

Working Paper  
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**Independent North-South Child Migration  
in Ghana: The Decision Making Process**

S. O. KWANKYE\*, J. K. ANARFI\*\*, C. A. TAGOE\*\*  
AND A. CASTALDO\*\*\*

\* RIPS

\*\* ISSER

\*\*\* Sussex Centre for Migration Research

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Development Research Centre on  
Migration, Globalisation and Poverty  
Arts C-226, University of Sussex  
Brighton BN1 9SJ

Website: <http://www.migrationdrc.org>  
Email: [migration@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:migration@sussex.ac.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)1273 873394  
Fax: +44 (0)1273 873158

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## 1. Introduction

This working paper explores the reasons for the phenomenon of independent child migration from the North to the South in Ghana, looking particularly at how the decision for the child to migrate is made, and who is involved in the process. Most of the findings of the research focus on what children themselves think and say about the decision-making processes and their experiences.

Whilst migration is neither a new phenomenon, nor specific to any group of people, the trends and dynamics of population movements vary greatly over space and time. Migration in its various forms has resulted in the redistribution of people over space, with migratory flows generally prompted by imbalances in development between origin and destination areas. These imbalances, be they in resource endowment, income levels or access to facilities and services, cause the movement of people at both internal and international levels. However, an understanding of the role of these structural factors should not deter us from looking at migrants' own agency in deciding to migrate. The literature on migration in Ghana has largely focused on the internal migration of its adult population. Recently, however, the independent migration of children, particularly from northern to southern Ghana, has become a subject of increasing concern for Ghana's national development. This phenomenon has important implications for the development prospects of both origin and destination areas, as well as for the socio-economic advancement of the child migrants themselves.

People migrate for a variety of reasons, including having better access to public services or to recreational options, and/or for economic gain. Therefore, differences in average income or wage levels between origin and destination areas are significant determinants of migration flows between the two locations. Households can make migration decisions to maximise income flows, or to develop the human capital of some of their members. In other cases, migration can be a response to severe hardship during periods of deprivation and economic stress.

Research into the decision-making processes behind whether to migrate or not also indicates various non-economic factors or variables at play. Gardner (1981), for instance, identifies a range of macro-level influences on migration decisions, which include societal norms and values about migration, opportunities or constraints and/or perceptions about these, and

accessibility. According to Gardner, societal and cultural influences always play a part in migration decision-making. The key role of community-level influences on the decision to migrate is supported by the fact that migration is more likely to take place from communities that have a history of migration, or customs necessitating the migration of some of their members (Findley 1982).

This broad theoretical framework is useful to look at the case of Ghana's northern regions. The perception of greater availability of socio-economic opportunities in the southern regions has over time sustained a continuous stream of migration from North to South. This is linked to the spatial imbalance in the distribution of natural resources between the north and the south and can be understood as a response to the differential in income levels and opportunities between the two regions, with the economic dynamism of the South acting as a 'pull' factor, rather than any absolute poverty in the northern regions 'pushing' people out.

The Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) reports 3 and 4 for 1992 (GSS 1995) and 1999 (GSS 2000) show, however, that the majority of individuals migrate for non-economic reasons, and it appears that these have not changed much over time. The GLSS 3 (GSS 1995) shows that 18 percent and 43 percent of all migrants cited 'marriage' and 'other family-related reasons' respectively as their reason for migrating, while 24 percent indicated that they had moved for work-related reasons involving their own or their spouse's employment. In 1999 however, about 28 percent of the migrants claimed they had moved for work-related reasons, involving their own or their spouse's employment. Thus, work does not appear to be the primary 'pull' factor in migratory behaviour in Ghana, although the percentage of migrants in this class increased from 24 percent in 1991/92 to 28 percent in 1998/99.

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) also carried out the Ghana Child Labour Survey (GCLS) in 2001, investigating a wide range of issues around Child Labour (GSS 2003). One aspect of the study of critical relevance to our research is an analysis of the region of origin of the street children in Ghana. Whilst not all child migrants become street children, some do, and a study of street children could give us insights into the lives of child migrants. Out of an estimated 6.4 million children (aged 5-17) in Ghana (GSS 2003), the nationwide survey interviewed 2,314 street children and found that over a third of the street children were from the Northern region (38.1 percent) followed by the Upper East (12.1 percent). These two regions stood out as the two most important source regions of street children, and contrasts with the Upper West, from

where only about five percent of the street children originate. In the household survey, the data shows that about 2 out of every 5 children in Ghana are working. However, a vast majority (88 percent) work as unpaid family workers or apprentices, or conversely, only 12 percent of all working children are paid for their labour (GSS 2003: xiii-xiv).

In studying the relationship between family, child labour and migration in Metro Manila, Camacho (1999), examines the role of the family in making decisions about migration, as well as the economic benefits of the migration of children for their family. She studies the cases of 50 children below the age of 18, who migrated from a province in the Philippines to work in Metro Manila as domestic wage workers. She finds that the majority of the child migrants had reportedly taken their own decision to migrate and work, although many of them had consulted their family members, particularly their mothers. The study found that the major driving force for their wanting to work was the desire to contribute to the income of the family and also to attain some level of education. It was however quite clear that those who migrated were largely following other kinsmen/women and community members as well as friends who had migrated earlier. Such a migration strategy reduced the risks associated with the migration of children. Another study carried out in India suggests that conflict between parents and children – in particular male children – is a determinant in prompting the migration of children (Iversen 2002).

These findings raise questions about what responsibility children take upon themselves. Ultimately, without losing sight of the role of external influences, we seek to explore whether it is the parents, the children themselves, both together, or other relatives, who make the decision for the child to migrate. Today, community-level influences appear to affect not only adult migrants but children as well. For example, a culture is developing, particularly among girls from the north, who wish to migrate to southern Ghana at least once in their lifetime, in order to acquire some basic items in preparation for their marriage.

Awareness of the decision-making processes that lie behind the north-south independent migration of children would constitute an important basis for the formulation of informed and well-targeted policies that seek to reduce the risks attached to this phenomenon or attempt to enhance its benefits. In fact, despite the generally held view that children's migration automatically increases their vulnerability to economic – and other types of -- exploitation, Migration DRC research has shown that children's perceptions of migration remain mostly

positive. In particular Hashim (2006:1) uses data collected during interviews with children over 3 months in Tempane Natinga in the Upper East region of Ghana to show that independent child migrants not only choose to migrate but are usually 'positive about their experiences, as they afforded them the opportunity to develop important relationships or skills, and/or to earn an income that allowed them to buy the things necessary for their progression into adulthood or pay for education'. Additionally, research into adolescents' independent migration in Burkina Faso shows their decision to migrate is mostly the outcome of their 'positive aspirations to look for work and urban experiences' (Thorsen 2007: 6).

The focus of our research is on a specific group of child migrants – children who have migrated from the northern regions to the cities of Accra and Kumasi, most of whom, and especially girls, work as head porters. Using data collected by two of the authors (Kwankye and Anarfi) in Accra and Kumasi in 2005 as part of their Independent Child Migrants' Survey, together with supplementary qualitative data from further fieldwork in Accra in February 2006, this paper examines the decision-making processes involved in the independent migration of children from northern to southern Ghana. These datasets were previously used for research into different aspects of the same phenomenon, namely the risks faced by independent child migrants and their coping strategies in the destination (Kwankye et al. 2007). The present working paper builds on that study, and attempts to answer a number of further questions, such as: What are the influences at play behind the decision for children to migrate from northern to southern Ghana? Who are the main players in the decision-making process? To what extent does the decision to migrate depend on the child? What role do parents and other relations play in the process? What resources are available to facilitate the migration? What are children's views on their migration experience?

In order to look at these questions, we will take the following steps. Section 2 will provide a historical overview of internal migration in Ghana, and Section 3 will go on to outline the methodology used for data collection. The fourth section will look at the demographics and characteristics of the sampled child migrants. The fifth section will constitute the core of this paper by looking into the process of decision-making, and in particular into the reasons for migration and the main players in the decision making, as well as into the children's migration experience and the resources that are available to them to facilitate their own migration. Section 6 deals with the views of the child migrants on migration. Section 7 briefly discusses two important risks that are attached to North-South independent child migration in Ghana,

namely, the means used for travelling and the abandonment of schooling. The final section will conclude and provide some policy recommendations that build on the findings of this paper.

## **2. Historical Overview of Internal Migration in Ghana**

Spatial mobility has been a constant phenomenon across human society. In Ghana, human migration has taken place from pre-colonial, through colonial to the post-colonial period. These movements have largely been prompted by economic forces, with populations responding to the uneven spatial distribution of natural resources in the country and the resulting regional variations in socio-economic development. Ghana can be divided into five regions of population distribution; these broadly match the spatial distribution of natural resources across the country:

- pockets of population concentration in the north-east and north-west of Ghana;
- a sparsely populated middle belt covering larger parts of the Northern region and parts of the Brong Ahafo and Upper regions;
- a densely populated forest zone;
- a moderate to densely populated coastal region and
- densely populated urban centres scattered all over the country (Nabila 1992).

The northern regions have historically constituted a belt of sparse population with some pockets of population concentration. The largely sparse population in these regions is a consequence of the region's disadvantaged position with respect to natural resource availability. In addition, the pattern of development which the country inherited from the colonial administration at the time of independence in 1957 and the subsequent development programme which the post-colonial administration embarked upon only further deepened the North's comparatively disadvantaged socio-economic position. While conscious efforts were made to develop the forest and coastal belts for the production of minerals, cash crops and timber for export, facilitated by the creation of transport links, ports and harbours on the coast, the North was virtually left behind, resulting in a spatial dichotomy with a relatively developed South and a largely undeveloped North. This dichotomous pattern of development in Ghana triggered the migration of economically active persons from the North to the South for jobs in agricultural areas and mining towns.



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However, an analysis of internal migration in Ghana through Ghana's population censuses since 1960 reveals a more nuanced picture. Apart from the Greater Accra and the Brong Ahafo regions, all other regions in both northern and southern Ghana have experienced some level of net out-migration at one time or another. Despite the fact that many are known to migrate from the north of the country to the south, the net out-migration experienced by the three southern regions of Central, Volta and Eastern outweigh the levels of out-migration from the three northern regions. Net migration in the three regions of Northern, Upper East and Upper West

was –157,055 in 1960 and –182,426 in 1970 (Table 1). In 1984, however, while there was a net gain of 10,716 for the Northern region, the Upper East and the Upper West suffered a net loss of 20,762 and 3,083 persons respectively. By 2000, all three regions experienced large volumes of net losses of population, which stood at 139,216 for the Northern region, 201,532 for the Upper East and 191,653 for the Upper West, with the southern regions of Central, Volta and Eastern also losing 274,579, 403,404 and 224,386 persons respectively. This suggests that, with the exception of the Northern and Volta regions in 1984, the three northern and southern regions have consistently suffered net losses of population to other regions in the south.

Migrants perceive urban centres as able to provide relatively higher opportunities for the enhancement of their lives. These opportunities act as poles of attraction for migrants from the north or rural settings to urban centres, resulting in rapid urbanization. The large rise in volumes of out-migration, in particular from the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions between 1970 and 2000, suggests a key issue is the ‘pull’ factor of growth in income and employment opportunities in the south. Economic growth and expansion from Ghana’s economic nadir of 1984 mainly took place in the south, thus ‘pulling’ people to migrate.

From pre-colonial times, certain regions of West Africa have witnessed vast population movements linked to trade, conflict or natural disasters, rather than to manpower transfers or rural-urban migration (Meillasoux 1969). The situation in the source regions also contributes to this inter-regional migration, which appears to have only increased over time (Kwankye and Wadieh 2005). For the Northern region in particular, the Dagbon conflict has contributed since early 2002 to a stream of migrants moving to other cities and towns outside the region.

**Table 1: Volume of Net-Migration in Ghana by Region<sup>1</sup>, 1960-2000**

Region	Net-Migration			
	1960	1970	1984	2000
Western	-1,566*	+123,916	+46,687	+350,792 (18.23%)
Central	-	-131,286	-77,874	-274,579 (17.23%)
Greater Accra	+90,109	+272,809	+153,154	+901,780 (31.03%)
Volta	-94,422	-169,089	+97,192	-403,404 (24.67%)
Eastern	-18,519	-99,645	-78,136	-224,386 (10.65%)
Ashanti	+90,821	+72,402	-28,327	+197,059 (5.45%)
Brong Ahafo	+84,919	+117,291	+52,192	+163,749 (9.02%)
Northern	-157,055**	-33,719	+10,716	-139,216 (7.65%)
Upper East	-	-148,707***	-20,762	-201,532 (21.90%)
Upper West	-	-	-3,083	-191,653 (33.24%)

Source: Extracted from Ghana's Population Census Reports 1960 (CBS, 1962), 1970 (CBS, 1975), 1984 (GSS, 1987) and 2000 (GSS, 2002).

Notes: \* Includes Central region

\*\* Includes Upper East and Upper West region

\*\*\*Includes Upper West

In the 1960s and early 1970s, migration from the North largely involved male adults who moved to work in the cocoa growing areas, oil palm plantations or in mining industries in the south. With time, however, these have been superseded by young persons moving to the urban centres of Accra and Kumasi. Many of these young migrants are female adolescents with little or no education or employable skills, who have to resort to working as head-porters -- popularly called *kayaye*<sup>2</sup> -- in the transport stations and market centres at these destinations.

Head portage is a major form of transportation of goods in Ghana. All over the country, people carry their wares from farms to their house on their heads. Both men and women carry goods in this way, but men increasingly use bicycles in rural areas, so women make up a growing and larger proportion of rural head porters. Head portage for commercial purposes was first introduced in Ghana by male migrants from the Sahelian countries in West Africa, mainly from Mali. It was virtually an exclusively male domain. Those who practiced it were called 'kaya' which is the Hausa word for load.

<sup>1</sup> Total population for each region as outlined in 2000 Census: Western Region - 1,924,577; Central Region - 1,593,823; Greater Accra Region - 2,905,726; Volta Region - 1,635,421; Eastern Region - 2,106,696; Ashanti Region - 3,612,950; Brong-Ahafo Region - 1,815,408; Northern Region - 1,820,806; Upper East Region - 920,089; Upper West Region - 576,583.

<sup>2</sup> *Kayaye* is the plural of *kayayoo* which is a term made up of two words, 'Kaya' and 'yoo' originating from Hausa (a foreign dialect) and Ga (a local Ghanaian language for people from the Greater Accra Region) respectively for a female porter at transport parks and market centres in the cities.

After the Aliens Compliance Order of 1969, the 'kaya' business almost disappeared as those who practised it were affected by the expulsion order. The vacuum created was filled by Ghanaians with some alterations. Although those who did portering continued to be largely males, they chose to carry the loads on hand trucks instead of their heads. These hand trucks became part of the traffic in Ghanaian cities and most big towns. With time though, it became increasingly difficult to use these hand-pushed trucks in the Central Business Districts of our cities and towns. It was easier for human beings to carry these things on their heads and weave themselves rather than the hand trucks through heavy traffic. This provided a niche activity for young people from the north of Ghana. But it was the first time this service was being provided predominantly by females, hence the need to qualify the service provider by adding the suffix 'yoo' to 'kaya' ('female' in the Ga language of the Greater Accra region of Ghana). 'Kayayoo' then is a female porter (the plural is 'kayayei'). This term is thus a true legacy of migration which vividly brings out the connection between internal and international migration. The latter gave us the term 'kaya' and the former has given us 'kayayoo' or 'kayayei'.

The wares carried by these 'kayayei' include everything from farm produce like vegetables, maize, yam and meat to provisions like milo, milk and sugar, either in boxes or plastic bags. The main users of this service are shoppers, shop owners or anyone else who needs help carting items from the point of purchase to the point where transportation is available. This business is informal by nature and all the people in it are self-employed. This activity is dominated by people from the northern parts of the country, especially the Northern region. Consequently, most of the 'kayayei' are Dagombas. All that is needed is a head pan either bought from one's own resources or hired on a daily basis, as new entrants into the business would do. Upon arrival in the city, all they have to do is locate a familiar face or someone from their ethnic group to get into the 'kayayei' business. Some of the 'kayayei' have regular customers; those who do not just visit the market to offer their services.

If past trends are understood to have had a relatively positive impact on the development of destination areas and migrants themselves, does the current situation have dimensions which are likely to have negative consequences? In the first place, it is possible that areas of origin, which are usually rural in character, might be deprived of the needed human capital and skills embodied in young out-migrants. How do potential benefits and new opportunities balance out against exposure to physical and reproductive health risks, or abuse of migrants' human rights,

in an environment where they may not be able to afford decent food and shelter? On the ground, whilst the migration of children, forced or voluntary, could be seen as disadvantageous to the migrants, more and more children continue to migrate from the northern regions to cities and towns in the south. This in itself could suggest that migrants still find a positive result after weighing up the costs and benefits of their migration. By looking into these questions, this paper seeks to provide a better understanding of various variables which feed into the decision-making process.

### **3. Methodology**

This study targets young migrants from the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, aged between 10 and 24, who migrated on their own to the southern cities of Accra and Kumasi. Data from these migrants, who currently live in Accra or Kumasi and migrated for the first time when they were children (under 18 years old), were collected from the three northern regions. Like the Ghana Child Labour Survey (GSS 2003), a non-probability sampling technique was used to select 400 and 200 child migrants in Accra and Kumasi respectively. Since the sample was purposively selected, it is not representative of all child migrants from the Northern regions, but only of those who were located at the major stations and market centres in the two cities under consideration, where most of them work as *kayayee*. As a result, the dataset is biased towards child migrants who practice such trades -- head portering in particular.

The sample used for analysis in this survey, referred to as the 2005 Independent Child Migration Survey, contains 450 child migrants aged 10-24, of whom 304 (67.6 percent) were in Accra and 146 (32.4 percent) in Kumasi. The child migrants were contacted using their group leaders as key informants at major transport stations and market places in both cities. The snowball approach was then adopted to locate other child migrants from places like the Kwame Nkrumah Circle Transport Park, Kantamanto Market area, Okaishie–Makola Market Area, Agbogloshie Market Area and Kaneshie Market Area in Accra and the Kejetia Lorry Park, Adum Shopping Centre, Asafo Market Area and Kumasi Central Market Area in Kumasi. Data were collected simultaneously by two teams – one in Accra and the other in Kumasi -- using a structured questionnaire. Additionally, separate gender-based focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were carried out in the destination areas among persons belonging to the age groups 10-14, 15-17, and 18 years and above.

The study also uses qualitative data from in-depth interviews with members of child migrant households in selected districts of origin in the Northern region, where a large proportion of the child migrants who were interviewed came from. These included key informants in the places of origin of the migrants; individuals who had been independent child migrants in the past but had returned to their areas of origin; and focus group discussions involving some potential child migrants and some adults regarding their views about the migration of children from the northern parts of Ghana to Kumasi and Accra. All tables presented in the remaining of the paper come from the 2005 Independent Child Migration Survey carried out in Accra and Kumasi.

We should emphasise that the choice of Accra and Kumasi as destination areas and the northern regions (i.e., Northern, Upper East and Upper West) as regions of origin of migrants is supported by the results of the 2000 Population and Housing Census of Ghana (GSS 2002), as shown in Table 1 above. The table shows that, compared to the other regions in the country, the Greater Accra region has received a much higher number and share of inter-regional migrants. The Ashanti region -- where Kumasi is located -- features a lower share of inter-regional migrants, but is still an attractive destination for internal migrants in Ghana. By contrast, the North presents a scenario of high out-migration relative to the total population. Furthermore, the Ghana Child Labour Survey (GSS 2003) points out that 55 percent of street children were from the three northern regions, while more than 75 percent of the street children interviewed could be found in Greater Accra and the Ashanti regions.

#### **4. Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Child Migrants**

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the 450 child migrants are examined with respect to age, sex, region and district of origin, current education, occupation and marital status in both destination areas. Overall, the sex distribution shows that a lot more females than males are involved in the north-south migration in both destinations, with a wider margin of difference between the sexes in Accra than in Kumasi. More than half the migrants surveyed in the two cities (54.4 percent) were in the age group 15-19 years, while 26.4 percent were aged 10-14 years (See Table 3). Less than one percent of them were younger than 10, suggesting that there are not very many young children operating as migrants in the two cities.

However, the parents of current child migrants have reported in in-depth interviews that a number of children migrated for the first time when they were under 10 years old. This seemed to be the case more with girls rather than boys<sup>3</sup>. The in-depth interviews conducted later on with child migrants in Accra produced some examples of girls migrating at a younger age: girls like Asana<sup>4</sup>, Sharatu and Mina all migrated when they were 9 or just turned 10. However, the few young boys found in the sample were mostly between 10 and 14 years of age, and had come to the city after they had turned 10.

An analysis of the age at which child migrant respondents in the Independent Child Migration survey moved out of their place of birth for the first time (Table 2) shows that a relatively high proportion migrated between the ages of 15 and 17, thereby suggesting that quite a substantial number of them are recent migrants.

**Table 2: Age at First Migration of Child Migrants**

	Both Cities		
	M	F	T
<u>Age (yrs)</u>			
<10	12.6	17.8	16.0
10-14	39.9	38.4	38.9
15-17	47.5	43.8	45.1
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	158	292	450

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

Apart from the 20-24 age group, which constitutes 18.7 percent of the sample (and contains a higher proportion of boys), girls dominate in all other age groups. This shows that a cut-off using the definition of a child<sup>5</sup> will make the migration from north to south a phenomenon dominated by girls overall, with more girls moving to Accra as their destination than to Kumasi. It may imply that more girls migrate to Accra while many of the boys choose Kumasi as their destination. One should also note that the higher proportion of girls across the sample at least partially results from a bias in the survey. As mentioned above, the sample consists primarily of

<sup>3</sup> These young female migrants will include some who are moving to help other family members/ households as domestic workers, and have not been included in our sampling.

<sup>4</sup> For ethical reasons, names used in this paper are not the given names of the respondents. This is to conceal their identities as agreed with them before the interview.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'child' is used according to the international definition, which refers to a person within the age range of 4 to 17 years inclusive.

children working as *kayayei*, a predominantly female activity. The higher proportion of boys in the older age group shows that perhaps more boys than girls have stayed in the destination areas after the age of 18. In other words, perhaps more of the girl migrants than their male counterparts eventually return to their places of origin. One explanation might be that girls return at a younger age than boys in order to get married to men in their area of origin.

Nonetheless it appears that the migration of children from Northern to Southern Ghana has become a very common phenomenon as almost every household is reported to have a child migrant in Southern Ghana. For example, an elderly person in one of the sending communities in the Northern region noted: 'There is no house in this community from which a child has not migrated to the South'.

About two in every three migrants hail from the Northern region (60 percent), while a smaller proportion of them hail from the Upper East and Upper West regions. When examined by sex, however, it is noted that most of the boys at the two destinations are from the Upper East (65 percent). Conversely, most of the girls have come from the Northern region (79.8 percent). The Upper West region provides the lowest proportion of child migrants surveyed in the two cities. This however, does not automatically imply that few children from the Upper West region migrate; it might be that they migrate elsewhere, possibly abroad to Burkina Faso or to Cote d'Ivoire, with which the region shares borders. By district of origin of the child migrants, West Mamprusi (25.4%), Tamale Municipality (14.7%), Bolga Municipality (14.0%) and Bawku East (10%) are the dominant districts.

Breaking the analysis down by sex shows that, overall, the males mainly originate from two main districts: Bawku East and Bolgatanga Municipality in the Upper East region while the females are mainly from West Mamprusi district and Tamale municipality. There are also differences between the two destination cities in the proportion of child migrants according to the districts of origin. On the whole, however, the Northern region, and in particular the Tamale Municipality and West Mamprusi, constitute the area of origin for most of the migrants.

**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Child Migrants by Current Age and Sex, Region and District of Origin, in Accra and Kumasi**

Background Characteristics	Accra			Kumasi			Both Cities		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
<u>Age (yrs)</u>									
< 10	0.0	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.4
10-14	9.2	32.7	26.0	21.2	33.3	27.4	14.6	32.9	26.4
15-19	56.3	59.0	58.2	39.4	53.4	46.6	48.7	57.5	54.4
20-24	34.5	7.4	15.1	39.4	13.3	26.0	36.7	8.9	18.7
<u>Region of origin</u>									
Northern	25.3	83.4	66.8	21.1	69.3	45.9	23.4	79.8	60.0
Upper East	57.5	5.1	20.1	74.7	24.0	48.6	65.2	9.9	29.3
Upper West	17.2	11.5	13.1	4.2	6.7	5.5	11.4	10.3	10.7
<u>District of origin</u>									
Bawku East (UE)	42.5	0.0	12.6	6.3	1.4	3.8	27.3	1.0	10.0
Bolgatanga (UE)	19.6	1.4	6.5	46.0	18.8	31.9	30.7	5.5	14.0
Savulugu-Nanton (N)	1.2	4.9	3.9	0.0	1.4	0.7	0.7	4.1	2.9
Sisala (UW)	3.4	8.5	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	6.5	5.0
Tamale (N)	4.6	17.1	13.6	6.3	27.6	17.4	5.3	19.6	14.7
Tolon-Kumbungu (N)	0.0	4.5	3.2	0.0	1.4	0.7	0.0	3.8	2.5
Wa (UW)	10.4	0.9	3.6	4.8	5.8	5.3	8.0	2.1	4.1
West Mamprusi (N)	5.7	46.0	34.6	1.6	5.8	3.8	4.0	36.4	25.4
Yendi (N)	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	7.3	5.3	1.3	1.7	1.6
Gushiegu-Karaga (N)	0.0	2.7	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	1.4
Other Districts (N, UE or UW)	12.6	13.1	12.9	31.8	30.5	31.1	20.7	17.2	18.4
Total %	28.6	71.4	100.0	48.6	51.4	100.0	35.1	64.9	100.0
N	87	217	304	71	75	146	158	292	450

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

For about a third of the child migrants, their place of birth (66.3 percent) and of childhood residence (65 percent) is urban i.e. an area with a population of 5,000 or more, suggesting that most of the migrants are from urban areas in the three Northern regions. This needs to be interpreted with caution, however, as it is common practice in Ghana for people to quote the nearest well-known town as their hometown or place of birth. It is therefore possible that not all persons indicating that they come from urban localities actually do so.

The majority (87.3 percent) of the child migrants in the sample have little or no education. As shown in Table 4 below, only 12.7 percent have education beyond primary school level. This is, however, to be expected as the three Northern regions have historically had the highest proportion with no education in Ghana. For example, the 2003 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) reports the proportion of the population with no education to be 74.4 percent in the Northern region, 71.1 percent in the Upper East and 66.1 percent in the Upper West,

compared with the national average of 28.2 percent and 39.1 percent in the Central region, which has the highest proportion of population with no education among the remaining seven regions in the country (Ghana Statistical Service and Macro Inc 2004). Also, men here have a relatively higher level of education than women.

**Table 4: Percent Distribution of Child Migrants by Sex, Education and Type of Work**

	Accra			Kumasi			Both Cities		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
<b>Education</b>									
No Education	21.8	60.4	49.3	38.0	60.0	49.3	29.1	60.3	49.3
Religious	1.2	2.8	2.3	1.4	8.0	4.8	1.3	4.1	3.1
Primary	43.7	32.7	35.9	43.7	22.7	32.9	43.7	30.1	34.9
Middle/JSS	29.9	4.1	11.5	12.7	5.3	8.9	22.1	4.5	10.7
Sec./SSS	3.4	0.0	1.0	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.8	1.0	2.0
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	87	217	304	71	75	146	158	292	450
<b>Type of Work</b>									
No Work	2.3	0.5	1.0	2.8	4.0	3.4	2.5	1.4	1.8
Porter/Truck pusher	26.4	94.9	75.3	43.7	76.0	60.3	34.2	90.1	70.4
Technician/Mechanic	42.5	1.4	13.2	11.3	10.7	10.9	28.5	3.8	12.4
Street Vendor	16.1	0.9	5.3	21.1	8.0	14.4	18.4	2.7	8.2
Trading/Selling	6.9	0.5	2.3	21.1	0.0	10.3	13.3	0.3	4.9
Artisans	1.2	1.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.0	0.9
Labourer	3.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.7
Other	1.2	0.4	0.6	0.0	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	87	217	304	71	75	146	158	292	450

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

With regard to the type of occupations in destination areas, the majority of migrants work as head porters (*kayayee*), carrying loads at the transport parks and market centres for a fee. This is especially the case for females, of who only 1 in 10 is *not* working as a *kayayoo*. Overall though, a much higher share of females operate as porters than males, and this difference is much more striking in Accra than in Kumasi. Among the males, the main occupations are truck pushers (34.2 percent), mechanics/technicians (28.5 percent) and street vending (18.4 percent) (Table 4). It should be re-emphasised that the occupations of the children interviewed reflect the way in which the sample was chosen: the authors selected sites where these types of work predominate. The types of work reported are commensurate with the low levels of education recorded in Table 4.

The majority (90 percent) of migrants (not shown in the table) were never married, which is to be expected since we are dealing with children. There is however a slightly higher proportion of males in this category than females. This is to be expected as women generally marry earlier than men in Ghana. This finding is similar to the GCLS which found about 99 percent of street children not married with a 2 point difference between the sexes – more boys than girls are not married.

## **5. Deciding to Migrate**

The analysis in this section focuses on the reasons children give for their movements and the processes involved in their decision to migrate independently at such a young age. This covers several aspects of the decision-making process of the surveyed child migrants. Thus, issues pertaining to the reasons for migrating, the major players in the decision making, the children's experience with migration and the resources available for the migration have been considered in the analysis.

### *5.1 Who Decides and Why*

The main reason stated by the children for their decision to migrate to their current place of residence in Accra or Kumasi is 'independence and money', as indicated in Table 5. Answers here included children who said it was the desire to get a job which would bring in some income. In this context 'independence' refers to the desire to be on one's own and not have interference in terms of how one's money is spent. This is especially the case among migrants in Kumasi where about nine in ten of the males and four in five of the females gave this reason as the main factor influencing their migration.

Another significant reason given by more males than females is the desire to learn a trade; the females in Accra were more interested in finding jobs. A substantial proportion of the females in Accra are noted to have followed their siblings to the city, which also indicates, to some extent, the involvement of family members in the decision to migrate.

**Table 5: Major Reason for Migrating to Current Location Stated by Child Migrants<sup>6</sup>**

	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Parents unable to take care of me	2.3	4.2	3.7	-	-	-
Independence and Money	52.4	79.5	71.7	89.6	81.0	85.3
Followed siblings to work	2.3	9.8	7.6	2.9	6.7	4.9
To continue schooling	9.3	0.5	3.0	1.5	1.4	1.4
Frequency of civil unrest	2.3	0.0	0.7	1.5	0.0	0.7
To assist sibling to trade	1.2	0.0	0.3	1.5	8.1	4.9
No longer wanted to go to school	2.3	0.0	0.7	-	-	-
Parents wanted to give out into marriage	0.0	0.9	0.7	-	-	-
To learn a trade	26.7	4.6	11.0	1.5	0.0	0.7
To stay with spouse/partner	1.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	1.4	0.7
To stay with mother	0.0	0.5	0.3	1.5	0.0	0.7
Maltreatment at home	-	-	-	0.0	1.4	0.7
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	86	215	301	68	74	142

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

Of interest is the small proportion of child migrants who cited maltreatment at home as their primary reason for migrating. It could be expected that this reason would attract a higher proportion of respondents as it is a potential ‘push factor’. But only one respondent in the in-depth interviews explicitly mentioned this reason: ‘My mother used to insult me whenever some of my peers returned from Accra and looked good and had bought pieces of cloth for their parents’. However, the absence of citation of this reason must be treated with caution. In Ghana it is culturally taboo to speak ill of one’s family, especially one’s father and mother, exemplified in the saying in one of the local languages, which literally translates as ‘one does not use the left hand<sup>7</sup> to point out the father’s house’.

Another factor mentioned by a few respondents as accounting for their migration was the inability of their parents to take care of them, which they attributed to poverty. This was the case for more females than males in Accra. In-depth interviews with parents of child migrants at the place of origin unanimously pointed in the same direction, emphasising the lack of jobs, which resulted in the parents’ inability to cater for their children. This has therefore prompted the movement of their children to the south for what they perceive to be ‘greener pastures’.

<sup>6</sup> The answers to this question were not pre-coded.

<sup>7</sup> The left hand, in Ghanaian culture, is considered to have less honour than the right hand. It is used to do all the dirty work such as cleaning after visiting the toilet for example. As a result, to give something to someone using the left hand is regarded as a sign of disrespect no matter what the age difference between the giver and receiver.

This is explained by a mother whose daughter is in Accra:

As a mother, it is my responsibility to provide the three basic necessities which are food, clothing and shelter. I don't have a job. How then do I cater for her? More importantly, there is nothing in this village that she could lay her hands on to get money. So I decided that she goes and works so that she can take care of herself and help me cater for the younger ones.

Other factors too emerged from the in-depth interviews with parents at the region of origin, including the influence of peers, with peers acting as a major source of information about the destination areas, which came up as a significant push factor. According to some of the parents, when children see their peers returning home from the South with items like clothing, utensils, etc., their children also yearn to go in order to acquire some of these items. Many of them plan to embark on a temporary migration and to return home once they have acquired the basic needs that will enable them to get married. One parent whose children migrated without his knowledge corroborated this when he said: 'Their peers go and come back with clothes and home utensils, so if they see these, they also feel the urge to go.'

This is supported by a number of child migrants, especially females, as illustrated by the following comments:

I did not know anything about Accra except what I saw of those who had been here. They looked good and had a lot of utensils, clothes and their parents were also happy. I was not doing anything back home so I decided to come to Accra and also become a Kayayoo (Alima, 16, from Wulensi, Northern region).

I developed the desire to come to Accra after observing those who returned to my village from Accra. They have nice clothes, permed hair and a lot of things like utensils and sewing machines. In our area too, if you return and you are going to marry but you don't have about 3 sets of utensils and basins, you will be a laughing stock. I realised that those who go to Accra get access to a lot of things, particularly money, so I decided to come here so that I could also get hold of these things (Habiba, 13, from Tamale, Northern region).

Another added: 'People who have been to Accra all say life is good here. Some friends also told me there is work here and this influenced my decision to migrate to Accra' (Stanley, 14, Bolgatanga, Upper East region).

The influence of peers operates not only in stimulating potential child migrants' desire to acquire material possessions. The presence of both family and friends in destination areas also strongly impacts on migration behaviour. On the basis of longitudinal survey data, Lansing and Mueller (1967) found that family and friends in the potential areas of destination, far from acting as a deterrent, may have an enhancing effect on migration decisions. Lansing and Mueller's observation is still valid today and often informs the decision of many children to migrate.

Overall, figures in Table 6 show not many of the child migrants are orphans, and therefore this cannot be identified as a primary factor in their decision/need to migrate: more than two-thirds of the migrants reported having both parents alive with only a very few cases of children reporting both parents as dead. The GCLS study also found that more than 90 percent of street children lived with one or both parents and other relatives before ending up in the street (GSS 2003).

**Table 6: Living Status of Parents of Child Migrants**

Parents alive or dead	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Only mother alive	24.1	7.3	12.1	15.5	13.3	14.4
Only father alive	6.9	4.6	5.3	7.0	9.3	8.2
Both parents alive	66.7	87.2	81.3	70.4	74.7	72.6
Both parents dead	2.3	0.9	1.3	7.1	2.7	4.8
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	87	218	305	71	75	146

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

The proportion of child migrants with 'only mother alive' is higher than those with 'only father alive', irrespective of gender. For example, nearly a quarter of the males in Accra had lost their fathers, whereas this was the case for only under a tenth of their female counterparts. In a patrilineal cultural environment, the male child (especially if he is the first born) has a greater responsibility towards the family upon the death of his father. Consequently, it is possible that more male children than females may be motivated to migrate to earn a living to support their family back home, a quest which may drive them to where most people believe there are

prospects for earning higher incomes. Accra is considered a more lucrative destination than Kumasi and this could explain why a higher percentage of the males whose fathers were deceased were in Accra.

If most child migrants still have their parents, it is of interest to explore to what extent their parents and other close relations play a part in encouraging – or discouraging – the migration of the children. With respect to who made the decision to migrate, more than half the migrants, and up to three-quarters of the females in Accra, took the decision themselves, with parents and friends nonetheless playing a significant part (Table 7).

**Table 7: Person Who Made the Decision for the Child to Migrate**

	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Self	47.2	74.2	66.5	47.9	44.0	45.9
Parents:	30.9	17.4	22.7	28.1	38.7	33.6
Both parents together	10.3	6.0	7.2	14.1	22.7	18.5
Mother only	10.3	9.7	9.9	7.0	13.3	10.3
Father only	10.3	3.7	5.6	7.0	2.7	4.8
Friends	2.3	1.4	1.6	12.7	9.3	10.9
Surrogate parents	3.5	1.8	2.3	1.4	0.0	0.7
Husband	-	-	-	0.0	1.3	0.7
Other relatives	16.1	3.2	6.9	9.9	6.7	8.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	87	217	304	71	75
						146

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

In Kumasi, on the other hand, it is found that for more than half of females and males alike, the decision to migrate was taken by persons other than themselves, with the main players being parents, mother and father, other relatives and friends. This emphasises the active role parents and other relations play in influencing the movement of the children from home. In a study by Gurung (2000) that sought to explain child migration in Nepal as a response to modernization, poverty, parents' suggestion, domestic problems, personal reasons and the influence of other persons were among the main factors affecting child migration.

The decision-making process, however, is more complex than the quantitative data depicts. It is a process and may involve more than the unilateral decisions depicted by the data. The data do not give any indication of the level of involvement even of the main players in the decision

making process. Negotiation and discussion concerning the decision among the main stakeholders may be involved as indicated in some of the qualitative data as follows:

Based on what I saw of those girls in our community who had come to Accra and returned home, I also wanted to come to Accra. So I talked to both my mother and my father, who agreed that I should go and even gave me ₵150,000 for transport (Alima).

I said she should go but her father has the final word. We (mother, father and child) discussed it and advised her to behave well there, get something for herself and send some home (A mother whose 15-year-old daughter was in Accra after initially migrating to Tarkwa<sup>8</sup>).

Further analysis of the qualitative data however, gives a mixed picture. On the one hand, some parents are not in favour of their children migrating when they are very young -- within the 10-14 age group -- but see it as necessary since they do not have a choice. The following comment by a mother illustrates this point:

If I had food for her to eat or if I could send her to learn a profession or take her to school, then she would not go. But because we can't provide her any of these, they have to go (A mother at Wungu whose 15-year-old daughter had earlier migrated to Ouagadougou at the age of 10).

This was supported by some 10-14-year-old female participants in a focus group discussion when they indicated that their parents did not want them to migrate to Accra and even wept as they left northern Ghana for Accra. Sharatu, who was 10 when she first left for Accra and now works as a local restaurant assistant, recounts her case:

I came earlier with my elder sister to spend eight months here. I have spent one year since I returned. This time I came alone. My parents did not encourage me. They rather discouraged me from coming because they said I was too young but I followed my sister all the same (Sharatu, 12 from Walewale, Northern region).

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<sup>8</sup> A mining town in the Western Region of Ghana.

On the other hand, parents are more likely to endorse the migration of children when they are in the 15-17 age bracket.

### 5.2 Children's Migration Experience and Resources

We now turn to analyse whether the children's moves are recurrent or just one-off instances, and how long they stay away for. Our research established that 89.6 percent of the migrants stayed at their present place of residence (destination) for five years or less. That leaves just one in 10 who has stayed for more than five years at their present location. In terms of the frequency of migration episodes, the data show that approximately 76 percent of the child migrants migrated only once, 16 percent migrated twice and 6 percent of them three times (not shown in the table). Many of them have therefore not been involved in multiple migrations; their migration experience is mainly limited to their current location.

Additionally, a very high proportion of the child migrants were found to have moved directly<sup>9</sup> to their current destinations from their places of origin with a higher proportion of them in Kumasi (91 percent) than in Accra (81 percent) (Table 8). Proximity could have been considered by the migrants, in view of the relative closeness of Kumasi to the North compared to Accra and probably the financial resources at their disposal, where a trip to Kumasi is relatively less costly than one to Accra.

**Table 8: Migration Stream of Child Migrants**

	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Moved straight from place of birth	78.2	82.6	81.3	89.6	93.1	91.4
Did not move straight from place of birth	21.8	17.4	18.7	10.4	6.9	8.6
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	87	218	305	67	72	139

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

A minority have been involved in some form of step migration – moving from an initial destination to another, perhaps after having gained some initial experience. For instance, those in Accra might have migrated first to Kumasi. The following statements support this observation:

<sup>9</sup> Those who moved straight from place of birth includes migrants who might have moved for education or work-related reasons but does not include fostered children.

The first time I came down, I stopped in Kumasi to work with a woman at her shop and later moved to Accra. But this time I moved directly to Accra for the chances of a better income (Maily, 22,<sup>10</sup> from Walewale, Northern region).

I came here with my friend and his father. I first passed through Obuasi to visit my uncle and to ask him for some money for my travel down south. I did not tell my parents I was going to Accra, I told them I was going to Obuasi to visit my uncle. I knew my parents would not approve of my decision. It was my uncle who encouraged me to come when I told him my intentions. He even gave me ₵100,000 for my transport (Stanley, 14, from Bolgatanga, Upper East region).

This second comment also highlights the issues around the financing of migration and other resources used to facilitate this movement. Asked how they financed their trip to Accra or Kumasi, approximately 50 percent of respondents indicated that they had paid for it through their own efforts with some wide differences between males and females in Accra, with more females (57.6 percent) than males (34.9 percent) having personally financed their trip (Table 9).

**Table 9: Person Financing the Migration of the Child**

Person Financing Trip	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Self	34.9	57.6	51.2	49.3	48.0	48.6
Parents	32.5	31.3	31.7	25.4	38.7	32.2
Friends	4.7	0.0	1.3	8.5	6.7	7.5
Sneaked unnoticed into cargo truck	7.0	1.8	3.3	1.4	0.0	0.7
Negotiated with truck driver	7.0	3.7	4.6	2.8	0.0	1.4
Other relatives	11.6	3.2	5.6	8.4	4.0	6.2
Spouse	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.0	1.3	0.7
Teacher	0.0	0.5	0.3	-	-	-
Trafficker	2.3	1.4	1.7	4.2	1.3	2.7
Total	% 100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N 86	217	303	71	75	146

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

<sup>10</sup> Maily is now a married woman with a child of one-and-half years who had been in Accra just about a week at the time of the interview. She was 16 years when she first migrated to Accra but had to return home to nurse a sick relative who passed away later. She stayed at home for 5 years during which she got married, got pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl.

The fact that parents financed about 32 percent of the migrants in both Accra and Kumasi clearly indicates the parental consent for these children to move out of their environment and 'try their luck' elsewhere. Crawford (1966) demonstrated that youth with low family ties, and those with high attachment to family in the area of origin but receiving encouragement for migration, are more likely to migrate. Some parents of current child migrants clearly expressed their support for the migration of their children, such as one of them who categorically said: 'I told him to go so I gave him money'.

Thus, as mentioned before, there often is an agreement between parents and their children on migration decisions; in several cases the parents even prompt their children to migrate and in addition, pay for their transport down south, perhaps with the hope of receiving remittances either in cash and/or in kind from their migrant children. As noted below, it was found that a significant share of the child migrants surveyed do send home either money or other goods, or both.

Some of the migrants had they funded their movement from their own resources and from savings earned by selling shea butter, groundnuts, goats etc, or with their siblings' support, while others stole from their parents and left without their knowledge. One of them for example, stated that:

No one talked to me about Accra. I saw that it would be better in Accra since the girls who returned to my village from Accra had a lot of things to show and that is what made me want to come here. I was then selling boiled eggs. I used some of the savings I had made from the sale of boiled eggs for transportation (Simao, 19,<sup>11</sup> from Tamale, Northern region).

Another child migrant explained: 'I migrated to Accra with a friend who is about the same age as me. We sold our groundnuts to pay for the transport fare down here' (Zeeta, 13, from Yendi, Northern region). In the case of Sharatu, support for transportation came from selling agricultural produce. In her own words: 'My brother sold his sorghum and gave me money to transport myself here'.

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<sup>11</sup> She migrated when she was 17 and in class 5, having started schooling very late at the age of 12.

Even though there was no evidence of any informal agreement between child migrants and their parents for the former to remit to the latter, many of the child migrants indicated that they do remit to their parents in cash and/or in kind. The in-kind remittances are two-way, where child migrants receive some maize, local rice, yam, groundnut and groundnut paste from their relations, especially their parents. They in turn send back clothes, pieces of cloth, lace material, shoes and sandals and items such as cooking utensils, soap, milk, tea bags, milo, sugar and imported rice. Some of the children are able to send substantial amounts of money at a time. However, this is not done on a regular basis and it depends on the availability of a trustworthy person going home. There were also migrants who could not afford to remit and therefore have never sent anything home. This was true especially for those who had been in the city for less than six months, for those who came to the city to continue their schooling and for others who were intent on saving some money for future studies or training. The inability to remit because of the latter reason was more common amongst boys, whereas girls were more likely not to have remitted because of the short time they had spent in the city at the time of the interview.

## **6. Children's Views on Migration**

Having looked at the factors behind children's migration, and the reasons they give for their migration, this section explores the children's experience of migration. Decision-making is an important stage in migration and is usually based on the expectation that migration will impact positively on one's life. A number of factors come into play. If the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, the migrant overlooks all risks to make the move. This is seen in instances where rural migrants are willing to risk the insecurities of urban life for the possibility that they may give themselves and/or ensuing generations the opportunity for economic advancement.

Over half the child migrants surveyed in Kumasi and almost half of those in Accra have not ever regretted embarking on their migration (Table 10). This suggests that the phenomenon of child migration has already gained ground perhaps due to the benefits the actors enjoy from their movements.

**Table 10: Views of Child Migrants on Whether They have Regretted Migrating**

Regretted Migration	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	37.2	48.2	45.1	26.8	20.0	23.3
No	54.6	41.3	45.1	60.6	69.3	65.1
Too early to decide	4.7	7.8	6.9	8.4	6.7	7.5
Not sure	3.5	2.7	2.9	4.2	4.0	4.1
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	86	218	304	71	75	146

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

Almost all the reasons given by those who said they had not regretted migrating related to improved working conditions. These included the fact that they now have a job; they are learning a trade; and/or they have saved some money and hence consider life to be generally better in their current locations than in their places of origin in the North. So far then, opportunities for jobs and money for one's upkeep are the key factors considered by the migrants. On other hand, those who reported regretting their migration were critical about their living and working conditions. Amongst other reasons provided by these migrants were: not making as much money as anticipated; financial problems; no job; difficult work; unsatisfactory income and general hardship in their present location.

The most striking figure in Table 10 is the high share of female migrants in Accra who have reported regretting their migration. The same group of respondents (females in Accra) had reported the highest share of self-financing in Table 9, and as per Table 7, they were the ones who took the decision to migrate independently. It would thus be interesting to further investigate the potential connection between these figures. These data seem to suggest a link between the independent decision to migrate, self-financing one's migration, which might both correspond to reduced support from relatives and a less successful migration experience for the child migrant, which is also reflected in the high share of females in Accra that work as

head porters (see Table 4).<sup>12</sup> One explanation why that might be more the case for female child migrants is that females have a greater incentive to migrate independently in order to provide for their own future needs (acquiring basic commodities for their marriage), whereas males might be more encouraged to migrate in order to help their family – in which case they would have the initial support and consent of their relatives.

Most respondents were of the view that a ‘solution’ to the migration ‘problem’ lies in the creation of jobs in the source regions and equipping the children with employable skills, in the absence of which the only option left for them would be to migrate again. This point was clearly noted by a 17-year-old migrant who had returned: ‘I love home but when I am home I have nothing to do. My parents cannot support me because they don’t have anything; sitting at home doing nothing is sickness. I will stay if I can get support for a training programme. If I don’t, I will go back.’

An Acting Chief corroborated the point above by stating that:

Child migration affects the education of the children. Some of the children return pregnant, a situation that indicates they are engaged in prostitution. But some of them return with their utensils ready for marriage, while some return with sewing machines. We, the family members, only benefit from a loaf of bread. I do not think migration has any benefit for the family or for the community. The only solution to migration is to create jobs.

## **7. Travelling to Destination and School Abandonment**

A previous paper based on the same dataset (Kwankye et al. 2007) looked into the risks faced by child migrants in destination areas. The researchers particularly identified risks associated with earnings being too low to cover all their accommodation, food and health needs as this would mean the children might face malnutrition and may be living in unsanitary conditions. In the present work we look at two other important areas of risks faced by child migrants that were

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<sup>12</sup> See Kwankye et al. (2007) for a discussion on the risks that child migrants, and in particular those that are employed in the *kayayoo* business, face in the city, including poor housing facilities and health care, inadequate sanitation, harassment from colleagues and city guards, as well as reproductive health risks.

not discussed in that paper: means of travelling to destination and school abandonment at origin.

In travelling to their destination, some of the child migrants used unorthodox and risky means like sneaking unnoticed into cargo trucks en route to the destination areas. According to our survey this mainly involved males who were interviewed in Accra (see Table 9). In the event of such trucks breaking down on the way or being involved in accidents (as some of them are), one wonders what would happen to these children. All six participants in a focus group discussion on the other hand indicated that they had come by this means because they did not have any money, and in contrast to the survey data, these were all female. According to them, the cattle truck on which they travelled was Accra-bound so they did not have any choice in determining their destination. Furthermore, the results suggest some form of child trafficking taking place from the North to the South as some of them (though quite a small percentage) indicated they ended up at their present location having been trafficked as part of a group. This practice of trafficking involves children being moved from their homes where they live with their parents or guardians, to other parts of the country where they are given out to other people for a fee. In some cases, it is a complete sell out and involves agents who pay a token fee to parents/guardians to allow them to take their children away. In other instances, other relations may be involved. Under the guise of looking after these children or training them up in some vocation, these relatives send them out to work with people for a fee under hazardous conditions and at the expense of the child's schooling, health and general development. The underlying reason is the parents' inability to cater for their children's needs.

A cursory look at the risks faced by children brings the sphere of education into focus, which is to a large extent affected by the movement of these young migrants. It was noted (Table 4) that almost half of the migrants in both Accra and Kumasi have never had any formal education and that 20 percent of migrations occurred at a time when the children were in school (Table 11). Putting these figures into context, the GCLS data does show that while 76.5 percent of Ghanaian children are in schooling, in the Northern region specifically, in other northern regions more generally, nearly half the children have never attended school (GSS 2003: xiii). This means that a child from the Northern region is already much less likely to be in education than his counterparts from any other region. Taking into account the fact that the vast majority of the sample child migrants originate from the north helps explain the strikingly low school attendance rates.

Considering the high percentage of children without any formal education, this situation suggests that for some of the children who left while still enrolled in school, migration might have constituted the end of their schooling. It is equally possible that of those who migrated when not in school, a considerable proportion might not ever have been in formal education at all. The risk here may be linked to the curtailment of their formal education and eventually the development of their human capital. It is therefore not surprising that most of them reported working in jobs where no specific skills are required (see Table 4).

On the other hand it is worth considering that these children and/or their relatives might not think education a worthwhile investment if the expense is too high, or if it is not required by the labour market, which is also linked to their expectations in terms of potential future jobs.

**Table 11: School Attendance Status of Child Migrants just before Migrating**

	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
In School	24.1	18.5	20.1	25.4	14.7	19.9
Not in School	75.9	81.5	79.9	74.6	85.3	80.1
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	87	216	303	71	75	146

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

Most of those who dropped out of school in order to migrate did so because their parents could not take care of their education as shown in Table 12. It was only in a few instances that they either could not cope with their studies or they left because they wanted to continue their education in the destination area. For children who could not continue in education in their place of origin because of their parents being unable to fund them, the decision to migrate might open up the possibility for them to access greater opportunities in their destination. It is clear from this data though that the overarching factor in choosing to migrate over staying and going to school is the poverty 'push' factor, which is as expected considering that the regions of concern (Northern, Upper East and Upper West) are among the poorest in the country.

**Table 12: Reason for Stopping School to Migrate**

	Accra			Kumasi		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Not interested in going to school	0.0	5.0	3.3	11.1	0.0	6.9
Unable to cope with studies	9.5	5.0	6.6	5.6	0.0	3.4
Parents unable to fund schooling	71.5	72.5	72.1	83.3	81.8	82.8
Wanted a better opportunity	9.5	12.5	11.5	0.0	18.2	6.9
To continue education at destination area	9.5	0.0	3.3	-	-	-
Other reason	0.0	5.0	3.3	-	-	-
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	21	40	61	18	11	29

Source: Independent Child Migration Survey in Accra and Kumasi, 2005

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Historically, migration from northern to southern Ghana has predominantly comprised young male adults, but since the 1970s this migratory stream has attracted increasing numbers of families, followed by independent women, and most recently, young people (under 18 years of age). The main reason behind the sustained and increasing volume of migrants from North to South can at least in part be linked to the very strong economic growth in the South, resulting from recent economic policies.

The research in this paper has identified some of the most important source and destination areas of independent child migration in Ghana, and contributes to a better understanding of where these child migrants work and who they are. Overall the findings help paint a clearer picture of why and how these children have chosen to migrate independently, and how they relate to that experience.

Independent child migration is an issue of significant and growing importance at the national level in Ghana. There is a lot of public concern and tremendous disquiet particularly about young girls working as head porters. Many of these children originate from the three northern regions of the country (Northern, Upper East and Upper West), with Greater Accra and the Ashanti regions the main destinations for them (GSS 2003). Thus, this analysis focuses on children who migrated independently from the three northern regions of Ghana to Accra or Kumasi.

The vast majority of the child migrants in this study have stayed at their place of destination for 5 years or less, and the largest proportion of children belong to the 15-19 age group. Females dominate the process. The Northern region is the principal region of origin for females, while the Upper East region is the main source for males. Most of the children, particularly the girls, have poor education and are employed as head porters.

The fundamental reason behind the migration of children is economic i.e. poverty and the hope that their moving away from home will bring some economic relief to both the migrant and their household. The economic reason for migration includes not only the expectation of earning some income but also the children's desire to be physically independent, and thus have some privacy and no interference in the management of their own money. On the other hand, orphanhood does not feature as a prominent factor pushing children to migrate. It is worth noting though that the proportion of child migrants with only the mother alive is higher than those with only the father alive. The highest proportion of migrant children who had lost their father was found among males in Accra, which reflects the fact that in a patrilineal culture the male child is most commonly responsible for the family once the father dies.

Despite the children's expectations of earning an income and achieving some form of independence from their families, it is also evident from the analysis that the decision making process with regard to independent child migration in Ghana often involves the entire family, as well as the child. In fact, although the majority of the children in the survey data stated that they took the decision to migrate alone, a considerable number of them also reported that the decision was made by, or influenced by, parents or other relatives and friends. Thus, it appears that family members, especially parents and mothers in particular, play an influential role in the movement of their children to the south. Further, the qualitative material that was collected in this research shows that the dynamics of decision-making are often quite complex and may involve more than unilateral decisions. Negotiation and discussion may take place between the children and their parents. Some parents may not be in favour of such migration but will let the child migrate because they feel they are not able to support them and see no other choice.

Furthermore, it is quite clear that there is a socio-cultural element to the independent migration of children. We are referring in particular to the common practice whereby a girl migrates in order to acquire certain household items, such as cooking utensils, in preparation for marriage. This might explain why more girls than boys migrate from the north to the south.

Despite the potential costs of discontinuing one's education and consequently getting into low and irregularly-paid menial jobs, most migrants are able to earn an income and some even are in a position to remit to their families back home in cash and/or in kind. This probably serves as a motivation to migrate since more than half of the children do not regret the move in the face of all the problems associated with being a child migrant in an unfamiliar environment. With more and more children continuing to migrate towards southern Ghana, the north-south independent migration of children in Ghana is fast becoming an intrinsic feature in the lives of the average household in northern Ghana.

On the other hand, we should not underestimate the high share of female migrants in Accra who have reported regretting their migration, which as discussed in Section 6 of the paper, may reflect low levels of family support for this group of children, and in turn a less successful migration experience (see also Kwankye 2007). Another area of concern that was addressed in this analysis relates to children who migrated while they were in school. Most of these children reported that the reason for dropping out of school was the inability of the parents to fund their education, thus supporting the view that often the choice of migrating coincides with abandonment of school, and both decisions are mainly driven by the higher poverty in the North.

These conclusions suggest that efforts at providing appropriate interventions should target both the sending and receiving areas. The following relevant recommendations have been formulated to mitigate the risks involved in the migration of these children while maximizing the benefits, particularly as children constitute future human capital for development.

The government should target the sheanut industry in Northern Ghana as a possible source of employment and income generation for youth in that part of the country. The North is endowed with sheanuts from which shea butter is processed. The plant grows wild and from the analysis, some of the young girls pick the nuts and sell them to cover the cost of their transport to migrate to southern Ghana. If this trade were given special business attention under a Presidential Special Initiatives<sup>13</sup> (PSIs), it would become a more lucrative source of income for

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<sup>13</sup> Government currently has a policy known as Presidential Special Initiatives (PSIs) by which selected sectors or activities are identified and given special investment focus as part of the poverty reduction efforts of the country. Examples of PSIs include textiles and garments, cassava and starch.

the young girls. A more scientific processing would ensure higher yields, and better marketing would ensure better prices and potentially a more sustainable source of income. PSIs should be implemented to support the poverty reduction programme in the north so that parents are better able to take care of their children, and children have a greater incentive to stay and pursue their education to relatively higher levels before migrating, should they choose to do so.

In line with the observation that parents are actively involved in the decision-making process of children's migration, efforts should be made at sensitizing parents and potential migrants in the sending areas to the risks of child migration. The District Assemblies in the sending regions should devote a portion of their Common Fund to such awareness-raising initiatives and encourage children to reach a minimum level of education, for example Senior Secondary School level, before migrating. Apart from guaranteeing would-be migrants the opportunity of relatively better jobs or further training in destination areas, such a programme would also ensure that, if they are to eventually migrate, children would be at an age where they would be better able to cope with independent living in the destination areas. This way, their vulnerability could be reduced.

Finally, a national debate should be initiated on independent child migration particularly from northern to southern Ghana as a basis for formulating policies and programmes to mitigate the risks associated with it, while increasing its benefits. This could be achieved when, as a nation, we place the phenomenon of north-south child migration as a priority area in our national human development agenda, bearing in mind that the North lags on most developmental indicators – education, health, peace and security.

Parliament has passed the Child Labour and Trafficking Act to ensure that no child is subject to any form of hazardous labour or forced to migrate from his/her place of origin against his/her wish. It should however be ensured that this Act is fully implemented in order to safeguard the rights of all children, be they migrants or not. In addition, government should consider adopting policies and producing guidance on the recruitment of independent child migrants, especially those moving from the North to the South. This is envisaged as a means to ensure that they benefit more from migration (if they have to) or stay back at their place of origin to continue their education. If such policies were developed and a national debate initiated, the risks associated with north-south independent child migration might be reduced, which would benefit not only the migrants themselves, but also their families back home and the nation at large.

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