

# **BASELINE RESEARCH REPORT**

## **Project for the Protection of Migrant Children Along the Abidjan- Lagos Corridor**

**(CORAL)**

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*The views expressed in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Terre des hommes- Lausanne, the AMWCY and ENDA*

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## Executive Summary

On April 1st 2017, Terre des hommes (Tdh), ENDA and the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) began the Project for the Protection of Migrant children along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor (CORAL) in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. CORAL's core purpose is to strengthen child protection services for migrant children and children affected by migration, including increasing access to those services, reinforcing existing services, creating new ones, and stimulating synergies between the formal and the informal actors. The present document constitutes the baseline report for that project, undertaken primarily as a situation analysis able to guide future programming.

**Fieldwork** for the baseline took place in multiple rounds between July and September 2017, in eight sites across five countries. Three days were spent in each research site. Each site was located in or near a market, either in the centre of the major city in each country (Abidjan, Accra, Lomé, Cotonou and Lagos) or in the border towns between two countries (Seme-Krake, Noé and Aflao). The logic for these choices was simple: markets and border points are major economic centres that attract many migrants, including children, who are trying to make a living. They are also major sites of vulnerability and exploitation. They are likely therefore to be places with a high concentration of child migrants and children affected by migration, including those who face exploitation.

The study's **methodology** was inspired by participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a way of engaging people living in difficult circumstances as agents of change and as actors in their own development. In contrast to more traditional forms of development programming – in which project beneficiaries are involved after the fact, often in 'top-down' fashion – PAR seeks to work 'with', rather than 'on' those for whom projects are designed. In this, it seeks to include people at all levels of the process – from researching their circumstances to developing solutions, designing interventions, and measuring success. The methods used included: individual interviews; focus group discussions; collective drawing; Photovoice; role-plays; and the use of child research assistants, including to administer simple questionnaires.

Seven **research questions** guided investigations. These were:

- RQ1: Who moves? When? Why? How? Where?
- RQ2: What is the child's experience of (labour) mobility?
- RQ3: How does the child experience/understand 'vulnerability' and 'risk'?
- RQ4: What organic protection mechanisms exist? How are they understood and used?
- RQ5: What formal protection mechanisms exist? How are they experienced?
- RQ6: What can be done to support the formal in strengthening the informal?
- RQ7: What difference does migration make?

In total, **598 people** engaged in the research, including 552 children and young people and 46 adults, all either protection actors or employers. The research **findings** were as follows:

*The Mixed Role of Families.* The institution of the family emerged as an ambiguous entity able both to provide protection and support for children in need and to constitute a direct threat to child safety and well-being. Many children cited their families as those to whom they would turn when in difficulty, and many of the unaccompanied children we interviewed admitted to being worse off *because* they lacked familial support. Indeed, with the most vulnerable children, being alone and without family was a more important determinant of vulnerability than migrant status. By the same token, large numbers of child migrants, and particularly child runaways, found themselves in positions of difficulty *because* they had fled their families, and specifically intra-familial violence or its threat. The fear of punishment and beatings led many children to leave the family home, telling us that family *per se* is not inherently supportive.

*Protection Services Exist, But Are Limited.* The research revealed a large number of formal and informal child protection services in each location. Tdh staff mapped a range of formal protection services, while the consulting team encountered many more which were informal – ranging from friendly and supportive neighbours, to savings cooperatives and organised youth groups. Each of these is able to provide support to young people, and our findings broadly show that access to protection services – formal or informal – leaves children better off than when they have no access. However, services are limited. There is a lack of formal provision specifically targeted at girls, street children still lack access to safe places to sleep and save their money, and huge numbers of children live near services that they are unaware of. All this adds to their vulnerability.

*Mundane Difficulties Matter.* Of the protection challenges that children face, the most mundane are often the most important. Small wounds, interpersonal violence (in particular at the hands of families, gangs of street children, or the forces of order such as the police), sleeping in the open, the inability to save: all these featured prominently in children's accounts of the dangers and threats they face to their wellbeing. Understandably, money matters a great deal. The children consulted in this study are all poor and all expressed the need for more money (raising the question as to why support services are not piloting projects to simply give it to them), as well as the opportunity to save it safely. Violence and the threat of theft are a significant issue for children connected to the street, migrant or not.

*Adolescence and Social Transitions.* Within our research sites, adolescent 'children' under the age of 18 often take on social responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings and their own children or earning a wage to contribute to family wellbeing. These contributions are important both to their own socio-cultural and emotional development, and to the wellbeing of their communities. They are critical for understanding children's work and mobility, as well as their experiences of vulnerability. In this respect, it is notable that the average age of child migrants documented in Ghana was 15, which is very much the age at which a young person

will be transitioning towards social adulthood and independence in the region. Migrant narratives reflected this also, with children expressing the mixed motivations for their departure (including the desire to grow, learn, adventure and contribute to their families) and their pride at overcoming or surviving adversity. Child protection strategies must take these nuances into account, working with rather than against existing social norms and structures.

*Placement Channels for Children.* Social norms are important also in the continued existence of placement channels to secure work for migrant children. Despite the years of anti-trafficking sensitisation efforts dedicated to suppressing child placement, it continues, with community and kin networks important forces structuring child labour mobility. Protection efforts will need to engage with these networks if they wish to be successful.

*Apprenticeships as Protective and Exploitative.* Apprenticeships remain one of the most desired routes out of poverty for children, their families, and the NGOs seeking to support them. Often this is with good reason – when they work, apprenticeships are an excellent mechanism for skills transfer and can enable children to transition into a stable future profession. They often also provide children with food and board. However, at times these arrangements can stray into exploitation, with children denied their ‘liberation’ if they fail to pay exorbitant fees. It is also clear that the apprenticeships provided by NGOs remain highly gendered and traditional. More research on this is desperately needed, along with innovation.

Given the above, our **recommendations** include the following:

1. Within the locales of CORAL intervention, expand existing spaces for children to gather and receive formal or informal support, whether they be migrants or not; build new spaces for children where these spaces do not exist; strengthen community mechanisms for creating such spaces and the support that comes with them, such as those provided by the AMWCY; spread awareness to children and communities of the services that do exist.
2. Create mechanisms to support street-connected children to sleep safely overnight. One of the single major issues facing children who work or sleep in streets and in markets is the lack of safety they experience at night. Under threat from some of the forces of order, from older children and youth, and from the elements, they are often in need of shelter and protection. For this reason, we recommend that CORAL concentrate its efforts on the provision of these things.
3. Extend basic medical coverage for vulnerable children, including those who are street connected, on the move, or concerned by mobility. As mentioned, mundane difficulties matter, and the add-on of basic healthcare provision to expanded protection services would not be difficult to achieve.
4. Develop a child-led micro-banking system in the spaces where CORAL works, in particular in zones of economic activity such as markets or borders. Children in every single research location and via every single research method made it clear to us



that theft was one of the greatest threats to their well-being. Constant danger haunted many of them at night, and a dog-eat-dog predation seemed the norm in the intensely insecure environment of market street-sleeping, at least in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. For this reason, we urge CORAL to invest time and resources in developing a series of micro-savings interventions, preferably child-led, that can support children to safely accumulate from their small-scale economic activities.

5. Apprenticeship Research and Innovation. As mentioned above, apprenticeships are widely desired and yet often problematic. Many fail to deliver for the children within them, while the apprenticeship programmes that exist are often highly formulaic. We recommend exploring options for delivering new apprenticeships more in line with the changing realities of the labour market (cell phone fixers are increasingly in demand, for example). We also recommend adding literacy components to existing apprenticeship schemes.

6. Sensitisation of the Forces of Order, particularly in relation to the perceived or actual threat of violence that they pose to street-connected children. We recommend CORAL staff to work collaboratively with the forces of order in each intervention site to find creative solutions which both allow the authorities to fulfil their mandates *and* enable them to become a source of protection for the most vulnerable. Our expectation is that these solutions will look different in each location.

7. Family Sensitisation regarding the potential effects of physical ‘correction’ of errant children. Interpersonal, intra-familial violence emerged as a significant source of concern for children in this baseline. Many children identified parental correction as a major threat to their wellbeing and a danger they commonly faced. Others explicitly acknowledged having run away from home in order to avoid such correction. As such, although we acknowledge the premium placed on discipline and firm parenting in many West African societies, we nevertheless recommend that CORAL explore options for advocacy and sensitisation messaging around the potential effects of using physical force as a parenting strategy.

8. Convene Multi-Stakeholder Protection Forums. We saw above that networks of child placement continue to exist and play a significant role in intra-regional child mobility. We therefore recommend that CORAL staff work with these network members and other relevant stakeholders to develop situated strategies for ensuring that migrant (and working) children are protected. These kinds of collective and inclusive actions are more likely to achieve success than simple repression.

9. Our penultimate recommendation pertains to the structural, national-regional level. As attested by our findings, ‘money is everything’, which is no surprise anywhere under capitalism. Children need money for practically anything they wish to accomplish and the lack of money is one of the major factors contributing to their vulnerability. In this respect, a structural expansion of social protection services to include monetary minimums for all people is desirable. Although not likely to be achieved in the near future or by the CORAL project, we believe that the advocacy component of CORAL should push towards universal cash transfers or basic income. Only this is likely to provide for people’s basic needs. A first step in this

direction can be CORAL partners engaging in internal dialogue as to the feasibility and desirability of this policy.

10. Finally, we recommend that Tdh and partners more fully explore PAR in program design, implementation and evaluation. PAR is both an approach to and a toolkit for creating contextually-appropriate, effective interventions in a logic of solidarity rather than charity. It has framed our approach towards this baseline and allowed us to surface recommendations with children and their communities that represent direct, rooted responses to the problems they say they have. Related to this, we recommend working with PAR groups of children in each locality to track and evaluate the impact of programme interventions. A small cadre of child researchers could be developed as part of this, documenting theirs and their colleagues' stories as the programme rolls out its interventions.



## Introduction

On April 1st 2017, Terre des hommes (Tdh), ENDA and the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) began the Project for the Protection of Migrant Children Along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor (CORAL) in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. CORAL's core purpose is to strengthen child protection services for migrant children and children affected by migration, including increasing access to those services, reinforcing existing services, creating new ones, and stimulating synergies between the formal and the informal actors. The present document constitutes the baseline report for that project, undertaken primarily as a situation analysis able to guide future programming. It lays the conceptual and empirical foundations for subsequent project interventions.

## Structure of the Report

Drafted by a team of international academic consultants with expertise in child migration, the report begins by outlining the central questions around which the research is organised. Next, it outlines the research methodology and provides an overview of how the research was organised, including the difficulties and constraints encountered during research. The main part of the report summarises what the relevant recent literature has said about the phenomena in question and the empirical findings from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. Lastly, it outlines future research directions, and offers recommendations for which specific interventions CORAL should pioneer.

## Research Questions

Based on the Terms of Reference, the following were retained as central research questions:

- RQ1: Who moves? When? Why? How? Where?
- RQ2: What is the child's experience of (labour) mobility?
- RQ3: How does the child experience/understand 'vulnerability' and 'risk'?
- RQ4: What organic protection mechanisms exist? How are they understood and used?
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## Methodology

### Documentary Review

The research design for the baseline study drew insights from a rich and diverse academic and non-academic literature on West-African child/youth labour mobility and the practice of protection. This included a number of primary texts by each of the project consultants, as well as a series of NGO reports, in particular those produced by Tdh and its partners over the last ten years as part of the 'Mobilities Platform'. Based on the assumption that these documents are available for and well known by the CORAL team, the objective of the literature review conducted for this baseline study was to broaden the sources of analysis, with a focus on child and youth-centred approaches to understanding young people's perspectives on family and social relations, school and other education, mobilities and work, imaginations of good futures, and experiences of opportunities and vulnerabilities. Finally, it considered the institutional context, paying attention to how child protection is addressed generally and in migration management in West Africa.

A mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative research was chosen to reflect these insights in our exploration of the research questions. Each component of the mixed method is outlined below.

## Child Research Assistants

A key method for ensuring the child-centred, participatory nature of research is to involve a small number of Child Research Assistants (CRAs). Our intention was to choose these CRAs from the AMWCY grassroots groups. We sought a gender balance and wanted them to assist both with participant selection and translation. By working closely with CRAs we hoped that even in the context of rapid field research, their insights into the lives of children in situations of migration would help us frame the research to offer as accurate an account as possible of the opportunities, difficulties and safety mechanisms that children and young people flag as significant in their lives. We also hoped that this collaboration would enable the CRAs to gain a window into the research process and learn some basic new research skills. The trial of using CRAs to collect basic quantitative data aimed at testing whether they could be engaged as part of CORAL's monitoring and evaluation process to ensure continuity between successive rounds of survey and ultimately for the children involved, to ensure more long-term capacity-building.

In practice, this process worked reasonably well. We explained how we wanted the CRAs to find and mobilise participants and what the difference was between translation and leading questions. We explained the logic of using different research tools and the comparison between results. The support of our CRAs was ultimately essential, especially in Seme-Krake and Cotonou. The nascent presence of AMWCY grassroots groups in Ghana affected the involvement of children in the identification of research participants; this work was done by two AMWCY leaders above 18 years and CRAs were employed as enumerators in the quantitative survey. A similar situation pertained in Noé in Côte d'Ivoire, where the AMWCY was not fully formed and assistance was provided by potential AMWCY members aged over 18.

## Quantitative Methods

The initial goal for the quantitative component of research was to produce an indicator of child mobility from data from each country's general census juxtaposed with basic biographical data captured from our research participants. This indicator was to be disaggregated by sex, age group, place of residence, relationship to head of household, educational status, level of education, and type of occupation. However, because of the non-accessibility of census data in the context of the baseline study, it was not possible to produce this indicator.

In view of this, the research conducted in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire was augmented by a basic quantitative component that extended the collection of biographical data beyond the participants in the qualitative components of the research. A questionnaire composed of 35 questions (see Appendix 1) was rolled out in the four sites covered by the baseline study in these two countries, with the aim of documenting children's socio-demographic characteristics, mobility and circumstances. A total of 214 questionnaires were administered in Ghana and 66 in Côte d'Ivoire among child migrants and children of migrants. Although, as we will go on to show, this did provide interesting findings, a basic survey like this one, with so few respondents, cannot claim to be representative. The findings from the surveys are thus only illustrative.

*Table 1: Number and gender of participants in survey administered by CRAs in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire*

	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Ghana - Accra</b>	45	76	121
<b>Ghana - Aflao</b>	33	60	93
<b>Total Ghana</b>	78	136	214
<b>CI - Noé</b>	21	14	35
<b>CI - Abidjan</b>	18	13	31
<b>Total CI</b>	39	27	66

## Qualitative Methods

Given the commitment to participation shared both by Tdh, ENDA and the AMWCY and the individual members of the research team, the central elements of our methodology were qualitative and participatory. By 'participation', we understand an approach that sees all people – including children – as subjective agents with much to contribute to the research process. Participatory research is thus about 'the generation' of knowledge, rather than its capture or extraction' (Veale in Campbell and Trotter, 2007: 33), with methods designed to learn *from* and *with* children, rather

than just about them. When children speak for themselves, about their lives, priorities, etc., we get a better understanding of their worldviews and ‘their talent to live’ (Mizen and Oforu-Kusi, 2011: 256; 2013). When this is combined with shared reflection about what to do with this information – as is the case with PAR – we often emerge with more effective programmes.

### *Individual Interviews*

As in any qualitative study, individual interviews were central to our methodology (see interview schedule in Appendix 2). We used them to go into greater depth with participants than was possible with our other group methods. In addition to asking biographical questions, the interviews explored easy topics such as children’s migratory pathways, the channels through which they found work, and what constituted danger or vulnerability for them. The interviews also generated insights into more difficult topics such as migrant children and youths’ sense of self, how migration impacted on it, their security and well-being, and how age and experience changed their attitudes. However, it should be noted that these latter topics are so complex and full of contradictions that a deeper understanding of them can only develop in the context of longer term engagement, when themes can be revisited and explored several times.

### *Focus Groups*

One of the other key qualitative methods used with children was the collective interview or focus group discussion. We used these as stand-alone tools and to make sense of the participatory activities described below, chiefly role-plays and drawing sessions. Their utility lies in the breadth of data one can gather in a short space of time, and for validating ‘collective data’ such as widely-understood threats, opportunities, and avenues for protection.

### *Roleplays*

Role-plays are powerful methods for putting young people at ease and for accessing information about themes rarely talked about in formal settings. In part this is because children often find role-plays so amusing both to watch and to participate in that they lose some of the inhibitions associated with talking about difficult issues. Role-plays are also useful in that they offer children a measure of control over their self-presentation – it is they who design and perform the play. We chose to employ role-plays in all of our research sites. In each, we grouped together groups of five or six children and asked them to prepare and perform a short play on set themes, including danger, protection, needs, aspirations and hopes. After each role-play, we then facilitated group discussions with the performers and in certain locations also with the crowd. This enabled us to discuss with performers what they presented and to ask general, related questions to the wider group. Doing so helped validate or refute the image presented by each group of performers.

### *Collective Drawing*

Collective drawing involves gathering small groups around a large flip-chart sheet of paper and equipping them with pens and markers. Each group is then invited to draw whatever comes into their mind in relation to a given theme. The advantages of this method are many. First, children often find it fun, especially in settings where pens and papers are a luxury. Second, the sheer fact of this being a rarity means that it often engenders connection and openness. Third, it offers children the chance to express themselves without words and to play as they share their story. We employed collective drawings in all of our settings and asked the participants to explore danger/difficulty, protection/safety and what they imagined they would do in five to ten years' time. The richness and power of our findings using this method will be seen in the images presented in the analysis below.

### *Photovoice*

Like drawing, Photovoice is another participatory method that relies on visual images but it is often executed individually. It can be used to get insights into children's everyday lives and about things they find difficult or to which they aspire immediately and in the future. The method involves lending children cameras to take photographs of their everyday lives and/or themes discussed beforehand, followed up by in-depth interviews using the photos as prompts. A real strength of this method is its ability to the reveal of issues that guide children's choices, which researchers would not necessarily have thought to ask about. Another strength is the child-centred representation and self-representation that offer a different perspective on children's lifeworlds.

*Table 2: Child participants, breakdown by method.*

<b>Children</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Method</b>			
FGD w/ Collective Drawings	<b>62</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>138</b>
FGD w/ Role Plays	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>74</b>
Individual Interviews	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>86</b>
Photovoice	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>
Questionnaire	<b>117</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>280</b>

NB: Some children participated in several methods, which is why the total number of child participants adds up to more than the total number of children who participated in the study (n = 579; see Table 4).



### *Interviews and Focus Groups with Child Protection Actors*

The final component of our field research involved individual and group interviews with local child protection actors. The list of protection actors we encountered included state officials, NGO staff, informal protection actors such as masters of workshops, and active members of the AMWCY groups, and community leaders. Themes covered included the existence of formal child protection institutions, their relationships with each other, the gaps between them, and the relations (or not) that all have with critical informal protection institutions. We also ‘discussed’ emergent ideas for protection interventions and received feedback on them.

## Organisation of the Research

Due to the short duration of the baseline, a case study approach was adopted in the inception workshop, with eight research sites retained from the 25 that are part of the overall CORAL project. Each of these sites was in a zone of intense economic activity, located either in the centre of the major city in each country (Abidjan, Accra, Lomé, Cotonou and Lagos) or in the border towns between two countries (Noé, Aflao and Seme-Krake).

The logic for these choices was simple: markets and border towns are major economic centres that attract many migrants, including children, who are trying to make a living. They are major sites of opportunity for employment, self-employment and vocational training and, simultaneously, they are major sites of vulnerability and exploitation. Additionally, border towns carry with them particular risks related to illicit movements, though in the West African context illicit movements are more often of goods than of people who can cross borders within the ECOWAS region with relative ease. We hypothesised that the relatively high concentration of forces of law and order around border crossings could also be a threat to children working and living in the street if individuals within the forces found them out of bounds.

It was a conscious choice not to include sites considered as ‘sending zones’ for logistical reasons of spending much time on travelling to these sites at the expense of having time to engage in research activities with children and youths and with actors in labour markets and child protection institutions. Mapping young migrants’ pathways in the sites defined as transit and destination areas in any case provided insights into the dynamics that led to their migration. Moreover, the motivations for children’s migration have been amply documented in studies of rural ‘departure zones’: Hashim and Thorsen (2011), for example, drew on child-centred ethnographic studies in Ghana and Burkina Faso to demonstrate the complex relationships between rural poverty, family reciprocities, aspirations for school and technical training, life course transitions linked with work and responsibility, and adolescents’ negotiation of social age, which motivated children’s and youth’s migration. A central issue underlying children’s migration is the local understanding of children’s work as skills acquisition and social reproduction through which they learn to work, to cope with demanding work, to manage their finances and to



gradually take on more responsibilities vis-à-vis their family (Bourdillon, 2006, 2014, Hashim, 2004, Howard, 2012, Ofosu-Kusi, 2014, Thorsen, 2006).

Despite global concern about children's work, much of the research focusing on migrant children is short and focused on a specific type of work. The urban informal economy is often treated as a uniform and non-gendered space of work, despite the diversity of jobs undertaken by children and young people. In-depth research is rare. Exceptions in the CORAL countries include Jacquemin's (2012) study of the transformation of kinship-based practices of the recruitment of young rural girls to do domestic work, Buchbinder's (2013) study of Togolese girls working in Nigerian markets and Thorsen's (2014a, b) study of adolescent migrant boys working in Ouagadougou and Abidjan, both focusing on adolescents' navigation of urban zones of intense economic activity. Although the time frame of this study was short, by bringing our collective expertise on local understandings of children's work, migratory networks and urban labour markets to the analysis, we hope to bring new empirical evidence to bear on programming.

*Table 3: Field sites and dates of fieldwork.*

<b>RESEARCH SITES</b>	<b>Dates of Fieldwork</b>
<b>BENIN</b>	<b>17-23 July 2017</b>
Seme-Krake (Don Bosco Centre and Apprenticeship Centres)	19-21 July 2017
Cotonou (Dantokpa Market)	22-23 July 2017
<b>NIGERIA</b>	<b>24-28 July 2017</b>
Lagos	24-28 July 2017
<b>TOGO</b>	<b>24-28 July 2017</b>
Lomé (Central Market)	24-28 July 2017
<b>GHANA</b>	<b>7-14 September 2017</b>
Accra (Okaishie and Kaneshie markets and Sarpaiman)	8-10 September 2017
Aflao	11-13 September 2017

<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>	<b>11-17 September 2017</b>
Abidjan (Port Bouët)	15-17 September 2017
Noé	12-14 September 2017

Benefitting from the existing Tdh-AMWCY partnership, we were able to use established spaces of local protection actors situated within these zones of economic activity as safe research locations to interview potentially vulnerable child migrants and workers. These included Tdh extension offices, AMWCY base group premises, the premises of fellow child protection NGOs such as Don Bosco, or governmental offices for social protection such as the 'Centre social de Noé'. The research sites in Ghana were the exception: spaces for interviews and group activities were identified and negotiated as the research progressed, taking valuable time and often lacking in the provision of privacy.

Research spaces within the premises of formal child protection actors were highly convenient and certainly safe, but they introduced two biases into our sampling. These were, first, that many of the children and young people most easily accessed were already benefiting from some kind of intervention, and second, that the majority were boys (in Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, though girls were more frequently reached in Noé, Cote d'Ivoire and Accra, Ghana). The sampling in Ghana was biased in a different way. Rather than sticking to one market, the research included groups of migrants that the Tdh-AMWCY team identified as particularly vulnerable, e.g. girls working as *kayaye* (head porters), boys working as scrap pickers or truck pushers, and street girls and boys. The research also included children of migrants, many of whom were enrolled in school. Only a few of the participants in participatory activities were employed in shops, street stalls and chop bars (small restaurants) and no-one was in an apprenticeship.

In order to offset these biases, we also sought to access young people who were *not* currently in the orbit of existing child protection NGOs or interventions and to purposively access both boys and girls in each site. In Seme-Krake, for instance, this meant actively seeking out two local workshops (one a hairdresser and the other a tailor) to speak with the many apprentices on site, in particular girls, who were in the majority. Similarly, in Lagos, it meant seeking out girls serving in local eateries, which took much persuasion and time. The same types of efforts to target boys were conducted in Noé but accessing even more boys would have meant seeking out children in rural camps outside the city, which was not possible given the time allocated to fieldwork. In Accra, we actively sought to include migrants from the other CORAL countries to explore whether there were differences in working and living conditions and in access to child protection services.

## Difficulties and Constraints

As is the case with any research project, there were multiple constraints and limitations to contend with as we conducted this one. Some of these were minor and required simple navigation. Others were more significant and hampered the quality of data we were able to gather. We outline the most important below.

### *Time*

Time was the resource most seriously lacking in this study, necessary time was underestimated both by Tdh, ENDA and AMWCY, and by the researchers in their technical proposal. 45 days to conduct mixed methods participatory research, including participatory activities, and analyse the data across eight sites in five countries is insufficient. For us, it meant spending no longer than three days per research site, which limited the depth into which we were able to dive. It also limited the training we were able to give to CRAs.

This further meant being dependent on the Tdh-AMWCY teams' knowledge of each site. However, during the research it became clear that the contextual information the teams had was influenced by programming and advocacy objectives and, at times, this led them to be less open to seeking children's perspectives on their choices. Moreover, the depth of their knowledge was not equal across all sites. In Ghana for example, which was a new country of direct intervention for Tdh, neither Tdh nor AMWCY were well established in the zones of intense economic activity in Accra and Aflao.

Across all countries the teams worked admirably to secure a broad base of research participants (including those non-mobilised or supported by NGOs), which we could not have accessed so rapidly had it not been for the trust they had established with the participants. However, on several occasions we ended up with participants who fell outside our sampling criteria. For example, many of the children surveyed were in a situation of mobility but had migrated under conditions of adequate protection with a close relative, or with their biological parents, sometimes at a very young age (<4 years). Moreover, a significant proportion of the children selected had diverse sociological profiles: some were in an internal migrant situation, some originated from other countries than those of the Abidjan-Lagos corridor, and some were children of migrants or even born locally/having spent most of their lives in the location where they participated in the baseline study. As a result, our participants had sociological profiles that were of real interest for general questions about the protection of children in a context of poverty but did not respond exactly to the focus of the study.

A further important element of our research design involved relying on partner staff and youngsters from local AMWCY groups (for example in Noé) to translate from local languages into English or French. One advantage of this approach was that it enabled understanding – without translation, the research would not have been possible. And yet, when translation is done without adequate training, the translator

is not always aware of the distinction between ‘neutral’ translation and distortions brought by their own interpretations and representations. As a consequence, questions are not put across carefully enough to allow for probing into themes of interest, nor are the translation of participants’ answers sufficiently accurate.

The quantitative element of the study in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire suffered from not having time to pilot the questionnaires more than once to ensure all questions were phrased in a way that children between six and 17 years would understand them. Insufficient time for training and supervising the CRAs also meant that not all questionnaires were completed to a high standard<sup>1</sup>. Lastly, time and resources did not permit the collection of enough data to be representative of the very diverse group of children defined as CORAL’s target group. However, the fact that some of the CRAs, including the younger ones aged 14-15 years, worked rigorously demonstrates that they are capable of doing the work, and that better training can resolve inaccuracies in the data collection.

### *Logistical Challenges*

The baseline study suffered from a number of major logistical challenges, including those related to coordination, transportation, and mutual understandings around financial commitments.

A notable coordination problem concerned visas, with a change of procedures to obtain a visa for Nigeria resulting in part of the team being unable to enter Nigeria (which accounts for the limited data we were able to obtain from Nigeria) and a letter of invitation to Ghana that was not accepted by the Ghanaian High Commission. In the Nigerian case, contingency plans had to be drawn up; in the Ghanaian case, higher fees were paid to procure the visa in time for travelling.

Coordination issues and communication breakdowns also hampered the collaboration of the Ghanaian Tdh-AMWCY team.

Logistical support relating to transportation was limited; a Tdh vehicle was available in Benin and Togo but not in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. In Côte d’Ivoire, transportation delays were only avoided because Mélanie Jacquemin was able to rent a vehicle through her institution, IRD. Costs for the vehicle rental were reimbursed by the CORAL project.

In terms of money, the initial budget included a higher amount to compensate the CRAs and feed the children participating in the research than what Tdh and AMWCY were used to. The research team doing the first stint of field research (in Benin, Togo and Nigeria) worked hard to resolve differences surrounding remuneration to reduce the risk of undermining trust between the CRAs and the national CORAL team. It

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<sup>1</sup> In the analysis of the Ghana survey, for example, we had to reject 24 of 214 questionnaires due to insufficient information (4), or the surveyed child being outside the age bracket at the time of migrating (20). Some of the remaining questionnaires lack information, very often about children’s migratory trajectories prior to living in the current destination and about their work.

should be noted that in Ghana, the Tdh team facilitated payment of CRAs and research participants in the second stint of field research.

### *Ethical Challenges*

Ethical issues must be taken into account from the outset of a research project, so that they can be integrated into the organisation of human resources, the budget, the timetable and, of course, the tools and planning of the research itself. In their full sense, ethics in participatory approaches are an ongoing, continuous process, from project design to the delivery of results (Graham, 2013).

The limitations detailed above significantly hampered our ability to fully adhere to the ethical principles of participatory research with children. However, all the staff involved in the project were generally able to demonstrate adaptability, supported by the remarkable involvement of a few people, the collective dynamics that are part of the history of the AMWCY, and the practical sense and experience of the researchers involved. This reminds us that ethics are not a fixed principle, but rather a situational and negotiated one, linked to the context in which they are put into practice.

At the level of research tools and practices, the basic principles of participatory research with children were applied in this study (Ennew et al, 2009). They include providing all participants with information about the research in advance; requesting consent for participation (from the child and a responsible parent/guardian/employer, if applicable); wholly voluntary participation; avoidance of harm or putting the child in a risky situation; attentiveness to power relationships; anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected.

These two principles, anonymity and confidentiality, are of fundamental importance and high priority. Even where there is thematic and time-bound convergence between two studies involving the same organisations, data produced in one study cannot be disseminated to the other without prior communication or agreement. For example, without prior notice, some data produced in the CORAL baseline study were requested by ENDA and the AMWCY for use in a study for the West Africa Network for the protection of children (WAN) on the accounting and identification of children in migration. This had not been included in CORAL's ToR, and that raises important ethical and political questions. The team of researchers hired for the CORAL baseline study, as well as Tdh, did not choose to meet this request.

Another point of great importance is the delivery of results and the continuity of research and action. It is important to note here the generally benevolent willingness of the populations solicited to participate in the study: this involvement was most often motivated by their interest in seeing the situation, or rather their situation, evolve. Reciprocity (short-, medium- or long-term) is one of the core ethical principles of participatory research: there is a strong demand from the populations who took part in the CORAL baseline study for its follow-up in terms of information, communication and, of course, action.



We believe that this demand must be taken seriously into account, especially in areas where the institutional environment (in the broad sense) for the protection of children is very limited. Thus, for example, in a small commune such as Noé, the previous visits of Tdh and the AMWCY to set up a basic WCY grassroots group, followed by the intensive work of the team for the baseline study over three days, left their mark and raised many questions and hopes: the prospect of taking the phenomenon of children's mobility seriously was widely welcomed, regardless of the underlying interests. Explicit demands have been made by children, CRAs, protection actors (formal and informal), families, employers, apprenticeship masters. All want to see something come of this. Ensuring that it does must be one of the central objectives of the CORAL project, because the ethical stakes in terms of representation are serious. Failure to meet the expectations of the participants in the baseline study would undermine the credibility of the project on the issue of protecting children in mobility, and the trust that all (or almost all) agreed to place in the team.

## Results and Discussion

### Key Findings from Literature

#### *Relationship between Migration and Work*

Within mainstream media and political discourse, children's work and mobility has often been framed as a problem and in terms of 'trafficking', 'new forms of slavery' or, for girls, comprising an elevated risk of sexual exploitation (see Howard 2017 for a fuller analysis of this discourse). Children and young people at work or on the move are understood to be deviating from 'normal' or 'healthy' child development, with the reason for doing so typically articulated in pathological terms, as a consequence of crisis, corrupted tradition, or criminality. This discourse is based on an ethnocentric (Western) notion of childhood as a time solely for learning and play, to be cared for by others, and to lead lives distinctly different from adult lives. In this view, children's work is only acceptable in terms of learning, not as employment or economic gain (Bourdillon, 2006: 1202); and mobility is constructed as inherently problematic, since 'the best place for children to be' is assumed to be in the bosom of their family, implicitly meaning with their biological parents (Thorsen, 2013).

This discourse contrasts sharply with what we know from years of empirical research on child and youth work and migration, including that conducted as part of the Mobilities projects in the early 2000s. In times of peace, children migrating without their parents or a guardian often do so to find work or to access education and technical training through accumulating the necessary money or working for relatives. Their mobility is often willed and very often productive. Parents and children frequently make collaborative decisions over where children will go and how, while adolescents often choose to move for themselves as part of their journey to social adulthood and to acquire the riches and status necessary to achieve their life goals and to support their families (Bourdillon et al. 2010).



Studies in West Africa show that most children are adolescent when they first migrate. Girls often start a little earlier than boys, which is linked with a combination of factors including, among others, schooling, domestic work and practices of child circulation (Grabska, 2017, Jacquemin, 2012, Leslingand & Hertrich, 2017). Many 'child migrants' are over 15 years of age and could as well be categorised as youth. Understanding their interests and protection needs requires consideration of their agency, of the continuum of work situations ranging from harmful to beneficial, and of the ways in which adolescents are part of families with responsibilities and rights.

### *Child and Youth Agency*

While the advocacy literature readily describes a range of vulnerabilities shaping migrant children's lives, scholars, and especially those taking a child-centred approach, seek to flesh out in more detail what child and youth migrants see as vulnerability and what they do to counter exploitation.

In Burkina Faso, for example, it is clear that adolescent migrant boys do not remain in situations of exploitation for very long. Once they have been cheated, they move to new jobs within the same occupation or swiftly begin learning new skills in another line of occupation (Thorsen, 2013). Such moves are not uniquely tied to exploitation but are also a means to command higher wages (Thorsen and Jacquemin, 2015). In Nigeria, young Togolese migrant domestic workers seek to establish themselves as micro-traders once they leave their employment, not only as an economic strategy but also as a life course transition (Buchbinder, 2013). There is a dearth of studies focusing on such transitions, especially if the age limit is set rigidly at 18 years. But what we know clearly documents the exercise of agency on the part of mobile and working children and youth – challenging the assumptions of inherent vulnerability or victimhood.

### *Links Between Schooling, Learning, Work and Migration*

Schooling, work and migration are entwined for many poor children in West Africa. Some children and adolescents are able to continue education *because of* their work for relatives who pay school or apprenticeship fees or by using their savings from paid work (Bourdillon et al., 2010, Deleigne & Pilon, 2011, Hashim, 2007, Okyere, 2012, Schlemmer, 2004). The ability to continue schooling as a working migrant depends on the flexibility of the school system to offer non-standard classes, and on the individual migrant's ability to get time off.

While some out-of-school migrants aim for formal education, it is just as common to aim for artisanal and informal vocational training. Access to these forms of education may depend on relatives who facilitate a place and pay fees (Hashim, 2011, Thorsen, 2012, Walther, 2008). Most emphasis is on formal schooling, enrolment rates and retention, thus the baseline study begins to fill in a knowledge gap on adolescent migrant girls' and boys' perception of, and access to, flexible learning structures, apprenticeships and formal schooling.

### *Factoring in Gender*

In marginalised rural communities, persistent poverty has gradually pushed senior men's responsibilities over to other household members. Mothers shoulder more and more expenses related to bringing up and educating children, while the younger generation is obliged to cover many of the expenses related to marriage, adulthood and the commodities they desire themselves. In turn, this has eroded patriarchal power. Household heads – senior men – cannot easily say no, when their dependants want to migrate. Senior women sometimes sponsor their daughters' migration to access remittances. Young women, who have least control over resources, sometimes migrate to boost their social position as 'good daughters' who send remittances and to reap the fruits of their own labour (Buchbinder, 2013, Darkwah et al., 2016, Lesclingand & Hertrich, 2017). An important point is that young people are not migrating out of rural areas only as resistance or rupture, but as part of families, in contexts where families are complex and multi-located. Furthermore, changing gender dynamics within households can gradually result in young women's migration being deemed acceptable.

In a small set of deeply qualitative studies of rural adolescent girls moving to factory work in Bangladesh, sex work in Ethiopia and all kinds of service jobs in Khartoum, researchers unpack the constraints these girls experience and capture the myriad reasons for migrating that hide underneath a discourse on poverty. It is worth noting that in one of the studies only seven of 30 interviewees mentioned poverty as the main reason to migrate. Other key reasons included social isolation, stigma, the imposition of limitations on mobility to protect young women's respectability, and pressure to marry to avoid reproductive 'mishaps' – children born outside marriage (Grabska, 2017, de Regt, 2017, del Franco, 2017).

Much focus has been on girls when untangling the relationship between gender and migration. Although adolescent boys are not under the same moral pressures as adolescent girls, it is important to recognise that gender dynamics also shape their choices. Boys can feel under pressure to become breadwinners, to support their families and eventually to cover the costs of their own marriages. Their contribution to the family budget may expedite their transition from immature child to mature adult in the eyes of their family but only if they subscribe to adults' ideas of age and gender appropriate behaviour (Thorsen 2006, 2014).

### *Limited Formal Protection*

Lastly, a key area of interest is the shift in child protection efforts to try to address the needs of children on the move. In terms of legal structures, as of December 2017, the legal frameworks included:

- 10 bilateral agreements against child trafficking
  - Benin / Nigeria (2005); / Gabon (2006); / DRC (2011)
  - Côte d'Ivoire / Mali (2000); / Burkina Faso (2013); / Ghana (2016)
  - Nigeria / Benin (2005); / Italy (2004); / UK (2005); / Spain (2006)

- 2 multilateral agreement against child trafficking.

- Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking in West Africa. Signed in 2005 by nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. By 2017, a total of 14 countries have signed this agreement.
- Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in West and Central Africa. Signed in 2006 by the 26 countries within ECOWAS and ECCAS.

To date, none of the bilateral agreements have been revised or amended and no other multilateral agreement has been developed. Ghana is not a signatory of any of the multilateral agreements, while Togo is signatory of the multilateral agreements. The scope of the agreements remains limited to the phenomenon of combating the trafficking and exploitation of children, according to the restrictive approach and pathology of child mobility in West Africa mentioned above. The broader issue of protecting children in mobility has not been included in strategic, political or legal agreements.

In advocacy and policy-making, children and adolescents are represented as 'unaccompanied child migrants' in spite of efforts among scholars to create awareness of the fact that many children move within dense networks of relatives, especially from areas well-known for their high rates of migration (Jacquemin, 2012, Hashim and Thorsen, 2011, Howard, 2017).

Child protection is linked with formal structures. The effectiveness of formal structures is commonly assessed on the basis of an ensemble of laws, structures, resources, services and information management without recognising the fluid interlinkages between the different components. This model constructs an opposition between child protection institutions – ultimately the state – and families and communities whose protective mechanisms are ignored, if not vilified as insufficient (Forbes et al., 2016). One of the problems in child protection driven by donors is that child protection systems often come to reflect a globalised notion of childhood which does not account for local realities, neither in relation to children's worlds nor in relation to the state's child protection policies and practices. One effect of this bias is that there is a knowledge gap in what we know about how child maltreatment is framed locally, and about informal child protection mechanisms and how they function (Forbes et al., 2016). Framing children on the move as 'uprooted', for example (see for example UNICEF, 2017), is unhelpful for understanding multi-local family relations and children's agency in decisions about migrating. It is also unhelpful for understanding how family relations can be both a blessing and a bane for migrant children (Thorsen, 2009, Thorsen and Jacquemin, 2015, Abebe, 2008).

## Key Findings from the Empirical Research

In total, 579 children and 46 adults were engaged in our research, with the following breakdowns by location and gender:

Table 4: Data breakdown for entire baseline study.

TYPE OF PARTICIPANT	Children on the Move			Children <i>not</i> on the Move			Parents, Guardians, Employers			Protection Actors*			Total
COUNTRY AND SITE	G	B	I	G	B	I	F	M	I	F	M	I	
<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>	46	39	85	23	9	32	2	2	4	2	8	10	131
Abidjan	31	14	45	15	8	23	0	1	1	1	4	5	74
Noé	15	25	40	8	1	9	2	1	3	1	4	5	57
<b>GHANA</b>	49	104	153	38	50	88	6	2	8	5	3	8	257
Accra	36	57	93	20	24	44	3	1	4	4	3	7	148
Aflao	13	47	60	18	26	44	3	1	4	1	0	1	109
<b>TOGO</b>	30	15	45	6	8	14	/	/	0	2	4	6	65
Lomé	30	15	45	6	8	14	/	/	0	2	4	6	65
<b>BENIN</b>	40	35	75	28	6	34	1	1	2	3	5	8	119
Cotonou	27	15	42	12	6	18	/	/	0	1	2	3	63
Seme-Krake	13	20	33	16	0	16	1	1	2	2	3	5	49
<b>NIGERIA</b>	15	11	26	/	/	0	/	/	0	/	/	0	26
Lagos	15	11	26	/	/	0	/	/	0	/	/	0	26
<b>TOTAL</b>	180	204	384	95	73	168	9	5	14	12	20	32	598

\* Formal or informal protection actors who see themselves as such (e.g. community leaders, etc.)

\*\* Some questionnaires lacked information about the children's migrant status (N=4 in Accra and N=23 in Aflao). These numbers are not included in the table but in the total number of child participants in the research.



Our findings are generally consistent with existing research on migration in West Africa. The latest migration data show that both Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria are important but disconnected destinations for migrants within West Africa (Map 1).

Map 1: West African emigration flows within West Africa, 2015.



Only values greater than 20% of the emigrant workforce from each country present in the other countries of the region are represented.

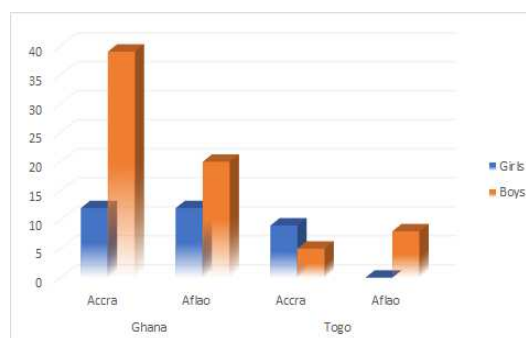
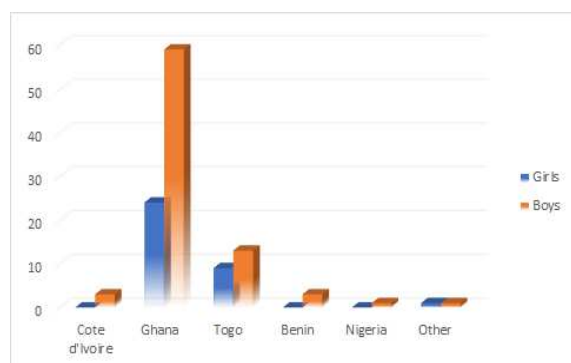
Source: United Nations (2015), Department for Economic and Social Affairs, International Migration Trends

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(<http://www.west-africa-brief.org/content/en/west-african-emigration-within-west-africa-2015>)

The survey in Ghana confirms these pathways (Figure 1). The migrant children in Accra and Aflao were primarily internal migrants from other regions and districts of Ghana and a small number of Togolese children and adolescents. It is important to bear in mind that the survey is indicative only due to the limited number of respondents and its non-representative nature, but it is interesting to note that Togolese girls appear to prefer Accra to Aflao, whereas the opposite is the case for boys. More Ghanaian boys migrate to Accra and Aflao compared to the girls.

Figure 1: Country of origin of child migrants in Accra and Aflao, Ghana survey, September 2017 (N=114).





Our qualitative findings are also consistent with existing research on mobility and on the sources of vulnerability amongst (migrant) working children in West Africa. We note that families function both as a source of vulnerability and a source of protection for working children but that the most vulnerable children are usually without any family support or contact. Both migrants and non-migrants are extremely poor and some lack access to education, vocational training, good nutrition, and health services, i.e. resources that critically determine the type of work that children can access. It is however worth noting that even in the most constrained situations children make choices (even if sometimes between two evils) and they choose what is most suitable for achieving their goals or in line with what they think is morally correct. Such choices can lead to more vulnerability. Thus, at the intersection of structural constraints and active navigation of everyday lifeworlds by children, migration is not a unique driver of vulnerability in our research locations and has limited explanatory value.

In the analysis, we explore how social and institutional structures shape children's and adolescents' pathways, we indicate where their agency to navigate constraints and opportunities can be supported, and we show where formal and informal institutions can reduce vulnerabilities if supported with more insights into children's migratory pathways, protection needs and interests.

### *Family as Source of Vulnerability*

Families are both a source of vulnerability and protection. Vulnerability is induced by factors including poverty, loss of one or both parents and intra-familial conflict. Severe poverty and families' consequent inability to feed, care for members and educate their children was frequently referred to as a reason for leaving home, sometimes resulting in siblings being spread across multiple locations. Children reported being hungry, feeling neglected and leaving voluntarily to find food. At times, they had been forced to leave by parents who were too poor to provide for them and either 'placed' with other family members or, less commonly, turned out by parents and left to fend entirely for themselves.

#### Orphanhood, poverty and family relations

17-year-old Grace came to Accra from Central Region when she was 14 years old 'because [she] didn't have parents'. What she referred to was the passing of her father, her mother's inability to provide for her children due to illness and the absence of an extended family to look after the children. The family had no money and she had to drop out of school. It was clear that she left to find work elsewhere like her three older siblings because of the family's poverty. Apart from her two brothers who were in Libya, she had one married sister in Accra. Three years after coming to Accra, she was living from hand-to-mouth on the street. As she did not want to speak about her sister, it was less clear whether her family situation had contributed to her vulnerability in Accra. She was in a relationship with a young man who had had to turn to casual work after losing his apprenticeship as a driver when the car broke down. She was visibly pregnant and was expecting to give birth on the street as she had not attended antenatal care at the hospital and thus was not registered. Generally, the street girls knew about a number of NGOs assisting the most vulnerable among them and especially those pregnant and with young babies, but those we met were not counting on the NGOs for reasons ranging from distrust to not wanting to adhere to a rigid set of rules (Interview in

Accra 9 September 2017).

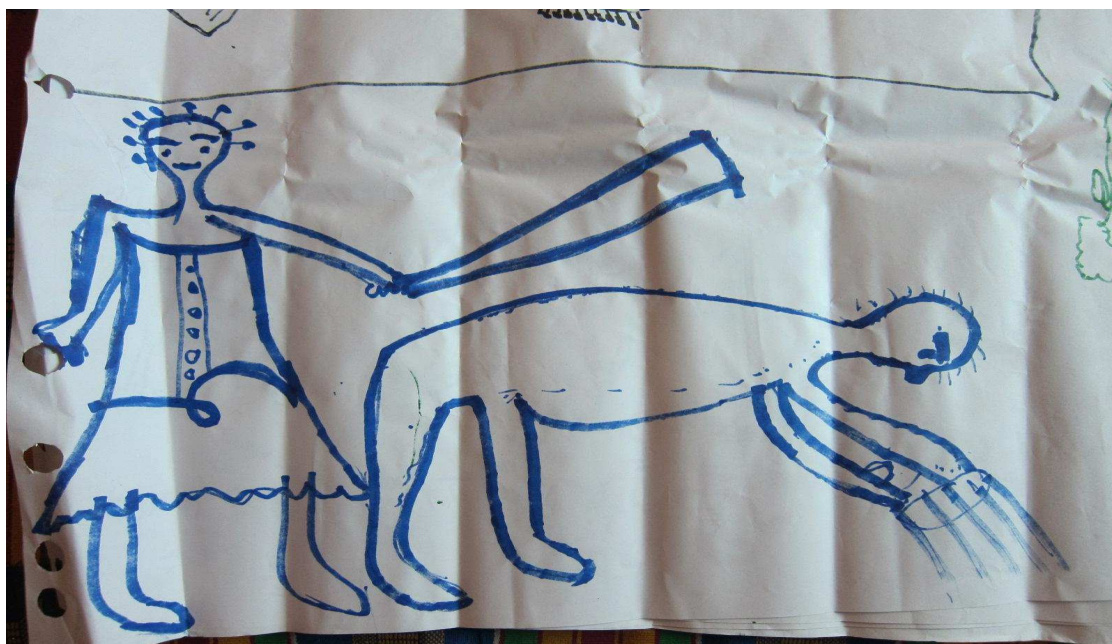
Many of the children who were orphaned or came from extremely poor backgrounds were amongst the most vulnerable, often living from hand-to-mouth and sleeping on the street (Cotonou, Lagos) or the beach (Lomé, Aflao) and therefore at high risk of robbery, sexual abuse, and harassment and violence from shop owners, police, and gangs of older adolescent boys. Children who had run away from their homes often cited intra-familial violence, or its threat, as well as excessive corporal disciplining of children to 'correct' their behaviour as a motivation.

#### Corporal punishment

15-year-old Bernard had run away from his home twice when he was 12-13 years' old because of his father's beatings. The first time his grandfather travelled from northern Togo to the fishing harbour in Lomé to bring him home. We do not know how the old man found him, but Bernard appreciated his grandfather's gesture. However, he could not stop the beatings and after a while Bernard ran away once more. After a while in Lomé fishing harbour, he went to Aflao with some fishermen who promised he could go to school there. He was never enrolled but decided to remain in Ghana. At the time we met him, he was as adamant to go back to school as he was *not* to return to his father's or another relative's house. It was unclear how he would be able to realise his wish to return to schooling (Interview in Aflao, 13 September 2017).

All of our collective drawings in Benin and Togo featured parents beating children in one way or another, and the focus group discussions reflecting on the drawings brought to the fore how often children were beaten (or feared being beaten) by a parent when they either lost the merchandise they were supposed to have sold or failed to sell enough of it. Below, for example, we see a mother beating her child for getting his chores 'wrong', which the child in question explained as his motivation for leaving home (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Detail of a Collective Drawing from Seme-Krake.*



Parental conflict could also have substantial consequences for children, whether the departure of one of the parents led to impoverishment or to one parent turning violent or abusive towards the children. The latter was the case for a 15-year-old girl working as a coal porter in Dantokpa market in Cotonou. She explained that she had arrived in the city alone six months earlier because: 'My father is very bad to me. After my mother left us and went away without telling where she went, he beat me a lot and threatened to kill me and my sister. We don't know where my mother is. My sister ran away to Nigeria and I came here. I want to find my mother and I look for her when I can'. We do not know if the father's abusive behaviour was caused solely by the mother's departure, but it was obviously closely linked and led to the sisters leaving home in search of safety elsewhere.

In other cases, children are obliged to drop out of school to accompany a leaving parent or to help a parent – often the mother – with earning money for the household. In such situations children are in a suspended situation during which it is difficult for them to influence their own pathway, since the parent might be moving to different relatives until their situation settles and they find a way to resolve their problems.

#### After divorce: the search for a better place

14-year-old Stephen from Togo dropped out of secondary school soon after he had begun. His mother had problems with her husband and left with Stephen and her new-born baby. First, she left Stephen in Aflao to help an aunt sell drinks on the beach, while she went to the Togolese village where her sister was living to see where she could best sustain herself and her two children.

At the end of the school summer holidays, Stephen was working to help his mother buy enough food, they lived under a shade roof on the beach and he had no prospects of going to school unless they went to his mother's sister's house in Togo. Even there he would only be able to return to school if his mother or his uncle or aunt were able to pay 45,000 FCFA [US\$85] in

tuition fees at a private school (Interview in Aflao, 12 September 2017).

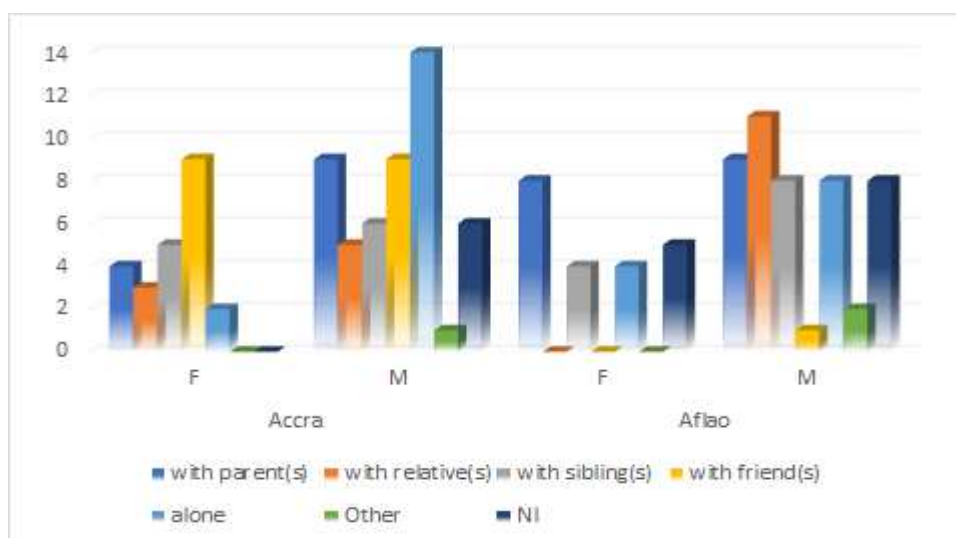
Stories of parental conflict, with or without one parent abandoning the family, were narrated by both girls and boys, and home was not a happy or safe place for these children. It is perhaps obvious but worth restating that parental conflict and its externalisation onto children is highly destabilising for the latter and leaving home is a strategy for finding safety in such circumstances.

### *Family as Protection*

Family – close and extended – is just as frequently a source of support and sustenance for migrant and working children. In Ghana, the survey showed that at the moment of migrating the large majority of children had travelled with someone (Figure 3). In Aflao, the majority of boys and girls were accompanied by their parent(s), but a large group of boys also travelled with other relatives. In Accra, more boys than girls came with their parent(s) but more boys than girls also travelled on their own and a significant proportion of boys and girls travelled to the capital with friends.



Figure 3: Child migrants' travel companions, Ghana survey, September 2017 (N=190).



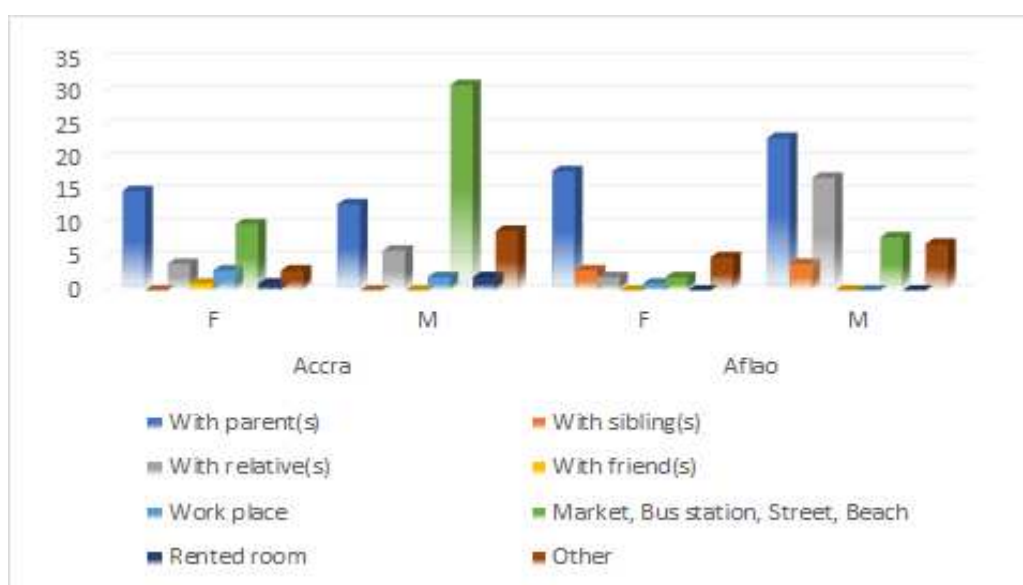
Age and child protection play a huge role in travel arrangements. Younger children below 12 years of age generally reported that they left their place of origin with a parent, sibling or a relative considered a parent. Older children and adolescents often also moved with an adult, or together with peers. Numerous boys travelled on their own whereas it was almost impossible for girls to do so in some of the countries. In Ghana, the survey indicated that six of 44 girls (14%) travelled on their own and 24 (55%) with relatives of different proximity, whereas 22 of 97 boys (23%) travelled on their own and 48 (49%) with relatives. The median age in our sample is 15 years for both boys and girls (see Appendix 3), suggesting that in many families the safety and well-being of children has high priority.

In all countries, the initiative to migrate could come from the person with whom a child travelled, their parent (mother or father) or caregiver, or sometimes from themselves. Whether they chose to move or were moved, some said that they agreed immediately while others said that they tried to resist but were ignored or put under pressure to contribute to the costs of their own education. The propensity of travelling with friends and alone suggests that older children have considerable say in travel arrangements. As we show below with an example from Noé, it may be different for younger children to exercise the same degree of choice.

Arriving with a parent or someone else usually involves accommodation or cohabitation for a shorter or longer time, but it does not necessarily mean that a child remains in the same house, or even enters a house. The survey in Ghana indicated that the majority of child migrants slept in their parents' or another relative's house or in a public space (Figure 4). This finding is biased due to the inclusion of children of migrants who are more likely to live in a family house but Accra is peculiar in its accommodation of large numbers of migrants in their teens, twenties and thirties in streets, markets and bus stations. Sleeping in public spaces is relatively institutionalised with paid access to toilets and shower facilities.

Even if newly arrived children travel with or join kin, they may be introduced to sleeping in public spaces by their relative who also sleeps there. Thus, the sleeping arrangement does not in itself indicate the level of vulnerability experienced by a child migrant (though in Benin and Togo the correlation between street-sleeping and experiences of difficulty or abuse was very high). Rather, it was primarily the children not living with or in touch with their families who were the most vulnerable. Those living with their parents, older siblings and/or other relatives shared food and helped out if someone had not earned sufficiently to eat.

*Figure 4: Sleeping arrangements among child migrants, Ghana survey, September 2017.*



Children of migrants living with their parents and children living with relatives were much more likely to be enrolled in school. While none of the children who lived outside the family network were in school, a small minority of those within the family network in Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire were enrolled, as were most children in Ghana who had lived with family members since a young age.

When asked who they went to when they needed help, children living with their families frequently referred to their mothers or sisters/aunts. However, every so often children living with or working for relatives, an employer or a craftsman with whom they were not related avoided voicing problems, and even abuse, for fear of reprisals from the employer, guardian or craftsman that could lead to family and social isolation. They perceived social isolation as a source of absolute vulnerability and were not confident that child protection structures could solve their problems without undermining their social inclusion.

This was not the case for the majority of children who were not living with family, though a few of them returned home temporarily for visits or in the case of illness. Children who had lost contact with their parents and family or were worried about



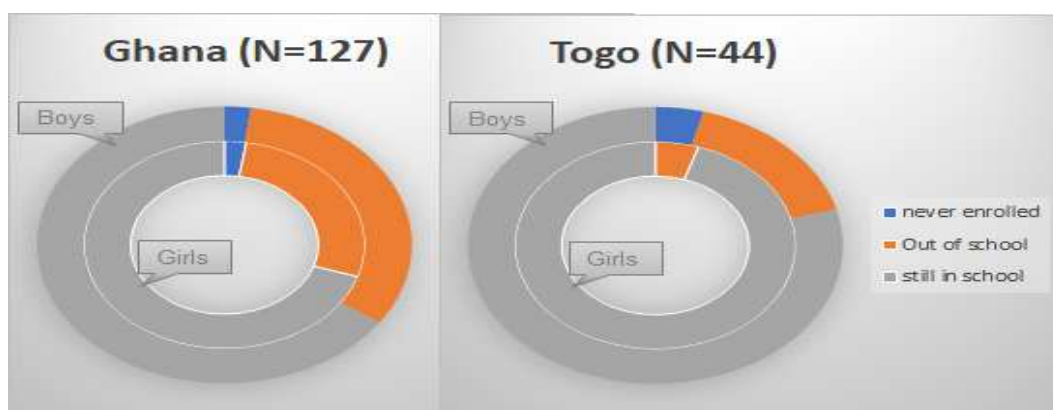
returning home exhibited a significantly higher tendency to say ‘no one’ when asked who they went to for help. They also reported feeling less physically safe and being hungry. Street girls in Accra who had given birth outside marriage or were pregnant exposed the ambivalent position of family in their thinking. One 19-year-old girl who had lived in Accra for three years after dropping out of school because of pregnancy noted that ‘city life is not easy and it would be better for you to go to your parents. They will do whatever they will like to do with you but they also take care of you!’ But she also said she would stay in Accra if she got a job. She had adopted a rosy way of speaking about home as a source of protection and security, but the fact that she did not return also indicated that parents’ reprimands, shame, and possible symbolic ceremonies in the case of breaking taboos could sway choices away from family protection towards more vulnerability.

### *Adolescent Transitions*

Taking chronological age as a marker of vulnerability and the need for child protection is inherently problematic, especially when local notions of life course transition and social position differ from a more globalised notion of childhood. One 17-year old girl who had migrated from Northern Ghana to Accra to work as a *kayaye* illustrates this conundrum, which she was not alone in experiencing. Orphaned of her father and from a poor family, she had married young. Having had some vocational training in tailoring, she came to Accra to save up to buy a sewing machine once the old one broke. Aged 17 years, she brought along her 10-month old baby and a younger sister to help out with childcare while she was working. According to local notions, this girl was a woman and responsible for the care of two younger children, a responsibility she took on fully despite the fact that it impinged upon her ability to save. For girls – or young women – like this one, vulnerability is not linked with being a child but with the necessity of bringing a younger child to provide childcare during working hours and with having other mouths to feed.

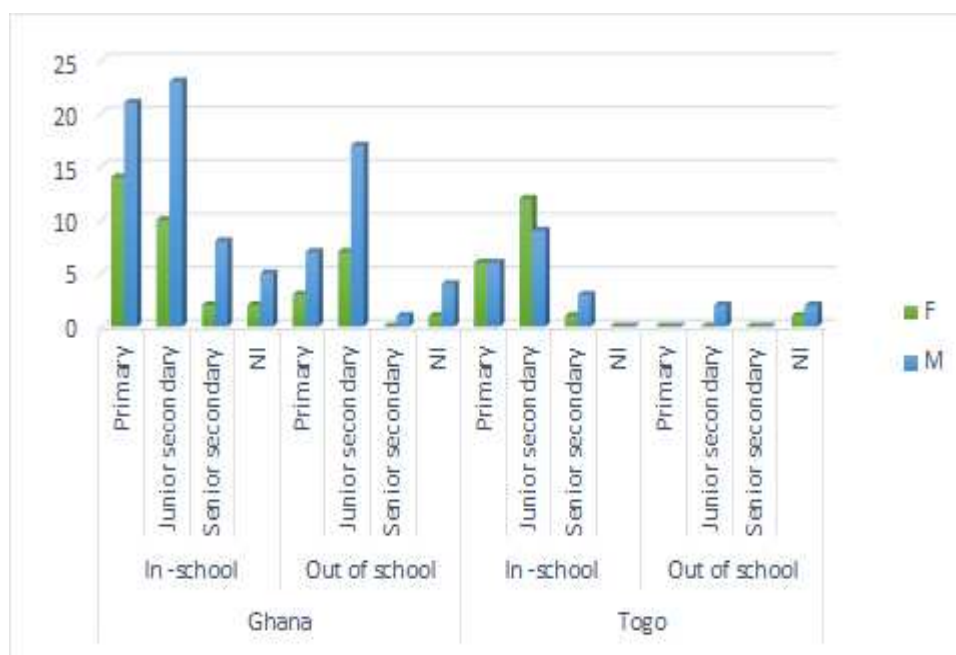
As part of their transition towards independence and adulthood, many youths migrate temporarily for work, including to earn money to pay for school fees. In Ghana, a significant number of rural students at secondary school migrate to work in the city during the school holidays. While the survey includes children of migrants and therefore records a very high enrolment rate, the small number of children who have never been enrolled in school suggest that schooling has become a central element in childhood in both Ghana and Togo (Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Educational status of migrant children from Ghana and Togo, Ghana survey, September 2017.*



However, when we scrutinise the level of schooling, it is clear that few of the migrants reach beyond junior secondary school and girls less so than boys. The high number of migrants in secondary education, especially among the girls from Togo (Figure 6) is in line with the qualitative research in Ghana, where both individual interviews and photovoice offered evidence of adolescents' contributions to pay for some of their continued education.

*Figure 6: School level of migrant children who are still in school and who have stopped schooling, Ghana survey, September 2017.*



One 15-year old girl, orphaned of her mother, had come to Accra five times during the holidays because her older sister told her to go if she wanted the family to help pay her school fees. In the beginning she helped an older sister with child-minding so the sister could work, now she worked to save up towards school fees herself and her younger sister had joined her in Accra and was expected to contribute some of her savings to the 15-year old's school fees. That schooling was more than an individual strategy and required a contribution from several family members was also

evidenced in interviews and Photovoice with boys who paid towards siblings' and/or their own education.



#### Holiday migration

'The two photos above show the things I would like to buy for the new school year: books, notebooks and new school bags for my brothers and myself. I came to Accra in June when our holidays began. Last year I also worked during the holidays but I was share-cropping in a village in the Volta Region. My father passed away so my mother supports me, and as I'm the oldest, I work to help pay for schooling. My younger brother drowned last year, the next one is 13 and the others are only little' (Photovoice by 19-year-old Francis in Accra, 8-9 September 2017).

Students purposively seek income from activities they can enter and exit quickly, with or without the help of family members and other social relations who can facilitate urban work. A few of the migrants from rural Ghana explained that they had sought work as store assistants or in chop bars (restaurants) but had opted out of the employment because the wage was too low, they wanted more liberty, or they did not want to commit to a long-term job. The few Togolese students we had a chance to include in the research did not have the same strategy but took up employment in the informal economy in Accra.

#### *Earning and Saving: A Source of Vulnerability or Protection*

A majority of the children and adolescents we worked with expressed that they had great difficulty or even found it impossible to keep the money they earned. The reasons for this are manifold, but all point to forms of exploitation and oppression, or even theft, perpetrated with impunity by the adults to whom they entrust their hard-earned money (members of the family circle, employers, guardians, *tontine* collectors, informal bank agents), by elders who abuse unequal power relations (particularly patrons who make disgraceful use of power relations, etc.), and by criminal youth gangs.

Looking at two 14 and 15-year-old boys' stories about their life on the beach in Aflao, the experience of being paid very little in collaborative work is similar even though one lives with his mother and the other one on the beach.

Both of the boys join fishing cooperatives when they pull in nets manually but are disappointed

with the small amount of fish they usually are given as compensation for their labour. When they sell the fish, they gain only two or three cedis. The boys who sleep on the beach frequently get away with stealing some fish in the chaos when the nets are opened and thereby boost their income with five or six cedis that they share between themselves. The punishment when caught red-handed is either a beating or being thrown in the water. While this could appear to an outsider as outright dangerous, the boys were not too worried. What happens, one of them explained, is that a fisherman swims with the thief far out, then leaves him there and returns to the beach, and the boy follows suit. It is seen as a punishment but all of them know how to swim well. He is proud of being able to fight for himself in this way.

The boys also do other work. The mother of one sends him out to work with bricklayers in the hope that he will learn a trade in this way. The other one mines sand on the beach to sell but complains that it is a very insecure source of income. For him the most secure income is when helping smugglers transporting oil containers that have been dumped at sea and brought into the shore by a group of youths and adult men. The younger boys work as porters, carrying the 25 litre containers from the shore to the storage house against a payment of five cedis per container (Interviews in Aflao, 12-13 September 2017).

In each of our research sites, most of our participants were paid daily rates, suggesting that there was a high level of distrust between employers and employees. From the employee's perspective, daily payments were a way to reduce the risk of non-payment but from employers' perspective it was also a way to institute a monetised relationship with less responsibility for feeding the employee and meet responsibilities slowly building up in the course of employment. Increasing distrust – warranted or not – thus has the propensity of making young employees even more vulnerable because they have to meet their daily needs for food. Their situation then is not so different from those working as *kayaye* and truck pushers or trying to establish themselves as itinerant vendors. It is difficult to save up when meagre incomes also need to cover basic needs.

It is not surprising that young migrants try to limit their spending on accommodation but living in crowded rooms and public spaces carries with it the risk of theft. In Seme-Krake, two groups of children engaged in collective drawing and role-plays highlighted theft at night as one of the major dangers they face and the prime threat to their physical and economic security. In the role-play, the boys depicted one of themselves sitting innocently before a large group of older boys came to rough him up and steal his money. 'This happens often', one explained, 'they take everything we have' (Focus group, Seme-Krake, 20 July 2017). Similarly, in Lomé, a role-play put on by six teenage boys usually sleeping on the beach on the theme of 'danger or difficulty in your lives' centred on the fact that collective strength in numbers was all that protected them from older '*bandits*' (Roleplay, Lomé, 26 July 2017).



### Accra and its many public sleeping spaces

It is the second year 19-year-old Yasmin has travelled from Northern region to Accra to work during the school holidays. She sleeps besides her older sister in the bus station saying that it is better to work hard for your education than to spend money on renting a place, even if it would be better and more secure. Theft is rife she says and describes how it often happen:

'When you are sleeping, they'll come and lie down as if you were their girlfriend and then they use scissors or a blade to cut your pocket open'. Laughing at her own naivety, she describes how she was robbed at night time. 'The first time that I was coming, I would just put my money in my pocket and sleep. So, while I was still awake, I saw someone behind my back and I said "Who is that person?" "That's me" the person said. "Who?" "That's me." I asked if it was my sister and the person said "Ehhh". When I woke up in the morning, I cried. Luckily where we slept was under the surveillance of a watchman, so the thief didn't succeed.

This year I've got a mobile money wallet. So I put my money there. If my phone is stolen, I'll go and block it with my passport that I used when I bought the sim. Then the thief cannot access my mobile wallet" (Interview in Accra, 8 September 2017).

Faced with these difficulties, there is a real need for savings systems that are open and adapted to younger workers; for this, certain discourses and rules must be adjusted: for example, paternalistic discourses which, on the grounds that children are too young to manage money, justify not entrusting them with money and appropriating their earnings. In addition, the opening of savings or 'mobile money' accounts is generally conditional on the presentation of identity papers and, in the case in Côte d'Ivoire, attesting to the legal age of majority (18 years). Minors are thus obliged to circumvent the rules by providing the papers of another person. Accessing a mobile phone and thus a safe mode of savings may represent a major challenge for newcomers and they may end up borrowing a phone. For minors, borrowing papers to obtain a sim card and/or a phone require relationships of trust, which are not easily accessible when networks are closed.

### *Placement Channels*

In Côte d'Ivoire in particular (in Noé and Port-Bouët), surveys with child workers on the move (for this study: girls in domestic service, small street vendors, carpenters, builders, seamstresses, hairdressers), employers and various protection workers pointed to the existence of rather old and well-consolidated placement channels, organised from the north-western part of Togo (Dapaong region). Due to the short time frame of the field survey, it was not possible to document these channels in detail, but some information could be collected: they are organised by men (and some women) who have built up their business in networks in Togo and Côte d'Ivoire; the children arrive from Togo either in response to requests from employers (in central Noé, in the surrounding camps, and in Port-Bouët), or with the prospect of being placed to work on arrival. Remuneration for their work is borne by the employer: it is paid both in kind (accommodation, food, care, sometimes schooling, literacy, apprenticeships) and in cash, in principle on an annual basis. Often, it is paid to the broker, who is responsible for forwarding it to the child's parents or saving it in order to deliver it to the child at the end of his or her 'contract' of several years (for example, for domestic girls, between 100 000 FCFA and 150 000 FCFA per

year). The vulnerability of children in these sectors is strongly linked to their dual dependence on the broker's authority and that of the boss or guardian; the risks of exploitation and even abuse are particularly high, especially for the youngest children.

*Figure 7: Details of collective drawings in Accra: border crossings from Togo to Ghana in the forest.*



Sometimes equated with cases of child trafficking, these practices are criticised by official discourses, but are generally tolerated 'on the ground'. Taking into account the views of the main stakeholders, especially children and their parents, and some informal protection actors (community leaders), it seems inaccurate and above all counter-productive to use the language of trafficking here. The immediate effect of awareness-raising and repressive measures against trafficking practices is to invisibilise children's labour migration within placement networks and to make journeys more dangerous by pushing children to cross the border by water or forest roads and making them more susceptible to corrupt and abusive practices around the borders (Figure 7). In the view of various (informal) protection actors, following anti-trafficking laws and police repression, placement practices have diminished, but have not disappeared, and probably still have a few years ahead of them because many actors involved, including some adolescents, do not view them as harmful in themselves.

As an alternative, therefore, we believe that forms of regulation could be put in place, with each of the various parties participating, and with the central objective being better protection of children in care, and future-oriented education/training opportunities. In particular, the Togolese community leaders, who are often in charge of resolving different types of problems and abuses related to this practice, have declared themselves keen to see such forms of regulation emerge, and are supportive of setting up a collective multi-stakeholder forum to discuss these practices and find ways of improving them, if not eradicating them. In Noé, for



example, the head of the Togolese community informed us in September 2017 that he had convened an information and awareness-raising meeting with his compatriots; he had already informed the Sub-Prefect and the Social Centre that this meeting was being held and stressed his interest and availability to participate in broader discussion and intervention groups on the subject of children's mobility, and in particular on the placement channels. In Port-Bouët, the head of the Togolese community described the fact that he was generally informed of the arrival of migrant child workers only once a problem arose; his desire would be for information to circulate more widely, for awareness to be based on a series of 'good practices' to be observed by brokers, employers, children and parents.

### *Apprenticeships as Protective and Exploitative*

The apprenticeship system imparts marketable skills and a sense of identity and mastery to children. However, it can also be highly exploitative and functions as a system of bonded labour when children or their families cannot pay the obligatory 'liberation' fees.

Through meetings with masters and child apprentices as well as interviews with child protection actors, we investigated how the apprenticeship system mitigated or otherwise affected (migrant) working children's vulnerability. Our findings fall broadly into two categories: on the one hand, learning a trade is clearly positive in that children are acquiring the means to earn their own livelihoods while also building an identity through performing dignified work and participating in a work community. They are also deriving the psychological benefits of mastery as they hone their skills. Physical sustenance is also in evidence: in some cases, teachers/masters provide food and shelter for child apprentices. For example, a hairdresser we interviewed in Seme-Krake had 17 girls 'working' for her in the salon she ran out of her home. One small salon room and a courtyard formed the working premises for all 17 girls, and there was not enough work to keep all of them occupied. A number of these girls slept at this teacher's home because they did not have homes of their own to go to and in individual interviews, away from their 'madam', they reported being supported by her, while the madam spoke of being motivated by her Evangelical faith to care for these young girls (often with children of their own).

However, we also note that in a non-negligible number of cases children or young adults cannot pay their 'liberation fees' and are therefore providing unremunerated labour for their masters well after the 'learning' period is over. Such situations are similar to those described in South Asia and elsewhere as 'bonded labour', and many children trapped in these circumstances evinced distress and hopelessness vis-à-vis their future. The need they articulated most explicitly was for money to pay off their debt such that they may be free to leave and start up their own business. Again, we observed that those from the poorest families or those children without any family support are the most vulnerable to ending up in these 'unfree' situations. To return to the hairdresser example, the girls being 'cared for' by the madam were also aware that they were not free to leave and indeed had to stay until at least a negotiated liberation fee was paid to the madam.



she has employed twelve girls and two boys from Ghana and Togo to help in her shop. The way she describes the relationship with her employees illuminates the blurry boundary between being a guardian and an employer that also serves to have the girls working with her at her beg and call.

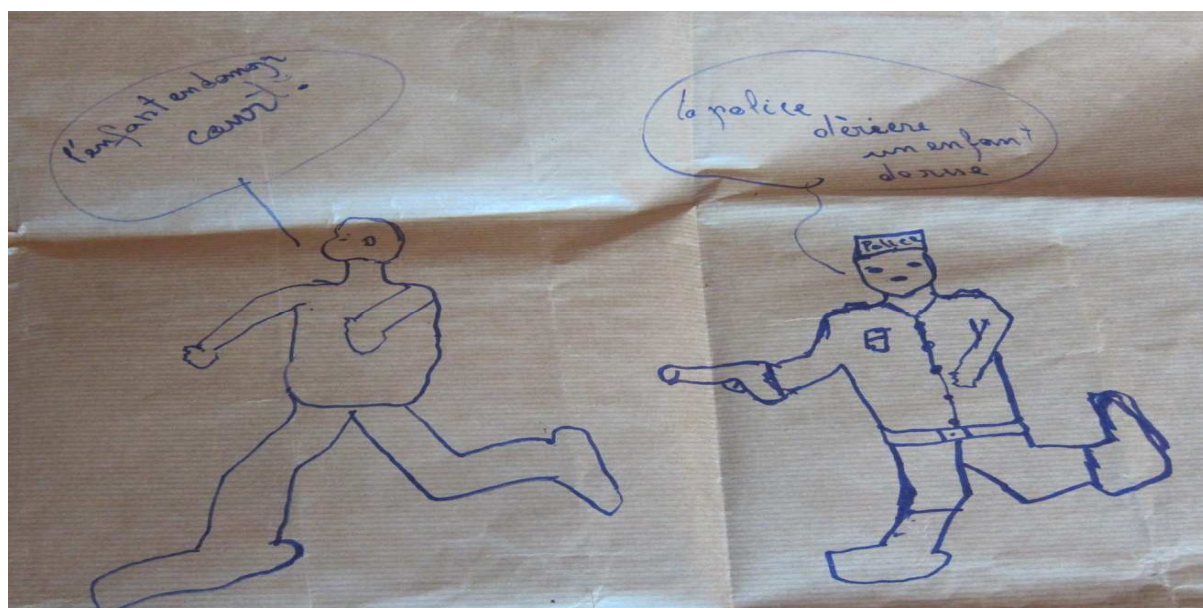
'Currently I employ a 17-year-old girl and a 9-year-old. I prefer they come to me when they are young, it's not easy at first but as they grow up they become refined. I protect the older one from boys now she is adolescent and don't allow her to go out alone. You know as a girl she can get pregnant or even the boys here can lead her into stealing. Most of the children do not like work but some know their background and work hard. Some of the girls for example are able to stay with people who help them to learn a trade and become independent workers. Some also are sent to school if they behave well with their employers. Most of the shop owners and chop bar operators here, have helped children establish their own business after serving them for some years. Rather than paying daily or paying the parents, I prefer assisting the girls to learn a trade or with capital. I have given the older one two options: to either learn sewing or I give her 1,000 cedis [USD 22] as capital to start her own trade. I only wish she will take my advice to stay away from the boys' (Interview in Accra, September 2017).

A handful of gaps stand out as especially important. First, children by and large have very limited access to savings facilities, even when they are able to accumulate small amounts of money from their economic activities. And, as we have said, this leaves them vulnerable to theft, which keeps them stuck in poverty traps. Street-connected children in particular face this threat. One boy in Seme-Krake, for example, explained that 'Every night I bury what I have in a different place to make sure it doesn't get stolen' (Interview 20 July 2017).

Second, the forces of order – most commonly it was the police who were cited – are often considered a problem rather than a source of protection by many children. Street-connected children especially experience the police as a danger, referring to the violence used when they clear the market and unanimously responding 'no' when asked whether the police could be turned to for support if needed. This is a major issue, pointing to a clear failing on the part of one 'protection actor'.

*Figure 9: Detail taken from a collective drawing, featuring a policeman chasing a street child with gun drawn*





Third, it is clear from our research that children are often aware of the protective services that exist, but much more could be done to spread that awareness. Many children arrived at assistance services in haphazard fashion and could have been helped earlier had there been more widespread awareness of what was available in terms of support. A paradigmatic example of this came from our work in Seme-Krake. Our field base there was in the Don Bosco centre. When the WCY CRAs went to mobilise children for research activities, they stumbled across a nine-year old 'hanging around' the market. It transpired that this boy was entirely unaccompanied, since the aunt with whom he had been left by his mother had herself decided to migrate to Nigeria without him. He survived on scraps and the handouts of a kindly neighbour. After our encounter, Don Bosco took him into care. Prior to this, he had been living around the corner from the centre for months.

Fourth and finally, it is worth emphasising that not all formal NGO programmes suit the children we encountered. While many subscribe to a discourse of formal education being their desire, not all of them will be able to fit back into the structure of a school day. Nor will they be able or willing to contend with corrective demands on their behaviour. To make a real difference to these lives, we would recommend working with them to identify their needs in a longer-term, progressive piece of action research and skills building.

Help for street girls - but what type of help do they want?

19-year-old Pauline came to Accra after what could be described as a reproductive mishap. Her fairly well-to-do parents had enrolled her in technical college but already as a fresher she fell pregnant with a man who was older than her. Too young to marry, too scared to tell her parents, she left the baby in the care of his father and fled to Accra. As a contrast to the *kayaye* (head porters) she identified as a street girl and talked about the difficulties of street life:

'There are NGOs that have room for you if you want to stay. They will sponsor you and do everything for you but, I mean, I don't want to stay there. I'd like to learn something, I like schooling, but it's not every day they give you that. On the Monday when I started to go, on the Monday we

went to school, we went to class and learned like we did in school. Ehe! They teach us like when we were at school, so I like that place. If every day was like Monday and I was to do that, then I would go there and learn. Even the English, I can speak fine, but if you come with them, then they will help you with the reading, eh, writing and everything, that's where I could learn. For now, I just want some money to start up business. I do small-small trading but would like to sell my own goods. I'll start with drinks, it's the most cheap. I have some training in catering from college but I don't have the means to buy a kneading machine to make all this possible. All I want is some start-up capital' (Interview in Accra, 9 September 2017).

## Recommendations for Future Research

The findings above offer many promising directions for project programming and future work. Yet they also point to a number of questions that we still need to ask and invite reflection on a number of issues that we would do well to investigate further. In this section, we will offer an overview of some of the future avenues of inquiry that we recommend either as part of CORAL or as part of related projects that will draw on CORAL's findings.

- The first – and perhaps most significant – is for Tdh and partners to more fully explore PAR in program design, implementation and evaluation. As mentioned, PAR is both an approach to and a toolkit for creating contextually-appropriate, effective interventions in a logic of solidarity rather than charity. Although at times confronting for those more used to the traditional approach of log frames and pre-defined deliverables, we and an increasing proportion of the development community are persuaded that PAR is the way forward for effective programming. It has framed our approach towards this baseline and, to the extent that our findings offer richer insights than would otherwise have been possible, this baseline represents a model that could be expanded. In very simple terms, therefore, our recommendation is for TdH and partners to continue the PAR approach. We acknowledge that this may present challenges in a world dominated by top-down donor relations, but we emphasise that more and more donors are themselves turning to PAR for its effectiveness. CORAL can deploy PAR techniques in implementing the programmatic recommendations below and in conducting evaluation of them.

- Specific examples of potential CORAL interventions suited for PAR approaches include: the establishment of child-focussed micro-banks, engagement with street-living adolescents and youth to work out the best ways to support them, support for protective community networks around child placement, and advocacy with the forces of order vis-a-vis their relationship with street-connected children. We explore each of these in further detail below.

- Narratives are key for creating compelling evaluations. Although long in thrall to numbers, increasingly donors are becoming attuned to the power of real human stories. For this reason, and in line with the tenets of PAR, we recommend that the CORAL team and partners track a number of individual children and young people throughout the life of the project in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of project interventions. This can also involve equipping a group of young

participants with research skills in order to generate ongoing self-evaluations of how and why interventions are having positive (or negative) impacts.

- Further research is unquestionably needed on the apprenticeship system in West Africa. It is clear that apprenticeships are a favoured form of escape from poverty for the children we worked with, whether they are migrants or not. Many children dream of apprenticeships and many that secure one are delighted. However, apprenticeships are still often sites of serious exploitation, with many children stuck in a Sisyphean trap unable ever to graduate and instead providing a non-stop stream of cheap or even free labour for their *patrons*. What is more, although development actors have long favoured apprenticeships as a means to support children exiting from poverty, we know that most apprenticeship programs recreate the same narrow set of career options with little that is innovative on offer. More research on the politics and practice of apprenticeships across the sub-region is therefore badly needed. The goal of this will be to determine which reforms could be recommended at political level and what practical, ground-level changes could be made.

- More research on the diverse range of child protection mechanisms in the CORAL countries would also be timely. It would be especially interesting if it explored the moral and ethical ideas underpinning the establishment and/or maintenance of protection mechanisms from below *and* how boys and girls of different ages perceived and use them.

## Programmatic Recommendations

The findings from this baseline point to a number of specific recommendations for CORAL programming. We wish to emphasise that these emerge both from our analysis of the data *and* from participatory analysis conducted with the children themselves. Each of our recommendations began to emerge as action-points during the research process, affording us the opportunity to propose and discuss with children as we went. The responses to each of these suggestions was overwhelmingly positive, suggesting a real degree of ownership and thus the potential for them to be operationalised. Equally so was the response of local child protection actors, with whom we also ‘trialled’ these ideas, along with project staff and partners at the report workshop held in Cotonou in January 2018. They have thus been ‘validated’ by hundreds of individuals. Moreover, many of these recommendations are in line with CORAL’s approach and planned activities. We begin with those that can take place ‘on the ground’ as direct, service-provision interventions with children.

### Ground-Level

- *Within the locales of CORAL intervention, expand existing spaces for children to gather and receive formal or informal support, whether they be migrants or not; build new spaces for children where these spaces do not exist; strengthen community mechanisms for creating such spaces and the support that comes with them, such as those provided by the AMWCY.*



Supportive spaces exist in many localities across the region and all of those we researched. At best, these offer a safe-haven for children during the daytimes where they can rest, play and at times access important basic services such as legal orientation. Don Bosco provides a useful model in Benin, as does Tdh with its *points espoir*, and each of our baseline locations had formal or informal parallels which could be built on.

We recommend that CORAL support the extension and expansion of these spaces in each of the places covered by its actions. That support could take many forms. First, CORAL could invest in the creation of new *points espoir* that provide a physical locale for children to congregate. Second, these *points espoir* could be made open for use by AMWCY and other groups supportive of children and their collective action, since often the AMWCY have active groups but do not have a physical space to congregate. Third, CORAL could work to spread awareness of existing spaces to children or community leaders who are not yet aware of them. Fourth, CORAL could partner with or offer financial support to expand existing structures.

In this effort, a critical issue to overcome is that many of the existing spaces have an in-built gender bias, in that their target group are young boys. This sees girls often missing out on what they have to offer. A key consideration for CORAL will be how to expand such services to include girls. Naturally, we recommend using PAR techniques to find answers to this question. In the example of marketplaces, CORAL staff could gather young girls together at a time that is convenient for their work schedules, and collaboratively design a space or a social support mechanism that fits around their existing timetable. It might also be worth organising spaces or time-slots that are 'girl only', where girls can explore their gendered needs for support in the absence of boys.

- Create mechanisms to support street-connected children to sleep safely overnight.

As was made clear above, one of the single major issues facing children who work or sleep in streets and in markets is the lack of safety they experience at night. Under threat from some of the forces of order, from older children and youth, and from the elements, they are often in need of shelter and protection. For this reason, we recommend that CORAL concentrate its efforts on the provision of these things. This too could take many forms. Firstly, CORAL could support the creation of new '*hangars*', or the expansion of existing ones, which are simple enclosed shelters that provide little more than basic protection from the weather and from unwarranted human attention. Children in locations across our baseline routinely reported themselves willing and able to spend 25-50 FCFA per night on these *hangars* and typically welcomed the chance to sleep safely inside them. That small daily contribution has the added advantage of supporting the wages of a night guardian and cleaner, thus contributing to the sustainability of the endeavour. Second, CORAL could spread awareness among street-connected children of existing *hangars*, since not all children are aware that this option is at hand. For example, part of the support package offered by the spaces mentioned above could be informing children of where they can safely sleep. Third, CORAL could support

innovative community mechanisms for providing children with safe spaces at night. One idea which emerged at the Cotonou workshop in January was to build a locally-rooted network of host families willing to offer the street-connected a place to sleep, including among expatriate communities. Another idea was to conduct sensitisation, including with the forces of order, to de-stigmatise street sleeping, so as to enable children to more easily ask for support when they need it and community members to more easily offer it. Finally, it would be an advantage to trace back the history of sleeping in public spaces in Accra, the provision of basic hygienic facilities and public policy and practice, since less harassment is issued by authorities. It would still be a key issue to identify ways of making those sleeping in public spaces safe from sexual harassment.

- Extend basic medical coverage for vulnerable children, including those who are street connected, on the move, or concerned by mobility.

Most of the children engaged within the context of this baseline had some experience of suffering basic medical difficulties. A number were sporting fresh wounds when we interviewed them. And almost none enjoy regular access to free preventive or restorative treatment. Furthermore, we know from extensive research on child labour and mobility that health costs are significant factors contributing to both (including for what in other contexts would constitute only 'minor' ailments). For these reasons, we consider it essential that CORAL supports the delivery of basic health treatment and education to its target populations. This can take many forms. First, CORAL could expand or build new medical dispensaries, including attached to the planned *points espoir*, and in particular at strategic points – for example in market places as zones of economic activity, or at border posts (where there are already often health outreach programmes linked to anti-HIV work). Second, the child-friendly spaces that CORAL will engage with or create could be supported to become first-aid zones, where children go for immediate care when in need. Third, CORAL could engage in partnerships with existing local dispensaries to facilitate preferential access to treatment for needy young people<sup>2</sup>. Fourth, CORAL could support the AMWCY to expand its existing health savings schemes for children and young people, to offset health costs in a time of crisis.

- Develop a child-led micro-banking system in the spaces where CORAL works, in particular in zones of economic activity such as markets or borders.

Children in every single research location and via every single research method made it clear to us that theft was one of the greatest threats to their well-being. Constant danger haunted many of them at night, and a dog-eat-dog predation seemed the norm in the intensely insecure environment of market street-sleeping, at least in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. Aside from the lack of physical and psychological safety resultant from this, one of its major consequences is that children are unable to accumulate and thus find themselves more likely to be trapped in a hand-to-mouth

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed it is worth noting that the local health worker responsible for Noé affirmed his support for such a suggestion, even if his health centre is 2km outside Noé centre, which limits his centre's accessibility for locals, including mobile children.

poverty cycle that offers no means of escape. Most hide their money on their own person, some bury it in various shifting locations, others rely on informal networks for support. However, none of these methods is secure or sustainable. For this reason, we urge CORAL to invest time and resources in developing a series of micro-savings interventions, preferably child-led, that can support children to safely accumulate from their small-scale economic activities. What is critical here is that children have an easily accessible, safe, reliable space in which they can, at the end of each day, deposit what little money that have been able to make. In making this suggestion, we wish to underline that it was the most popular of the recommendations when trialled with the children themselves, receiving overwhelming support in each location.

In practice, its precise form could and should vary, with PAR techniques used to develop contextually-appropriate strategies. One option that may be viable, and is moreover already planned in the CORAL project, would be to reinforce the capacities of the existing savings schemes mapped as part of the CORAL project, particularly where these are recognised as being trustworthy. Another is to support the AMWCY in promoting formalised mobile money savings groups. Mobile money is increasingly being used by young people across West Africa and the barriers to entry are decreasing. Many AMWCY youth already support other children to save with it, through the provision of identity documents that allow children to obtain sim cards and the lending of cell phones that allow immediate transfer. A third option is to establish more formal mechanisms, perhaps following the example of the internationally-recognised 'Butterflies NGO', which combines financial literacy training, rights sensitisation, and banking support for young street-connected and working children. We believe that this could be an excellent model for CORAL to follow in West Africa, not least because it allows an 'add-on' component to the savings. Tdh staff have expressed interest in this idea and plans are afoot to explore a means to trial it.

#### - Apprenticeship innovation.

As mentioned above, apprenticeships are widely desired and yet often problematic. Many fail to deliver for the children within them, while the apprenticeship programmes that exist are often highly formulaic. We recommend exploring options for delivering new apprenticeships more in line with the changing realities of the labour market (cell phone fixers are increasingly in demand, for example). We also recommend adding literacy components to existing apprenticeship schemes.

At the Cotonou workshop, two further suggestions emerged from participants. First was to work on formalisation of apprenticeship processes. Second was to explore mass training opportunities, bringing large numbers of young people and their *patrons* together to impart new skills and use the opportunity for sensitisation.

#### - Sensitisation of the forces of order, particularly in relation to the perceived or actual threat that they pose to street-connected children.

This baseline research strongly suggests that, in order to prevent against theft or to otherwise enforce laws regarding open sleeping and child mobility, the forces of

order routinely attempt to move street sleepers, at times menacing them and at others using violence against them. Although police officers at the Cotonou workshop strongly refuted these claims, our research undeniably shows that many children fear uniformed officials because they have experienced violence at their hands. The images dotted throughout this report attest to this fact. This poses a serious double problem. On the one hand, it means that the forces of order are themselves sometimes the direct cause of a threat to children's rights and well-being. On the other, where children are threatened by different people, they feel unsafe going to the forces of order for protection. This is especially tragic given that children who have *not* experienced violence on the part of state officials *do* view them as a potential source of protection against '*les bandits*'. As such, those who are too scared of agencies such as the police to approach them for support are typically those most in need of it. What can be done about this conundrum?

The obvious recommendation would be to sensitise the forces of order and convince them that their behaviour needs to change. However, the police representative at the baseline study validation workshop was strongly resistant to this suggestion, claiming that 'the police must do their job'. As such, we recommend CORAL staff to work collaboratively with the forces of order in each intervention site to find creative solutions which both allow the authorities to fulfil their mandates *and* enable them to become a source of protection for the most vulnerable. Our expectation is that these solutions will look different in each location.

- Family Sensitisation regarding the potential effects of physical 'correction' of errant children.

Interpersonal, intra-familial violence emerged as a significant source of concern for children in this baseline. Many children identified parental correction as a major threat to their wellbeing and a danger they commonly faced. Others explicitly acknowledged having run away from home in order to avoid such correction. As such, although we acknowledge the premium placed on discipline and firm parenting in many West African societies, we nevertheless recommend that CORAL explore options for advocacy and sensitisation messaging around the potential effects of using physical force as a parenting strategy.

- Convene multi-stakeholder protection forums.

We saw above that networks of child placement continue to exist and play a significant role in intra-regional child mobility, notwithstanding the considerable investment in anti-trafficking (and at times anti-migration) sensitisation that has taken place over the past two decades. Although these networks remain robust, they are not necessarily optimally organised to guarantee child protection. The example of the Togolese in Côte d'Ivoire makes this clear, just as it makes clear that network leaders would like support in establishing structures and mechanisms to ensure that children are well protected. We therefore recommend that CORAL staff work with these network members and other relevant stakeholders to develop situated strategies for ensuring that migrant children are protected. These kinds of collective and inclusive actions are more likely to achieve success than simple repression.



## Macro-Level

- Our final recommendation pertains to the structural, national-regional level. As attested by our findings, 'money is everything', which is no surprise anywhere under capitalism. Children need money for practically anything they wish to accomplish and the lack of money is one of the major factors contributing to their vulnerability. In this respect, a structural expansion of social protection services to include monetary minimums for all people is desirable. Although not likely to be achieved in the near future or by the CORAL project, we believe that the advocacy component of CORAL should push along the lines advocated by Professors James Ferguson and Armando Barrientos towards universal cash transfers or basic income. Only this is likely to provide for people's basic needs, captured painfully in the drawing below (Figure 10), of a child safe in his bed, in his house, with food on the table and a shower to wash regularly in.

*Figure 10: Detail of a Collective Drawing from Cotonou.*



Each of the organisations involved in CORAL should begin a process of internal reflection around what long-term, structural political messages it would like to get across to regional governments about social protection and should ask itself whether they can support calls for cash transfers and basic income of the kind that are now beginning to be rolled out in countries such as Ghana. If they do, we would like to see them use their considerable reputations to call publicly for structural, political solutions both to the poverty and the exploitative child work and mobility that can result from it.

## Conclusion



Children move for a variety of reasons and in many different ways. A one-size-fits-all approach to their protection will therefore never work. Rooted responses to particular and situated difficulties are more likely to bear fruit. In this study, conducted over eight sites and in five countries, we have attempted to shed light on a number of such responses. Our belief is that, in order to be successful, these should be operationalised working collectively with children, their communities, and local protection actors. The same groups can also play a key role in evaluating those responses. Through the use of CRAs, PAR research groups and other methodologies, Tdh and partners can develop genuinely grounded indicators and assessments of their interventions. In turn, these can form the basis for future and ongoing action. But work at scale is also important, and this is where we believe high-level advocacy and clear official discourse around the root causes of exploitation, vulnerability and unsafety to be key.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 : Survey in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

#### Biography

1. Name / *Nom* \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age / *Âge* \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender / *Genre* : Boy / *Garçon* \_\_\_\_\_ Girl / *Fille* \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where do you come from / *Lieu de naissance* :  
Country / *Pays* ? \_\_\_\_\_  
Region ? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where do your parents live ? / *Où résident tes parents?*  
Father / *Père* : \_\_\_\_\_ Mother / *Mère* : \_\_\_\_\_
6. What work do your parents do? / *Quel travail font tes parents?*
7. Père : \_\_\_\_\_ Mère : \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many siblings do you have : / *Combien de frères et de sœurs as-tu* :  
Older brothers / *grand frères* \_\_\_\_\_  
Younger brothers / *frères cadets* \_\_\_\_\_  
Older sisters / *grande sœurs* \_\_\_\_\_  
Younger sisters / *petite sœurs* \_\_\_\_\_
9. Where do your siblings live ? / *Où résident tes frères et tes sœurs?*  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Education / Education

10. Are you in school currently? / *Tu fréquentes actuellement?* \_\_\_\_\_
11. What type of school ? (public/private/faith-based/informal etc.)  
*Quel type d'école ? (public/privé/ laïque/confessionnelle/informelle etc.)*
12. Years of schooling / *Nombre d'années de scolarisation* ? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you wish to continue your education? / *Est-ce que tu souhaites continuer les études ?* \_\_\_\_\_
14. If yes, which education will you do? / *Si oui, quelles études/quelle éducation tu souhaites faire?* \_\_\_\_\_
15. What will you do to access education ? *Comment vas-tu faire pour accéder à ces études ?* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Mobility / mobilité

16. When did you leave your home ? / *Quand as-tu quitté chez toi ?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Who did you come with ? / *Avec qui es-tu venu-e ?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. How long have you been here? / *Combien de temps tu as duré ici?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. Did you stop over to work on your way? If so, what did you do ?  
*Est-ce que tu as travaillé quelque part avant de venir ici? Si oui, où ? et qu'est-ce que tu as fait ?* \_\_\_\_\_
20. Where do you sleep? / *Où tu dors chaque nuit ?* \_\_\_\_\_





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21. How many of you sleep there? / *Combien de personnes partagent cet espace?* \_\_\_\_\_
22. How much is the rent? / *Le loyer, combien tu payes ?* \_\_\_\_\_
23. Have you got access to these utilities? Where? (encircle) How much do you pay for access? *Est-ce que tu as accès aux commodités suivantes ? Où? (Entourer) Combien paies-tu pour l'accès?*  
 Water: home / neighbour / public tap? Payment? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Eau: à la maison / chez le voisin / fontaine publique? C'est combien? \_\_\_\_\_*  
 Electricity: yes / no? Payment? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Electricité: oui / non ? C'est combien ? \_\_\_\_\_*  
 Toilet: home / public? Payment? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Toilettes (WC) : à la maison / WC publics? C'est combien ? \_\_\_\_\_*  
 Bath: home / public / no access? Payment? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Douche: à la maison / douche publique / pas d'accès? C'est combien ? \_\_\_\_\_*
24. If you fall ill, what do you do? *Si tu tombes malades, que fais-tu? (entourer et préciser)*  
 Do you go to the hospital/clinic / buy medicine without consultation / see traditional healer or buy local medicine / wait out the illness / other ?  
*Est-ce que tu pars à l'hôpital / achètes des médicaments sans voir une infirmière / vois un guérisseur / achètes des médicaments indigénats / attends une guérison naturelle / autre :* \_\_\_\_\_
25. Which health services have used here? / *A quels services de santé tu as pu accédé ici ?* \_\_\_\_\_
26. Who helped you access this service? / *Qui t'a aidé-e à aller dans ces services?* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Work / travail

27. What kind of work do you do, and with whom / *Quel travail fais-tu, et avec qui et pour qui ?* \_\_\_\_\_
28. How did you find this work? *Comment tu as eu trouvé ce travail?* \_\_\_\_\_
29. Do you get paid? How much? *On te paie? Combien?* \_\_\_\_\_
30. How often? (encircle) Daily / weekly / every 2 weeks / monthly / at the end of your stay
31. *Fréquence de paiement ? (entourer) Chaque jour / semaine / 2 semaines / mois / quand tu vas partir*

#### Income and savings / Salaire et épargne

32. Where do you save your money? / *Où tu gardes ton argent pour ne pas le perdre?* \_\_\_\_\_
33. Have you bought anything that could help you save up or something you need later in life? / *Est-ce que tu as acheté quelque chose pour le futur? Préciser:* \_\_\_\_\_
34. Do you send money home? *Est-ce que tu envoies de l'argent à ta famille? Combien ? fréquence ?* \_\_\_\_\_
35. If so, to whom and how is the money used? / *Si oui, à qui et comment utilise-t-on cet argent que tu envoies ?*



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36. If not, how do you use your money ? / *Si non, comment utilises-tu ton argent ?* \_\_\_\_\_

37. Are you in debt? Why ? / *Est-ce que tu as des dettes ? Pourquoi ?*

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2 : Interview Schedule for Children

*(Questions in Red Essential, in Black Depending on Situation)*

### A. Biographical Information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Place in birth order
5. Place of origin
6. When did you leave?
7. Itinerary of mobility ?
8. In school currently?
9. Years of schooling
10. Occupation, and with family/non-family?
11. How long have you been here?
12. Where do you sleep?
13. Both parents alive?

### B. Migration and Aspiration

14. Why did you come here?
15. How did you find this work?
16. What are your goals for while you're here?
17. Good bits of being here? Bad bits of being here?
18. What do you want to be when you grow up?
19. Describe a successful big person in your community – what would you need to do to be like that? Do you want to be that? Why?
20. Would you advise other young people to do what you're doing? Why or why not?
21. How many of your friends moved from home ?

### C. Work

22. What does your working day usually look like? Do you have days on which you don't work?
23. Do you like your work?
24. Do you get paid? How much?
25. What does fairness look like to you?
26. Tell us about when you think you have been treated fairly.
27. What does exploitation mean to you?
28. Tell us a story about when you were exploited.
29. How did you handle it?
30. Can you describe a good bad boss?
31. Can you describe a good job?

## Appendix 3: Results from Ghana survey, September 2017

*Number of surveyed children, Ghana survey, September 2017.*

Accra			Aflao			Ghana total		
Total	100	%	Total	90	%	Total	190	%
Girls	37	37	Girls	31	34	Girls	68	36
Boys	63	63	Boys	59	66	Boys	122	64

*Age distribution, Ghana survey, September 2017 (N=190)*

Accra						
	N	Average	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.	Median
Girls	37	14.4	2.71	7	17	15
Boys	63	15.5	2.84	7	*23	16
Total	100	15.1	2.84	7	23	16
Aflao						
	N	Average	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.	Median
Girls	31	14.0	2.44	6	17	14
Boys	59	13.9	3.02	6	18	15
Total	90	14.0	2.73	6	18	14
Ghana total						
	N	Average	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.	Median
Girls	68	14.2	2.57	6	17	15
Boys	122	14.7	2.93	6	23	15
Total	190	14.4	2.90	6	23	15

\* Maximum age is above age because the sample includes youths who migrated before they turned 18 years.

*Household head's occupation, migrant children in Ghana.*

