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Children as 'Invisible' Contributors to Household Income in Ghana

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Abstract

Poverty reduction in Ghana has attracted varied approaches. Over the recent past decade, the government implemented a number of programmes tailored to reduce income poverty. These include the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), School Feeding Programme, National Health Insurance Scheme and Capitation Fund. Recent data on poverty indicate that Ghana has achieved the Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG 1). Beyond these poverty reduction programmes are children who contribute immeasurably to household income which could lead to household poverty reduction, yet are largely unnoticed and least focused. The paper used both survey and qualitative data from a child-mobility research in four different settlement types in the Central and Brong Ahafo Regions to assess the contributions of children to household income. The findings revealed that a week preceding the survey, 55% of the children assisted parents/guardians on the farm, about 25% sold at the market (largely by hawking) and less than 3% took care of herds in the fields on behalf of their parents. Some of the children who sold earned between GH¢7 and GH¢15 per day to support household income. In addition, the children undertook varied household activities including caring for younger siblings to enable parents to have adequate time to engage in socio-economic activities. Children's involvement in the socio-economic space needs to be further explored as a means of formally evaluating and reconceptualising their contributions to household income and possibly poverty reduction. By so doing these 'invisible' contributors can be properly recognised and acknowledged. Consequently, this will activate the necessary offices, structures and systems to regulate their activities and contributions legitimately.

Introduction

The quest to reduce (economic) poverty in Ghana saw the implementation of various programmes towards reduction of household poverty as well as wealth creation among the economic poor. Over the last decade, the government intensified her efforts to reduce poverty which undoubtedly, is a necessary developmental concern. For instance, the introduction of the

Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), Capitation Fund and National Health Insurance Scheme were targeted to reduce the financial stress poor households are likely to face while one of the objectives of the School Feeding Programme is to create wealth for rural food crop farmers. These poverty reduction interventions have, to a large extent, contributed immensely to Ghana's achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 1 (United Nations Development Programme, 2012).

One category of the Ghanaian population that contributes to household income generation and to a large extent poverty reduction directly and/or indirectly is children. Traditionally, and contemporarily, children contribute in diverse ways to household income legitimately. As social assets, over 97% of children in Ghana provide direct economic services at the farm, market and other economic centres as household heads or under the dictates of their parents (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011; Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2008). For instance, the Ghana Living Standard Survey (Round Five (5)) shows that almost 13 % of children aged 7 to 14 are economically active (GSS, 2008). Similarly, children play diverse domestic and non-economic roles to enable their parents and guardians to practice their economic endeavours (Esia-Donkoh, Abane and Esia-Donkoh, 2011). A critical review of household income and poverty reduction literature such the poverty studies and Ghana Standard of Living Surveys shows that children's contribution is usually less emphasised and highlighted to an extent to inform policy direction. Literature available that touches on this subject more or less provide statistics about child employment but scarcely discusses children's socioeconomic activities that contribute to household wealth creation or poverty reduction or both. Perhaps, the difficulty to do this is as a result of constitutional frameworks and international conventions regarding children and work. It is therefore not uncommon for some writers to conceptualise, perceive and generalise all child work as labour. This continually makes children as 'invisible' contributors to household income. However, it must be stressed that not all the work children engage in constitute child labour. While some provide a platform for the development of children to adulthood, others contribute to household 'socioeconomic' survival (UNICEF, 1997; United Nations, 1989; Fyfe, 1989). For example, there are considerable population of children who work after school on temporary or permanent bases. This has initiated the call to re-examine and re-conceptualise childhood (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011) and also to discuss and emphasise the relevance of children's contributions to household income and/or poverty reduction (Esia-Donkoh, Abane and Esia-Donkoh, 2011).

This has encouraged the debate about the need for the re-conceptualisation of childhood based on the various domestic and economic activities

children contemporarily engage in. This rationalised views about the rights of children, and their economic contribution to household income have had varied discussion in the literature (see Agbényiga, 2012; Clerk, 2012; Mariwah and Esia-Donkoh, 2011; Boakye-Boaten, 2010). For instance, in his recent comprehensive analysis of childhood, Jenks (1996) focused on a time scale between the pre-Christian era to the 20th century. Given the current social and economic trends in the 21st century, the need to do a broader scale of study to assess the role children play especially in economic enterprises to contribute to household income is imperative within the context this study is situated.

Like Jenks and other earlier writers such as Kehily (n.d.), childhood has been conceptualised as a social construct. Thus, the society constructs the roles and responsibilities of children taking into account the socio-cultural and economic dimensions pertaining in the society. Suffice to say that as society changes in these dimensions, it reconstructs its conception about childhood. This current study contributes to the re-conceptualisation debate based on recent data on children's activities in Ghana in the 21st Century. The paper explores the various socio-economic activities children engage in, analyses the contributions of children to household income and finally argues for the re-conceptualisation of childhood to reflect contemporary roles children play.

For the purposes of this current study, the paper uses income generated by children from economic enterprises in the two ecological (coastal and forest) zones in the country as a basis to explain children's contribution to household income and to some extent poverty reduction. The paper is structured basically into six main parts. These are the introduction, conceptual and theoretical issues, data sources and methods, results, discussions and conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual, legal and theoretical perspectives

Children constitute critical component of population in the world and to every government. It is therefore not surprising that there is the consistent global, regional and national effort towards their development and welfare. Among these efforts is the creation of institutions and structures as well as enactment of legislative instruments. Generally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and specifically, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and The Children's Act (Act 560) of Ghana (1998) largely govern affairs of children in the country.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has three broad categories of rights: provision, protection and participation. Critically, the issue of participation transcends into the domains of socioeconomic

activities. Therefore, economic participation of children in farming, fishing, and other enterprises as well as domestic (or housekeeping) involvement of children also need recognition.

It is undoubted that household poverty is the cause of child work. Similarly, it is unarguable that children contribute to household survival. This has evidently been highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Poverty, however emerges as the most compelling reason why children work. Poor households need the money, and children commonly contribute around 20 – 25 % of family income. Since by definition poor households spend the bulk of their income on food, it is clear that the income provided by working children is critical to their survival (ILO, 1997, cited in Rose (1998)).

Thus, based on ILO's assertion, the survival of households to a large extent depend on the socioeconomic contributions of children. It must be emphasised here that the account of contribution need to be legitimate and legal. In fact The 1998 Children's Act as well as the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly prohibits children from participating in any work that affects the health, education and/or development of the child. The ILO defines such a work as child labour. A child, in this perspective is any person less than 18 years. Even though in The Children's Act, the minimum age of employment is 15 years, the law allows children above 13 years to engage in light work.

The issue of age however becomes a concern when discussing subjects such as this. For instance, culturally, puberty marks the beginning of adulthood irrespective of one's chronological age. There are also instances where physical and mental development of some children surpass those older than them. It is therefore not surprising to see children less than 13 years engaged in economic activities in Ghana (GSS, 2008) and elsewhere (Understanding Children's Work Project, 2006). The relativity associated with the concept of childhood challenges the status quo and normative definitions available.

Literature on children's contribution to household income and poverty reduction is limited in general and particularly in Africa. This may be attributed issues surrounding child work and child labour (Bala-Donkoh and Marlowah, 2011). Few literature available however indicates that children's contributions to household income or poverty reduction are related to the incidence and patterns of work, and at times, future employment prospects (Johnson and Line, 2000). In Ghana, agriculture engages more than 89 % of the services of close to five million children between the ages of seven and 14 years. The others work in other areas such as trading, fishing and the hotel and restaurant sectors (GSS, 2008). In most instances, children are not paid

or and under paid for services rendered. This may be attributed to the fact that most of these children are family workers (Morrow and Vennam, 2009; Johnson and Lino, 2000).

Nevertheless, the Fifth Ghana Living Standard Survey provides an account about economic gains of children as a result of work. While boys are more likely to be employed, girls are more likely to receive higher wages. The report indicates that about 80 % of the children worked for less than 40 hours per week with an average hourly wage of 29 Ghana pesewas seven days preceding the survey. While girls received 32Gp which is 70 % of hourly wage of adult females, their boy counterparts received 27Gp which is 40 % of hourly wage of adult males (GSS, 2008). In a similar study in the USA, Johnson and Lino (2000) realised that teens who were employed between less than 10 weeks and more than 10 weeks per year received between \$2,000 and \$5,000 depending on the sector which employed them.

Issues of low educational attainment have been raised in relation to child work (Esia-Donkoh et al., 2011; Johnson and Lino, 2000). In as much as the current study recognises that children below and above 14 years who are engaged for more than 14 hours and 42 hours in productive tasks is a concern, it also admits that this should not cloud their contributions to household income generation and poverty reduction. Perhaps, there is the need now to consider their contribution in order to develop a framework which would then accommodate children's economic engagement without any detrimental effects.

Understanding childhood and the roles of children continues to be contentious largely because of political claim of culture and the notion of identity. Given the consistent increasing rate of globalisation and the changing roles of children within the social, cultural, economic and political domains and constructs, it has been argued that issues of childhood should be understood within cultural and social contexts. That is, childhood should be contextualised rather than universalised. Analyses by authors such as Aries' historical analysis in 1962, Qvortrup's structural analysis in 1994 and Jenks' historical analysis in 1996 (Horowitz 1995; Meece, 1997; Santrock, 2005) provide a broader platform for further discussion on the subject.

Like the other authors, Jenks' analysis is critical to this study. He studied the understating and conceptualisation of childhood from pre Christian era to the 20th century era. Using a time dimensional framework, he came out with six main stages. These are the infanticide mode, abandoning mode, ambivalent mode, intrusive mode, socialisation mode and helping mode. Each stage explains how people in that era perceived and therefore assigned roles to children. The last stage of Jenks' analysis comprises the admission

of children's rights and the enactment of legislative instruments to acknowledge, protect and enforce such rights. The paper is of the opinion that there is the need for a seventh stage because of the 21st century time dispensation which is characterised by changing roles and activities of children especially in the political and socio-economic domains.

Agbényiga (2012) has also done a comprehensive historical analysis of images of childhood from the Ghanaian context. He reviewed the images of childhood in the pre-colonial era, colonial era, post-colonial era and the continuity of childhood in contemporary Ghana. Like Jenks, he also pointed out that images of childhood have changed from a traditional understanding to universalised perspective with broadened legislation and framework. His conclusion was in support with others that 'changes in images of childhood in Ghana have been viewed in terms of the inconsistency between the reality of children's everyday experience across gender, religions, and class and the promise in policy which is interpreted to bring more harm than progress (see Clerk, 2012; Amc, 2012). There is therefore a support for the call for changes on the local level so that the gap in images of children between Geneva and Ghana could be narrowed to reflect the local framework for the realisation of children's rights and understanding of their experiences.

Earlier, writers such as Veerman (1992, cited in Agbenyiga, 2012) have shown that there has not been a static and singular perspective of childhood even in the history of America, and that, the image of childhood has changed over the last century and comes with varied conceptualisation in different contexts. Among the issues discussed in a study by Bruscinò (2001, cited in Agbényiga, 2012) in a village in Northern Ghana, two are relevant to this paper. The first issue is that even though the Convention was to affect children, their input was not considered. The second issue is that Ghana, like any other developing country, needs a legislation which would permit children to work but under certain conditions. Thus, given the changing image of childhood, legislation of children's rights must reflect their everyday activities and experiences as well as how the societies treat them (Agbényiga, 2012) for the benefit of both the child and the household.

The research is guided by an adapted version of the Wennekers and Thurik Model (Wennekers and Thurik, 1999). The original model was used to synthesise disparate strands of literature to link entrepreneurship to economic growth. For the adapted model, an attempt was made to describe child work and children's contributions to household poverty reduction. The (adapted) model has four key variables, namely level of analysis, household conditions to work, crucial reasons to work and effect on entrepreneurship. Each of these variables is explained by a corresponding activity or description. These are:

the individual (or the child),
 the characteristics of children and parents in a household (such as age, sex, educational status and occupation),
 contributions to household income, and
 effect on household (Figure 1).

This model is premised on the assumption that children irrespective of sex and residence contribute to household income which by extension, also contributes to the reduction of household poverty. Thus, the unit of analysis is children. The household conditions to work variant is explained by the characteristics of the children and parents. Evidence indicates that household poverty is the crucial reasons children work. Children who work therefore contribute to household income which goes a long way to reduce household poverty. The model also explains the issue of entrepreneurship. Relevant to the study is the fact that traditional children learn both domestic and economics skills and abilities from their parents (Agbényiga, 2012; Rattray, 1933).

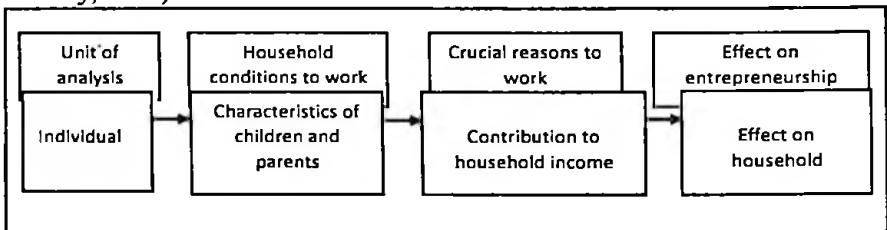


Figure 1: Children's contributions to household poverty reduction model

Source: Based on Wennekers and Thurik Model (1999)

Data sources and methods

Data were sourced from a five-year, multi-country research project titled 'Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa comprising Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. For details of the project and its research design and methodology (which concern Ghana), see Porter et al (2010, 2011). Both qualitative and survey data were collected by trained staff from the University of Cape Coast (the implementing institution in Ghana). The survey data was used for descriptive purposes to complement the qualitative data. The data were collected from four purposively selected settlements namely, urban, peri-urban, rural and remote rural settlements from two main ecological zones: coastal and forest zones. The selection of the research zones and settlements was influenced by spatial dynamics, socio-economic characteristics and access to basic social services such as health facilities,

schools, telecommunication and transport.

The settlement types were categorised based on the availability of social services. Thus, an urban settlement was defined as a type of settlement where all the basic social services are available. A peri-urban settlement was defined as a type of settlement where some of these social services are available. A rural settlement and remote rural settlement on the other hand were referred to as a settlement with at least one and none of the basic social services available respectively.

The respondents that were drawn from these settlements constituted children aged 9 to 18 years. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were employed to collect data from in-school and out-of-school children, parents, settlement leaders, (head) teachers, health workers, transport operators and assembly men and women. In all, 150 interviews/focus group discussions were conducted. It must however be emphasised that the qualitative data are focal to the analysis of this paper. Notwithstanding, the paper also draws from survey data which was collected in the same ecological zones and settlement sites. The interview schedule was used to collect this data from 1000 children. Five hundred respondents participated in the survey in each ecological zone comprising 125 respondents from each settlement site. The rationale for the sample size was to allow for adequate statistical application to the data at least at each site (see Hair et al., 1987).

The project relied on field assistants from the University of Cape Coast. They were made up of lecturers, research assistants and post graduate students from the Departments of Geography and Regional Planning and Population and Health. One week was used to train the field assistants after which pre-test and pilot study were conducted purposely to assess the reliability and validity of the instruments as well as the possible administrative and logistic challenges that were likely to be encountered in the actual field work for remedial actions. Apart from the out-of-school respondents who complained of loss of income as a result of time they spent to be interviewed, there were no challenges to study.

The study is largely situated within the qualitative framework. Narratives are used to substantiate issues under discussion after making general assessment of such issues. The Nu*dist (version 7) application was used to analyse the data. In addition, basic descriptive statistics was employed for descriptive analyses. Cross-tabulations, frequencies and percentages were used. The Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) (version 17) was the application used for the descriptive analysis.

Limitation of the study

Although broader in scope, the study did not conduct a baseline survey to make a comparative analysis about how children's contributions to household income have resulted in poverty reduction. It also did not focus on the percentage contribution of income by children in each household surveyed and interviewed. Therefore the study could not employ quantitative statistics to make a generalised conclusion that there is a correlation between children's contributions to household income and poverty reduction in the study areas.

Results

Background characteristics of respondents

The background characteristics of the children considered for analyses in this study were sex, age, type of settlement, educational status, occupation and life status of parents. In all, about 53% of the respondents were females (Table 1). Nearly 52% of the girls interviewed lived in the coastal zone while a little over 51% of their male counterparts resided in the forest zone. At least, more than 20% of all the respondents lived in an urban, peri-urban, rural or remote rural settlement.

Specifically, there were slightly more female respondents interviewed in the urban and peri-urban settlements at the coast, 29.0% and 29.8% respectively. However, there were generally more males interviewed at the peri-urban settlements in the forest zone than any other types of settlement in all the two ecological zones.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents by ecological zone, settlement type and sex

Ecological zone	Sex	Settlement type % (N)				Total % (N)
		Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Remote rural	
Coast	Female	29.0 (79)	24.5 (67)	25.3 (69)	21.2 (58)	100 (273)
	Male	20.4 (46)	25.8 (58)	26.7 (60)	27.1 (61)	100 (225)
	Total % (N)	25.1 (125)	25.1 (125)	25.9 (129)	23.9 (119)	100 (498)
Forest	Female	29.0 (74)	29.8 (76)	24.7 (63)	16.5 (42)	100 (255)
	Male	22.3 (55)	36.8 (91)	24.7 (61)	16.2 (40)	100 (247)
	Total % (N)	25.7 (100)	33.3 (167)	24.7 (124)	16.3 (82)	100 (502)

Source: UNICEF mobility survey (2005).

... were enrolled in school. Specifically, nearly ... were enrolled in school a ... 20% attended public

Primary and Junior High School (JHS). With respect to their parents, the majority of them were reported alive. For instance, about 94% of the respondents indicated that their mothers were alive while 91% and 87% of the girls and boys said that their fathers were also alive. The major occupation of these parents was farming. However, about a third (30%) of the mothers were engaged in petty trading.

Children's domestic-related tasks

Children play diverse roles consciously and unconsciously or directly and indirectly to the survival of their families or households and increase the income of their parents (and at times their own selves). Usually, they take up major domestic roles such as fetching water, washing clothes of parents and other siblings, going to the mill with loads of grains and caring for younger siblings. To some extent, children performed these tasks to enable their parents engage in some economic ventures. Nevertheless, these contributions if not quantified economically would not be relevant to assessing children's contributions to household income. Some of the reported contributions are as follows:

I carry items such as rice, beans, tin tomatoes and other wares to the market in the morning. My guardian sells these items. In the evening, I go to the market to pick the items which were not sold back home (Male, 15 years, coastal, urban).

I am the female in the house. My sister goes to farm and comes late in the day. I also take care of the three children of my sister while she is at the farm. I am the only female in the house apart from my sister so I do most of the domestic activities including cooking (Female, 13 years, forest, urban).

There are yet other tasks that the respondents performed a week preceding the study which are domestic-related, but by extension, contribute to the survival of the household. For instance, some of the children carried non-farm wares of the parents to the market, while others were engaged in the portage of food crops, fuel wood and charcoal from the farm to the house and/or the market.

Children's economic-related tasks

Children also serve as a crucial resource to many household occupations (Cockburn, n.d.). With majority of their parents engaged in farming and farm-related activities, the respondents participated meaningfully in most of these activities. In fact, most of the children were engaged in one economic-related activity or the other. Principally, some children reported working on the farm and selling at the market. Other tasks the respondents engaged in included gathering forage and pasture for animals and livestock

herding. It was realised during the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that children work in diverse economic sectors because of diverse reasons. One of the settlement leaders in the forest zone remarked that:

Children are involved in economic activities either to cater for themselves or the family as a whole. Some of the parents are old or invalid so the children in such households work to feed the household in general... some of them farm, provide labour at poultry farms while others serve as are casual labourers weeding around some peoples' houses for money and at times food (Male leader, 59 years, forest, rural).

The study noted that children engaged in varied economic activities including weeding on farms, working at poultry farms, carrying loads and hawking as well as harvesting crops. For purposes of this study, these have been categorised into two main economic activities based on dominance in all the ecological zones as well as the types of settlements. These are farming and selling. Both males and females at varied ages were engaged on the farm and at the market to contribute to household income at one hand as well as personal income for survival.

Working on the farm

Working on the farm is not an uncommon phenomenon in Ghana particularly and Africa in general. Literature available indicates that children usually assist their parents in household occupations (Esia-Donkoh et al., 2011; Morrow and Vennam, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that more than half (54.8%) of the children worked in the field a week preceding the survey. More than 50% of the respondents were involved in farm activities in the coastal and forest zones. A substantial number was also engaged in similar tasks in most of the settlements studied (Table 2).

Table 2: Children's farm work per day by ecological zone and settlement type

Type of settlement	Work per day in ecological zone		Total % (N)
	Coastal	Forest	
Urban	9.4 (3)	90.6 (29)	100 (32)
Peri-urban	47.0 (77)	53.0 (87)	100 (164)
Rural	50.5 (101)	45.5 (99)	100 (200)
Remote rural	59.2 (90)	40.8 (62)	100 (152)
Total % (N)	49.5 (271)	50.5 (277)	100 (548)

Source: Child mobility survey (2005)

Similarly, within the context of the ecological zones, there were substantial numbers of males (307) compared to females (237) who were engaged in farm and farm-related activities a week preceding the survey. At the coastal and forest zones, most of the male-children were engaged in farming at the rural and peri-urban settlements while other female-children worked on the farm at the rural settlements in both ecological zones (Table 3).

Table 3: Children's work on the farm by ecological zone, settlement type and sex

Working on the farm in ecological zone by sex		Settlement Type % (N)				Total % (N)
		Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Remote rural	
Coastal	Female	0.8 (01)	31.7 (38)	37.5 (45)	30.0 (36)	100 (120)
	Male	1.3 (02)	26.2 (39)	36.9 (55)	35.6 (53)	100 (149)
	Total % (N)	1.1 (03)	28.6 (77)	37.2 (100)	33.1 (89)	100 (269)
Forest	Female	8.6 (10)	25.6 (30)	39.3 (46)	26.5 (31)	100 (117)
	Male	12.0 (19)	35.5 (56)	32.9 (52)	19.6 (31)	100 (158)
	Total % (N)	10.6 (29)	31.3 (56)	35.6 (98)	22.5 (62)	100 (275)

Source: Child mobility survey (2005)

Children's core work on the field comprised weeding, planting and harvesting of crops. In addition to these, it was realised from the study that more than 73% of the respondents carried loads on the head to and from the farm. Specifically, about 77% girls and 71% boys carried loads a week preceding the survey. On the basis of settlement type, more than 70% of all the respondents except those in urban settlement (53%) carried loads to work on the farm. Among all these respondents, more than 89% in the coastal zone carried loads to similar destinations for the same purposes.

Sale of wares

Children also reported selling different types of farm and finished products. The survey results showed that more than one-fifth of the respondents were engaged to sell. Some of the respondents sold in all the days of the week preceding the survey. While undoubtedly, girls were more engaged in selling, there were more respondents who sold at the forest zone and urban settlements than in the other settlements studied (Table 4).

Largely, female children are often engaged to sell for and on behalf of their parents, usually mothers. However, there are instances where children sell to cater for their personal needs and that of the larger household (Esia-

Donkoh et al., 2011). One of such children was a 14-year old female who sells charcoal to take care of her personal and household needs in one of the peri-urban settlements in the coastal zone. She indicated that: The charcoal business is my own business. I used to sell with my mother. Now I am on my own but the money I get is for me, my younger siblings and my entire household too.

Table 4: Selling per day by ecological zone and settlement types

Type of settlement	Selling per day in ecological zone %		Total % (N)
	Coastal	Forest	
Urban	53.4 (39)	46.6 (34)	100 (73)
Peri-urban	52.7 (29)	47.3 (26)	100 (55)
Rural	12.8 (18)	87.2 (34)	100 (52)
Remote rural	45.5 (5)	54.5 (6)	100 (11)
Total % (N)	47.6 (91)	52.4 (100)	100 (191)

Source: Child mobility survey (2005)

Slightly more children were engaged in selling in the forest zone a week prior to the survey. As usual, girls were generally found selling. Selling was more common among females in both ecological zones and settlement types except in rural and remote rural areas in the coastal zone and rural settlements in the forest zone (Table 5). The variation may be explained by the types of wares such as fuel wood and food crops which constitute the heaviest types of items sold in such settlement types.

Table 5: Children's selling activities by ecological zone, settlement type and sex

Selling in ecological zone by sex	Settlement Type % (N)				Total % (N)	
	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Remote rural		
Coastal	Female	43.5 (30)	33.3 (23)	17.4 (12)	5.8 (4)	100 (69)
	Male	40.9 (9)	27.3 (6)	4.6 (1)	27.3 (6)	100 (22)
	Total % (N)	42.9 (39)	31.9 (29)	14.3 (13)	10.9 (10)	100 (91)
Forest	Female	38.9 (21)	31.5 (17)	24.1 (13)	5.5 (3)	100 (54)
	Male	31.0 (13)	21.4 (9)	40.5 (17)	7.1 (3)	100 (42)
	Total % (N)	35.4 (34)	27.1 (26)	31.3 (30)	6.2 (6)	100 (96)

Source: Child mobility survey (2005).

Children's contribution to household income

Children contribute to household income directly, indirectly and diversely. As have been espoused earlier, their engagement in domestic and economic activities contributes substantially to their household income. The survey results showed that majority of the respondents who were engaged in economic enterprise a week prior to the study were either under paid or not paid for.

However, the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that across all the ecological zones and in the various types of settlements, children were engaged in economic activities that brought income ranging between GH¢2.00 and GH¢5.00 per day or more than GH¢50.00 per year to their households. Some of the contributions were found to a large extent regular. A few instances are cited below.

I have a farm...Last year, when I harvested and sold my crops, I had GH¢90.00...I remitted my father GH¢50.000 to assist him take care of my other household members especially my siblings (Male, 18 years, remote rural, forest).

My parents are farmers...Apart from working with them, I work for other people too. I weed around their houses. Usually, I receive GH¢ 2.00 per day. Sometimes too I get GH¢4.00. I give all the money I receive to my mother. She buys clothes and school items for us (Male, 15 years, rural, forest).

I sell charcoal. It is a household business. I sell for my parents. I also have the liberty to sell my own charcoal. A big bag cost GH¢7.00 at the farm but GH¢8.50 and GH¢15.00 if it is nearer to the roadside and at the market. I get between GH¢1.00 and GH¢2.00 profit per bag of charcoal. On a good day, I sell about five bags a day. I keep my profit and use it to buy books, bags and other school items as well as other personal needs (Female, 14, peri-urban, coastal).

It is clear that children go beyond the domestic spheres to contribute economically to household income on one side and the other side generating their own income. In so doing, some amount of wealth is created. This can be essential for sustainable poverty reduction.

Child entrepreneurship

Both the pilot and the main study revealed that some of the parents consciously or unconsciously encouraged their children to develop certain entrepreneurial skills and abilities especially in trading. There were instances where some of these children added other wares to that of their

parents to sell alongside. In this case, they sell the wares of their parents as well as their own wares to generate personal income. One of such entrepreneurial capabilities was exhibited by a 14 year old female primary pupil in a peri-urban site at the coastal zone. This child sold with her mother for a while and later started her own charcoal business when the mother was no longer able to take care of all the domestic and academic needs of the household.

I realised that my parents were not able to meet all our needs so I decided to start my own business to buy and sell charcoal. Charcoal seems to be the main product to sell here. I started selling in Elmina and my mother encouraged me... After sometime I told my mother I would like to sell in Cape Coast to see how the business is at the place too. She agreed... That is how it began in Cape Coast. Selling in Cape Coast is more lucrative than at Elmina. My other siblings also sell charcoal. But they sell at Elmina. We share the profits equally. We also give some to our parents. My mother keeps our money on our behalf and all our needs are bought with our savings.

Children's participation in economic activities and demonstrating of entrepreneurial abilities are worth studying. The above quote shows how some children (female) can learn from their parents the necessary skills and abilities to start their own enterprises, and further identify new business niches. Similar skills were also demonstrated in some of the farming communities especially in the remote rural and rural settlements where some children had some plots of farmlands demarcated to them by their parents to cultivate vegetables and other food crops. Other children mostly in the forest zone were trained to hunt for animals using guns and dogs. They usually engaged in this activity after school and whenever they went to the farm. Grasscutters, birds and other animals were hunted and killed and sold to generate personal and household income. As depicted by the framework used for this study, household conditions and reasons to work are linked to entrepreneurial skills and development (see Rattray, 1933).

Discussion

Understandably, children all over the globe and specifically in developing countries play various economic roles directly or indirectly to contribute to the survival of households. As illustrated by the framework adapted for this study, children more or less work in economic arenas that are common to their parents and household. The knowledge of children's contributions to household income is not in contention. But how these contributions translate to household poverty reduction has rarely been researched into or carefully ignored.

Theoretically, household income and poverty are inversely related. Therefore, holding all other things equal, an increase in household income reduces poverty. As shown in the framework, there is an impact of children's contributions to household income on household poverty reduction. The call is how to make these contributions (to poverty reduction) visible in poverty reduction analyses. In doing so, two issues may arise. The first is how to define the work children engage in as legitimate and not child labour. In as much as the paper advocates for the acknowledgement and further computation of contributions by children to household income, it also recognises issues that bother on legitimacy and legality. For instance, there are national, regional and international frameworks that govern and regulate the activities of children including work. Making children's economic contributions to household income 'visible' takes into cognisance issues of child labour and child skill development (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011; Esia-Donkoh et al., 2011; Mariwah and Esia-Donkoh, 2011; Porter et al., 2011). This is critical to avoid the tendency of rationalising an illegality (child labour).

The second critical issue for consideration is the analysis of children's contributions to household income (and possibly poverty reduction) at both the micro (household) level and macro (national) level. In developing countries such as Ghana, where governments do not have sustainable social welfare system to support the dependant categories of the population (children and the aged) economically children will continue to constitute both economic and social assets in this regard. The tasks children engage in, their contributions to personal and household incomes, and remittances sent to siblings and parents in other social and geographical contexts serve as basis for recognition, acknowledgement and (re) conceptualisation of childhood. Age therefore does not provide the best of measure to evaluate and conceptualise childhood. This makes the call for the re-conceptualisation of childhood imperative. Thus, an eclectic analysis, that is, drawing from various contextual/social constructs becomes appropriate compared to a single standardised universalised definition (Clerk, 2012). This will enable the sustainable contribution of children to household income and poverty reduction to be accounted for and reflected in local and national programmes. The call for a context-specific (re)conceptualisation of childhood rather than the adoption of the existing international universalised framework seems appropriate.

Closely related to the issue of re-conceptualisation of childhood are the legal and operational definitions of some of the key concepts used in international frameworks. For instance, in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, participation is one of the critical broad

classifications. Participation of children in the economic sphere is scarcely envisaged in the Convention, but its discussion is critical given the roles and contributions of children to household survival and income. Apart from the protection and provision components which have well been discussed and rationalised adequately, parents' roles and influence in the participation of children in both social and economic domains are worth flagging. As has been recognised, some of the activities children engage in usually under the supervision of their parents (Casabonne, 2006) provide a platform for positive child development and gradual initiation into adulthood (Esiadonkoh and Mariwah, 2011; UNICEF, 1997; Fyfe, 1989). This to some extent explains the role of parents in the development of entrepreneurial skills of their wards.

Also related is the view that there is the need for a review of Jenks' historical analysis of childhood. The paper advocates for a seventh stage given the activities children engage in, their contributions to household income (and poverty reduction) and the demonstration of entrepreneurial ability. The study and literature available indicate that children are playing roles beyond the helping mode (described as a stage in the 20th century). The paper therefore advocates for a seventh stage to be described as the participation mode to reflect children's contributions in the 21st century.

Finally is the wages children receive or do not receive after work. Perhaps, adults still see children's economic roles as part of the socialisation process (Boakye-Boaten, 2010). This cultural orientation contributes to the inadequate wages paid to them, if any. In some instances, these contributions are not recognised at all or are taken for granted by adults. With the cultural perception that children are to be seen and not heard, they find it difficult to exercise any effective agency to seek or bargain for better wages. As a survival strategy, children might be unwilling too to challenge the status quo. These explain the need for a formal admission and acknowledgement of the need to activate the necessary systems and structures to compute the contributions of children to household income in Ghana without having detrimental effects on the education, health and development of children.

Conclusions and recommendations

Children's economic endeavours and their contributions to household survival and income are important to national development in general. All over the globe, children are engaged in both domestically and economically for personal and household gains. What has most importantly been missing within this context is the recognition and acknowledgement of such contributions at the micro and macro levels in many developing countries such as Ghana. The difficulty perhaps relates to conceptualisation of

childhood and child work or labour. Generally, conceptualisation from the international domains at times cloud local images constructed about children, and hence, conflicts with any attempts to any formal admission and computation of their contributions to poverty reduction.

If analysis of childhood in general centres on the societal construct of the concept, then it becomes appropriate to review such conceptualisation from time to time when children's roles, responsibilities and contributions change. Since over the recent decades, children's activities in Ghana and likely elsewhere in Africa have changed owing to the growing trends of modernisation and its associated economic activities, it becomes necessary the Ghana recognises this changing trends. This will then allow for further exploration of child work and its consequent relevance to household and national income as well as poverty reduction programmes. This is critical because children's contributions to household income could translate to household poverty reduction.

Specifically, the systems and tools used by the Ghana Statistical Service in particular to generate and assess national incomes, poverty assessment and living standard studies must incorporate tools to assess the contributions of children to household income and poverty reduction. Additionally, as part of its mandate, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection with its affiliate Departments must develop or activate the appropriate structures to ascertain the diverse economic activities children engage in, and how such activities contribute to household income and poverty reduction without jeopardising their health, education and development.

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