and girls of different ages but also for understanding the expectations children have of their parents. As many of the children working in domestic service in urban households come from rural areas, it is important to bear in mind that the mobility of children is rooted in the view that children do not just belong to their birth parents but to the extended kin group. Consequently, **a child's socialisation and learning of various skills is the responsibility of a large group of people and the child has obligations to those considered as 'parents'.**[8, 65, 83, 85] This is particularly significant when a child has been recruited by someone in their network of kin.

Children's experiences of child domestic work differ according to their age, their family background and treatment by their employer. A nine-year-old and a sixteen-year-old who both are new to domestic work are likely to evaluate their experiences differently but two nine-year-olds may also enter domestic work with differing attitudes, especially if their family backgrounds are dissimilar.

Inexperienced girls who are new to the city tend to work for women who assume the role of an educator, especially if the primary decision-maker is a parent. Educators teach the girls many of the tasks they have to carry out, give them advice on social matters and behaviour, and takes charge of their appearance and well-being by paying for clothing and hairdressing, and medical treatment when necessary. These women can

be relatives but are not necessarily so.[48] **Once girls are employed as waged workers they are expected to be able to carry out most tasks independently but may still be under vigilant supervision due to fears of theft, carelessness or laziness**.

Child domestic workers' acquisition of domestic skills is not the only concern. Rural boys and girls emphasise the eye-opening experience of life in the city, meeting people from other walks of life, gaining more frequent access to radio and TV, learning new languages and, for those who are employed, having to work under a stricter regime than when working for parents. Girls, in particular, stress the skills they acquire in cooking urban foods.[51, 72] Those living with kin or being treated as kin may also be allowed to do trade on their own account as part of their induction into income-generating activities and gendered economic spheres within households, as they would have been at home.[74] **Apart from giving children the space to interact with people outside the household where they work, the additional trade gives them a degree of economic autonomy and the encouragement to develop the necessary social skills to perform in the informal economy.** Most children working for relatives also expect a larger gift when their service ends, whether in the form of fabric, plates and pots (girls), a lump sum (boys and sometimes girls) or an apprenticeship (boys and girls),[13, 30, 50, 72] thereby emphasising the material aspect of kinship relations and work.

Considerable variations exist in access to formal education, not just between, but also within countries of West and Central Africa. Few of the children recruited specifically to do domestic work are enrolled in school. For these children, **the primary goal in the eyes of adults is to teach them the value of working, the ability to get by, independence, as well as making sure they are not idle, as this is believed to cause delinquency. Alternatively, work is aimed at familiarising children with particular occupations.**[66, 78] As a contrast, almost two-thirds of the fostered children interviewed in a study of northern Ghana were enrolled in primary and junior secondary school.[6]

Both parents and children are keen for children to receive vocational training, but since **poor parents often struggle to find the means to pay apprenticeship fees[6] or even to find training close to home, fostering or waged domestic work is perceived as a pathway to receive such training**.[30, 35] This has become part of the social fabric of informal employment and it has become common for people taking in foster children or employing children as domestics to promise a sewing machine or mediating an apprenticeship through their social network or by paying the fees.[31] Foster children may receive formal education for the same reasons but are sometimes withdrawn because other relatives need the labour of a child of that particular age and gender and therefore request that the child is relocated.[31, 35]

Work Trajectories and Upward Social Mobility

Irrespective of whether children's relocation to an urban household is initiated by parents or they set off from home on their own initiative, most child domestic workers have some ideas of what effect their work as domestics may have on their life. In the literature much emphasis is paid to rural girls' purchase of clothes when working as domestics in urban areas and, in particular, their accumulation of items for their trousseau, which encourages other girls to become domestic workers.[13, 32, 35, 68] However, the material aspects are only part of the story. For many girls the learning prospect of domestic work in urban households is important. In the course of living in the city, **girls get new ideas about their identities and about the kind of life they would like to live**.[26, 31, 35, 76] This, in turn, leads girls to extend their stay in the city in order to carve out some time before marriage to experience life as young women. With the economic decline in many parts of Africa, it has become more common for girls 'to bring something into the marriage' - usually commodities or clothing for their own use. In Senegal, for example, it has become common since the 1950s for rural girls to remain in the city for several years in order to earn a trousseau.[56]

Some girls may work a few years only, others stay in domestic service for a long time during which they shift between different workplaces. This may be due to differences in demands from relatives, learning opportunities, or a consequence of bad working conditions. When experiencing difficulties, children are not

merely the victims of adult recklessness. **The higher mobility among girls employed to do domestic work is not just linked to adult practices of exploitation or fear but also due to the fact that they can change jobs without upsetting the social order of their network of relatives and friends.** They may leave because they find the working conditions unbearable or the way in which

> **Ghana.** A study shows that 13 per cent of the girls working as domestics did so to earn money to start their own business, 6 per cent to pay for their school fees and 6 per cent to learn a trade. [36]

they are spoken to insulting. As a contrast, girls who leave a relative may bring shame upon their family and they are therefore under greater social pressure to endure hardship. [6, 49, 51] However, even in such cases girls may choose to run away to find alternative jobs or families to live with. [35]

Likewise, **their response to repeated wage cuts and non-payment is often to leave the job**, except if they have asked their employer to safeguard their savings. Employed domestic workers experiencing unsolicited wage cuts usually postpone their leaving until some payment of their dues has been made in order to minimize the loss. However, they rarely leave an employer without an economic loss unless they fabricate a story about having to visit their village due to illness in their close family. [31, 35, 51, 66, 75] The volatility in girl domestic workers' employment is a common feature of children's informal employment and not specific to child domestic work. [75]

Policy and Programme Initiatives

This paper examines the child protection work implemented to protect child domestic workers from hazards impacting negatively on their human capital and assesses the effectiveness of programme initiatives. Given the limited statistical data on children's work, **effectiveness cannot be measured in numbers of domestic workers, because some are considered family members and others employees. Instead, a more qualitative assessment is needed of whether policies and programmes are based on a nuanced understanding of the circumstances in which children work, of local notions of childhood and family, and of alternatives to work in domestic service**. Moreover, interventions to address child labour have been implemented at the same time as mapping exercises were carried out to determine the extent of children's work, the harms, benefits and the factors leading children to work. As a result, the scope for comparative analysis of child domestic work before and after an interventions is limited and evaluations of such interventions often focus on the process and not on the outcomes for children. [67]

International policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s has been premised on the perception that many girls working in domestic service are victims of trafficking and exploitation unless they work for close relatives. As a consequence, policy and programme initiatives have been preoccupied with prevention and the rescue of children living and working away from their family. Rural girls have been discouraged from leaving their communities to work in urban areas. [13, 20, 22] The idea that children will suffer if they are away from their parents reflects a globalised notion of childhood as a time when children are protected by their family, go to school and are free of responsibilities. This, however, does not reflect the reality of most children in West and Central Africa. [31]

National policy environments are often ambiguous. Much legislation reiterates ILO Conventions No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stipulates that states must have a child protection system in place if parents and guardians fail to meet their responsibility to protect children against abuse, violence and neglect, enforcement of child protection legislation tends to be inadequate. Child protection systems are poorly funded and less than one per cent of national budgets is spent on social welfare. Child protective services are not sufficiently operationalized and lack capacities and resources to support children in need. [15]

The CRC affirms children's rights to form and express their own views in matters affecting them, according to their age and maturity.[4, 11, 31] For programming purposes, it is important to identify context-specific practices that impact on intergenerational dynamics and on child domestic workers' ability to meet their own aspirations, and to link them with universal international standards in a flexible and pragmatic manner.[11]

Preventing child domestic work: prohibition, awareness raising and education

Programmes under the auspice of ILO, UNICEF, bilateral donors and large NGOs have addressed children's work in domestic services from both the 'supply' and 'demand' side. Early programmes, such as the 'Lutte contre le Trafic des Enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre' (LUTRENA[3]), sought to limit the supply of child workers as part of anti-trafficking initiatives because children's labour migration before the age of fourteen was interpreted as an outcome of trafficking.[cf. 18] 'Upstream actions' involved awareness-raising and pressure on states to align national legislation with international treaties. Ghana and Sierra Leone passed a human trafficking act in 2005, while Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Nigeria have created national committees against the trafficking and exploitation of children. Moreover, bilateral agreements (Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, and Benin and Nigeria) and multilateral agreements (between Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Togo) have been made within ECOWAS to target cross-border trafficking and facilitate repatriation of children and retribution for traffickers.[29] The establishment of local vigilance committees aimed to enforce anti-trafficking legislation, and a broad range of authorities including security forces, magistrates, labour inspectors, road transporters, religious leaders and community leaders were tasked with preventing children from being trafficked.[35, 40]

However, in reality, the vigilance committees often tried to prevent all young people from travelling, were corrupt, ineffective and mistrusted by the local population because they were imposed by the government without prior dialogue about children's mobility.[13, 21, 22, 47] The committees were premised on the idea that rural parents and children were unaware of the plight of migrant children, and by stemming children's exodus from rural areas they would be protected against exploitation. This assumption facilitated **indiscriminate interception, including of children above the minimum age of admission to employment. The approach failed to take into account children's own views on how their lives should unfold**.[13, 24, 23] Indeed, children who were intercepted and repatriated regularly set off again a few days after returning home.[11, 13, 21]

Moreover, the premise ignores the long history of migration in West and Central Africa and the level of communication and links between migrant communities and rural areas.[2, 16, 21, 27, 74, 75] The labelling and criminalisation of older travel companions as child traffickers, may transform the way in which migrant children journey. **It may reduce the potential income from recruiting girls for domestic work, but it may also increase the risks for migrant girls if, for example, they have to travel on their own rather than with someone** who knows the route, how to pass roadblocks and borders, who can help find a job and offer support in case of difficulties.[13, 21, 23, 31]

Current programmes aim to prevent girls below the minimum age from working in domestic service and to ensure that the working conditions for older girls are not hazardous.[46] A legislative approach of banning child domestic work has not had much support at the national level. It would present a number of challenges and might make some children more vulnerable instead of protecting them. First, **a ban does not address the issue of why children are working**.[5, 10] For a ban to be effective, alternatives need to be identified and made accessible for child domestic workers.[41] Second, a ban implies a sweeping generalisation of all domestic work as harmful despite the fact that it has been documented that children have a wide range of good and bad experiences as domestic workers. While some children are mistreated, others are treated well and gain skills

---

[3] The LUTRENA programme was launched in 2001 and started projects five months later in twelve countries in West and Central Africa, focusing on institutional development; direct action; research, documentation and monitoring; and cooperation and joint action within the region.[40]

and dignity from the work they do.[10, 11, 13, 38] Third, a ban of the use of child domestic workers is difficult to enforce because social and kin networks are filled with moral reciprocities and many employers/relatives feel morally obliged to help children from poor families. Finally, there is a market for cheap labour among poor households, where women spend considerable time in low-paid economic activities.[3, 10, 11, 39, 58, 80, 81] A ban might increase the vulnerability of girls working as domestics if their ability to leave the household, in which they work, is curtailed by a ban or if they lose their job without viable alternatives.

National governments allocate limited funds to child protection. They tend to stress awareness-raising and the dissemination of information and have limited capacity to provide direct assistance to children and families in need. 'Downstream actions' focus on reducing the 'supply' of child domestic workers target rural communities. The reliance on international organisations and NGOs to finance child protection work allows donors to define priorities and approaches.[15]

Community-based approaches are popular among donors as way to disseminate information about the conditions in which child domestics work and about the hazards associated with children's independent migration.[39, 40] The social mobilisation of communities is considered by programme managers to be an effective and sustainable approach because of the wider outreach and the ease with which collective planning and action can take place in the community. Participation in community groups is also perceived to signal a change in attitudes among rural populations.[39, 42, 67]

While community-based interventions can facilitate broad participation of civil society in discussions about common norms and practices of child rearing and how to influence these norms, they also raise the issue of *who* participates. It is therefore important to think about gender, generation and power dynamics in the establishment of committees, which typically have between ten and twenty members, include women and men and a small number of children.[67] Moreover, community-based approaches raise the issue of *who* listens. Sustainability is only ensured if communities take ownership of a committee and its work. Ownership is undermined by top-down approaches, e.g. top-down transmission of one-way messages aimed at sensitising a target group of what is right and wrong for children or if the process is hurried.[67] It is a question of the degree to which programmes are participatory and the degree to which they take existing informal protection systems into account.[15]

> Migrant networks – whether assisting newly arrived migrants or taking in children through fostering arrangements – provide some level of protection against abuse, "so it seems only sensible to take them into account when exploring methods to prevent unaccompanied children being subjected to abuse".[15a, p. 45]
>
> **Burkina Faso.** Girls who migrate to work as domestic workers sometimes create a protection system within their peer group. Newly arrived girls turn to slightly older girls from their home community and if one girl stands out as someone who is good at giving advice, is well networked and can facilitate employment, she is labelled quickly as an 'older sister' who can speak on their behalf.[70]

A number of NGOs have used child participatory approaches to disseminate information about child domestic workers' hardship and vulnerability to different forms of abuse in communities with a high rate of child relocation for domestic work. The African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), for example, was one of the first to assist children in developing plays about domestic workers' lives and to use the plays to initiate discussions among children, parents, village leaders and school teachers.[3] World Vision Vietnam followed at similar approach and trained children to teach their peers at school about the dangers of trafficking, using creative methods, such as role plays, quizzes and talk shows.[67, p. 42] This approach is premised on the idea that the rural population in general lacks information about urban conditions of life, which ignores the high levels of mobility and information sharing. Nevertheless, one of the keys to effective programming is to involve child domestics themselves, not only in consultations, but also as campaigners speaking from their own experience and as peer educators organising

training sessions, discussions, and activities. This approach has been critical to the success of NGOs working with domestic workers in the Kenya, Tanzania, Philippines, Vietnam and Peru.[3, 38,46, 67]

Most programmes focus on education or technical training as means of preventing children's participation in hazardous work and as viable alternatives for children removed from such work.[79] First, the focus on schooling derives from the idea that children drop out of school in order to take up domestic work and this is why compulsory primary education has been seen as an effective means to reduce the number of children workers.[80] However, across the world, studies document the impact of deep and chronic poverty on children. **Most child domestic workers had already dropped out of school, or were never enrolled, due to their family's poverty. For them, working outside the home to earn support for schooling or to contribute to the household budget seems a socially and economically rational strategy**.[11, 30, 31, 72]

Second, there has been a strong emphasis on decreasing gender disparities in school enrolment. Programmes focusing on child domestic workers may benefit from an important lesson from consultations concerning children's work in cocoa cultivation, in which rural communities voiced the need to allocate greater resources for education. **Lack of access to formal education in rural areas, due to the lack of infrastructure, absence of teachers, or the inability of parents to pay school fees, implies that education does not yet constitute an alternative to children's work because education access remains out of reach of many children.**[22, 43]

More emphasis has been given to the education of girls withdrawn from domestic work as a means to prevent their re-employment. Increasingly, 'second chance' education is being stressed for children who have no school qualifications. It can involve bringing younger children back into the formal school system or directing children, and especially older children, into vocational and technical training.[21, 45, 69, 79] Although the aim of 'second chance' education is to skill disadvantaged children and youth to strengthen their future position in the labour market, international organisations, such as the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, acknowledge the difficulties of implementing programmes that hinge on the formal education system and on non-formal apprenticeships.

The dispersed nature of rural communities affects the kind of initiatives that are offered to girls who have returned to their community after having withdrawn from domestic work. Often, literacy classes are offered in farming communities, while vocational training centres are set up in rural towns and require young people from the surrounding villages to commute on a daily basis or move to town. No reports on the viability of such training centres have been reviewed, but the quality and sustainability of training centres in rural towns is often poor.[71] Moreover, **few of the training programmes were based on an assessment of the local labour market to identify which vocations to teach, and children were not offered guidance on the range of skills training available or on the opportunities they would provide in the future**.[79] While this approach resembles the way in which rural parents send their children through training[77] and therefore is unlikely to engender much criticism locally, it is ineffective because few of the young people are able to put their training to good use and to improve their circumstances. A final consideration is the trade-off adolescent girls make between learning a skill that may be useful in the future and foregoing an income which may give them some level of economic independence and thereby emphasise their social position as almost adults.

Child Protection Services Assisting Working Children

The Innocenti Digest of 1999 discussed a number of approaches to assist street children or children working and living in abusive circumstances. Work by Shoisab in Bangladesh and the Visayan Forum in the Philippines was highlighted as particularly innovative.[80] The core elements of this work have been adopted widely by child protection programmes in urban areas.

Drop-in centres – usually run by national or international NGOs - are the key focal point in these responses because they provide a physical and emotional space for child domestic workers where they can seek information, relax and meet with others in a similar situation. Drop-in centres often contain other services,

providing children with free medical or legal advice, counselling and various crisis interventions, such as telephone hotlines and short-term housing if urgently needed. Finally, different forms of skills-building are frequently part of the curriculum for drop-in centres.[5, 80]

Concrete challenges arising from drop-in centres and other abuse response mechanisms are the need for multiple drop-in centres or outreach work because child domestic workers have difficulties going to these centres unless they have their employer's permission, defy their employer by leaving the household without permission or run away. Likewise, the appropriateness must to be assessed of initiatives such as telephone hotlines. It may only benefit some child domestic workers, as few young people of poor background own mobile phones and children are more or less excluded from accessing pay phones if they do not have an income.[86] Moreover, for those not being used to chatting on a phone but using it for brief messages only and usually in the presence of others, hotlines are not an effective approach to reach out to them. Yet, it is a quickly moving field and a mobile phone may be one of the first things young migrants purchase. The child protection work done by the Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs (MAEJT), especially for their members, demonstrates the importance of telephones to assist children who migrate or who are in difficult circumstances.[59] However, their work also shows that assistance is sometimes mediated through adults or other members of MAEJT who access a phone.

The rehabilitation of girls who have been abused is often facilitated in drop-in centres by professional counsellors, but in Tanzania a system of peer counselling has proved to be an effective supplement. Former child domestic workers are paired up to share experiences and provide emotional support to each other. Moreover, some girls receive training to become peer educators who help identify and provide initial counselling to domestic workers below the minimum age for employment or those working in difficult situations.[46] This approach appears to be effective, not least because it resembles informal protection mechanisms among rural girls working as domestics. In Burkina Faso, for example, migrant girls use the language of kinship to call peer educators 'older sister'.[70] A spin-off from the training offered by NGOs or the experience gained from being 'the older sister', empower girls to negotiate with their employer for better working conditions. Brazilian girls working in domestic service were able to negotiate time off for education. However, in return they accepted a salary below the minimum wage.[7]

Some of the established migrants who operate as a kind of informal recruitment agency also provide a space in their compounds for young workers to meet and relax outside their employer's household. They intervene in conflicts, and keep records of child domestic workers' whereabouts. In many respects, they function as informal drop-in centres and both children and their parents appreciate them for the social protection they provide. **From a policy perspective, it is important to see the potential of such informal protection mechanisms, not as a substitute for more formal mechanisms but as parallel and supplementary arrangements**.[13] This will also help address the discrepancy between top-down and bottom-up approaches to child protection. Top-down approaches often disregard informal community or peer protection mechanisms and rely on NGOs to provide child protection services.[35] Informal, bottom-up mechanisms are based on extended kin and neighbourhood networks for social protection. The must be understood in light of people's deep distrust of corrupt and highly unequal government structures.[15] It is important to acknowledge the limitations of informal community-based mechanisms. There is a limit to the type of problems peer educators can solve and the counselling they can provide [70] and it is important to delineate the roles of community-based committees to avoid their taking on more than they can handle with the given resources and to ensure that they refer serious cases of abuse to appropriate authorities.[67]

Regulating and Formalising Child Domestic Work

Domestic work is informal and children's vulnerability as workers is made more complex by the presentation of their work as help or as part of their upbringing, by their dependence on their employers if they are live-in domestics, and by their working in a private home.[18, 62, 67] It is difficult to enforce legislation because labour

inspectors cannot easily enter private homes and they are limited in numbers and tend to serve formal workplaces only. However, **the degree to which the treatment of child domestics is hidden depends on the type of household in which they work.** In up-market housing, they may well be within the walls of a house or a compound but in popular neighbourhoods and unplanned settlements, courtyards are often shared, cooking takes place outdoors and there is much interaction and surveillance among neighbours.[cf. 14, 59]

Some recent programmes begin to recognise that for some children, given the circumstances in which they live, work is their best option. It is therefore important to support these children by ensuring their rights as workers. **Programmatic approaches to promote a formalisation of child domestic work** promote a shift from family-like relations to acknowledging children's domestic work as employment and thus their rights to minimum pay, limitations on how many hours they may work, the freedom to choose whether to live in the household where they work, access to health care and education and rights to regular time off and to have contact with their family. Some of these rights derive from conventional labour laws aiming to protect workers in formal employment and are combined with a call for effective complaints systems through which abusive employers can be punished as well as support systems that enable governmental or non-governmental agencies to remove children living in abusive households.[18, 61, 80] **Other rights, such as access to health care and education and contact with their family, lift child domestics out of the role of workers and place them firmly within a universalised notion of what childhood should entail.** Rigorous registration and monitoring programmes are suggested to prevent and reduce abusive situations.[18]

Most of the countries in West and Central Africa are signatories to the ILO Convention concerning minimum age for admission into paid employment. In accordance with the special provisions for developing countries, some states have specified 14 years, others 15 or 16 as the official minimum age of work. The lower ages may create a clash between education and labour laws. In Burkina Faso, for example, the minimum age for admission into employment was finally raised from 14 to 16 years in 2008 to align them with the legislation for compulsory education.[4] In Guinea, on the other hand, a provision is made in the legislation that allows children aged twelve admission into employment provided their parents or guardians give written consent, thereby undermining the intention of stipulating a minimum age.[35] Another challenge is the large number of children whose birth was not registered immediately after birth. Many children know their age in relation to other people in their kin group and community, rather than their exact chronological age. It is thus difficult to enforce minimum age legislation.

States have also legislated the right to fair remuneration, the right to time off work, as well as rules about working conditions and social security and insurance to which workers, including children, are entitled. For children, additional provisions are made, especially concerning the restriction of working hours. The Children's Act in Ghana, for example, prohibits exploitative labour that deprives the child of access to education, development and health.[31, 78] However, **the enforcement of labour legislation protecting child workers is difficult because the work takes place within private homes, formalised contracts are rare, and the supply of potential domestic workers makes it difficult to negotiate better terms.**[78]

Child domestic work is even more deeply rooted in informality than other types of children's work because live-in child domestic workers are spoken about in kinship terms as nieces, nephews or, generically, as children. Attempting to regulate such relationships is extremely difficult. The NGO Shoishab in Bangladesh has developed initiatives that stress a socially-embedded approach to child workers' labour rights rather than a strictly legalistic approach. Shoishab has worked consistently for **a change of attitudes among employers of child domestic workers to be aware of the limitations to the workload and chores that can be expected of children, and to allow these children to attend classes one to two hours per day.** Furthermore, the NGO has succeeded in introducing a code of conduct that is now widely accepted among employers. The social

---

[4] Code du travail au Burkina Faso, article 87 du 22/12/1992, Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Jeunesse & Code du travail au Burkina Faso, article 152 du 13/05/2008, Ministère du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale.

disapproval towards people who demand too much from child domestic workers helps to keep the employers' demands in check.[7] In Tanzania, the trade union CHODAWU established a training centre for older girls working in domestic service to increase their ability to negotiate a decent wage through having certified skills in housekeeping, cooking, childcare, and etiquette. The centre also has a placement service that requires employers to sign a contract with the girl and with CHODAWU, which gives the union the right to monitor the girl's working conditions through home visits.[46]

In Burkina Faso, La Coalition au Burkina Faso pour les droits de l'enfant (COBUFADE) and an inter-agency network supporting girl domestic workers have formulated a code of good conduct, which stipulates rules along the same lines as international standards and national legislation but adjusted to local realities. The minimum monthly wage for a child domestic worker is set at 10,000 CFA francs [US$ 21] (December 2006) in addition to food and health care, and the wage is to be paid directly to the child at the end of the month and no later than the 8th of the following month (Article 2).[18] Although this wage is lower than the formal minimum wage, the code underlines that employers are not exempt from covering children's basic needs. Furthermore, it is an improvement compared to the real wages of 3,000-7,000 CFA francs [US$ 6-15] children received in 2006.[74]

The code also specifies the kinds of tasks child domestic workers can be expected to undertake. More importantly, child domestic workers should not perform tasks, such as gardening, being a watchman, washing cars, petty trade, preparation of goods to sell, and vending (Article 6).[18] The intention of this article is to curb the demands on children, yet it may be challenged by both employers and employees because domestic chores and trade activities are closely linked and seen as integral parts of socialisation and children's learning. At home, children would gradually be expected to farm or trade and thereby obtain a degree of economic autonomy as well as a chance to develop the social skills necessary to perform in the informal economy.[26, 31, 74] **Although being a domestic worker gives children some economic autonomy if the employer adheres to article 2, children may resist being denied a chance to learn about urban street vending, not least because it allows them time outside the confines of the household during which they get to know their neighbourhood and begin to build a social network,** which may provide assistance and protection if need arises**.**

COBUFADE's code of good conduct asserts child domestic workers must be given time off to pursue education or vocational training (Article 12).[18] Although the educational system in Burkina Faso is relatively flexible and provides both day and evening classes in urban areas,[55] many child domestic workers change jobs frequently.[49] A more general challenge is **the recognition of children's status as employees and thus a detachment from the social relations** which often are central to relocating from rural to urban areas and to finding employment, housing and support. This is reflected in children's preference for being accepted into the family.[11] The push for categorising domestic workers as employees rather than as family members, for example, and of prohibiting live-in arrangements for child domestic workers under the age of 18[63] highlights discrepancies between the unavoidably clear-cut, simplified formulation of laws and the ambiguous, shifting social relations between people. **In West Africa, being paid a wage and at the same time preferring being treated like a family member is rarely perceived as contradictory by child domestic workers and their employers**.[49, 66]

The importance of involving child domestic workers in any interventions concerning their rights, well-being or protection cannot be over-emphasised.[3, 11, 26] MAEJT and ENDA (Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde) have facilitated meetings between child domestic workers from across West Africa to share their experiences and push for improved working conditions.[5, 80] In Mali, MAEJT organised child domestic workers to visit 200 families during a week-long awareness-raising campaign to improve the treatment of children doing domestic work. In Senegal, MAEJT helped a number of domestic workers to write, direct and perform a theatre play which they performed in different neighbourhoods of Dakar.[24] Children do not only use this kind

of empowerment to negotiate with employers and parents, but also to negotiate different approaches with the NGOs supporting them.[5]

Questions that Need Further Investigation

- To what extent do non-migrant children work as domestics? Do their experiences and ways of solving problems differ from those of children of rural origin who carry out domestic work in urban households?

- How, concretely, are children recruited into domestic work?

- How do child domestic workers navigate their work situation? Do they resist excessive claims on their time? Do their practices reflect those of other children in the household? If not, how do they differ?

- How do unwanted sexual advances or abuse impact on the way child domestic workers see themselves? Does it affect the way in which they explore different aspects of adolescent or adult life? What strategies do they adopt to avoid unwanted advances and to cope with abuse?

- How do adults and children describe child rearing practices and their rationale? How do children in general, and child domestic workers in particular, perceive adult behaviours, the fairness of such behaviour, and how do they navigate them?

- What is the long-term impact of initiatives to reduce the demand for child domestic workers? The introduction of labour-saving technologies for domestic chores, for example, may reduce the need for domestic help but does it reduce the number of domestic workers? Will poor children accept to work for less? Will they find other occupations? Will employers feel morally obligated to find other tasks for their young relatives to do?

References

1. Akresh, R. (2004a) *Adjusting household structure: School enrolment impacts of child fostering in Burkina Faso.* Bureau for Research in Economic Analysis of Development BREAD Working Paper 89. [http://ipl.econ.duke.edu/bread/papers/working/089.pdf]
2. Andersson, J. A. (2001) Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection: migration practices and socio-cultural dispositions of buhera workers in Harare. *Journal of the International African Institute,* 71**,** 82-112.
3. Andvig, J.C., Canagarajah, S. and Kielland, A. (2001) *Issues in child labor in Africa.* Working Paper No. 26701, Human Development Sector, Africa Region, World Bank. [http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/237384/toolkitfr/pdf/andvig2.pdf]
4. Ansell, N. (2005) *Children, youth and development*, London and New York: Routledge.
5. Anti-Slavery International (2005) Child domestic workers: A handbook on good practice in programme interventions. London: Anti-Slavery International. [http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/c/child_domestic_workers_interventions.pdf]
6. Apt, N. A. (2005) *A study of child domestic work in Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana.* Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, August 2005. [provided by UNICEF]
7. Black, M. (2004). *Opening minds, opening up opportunities. Children's participation in action for working children*. London: Save the Children-UK. (http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_5181.htm, accessed 3/6/2005)
8. Bledsoe, C. H. (1980) *Women and marriage in Kpelle society.* Stanford, CA., Stanford University Press.
9. Bledsoe, C.H. (1990), 'No success without struggle': social mobility and hardship for foster children in Sierra Leone. *Man (n.s.)* 25: 70-88.

10. Bourdillon, M. (2009) Children as domestic employees: Problems and promises. *Journal of Children and Poverty* 15(1): 1-18. [provided by UNICEF]

11. Bourdillon, M., Levinson, D. Myers, W. and White, B. (2010) *Rights and wrongs of children's work*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

12. Børnefonden (2009) *Prevention of HIV/AIDS and STI among young people, Togo.* Annual Report 2009. Lomé: Børnefonden.
[http://bornefonden.dk/images/stories/projekter/danmarksindsamling/ar2009hivaids.pdf]

13. Castle, S. and Diarra, A. (2003) *The international migration of young Malians: Tradition, necessity or rite of passage?* London: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

14. CHI (2009) *Violence Against Children Follow up report 2009*. Amsterdam: Child Helpline International.

15. Child Frontiers (2011) *Mapping and assessing child protection systems in West and Central Africa. A five-country analysis paper.* Regional Reference Group for West and Central Africa, Plan International, Save the Children International and UNICEF.

16. Clifford, J. 1992. Travelling cultures. In: Grossberg, L., Nelson, C. & Treichler, P. (eds.) *Cultural studies.* New York and London: Routledge.

17. Cobufade (2006) *Code de bonne conduite - en faveur des enfants travailleurs domestiques au Burkina Faso.* Ouagadougou : Coalition au Burkina Faso pour les Droits de l'Enfant (Cobufade).

18. CRIN (2010) *Child Domestic Workers - the dawn of a new Convention?* CRINMAIL No. 1180, Child Rights Information Network (CRIN). [http://www.crin.org/email/crinmail_detail_popup.asp?crinmailID=3317]

19. Diallo, Y. (2008) *Les activités des enfants en Afrique subsaharienne: les enseignements des enquêtes sur le travail des enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest.* Florence :   Understanding Children's Work, Innocenti Research Centre. [http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/STyacouba_SSA_act_enf.pdf]

20. Dottridge, M. (2007) *A handbook on planning projects to prevent child trafficking.* Lausanne: Terre des Hommes.

21. Dottridge, M. (2008). *Kids abroad: ignore them, abuse them or protect them? Lessons on how to protect children on the move from being exploited.* Lausanne, Terre des Hommes.
[http://tdh-childprotection.org/documents/kids-abroad-ignore-them-abuse-them-or-protect-them]

22. Dottridge, M. (2011a) *Exploring methods to protect children on the move. A handbook for organisations wanting to prevent child trafficking, exploitation and the worst forms of child labour.* Lausanne: Terre des Hommes International Fédération.
[http://www.terredeshommes.org/pdf/handbook/handbook_children_on_the_move.pdf]

23. Dottridge, M. (2011b) *A handbook on adapting and implementing UNICEF's Guidelines for the protection of the rights of child victims of trafficking at national level in West and Central Africa.* Dakar: West and Central Africa Regional Office, UNICEF.

24. Dottridge, M. and Feneyrol, O. (2007). *Action to strengthen indigenous child protection mechanisms in West Africa to prevent migrant children from being subjected to abuse.* Lomé: Terre des Hommes.

25. Fiossi-Kpadonou, E., Kpadonou, Gt., Chidikofan, V., Aiyivi, B. et Charleir-Mikolajczak, D. (2007) Éducation préscolaire en famille : ce qui reste de la tradition en ville expérience à Cotonou, Bénin. *Louvain Médical* 126(8): 317-321.
[http://sites-final.uclouvain.be/loumed/V126,%202007/V126,%202007/octobre/Fiossi-Kpadonou-%20p317-324.pdf]

26. Fréchette, L. et Aduayi-Diop, R. (2005) *La main d'œuvre féminine chez les jeunes d'Afrique : regard sur trois situations aliénantes.* Québec : Centre d''étude et de recherche en intervention sociale (CÉRIS).

27. Gugler, J. (2002) The son of the hawk does not remain abroad: The urban-rural connection in Africa. *African Studies Review,* 45**,** 21-41.

28. Guinée Stat Plus & BIT (nd) *Etude de base sur le travail des enfants en Guinee*.

29. Harsch, E. (2001) Child labour rooted in Africa's poverty. Campaigns launched against traffickers and abusive work. *Africa Recovery,* 15(3, Part of Special Feature: Protecting Africa's Children): 14p.
[http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol15no3/153chil4.htm]

30. Hashim, I.M. (2007) *Independent child migration and education in Ghana. Development and Change,* 38(5): 911-931.

31. Hashim, I. and Thorsen, D. (2011) *Child migration in Africa*, London and New York: Zed Books with the Nordic Africa Institute.

32. Hertrich, V. and Lesclingand, M. (2007) *Transition to adulthood and gender: changes in rural Mali.* Documents de Travail, No. 140, Paris: INED.

33. Human Rights Watch (2003). *Borderline slavery. Child trafficking in Togo.* Vol.15, No. 8(A), New York: Human Rights Watch. (http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/04/01/borderline-slavery)

34. Human Rights Watch (2004) *Child domestics: The world's invisible workers.* New York: Human Rights Watch. [provided by UNICEF]

35. Human Rights Watch (2007) *Bottom of the ladder. Exploitation and abuse of girl domestic workers in Guinea.* Volume 19, No. 8(A), New York: Human Rights Watch. [provided by UNICEF]

36. ILO (2004a) *Girl child labour in agriculture, domestic work and sexual exploitation. Rapid assessments on the cases of the Philippines, Ghana and Ecuador*, Girl child labour studies Vol. 1, edited by A. Amorim, U. Murray and J. Bland, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO).

37. ILO (2004b) *Helping hands or shackled lives? Understanding child domestic labour and response to it*. By J. Kane. Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Organisation. (http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2004/104B09_138_engl.pdf, accessed 24/03/2011)

38. ILO (2006a) *Child domestic labour in South-East and East Asia: Emerging good practices to combat it.* By A. Matsuno and J. Blagbrough, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO).

39. ILO (2006b) *ILO-IPEC Interregional Workshop on Child Domestic Labour and Trade Unions: Report.* International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO).

40. ILO (2007a) *Combating the trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa.* IPEC evaluation by R. Kolokosso, D. Yantio and H. Ketel, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Organisation (ILO).

41. ILO (2007b) *Guidelines on the design of direct action strategies to combat child domestic labour.* By C. Sornkaew and M. J. Chamorro, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO).

42. ILO (2007c) *Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms. Paper No. 3: Sharing experiences.* By S. Khan S. and U. Murray, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO). [http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo]

43. ILO (2007d) *Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms. Paper No. 4: Child labour monitoring – A partnership of communities and government.* By S. Khan S. and U. Murray, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO). [http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo]

44. ILO (2009) *Give girls a chance. Tackling child labour, a key to the future*. International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva.

45. ILO (2010a) *Decent work for domestic workers.* Report IV(1), Fourth item on the agenda for the International Labour Conference, 100th Session, 2011, International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva.

46. ILO (2010b) *Moving towards decent work for domestic workers: an overview of the ILO's work.* By Asha D'Souza. Geneva: Bureau for Gender Equality, International Labour Office (ILO).

47. Imorou, A.-B. (2008) *Le coton et la mobilité: les implications d'une culture de rente sur les trajectoires sociales des jeunes et enfants au Nord-Bénin.* Dakar: Plan-Waro/Terre des Hommes/Lasdel-Bénin. [http://cnscpe.net/documents/EtudesRapports/Le%20coton%20et%20la%20mobilite%20des%20enfants%20au%20Nord%20Benin.pdf]

48. Jacquemin, M.Y. (2002) Travail domestique et travail des enfants, le cas d'Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). *Revue Tiers Monde* XLIII(170): 307-326.

49. Jacquemin, M.Y. (2004) Children's domestic work in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The petites bonnes have the floor. *Childhood* 11(3): 383-397.

50. Jacquemin, M. (2007) *Sociologie du service domestique juvénile: 'Petites nièces' et 'petites bonnes' à Abidjan.* Thèse doctorale, Paris : Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

51. Jacquemin, M.Y. (2009) "Petites nièces" et "petites bonnes" à Abidjan. Les mutations de la domesticité juvénile. *Travail, genre et sociétés* 22.

52. Jensen, L. P. V. (pers.com.) Project director, Børnefonden Togo, Lomé.

53. Kanté, S. (2002) *Le secteur informel en Afrique subsaharienne francophone: vers la promotion d'un travail décent.* Secteur de l'Emploi, Bureau International du Travail, Document de travail 2002/15.

54. Kielland, A. (2009) Child mobility as household risk management. *Forum for Development Studies* 36(2), 257-273.

55. Koundouno M.-S. (2005) *Exploitation sexuelles des filles doméstiques (zone d'application : Kissidougou, Kindia, Conakry).* Conakry : UNICEF. [provided by UNICEF]

56. Lambert, M. (2007) Politics, patriarchy, and the new traditions: understanding female migration among the Jola (Senegal, West Africa). In: H.P. Hahn and G. Klute (eds.) *Cultures of Migration. African Perspectives*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, pp. 129-148.

57. Leinaweaver, J.B. (2007) Choosing to move. Child agency on Peru's margins. *Childhood* 14(3), 375-392.

58. MAEJT (2009) *Exode précoce des enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest.* JEUDA No. 119, Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs, Dakar.

59. MAEJT (2011) *Protection des enfants en mobilité par des enfants et jeunes organisés. Quelques expériences des AEJT en Afrique de l'Ouest.* JEUDA 123. Dakar: Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs (MAEJT).

60. Notermans, C. (2008) The emotional world of kinship: Children's experiences of fosterage in East Cameroon. *Childhood* 15(3), 355-377.

61. Okafor, E.E. (2009) The use of adolescents as domestic servants in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24(2): 169-193.

62. Pinheiro, P. S. (2006). *World report on violence against children.* Geneva: United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. [http://www.violencestudy.org]

63. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. Gulnara Shahinian* (2010) (A/HRC/15/20), UN General Assembly, New York.

64. Riisøen, K.H., A. Hatløy and L. Bjerkan (2004) *Travel to uncertainty. A study of child relocation in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali.* Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Oslo. [http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/440/440.pdf]

65. Robertson, C. C. (1984) *Sharing the same bowl,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

66. Save the Children (2009a) *Ça-là, c'est difficile. L'exploitation du travail des enfants en Côte d'Ivoire.* Save the Children UK Côte d'Ivoire en collaboration avec Save the Children Sweden Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan.

67. Save the Children (2009b) *What are we learning about protecting children in the community? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*. By Mike Wessells. Inter-Agency Reference Group.

68. Terre des Hommes (2003) *Les filles domestiques au Burkina Faso: traite ou migration?* Ouagadougou : Terre des Hommes.

69. Terre des Hommes (2009) *Child Labour: Stop Exploitation – Empower Children.* Position Paper, June 2009. Lausanne: Terre des Hommes.

70. Terre des Hommes (2010) *Saly, grande soeur.* Délégation du Burkina Faso, Lausane: Fondation Terre des hommes.

71. Theis, J. (pers.com.) Regional chief of child protection, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, Dakar.

72. Thorsen, D. (2006) Child migrants in transit. Strategies to become adult in rural Burkina Faso. In: Christiansen, C., Utas, M. & Vigh, H.E. (eds.) *Navigating youth, generating adulthood: social becoming in an African context.* Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 88-114.

73. Thorsen, D. (2007a) Junior-senior linkages. Youngsters' perceptions of migration in rural Burkina Faso. In: H.P. Hahn and G. Klute (eds.) *Cultures of Migration. African Perspectives*, Berlin: Lit Verlag.

74. Thorsen, D. (2007b) *'If Only I Get Enough Money for a Bicycle!' A Study of Childhoods, Migration and Adolescent Aspirations Against a Backdrop of Exploitation and Trafficking in Burkina Faso.* Working Paper T21, Development Research Center on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, Brighton.

75. Thorsen, D. (2009) *Mobile youth with little formal education: Work opportunities and practices.* Development Research Center on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, Brighton.

76. Thorsen, D. (2010) The place of migration in girls' imagination. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* XXXXI(2): 256-280.

77. Thorsen, D. (2011) Non-formal apprenticeships for rural youth – questions that need to be asked. *NORRAG News*, 146, 71-73

78. Tsikata, D. (2009) *Domestic work and domestic workers in Ghana: An overview of the legal regime and practice.* Conditions of Work and Employment Series 23, International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva. http://www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_145332/index.htm

79. UCW (2010) *Joining forces against child labour. Inter-agency report for The Hague global child labour conference of 2010.* By Furio C. Rosati with Lorenzo Guarcello, Nihan Koseleci, Scott Lyon, Gabriella Breglia, Irina Kovrova, and Cristina Valdivia. Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Programme. Geneva: ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=13333]

80. UNICEF (1999) Child domestic work. *Innocenti Digest*, No. 99/17, Innocenti Research Centre, Rome: UNICEF. [provided by UNICEF]

81. UNICEF (2010) *Urbanisation, changements sociale et protection des enfants en Afrique de l'ouest et du centre – une revue documentaire.* By M. Jacquemin, M. West and Central Africa Regional Office, Dakar: UNICEF.

82. USAID (2002) *Planning intervention strategies for child laborers in Côte d'Ivoire.* Final Report (consultancy), Education to Combat Abusive Child Labor (ECACL) and Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS).

83. Vischer, L. R. (1997). *Mütter zwischen Herd und Markt. Das Verhältnis von Mutterschaft, sozialer Elternschaft und Frauenarbeit bei den Moose (Mossi) in Ouagadougou/Burkina Faso,* Basel: Universität und Museum den Kulturen.

84. Walther, R. (2006b) *La formation professionnelle en secteur informel – Cameroun.* AFD Document de travail Nº 17, Agence Française de Développement, Paris.

85. Whitehead, A., Hashim, I. M. and Iversen, V. (2007) *Child migration, child agency and inter-generational relations in Africa and South Asia.* Working Paper T24, Development Research

86. Author's observations in Burkina Faso and/or Côte d'Ivoire.