

# THE STREET CHILDREN SITUATION IN TAMALE, GHANA

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*There can be no keener revelation  
of a society's soul  
than the way in which  
it treats its children.*

*Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela*

## ABSTRACT

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This is a study about the street children situation in Tamale, Ghana. The purpose of the study is to find out how the street children situation is in Tamale and how it has developed in the new millennium, what kind of street children work is done in Tamale, and what kind of policies and practices have been implemented to improve the street children situation in Tamale in the new millennium. In this study, the street children situation is taken to mean the number of street children and welfare of street children.

This study is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. The data were collected by interviewing professionals who work with street children or in child protection in general, and by keeping a field diary. The field diary data were collected through visits to different institutions and through informal conversations and observation. The data collection process was carried out during the researcher's internship for Youth Alive –organization in Tamale. Youth Alive is a local, non-governmental organization working with street children.

A lot has been done to improve the welfare of children in Ghana in the new millennium but the population growth and urbanization, in Tamale and throughout the country, remain rapid. Therefore, the street children situation continues to get worse. The number is still increasing, and street children are lacking basic welfare, such as accommodation, health and safety. Street children live at the mercy of the weather and peer relations. The education and health care systems have improved but are still out of many street children's reach. In recent years, advocacy and work with extended families and communities have also been emphasized.

The government of Ghana is not able to take full responsibility for offering social security for its citizens. Therefore, the non-governmental sector is complementing the government's work in providing social services. In fact, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both local and foreign, usually have the primary responsibility for service delivery, especially regarding specialized fields, such as street children work.

Keywords: street children, welfare, Ghana, qualitative research, ethnography

## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän opinnäytetyön aihe on katulapsitilanne Ghanan Tamalessa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, millainen Tamalen katulapsitilanne on ja miten se on kehittynyt 2000-luvulla, millaista katulapsityötä Tamalessa tehdään, sekä minkälaisin käytännöin Tamalen katulapsitilannetta on pyritty parantamaan 2000-luvulla. Tässä tutkimuksessa katulapsitilanne -käsitteellä viitataan katulasten määrään ja hyvinvointiin.

Tämä on kvalitatiivinen eli laadullinen tutkimus, jossa on etnografinen tutkimusote. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty haastattelemalla katulapsien parissa töitä tekeviä sekä muun lastensuojelutyön ammattilaisia. Lisäksi aineistoa kerättiin pitämällä kenttäpäiväkirjaa, jonka merkinnät on kerätty tutustumiskäyntien, epävirallisten keskustelujen ja havainnoinnin avulla. Aineistonkeruu toteutettiin samaan aikaan kun tutkija teki kansainvälistä harjoittelua Youth Alive -järjestössä Tamalessa. Youth Alive on paikallinen, kolmannen sektorin järjestö, joka työskentelee katulasten parissa.

Ghanassa on tehty paljon lasten hyvinvoinnin parantamiseksi 2000-luvulla, mutta väestönkasvu ja kaupungistuminen on voimakasta, myös Tamalessa. Siten myös katulapsitilanne on pahentunut entisestään. Katulapsien määrä on edelleen kasvussa, ja katulapsilta puuttuvat perustavanlaatuisetkin hyvinvoinnin elementit, kuten majoitus, terveys ja turvallisuus. Katulapset elävät sään ja vertaissuhteiden armoilla. Koulutus- ja terveyspalvelut ovat parantuneet, mutta ovat edelleen monien katulasten ulottumattomissa. Viime vuosina myös katulasten oikeuksista puhuminen ja niiden puolustaminen sekä työ perheiden ja yhteisöjen parissa ovat korostuneet.

Ghanan hallitus ei yksin pysty tarjoamaan perusturvaa kansalaisilleen, joten kolmas sektori täydentää julkisen sektorin toimintaa. Itse asiassa, kolmannen sektorin järjestöillä on usein päävastuu palveluiden tuottamisesta, erityisesti jos puhutaan erikoistuneista palveluista, kuten katulapsityöstä.

Asiasanat: katulapsi, hyvinvointi, Ghana, laadullinen tutkimus, etnografia

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This is a study about the street children situation in Tamale, Ghana. The purpose of the study is to find out how the street children situation is in Tamale and how it has developed in the new millennium, what kind of street children work is done in Tamale, and what kind of policies and practices have been implemented to improve the street children situation in Tamale in the new millennium. In this study, the street children situation is taken to mean the number of street children and welfare of street children. The concept of welfare is formed by adapting Allardt (1980) and Maslow (1987).

Childhood is understood to be the foundation of not only every individual but also of the world's better future. Therefore there has been a great focus for the last couple of decades to make childhood better for all the world's children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, followed by Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 and 'A World Fit for Children' in 2002. There have been concrete results since those international agreements, but still, childhood remains under threat mainly because of three reasons: poverty, armed conflicts and HIV/AIDS. More than one billion children are lacking the basic goods or services that would allow them to survive, develop and thrive. (UNICEF 2005, 3–10, 20.) Street children can be considered to be among the most deprived of all children: the hardest to reach with vital services like education and health care, and the most difficult to protect. (UNICEF 2006, 40.)

This study is qualitative with an ethnographic approach, and the data were collected by interviewing professionals who work with street children or in child protection in general, and by keeping a field diary. Interviewees represented different fields because one aim of the study is to promote the multi-professional cooperation between different sectors working with street children. This study is to benefit street children work in Tamale, and therefore it is written in English. The data were collected during an internship with the organization 'Youth Alive', towards the end of 2009. Youth Alive is a non-governmental organization working with street children

Personal interests and aims played a big role in choosing a topic for this study. Previous work experience in Africa has made cultural, social and developmental issues of the continent, especially those of its children, personally important. Social work in Africa appears fascinating and challenging, and so do the developmental policies with which the Western world is taking part in Africa's development.

Social work and life in general is multicultural, and globalization is rapid. This is true also in Finland. For a Finnish Bachelor of Social Services it can mean facing the challenge in Finnish social work or working in an international context abroad. Regardless of where one wants to work, cultural interaction and understanding the nature of globalization are essential to all social services professionals. Negative effects – or challenges – of globalization are most likely to fall on groups and individuals who are excluded or marginalized and who thus are also most likely to be the focus of social work. Therefore, all social services professionals need to understand the basics of globalization and the various processes that affect their own countries and practices. Social services professionals need to view practices and services in the light of international perspectives and events. (Lyons, Manion & Carlsen 2006, 1, 7.)

This study offers a good overall view to anybody who is interested in finding out how the street children phenomenon appears, how children's rights are achieved or how child protection is implemented in Ghana



## 2 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The development and well-being of children is not simply the responsibility of individual parents and families but of societies as a whole. Societies, through social, economic and educational policies, can be either supportive or neglectful of children. However, there are widely spread international commitments that do not consider these state policies optional but place responsibility on participating states to protect the rights of children. Such commitments include the United Nations' (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and Millennium Development Goals. (Spencer & Baldwin 2005, 26–28; UNICEF 2005, 7–8.)

### 2.1 Human Rights and Welfare of the World's Children

The most widely endorsed human rights treaty in history is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and is ratified by 193 countries. The Convention has been the culmination of a process of recognizing the rights of children. Globally defined key terms of a good childhood are agreed in it. According to the Convention, children have the right to survival, health and shelter. Children also have the right to be encouraged, educated and developed to the fullest. Children should live in a loving, understanding family environment, and children have the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Children should be protected against any kind of violence, abuse or exploitation. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development and respect for the views of the child. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; UNICEF 2005, 1; UNICEF 2008a.)

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by the UN Millennium Summit in New York. MDGs are eight goals to be achieved by 2015, and they have become central objectives for all countries, UN agencies, bilateral donors and international financial institutions. The goals have a strong focus on children. The goals are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, to achieve universal primary education, to

promote gender equality and empower women, to reduce child mortality, to improve maternal health, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, to ensure environmental sustainability and to develop a global partnership for development. All the goals have different targets, to be reached by 2015. In 2002, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children was held to create new commitments to complement the MDGs. The commitments were reflected in a new international framework: “A World Fit for Children”. (UNICEF 2005, 7–8.)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was a landmark in human history, and there have been concrete results since it and MDGs were adopted. Still, childhood remains under threat. In several regions and countries children’s rights appear at risk because of three key threats: poverty, armed conflicts and HIV/AIDS. Other threats to children’s survival and development exist mainly because of those three. (UNICEF 2005, 9–10.) However, there are also factors that are not strictly connected to any of the above, such as weak governance and corruption (UNICEF 2006, 11).

One of the most simplistic and widely used measures of poverty is the \$1 a day per person benchmark. However, poverty has a lot of different dimensions, and children are usually hit hardest by it. Poverty widens social, economic and gender disparities that prevent children from enjoying equal opportunities and undermines protective family and community environments leaving children vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, discrimination and stigmatization. Therefore, it can be said that child poverty is a human rights issue. If the survival, health and education rights of children are not met first, and if children are not provided services such as access to safe water or proper nutrition, it is impossible to talk about equal opportunities. Poverty prevents children from realizing their full potential and participating as equal members of their communities, and since a good start in life is critical to the development of every individual, poverty in early childhood can become a lifelong handicap. (UNICEF 2005, 15–18.)

The rights of over one billion children – more than half of the children in developing countries – are violated because they are lacking at least one of the basic goods or services that would allow them to survive and develop. An UNICEF-funded study about child poverty in the developing world by Gordon, Nandy, Pantazis, Pemberton and Townsend (2003), outlines, how children in developing countries are affected by severe

deprivations in seven areas: adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. (UNICEF 2005, 19–20.)

The mid-point of achieving the MDGs shows that overall there has been a lot of success, but sub-Saharan Africa is not keeping up with the rest of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa is unlikely to achieve the target on halving the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day. In fact, high prices of energy and commodities in early 2008, and the global economic crisis that followed, have deepened poverty, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Worldwide, the number of people living in extreme poverty in 2009 was estimated to be from 55 million to 90 million higher than anticipated before the economic crisis. Conflicts are another contributor to the deepening of poverty: there are still tens of millions of internally displaced people and refugees. (UN 2009, 6–11.)

Despite small victories, AIDS also continues to take a terrible toll in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of people living with HIV rose from an estimated 29,5 million in 2001 to 33 million in 2007, and two thirds of those living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa. The HIV prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa is about 5 per cent, and 12,5 per cent of sub-Saharan African children are estimated to be orphaned by 2010. By the end of 2007, specific national plans of action for children orphaned by AIDS and other vulnerable children had been developed in 21 sub-Saharan African countries. (UN 2008, 28–29; UN 2009, 33; UNICEF 2006, 40.)

### 2.1.1 Street Children

One indication of poverty is the existence of street children. Street children are among the most visible of all children, living and working on the streets and squares of cities all over the world. Yet, they are also among the most invisible children: the hardest to reach with vital services like education and health care, and the most difficult to protect. Once on the street, children become vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse, and their daily lives are likely to be very different from the ideal childhood defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, it is important to remember that street children are individuals, and they all have their personal circumstances, their own

ways of living and/or working on the streets and a range of reasons for doing so. (UNICEF 2006, 40–41.)

The term street children itself is problematic as it can be used as a stigmatizing label. One problem street children face is that the society considers them as a threat and a source of criminal behaviour. However, many children living or working on the streets have embraced the term, since it seems to offer them a sense of identity and belonging. (UNICEF 2006, 40.)

A basic definition of the term ‘street children’, according to the Oxford Dictionary is “a homeless or neglected child who lives chiefly in the streets”. An early definition of street children, formulated in 1983 by the Inter-NGO Programme for Street Children and Street Youth stated that street children are those for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults. The United Nations adopted the phrasing: “any boy or a girl --- for whom the street in the widest sense of the word --- has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults”. UNICEF has established terms “of the street” and “on the street” to differentiate street-based and home-based street children. Children of the street make streets their home but child workers on the street return at night to their families. This terminology has been promoted world-wide but in practice it has been found problematic as children themselves have defied these generalizations. Many children sleep both at home and on the streets, and they also spend periods in residential institutions like orphanages. (Panter-Brick 2002, 148–150.) Most street children are not orphans, and even children of the street are usually in some kind of contact with their families (UNICEF 2006, 41). In this study, the term ‘street children’ is used widely to refer to children who work and/or sleep on the streets. The gist is that the data create definitions.

The exact number of street children is difficult to quantify but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world, with some estimates as high as 170 million. It is also likely that numbers are increasing as the global population grows and urbanization continues. (Panter-Brick 2002, 153; Reale 2008, 6; UNICEF 2006, 40–41.)

There are many reasons for children to decide to leave their homes: chronic poverty, abuse, discrimination or domestic violence, lack of education or work opportunities and HIV/AIDS, conflict or natural disasters (Reale 2008, 7). Sometimes children do not make the decision themselves: they may be forced to leave. Unfortunately, moving to live on the streets usually brings other kinds of problems, just replacing the old ones.

Street children are deprived of citizenship rights. They are socially excluded, beginning with a lack of registration documents and lack of stability of residence, proper education and health care. In fact, in current welfare literature, street children belong to a category of “children at risk”, risks being both physical and psychosocial. Children on the move in general are often vulnerable to the worst forms of exploitation – coercion, violence, physical and mental abuse and exhaustion. Street children can, for example, end up in work that is highly dangerous. In terms of engaging in drug-taking, sex and other HIV-risk behaviour, studies show that street youth, especially street girls, belong to a risk category. (Panter-Brick 2002, 155–162; Reale 2008, 12.) Especially girls can also be forced to have sex or can be trafficked.

## 2.2 Concept of Welfare

Welfare is difficult to define and research because of a variety of premises. Welfare is often understood as material resources only, but its definition should be wider than that. Erik Allardt (1980) divides welfare into three aspects – having, loving and being – as a part of a Nordic welfare research. ‘Having’ relates to standard of living: incomes, level of accommodation, employment, education and health. ‘Loving’, on the other hand, refers to relationships, while ‘being’ refers to self-fulfilment. Definition can also be used in the developing world, but it can be said that living standard (having) values are the most fundamental of those three. The argument can be disproved to a certain point, but the absolute poverty facing the developing world, makes more specific justifications unnecessary when it comes to this study. (Allardt 1980, 38–41, 50.)

Need Theories, including Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, also emphasize physiological needs. According to Maslow, there are five basic needs that can be put in hierarchical order. The most fundamental of those needs are physiological needs, such as

the need for food, water and clothing. After that comes safety needs: security and protection. The third one is social needs, including love and a sense of belonging. After that come esteem needs and needs of self-fulfilment. If all the needs are unsatisfied, the organism of a human body is dominated by the physiological needs. All the other needs may become simply nonexistent or be pushed into the background. (Allardt 1980, 41; Maslow 1987, 15–22.)

According to UNICEF (2005), children living in poverty are deprived of many of their rights: survival, health and nutrition, education, protection and participation. Therefore, it can be said that poverty is more than material deprivation. However, without first meeting the survival, health and education rights, without providing goods and services such as access to safe water or adequate nutrition, it is impossible to talk about equal opportunities in life. (UNICEF 2005, 15–17.)

The context of this study is a developing country, Ghana, and the study is about street children, who can be considered the most deprived and vulnerable children of all. They are lacking the basic goods, services and security. Therefore, in this study, welfare is understood mainly as the most basic needs and human rights (having), though relationships (loving) are also included. Most of the street children still have families, and on the streets they form new, complex relationships (Boakye-Boaten 2008, 81–83; UNICEF 2006, 41). In this study, I have formed my own understanding of welfare by adapting Allardt and Maslow.

### 3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: GHANA

The Republic of Ghana is a country in West Africa with a population of approximately 20 million people (Ghana's Government a). The capital of Ghana is Accra and its neighboring countries are Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo. Ghana is located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, the climate being tropical. More than half of the Ghanaian labour force is involved in agriculture or fishing as their primary occupation. Farmers produce a variety of crops for domestic consumption and export. The main export products are gold, cocoa and timber. Along with the export of raw materials, Ghana has also made huge advancements in other areas, tourism being one of them. (Salm & Falola 2002, 13–16.)

The cultures, customs and lifestyles of Ghana today are influenced by a long history of Islamic and European contact. Ghanaian culture encompasses long-standing interactions between the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Religion is one indication of that. Christianity is a prominent religion, and Islamic influence is also pervasive especially in the Northern region of the country, but many people adhere to the traditional beliefs as well. Colonial education tried to disparage African culture, to eliminate the African past but it did not succeed. Along with Western-style systems, informal education pervades many aspects of African life, including teaching professional skills such as blacksmithing or drumming. Music and dance in general are a significant part of Ghanaian culture. (Salm & Falola 2002, 1, 9, 30, 167.)

Ghana is a highly multicultural and multiethnic country. There are about one hundred ethnic divisions and about sixty language groups. English is the official language due to Ghana's colonial history. Families are extended, and traditional family is instrumental in determining the overall social organization of society. Lineage systems determine the control of property, ensure the maintenance of social laws, and play a vital role in ceremonial and religious rites. (Salm & Falola 2002, 5–8, 125.)

### 3.1 Post-colonial History and Development of Ghana

After a colourful period of colonialism, during which Ghana was called the Gold Coast, Ghana gained independence from Britain in 1957. It was the second sub-Saharan African country to become independent and the first one to gain independence from its colonial power. This event is typically considered the kick-start of Africa's independence movement. Ghana's first head of state was Kwame Nkrumah who was one of the fathers of African independence. He was arguing not only for self-determination of the Gold Coast colony, but also for a more radical Pan-African ideal. However, his presidency was disastrous. He soon became a dictator, and his economic policies, for example nationalizing the gold mines, led to a collapse in living standards and eventually a full-blown crisis. Nkrumah was overthrown by his own military in 1966. (Moss 2007, 1, 25, 41–42.) Still, Nkrumah is highly respected not only in Ghana but all over Africa.

After the presidency of Nkrumah, Ghana suffered from an unstable political situation and an enormous decline of economy until the beginning of the 1980s. In 1979, an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council was set up under the chairmanship of Jerry Rawlings. His junta executed three former military leaders, but then organized elections and handed power over to a new civilian administration. Things did not improve though, so finally Rawlings seized power again in 1981. Under Jerry Rawlings' rule, Ghana became the most politically stable and prosperous nation in West Africa, and provided a model of development for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. In the early 1990s Rawlings allowed multiparty elections and was re-elected in 1992 and 1996 before retiring in 2000. (Moss 2007, 48–49; Salm & Falola 2002, 27–29.)

Today Ghana is still the model country of democracy in Africa. It has a functioning multiparty system and a constitution which guarantees freedom of speech, thought and religion. (Ghana's Government b.) In January 2009, Ghana also provided an example of a maturing democracy by transferring power to the opposition, despite a very close margin of votes (The World Bank a). The new president of Ghana is John Evans Atta Mills from National Democratic Congress (Ghana's Government a).

With more than two decades of progressive, peaceful and democratic political stability as well as a growing economy, Ghana has emerged as a leader in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Ghana's economy has grown at an average annual rate of 4.5 per cent over the past two decades, agriculture being the country's major engine of economic growth, and in fact, that could allow Ghana to meet the Millennium Development Goals before the 2015 deadline. Poverty rates have been cut almost in half, from approximately 51.7 per cent in 1991-1992 to 28.5 per cent in 2005-2006. (IFAD.)

Although Ghana's overall development has been substantial, poverty still has a firm grip on rural areas, especially in the north. There is a wide disparity of income between people of the south and people of the north. The majority of the northern Ghanaians are food crop farmers, usually traditional small-scale producers, and poverty is deepest among them. There is only one growing season in the north whereas there are two growing seasons and greater economic opportunities in the south. (IFAD.)

### 3.2 Child Protection and Welfare of Children in Ghana

Despite the relative prosperity of Ghana, one third of the population is still living below the poverty line. Approximately 30 per cent of children do not go to school, one third of rural population lacks access to safe drinking water and only 11 per cent have adequate sanitation. HIV prevalence seems to be stabilizing but it has been estimated that only 30 per cent of AIDS cases are reported, partly because of stigma, but also due to factors like inadequate access to health care services. Poverty together with rapid urbanization, as well as economic globalization, has fuelled extensive rural-to-urban migration often resulting in family separation and/or child migration. Such changes are accompanied by the breakdown of traditional social protection mechanisms for the poorest and most vulnerable. Therefore, child protection systems – laws, policies, regulations and services – are needed across all social sectors. (ODI & UNICEF 2009, 17, 29; UNICEF 2008b.)

Ghana has a Children's Act, designed to protect the rights of the child, and a range of complementary laws against child labour, trafficking and domestic and sexual violence. Relevant institutions to tackle child protection violations in Ghana include the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Child Labour Unit (CLU) in the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment; the Department of Children in the Ministry of

Women and Children and the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service. These units are fragmented however: they do not have a clear coordinating mechanism or clarity about their division of labour. Human and financial resources are also small, e.g. outreach at the local level on child protection issues is limited. For instance, Ministry of Women and Children receives less than one-tenth of a percent of the national budget, and cannot afford to have local offices for example. (ODI & UNICEF 2009, 30–31, 34.)

However, Ghana has preventative and awareness-raising activities, such as active nationwide campaigns about the importance of birth registration, as well as concerted campaigns about the importance of tackling the use of child labour, promoting universal education and curbing child trafficking. International agencies, such as UNICEF and ILO, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a key role in funding and implementing child protection services. A number of major international NGOs such as Save the Children, Plan International and Amnesty International are actively involved in Ghana on a range of child protection issues. (ODI & UNICEF 2009, 32–33.) There are also a number of smaller, local NGOs that may not be talked about in the international media, but whose input is equally important, especially on the ground level.

### 3.3 Street Children of Ghana

There are no reliable data on the quantity of street children in Ghana but it is estimated that there are 20 000 street children in the capital, Accra, alone which makes it easy to overlook what is going on elsewhere in the country. However, in all the regional capitals and many smaller towns and cities, there are many children living and/or working on the streets, facing the same challenges as street children in Accra and all over the world. (CAS & UNICEF 1999, 37; Boakye-Boaten 2008, 77.)

Poverty is one and the biggest of the reasons Ghanaian children end up on the streets. However, there are many other reasons too. In 1999, CAS (Catholic Action for Street Children) and UNICEF published a study where they stated reasons for CAS-registered Ghanaian street children leaving their homes. Main reasons were poverty and divorce of the parents but children also stated other reasons such as death of a parent, neglect, vi-

olence within the home or sexual abuse. These reasons alone, however, do not explain why more and more children are migrating each decade. Rapid urbanization and its consequences, as already mentioned, play a big role. (CAS & UNICEF 1999, 15, 27.)

Children leave their homes thinking that life in the city will promise a better future. The truth, however, is, that children will face the same difficulties in the cities, just in different forms. Boakye-Boaten interviewed street children of Accra for his study (2008), and found out that all the children he interviewed had gone through harsh experiences on the streets, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse. According to him, there is no safe place for children on the streets of Accra – they are always prone to abuse, especially the girls. Apart from the general struggle of survival, many of the girls suffer from the most gruesome sexual attacks from fellow street children and other people. Because of the sensitive nature of the matter and still existing stigmatization, children do not, however, report sexual assaults. Some of the children also end up working as prostitutes. (Boakye-Boaten 2008, 79–80.)

Street children in Ghana, and surely all over the world, have formed complex relationships to ensure their survival on the streets. Boys usually protect themselves by engaging in groups, but for girls it is better to be in sexual relationships with boys who can protect them. Unfortunately this sexual activeness of the street children is also producing yet another generation of street children. These children are also exposed to all the other ills in society, such as drug use, pick pocketing and other activities that are criminal. They are children, but they are living in an adult environment facing chaotic, difficult circumstances. They have been deprived of their childhoods. (Boakye-Boaten 2008, 81–83.)

When it comes to the basic aspects of welfare, such as eating nutritious food and staying healthy, recent studies are difficult to find. Van Ham, Blavo and Opoku, in cooperation with University of Ghana, Department of Social Welfare and Save the Children, carried out a study about street children of Accra in 1992. Some of the conclusions were that street children of Accra ate unhygienic food, drank from contaminated cups and did not have enough rest which made it difficult to maintain good health. Children might have eaten healthy food, but the environment in which the food was consumed, was unheal-

thy. Children were also exposed to malaria when they worked and slept on the streets. (Kusters 1995, 17.)

Lack of education is also closely related to the phenomenon of street children. It can be a cause but also a result of working on the streets. Children may drop out of school because they need to earn money or they may drop out because they are already working on the streets and therefore have no time to continue their education. Lack of education also limits job opportunities and children end up working long hours doing hard and odd jobs such as trading (selling food and drinks), truck pushing, load carrying, shoe shining etc. (Kusters 1995, 16, 44.)

### 3.3.1 Street Children of Tamale

This study took place in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana. The Northern Region is one of the poorest regions together with Upper East and Upper West Regions. According to a study Participatory Development Associates, in co-operation with UNICEF Ghana, carried out in July 2009, in the northern parts of Ghana life is dominated by food crop farming and slack periods lasting half of the year caused by the lack of rains. The south, on the other hand, offers a wider diversity of year-round employment opportunities. Therefore many children of the north end up on the streets of Accra since they are seen as a potential source of labour and they are expected to help in raising incomes for their families, usually at the expense of their schooling. Migration of children is a growing phenomenon, with more girls migrating and doing so at a younger age than boys. Girls move to the south to become market porters and they also end up sleeping in the markets. (Participatory Development Associates 2009.) It is often a family decision to send a girl to work on the streets not only to earn incomes for the family but also to guarantee the girl's good future. Girls need goods, mainly clothes and cooking utensils to make a good marriage. Girls also need money to establish their own enterprises once they are married. (Youth Alive & Farafina Consult 2007, 4.)

However, all the children of the north, who leave their homes to live or work on the streets, do not move to the south. Some of them stay in Tamale. As stated earlier, the street children phenomenon exists in all of the regional capitals and other cities. How-

ever, there are no reliable data on quantity of the street children in Tamale or recent studies about the welfare situation of the street children in Tamale.

Cecile Kusters interviewed 75 street girls and 75 street boys for her survey about street children of Tamale in 1995. The total number of street children in Tamale at the time was roughly estimated to be 600. The majority of the children interviewed for the study were children *on* the street, while only 12 boys stated that they slept on the streets regularly. According to the study, boys also slept with other street children or non-related friends more often than the girls. Over all, the girls were more looked after by their relatives in terms of accommodation, food and health care whereas the boys took care of themselves more. However, both girls and boys stated that they use their earnings mainly for food and clothes whether it is through their guardians or not. Children stated that they did not always get enough to eat but that they rarely got sick. If they did, it was usually something “minor” like headache, stomach ache, guinea worms etc. (Kusters 1995, 30-32, 38-39.)

Most of the children stated that they had sometimes been harassed by other street children, security officers, market women, general public, guardians etc. However, they rarely had contact with the police. One security problem children faced on the streets was lack of safe places for their money or belongings. These factors also seemed to be the things the children feared the most. (Kusters 1995, 33-35.)

Almost half of the interviewed girls stated they had never been to school and more than half of the boys had been to school before but had dropped out. About one third of both boys and girls stated that they were attending school at the moment. Some of the children indicated that they had been to Arabic school but this was not included in the data since only formal education was taken into account. (Kusters 1995, 27.)

#### 4 PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study is about the street children situation of Tamale. Tamale is the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana. The purpose of the study is to find out how the street children situation is in Tamale and how it has developed in the new millennium, what kind of street children work is done in Tamale, and what kind of policies and practices have been implemented to improve the street children situation in Tamale in the new millennium. In this study, the street children situation is taken to mean the number of street children and welfare of street children.

The research questions are: How is the street children situation of Tamale and how has it developed in the new millennium? What kind of street children work is done in Tamale? What kind of policies and practices have been implemented to improve the street children situation in Tamale in the new millennium?

The data were collected using different methods: interviews, informal conversations, observation and visits. The idea was to get a wide understanding about the phenomenon. This study may be useful to everybody who is interested in the street children phenomenon, child protection or implementing children's rights in the developing world, especially in Africa. This study is also to benefit street children work and multi-professional cooperation between different quarters working with street children in Tamale. Therefore, the study report is written in English.

## 5 STUDY METHODOLOGIES

This study is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. The starting point for qualitative research is to get a holistic description of real life and the subject. Qualitative research is not about verifying arguments but discovering, revealing and understanding factors about the subject. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2001, 152.) This study is about understanding how the street children situation is in Tamale, and how and why it has developed during the past decade.

Data were collected by interviewing professionals who work with street children or in child protection in general, and by keeping a field diary which includes descriptions of institutions, conversations and events. The data were collected during my internship for the organization, Youth Alive, in Tamale, Ghana. Youth Alive is a local, non-governmental organization working with street children. The internship and data collection covered a period of approximately three months, lasting from September to December, in 2009.

### 5.1 Ethnographic Approach

Ethnography is a form of a qualitative research which explores a nature of a certain social phenomenon. The researcher tries to achieve an understanding of people's behavior and its social meanings in a certain context. The main aim is to describe and interpret cultural systems of a certain group. Ethnographic research usually includes field work among the subject group. The researcher is participating in people's daily lives for an extended period. Actions and accounts are studied in everyday context. The researcher becomes personally involved, and in fact, the presence and influence of the researcher are unavoidable, and a resource that should be capitalized upon. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 3; Holliday 2007, 16, 137; Vuorinen 2005, 63–64.) This also means that a continuous self-awareness of the researcher is required throughout the research process.

In terms of data collection in ethnography, the researcher uses a range of sources, and data collection is relatively unstructured. While participating in field work, the re-

searcher observes, listens and asks questions through informal and formal interviews. The focus is usually on a few cases. (Hammersley & Atkins 2007, 3.)

In this study, the data collection was closely connected to an internship in street children work which proved to be very productive. Data collection was a natural part of my work at Youth Alive. My aim was to get a holistic picture of the researched phenomenon and its context.

Cultures and recognition of them are an essential part of both data collection and analysis of the data in this study. In fact, there are a lot of similarities between qualitative - especially ethnographic - research and cultural research, and there are many features of cultural research in this study. In both qualitative research and cultural research, analyzing and explaining are based on understanding, not on verifying universal arguments. Cultures and recognition of them thus are an essential part of qualitative research: understanding reality means understanding that it is built of interpretations and rules of interpretations. Nothing in the world appears *per se* but through the relationship we have with the world. The reality exists through interpretations and understanding. (Alasuutari 1993, 38, 42–43, 46.)

The multiplicity of cultural influences also needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about the relationship between the researcher and research setting cultures during the data collection. The interaction between the researcher and research setting cultures is a complex affair. The researcher comes into the research situation with personal opinions and understandings, but the people in the research setting are as culturally skilled as the researcher. They also have the potential to be involved in negotiating the research event. (Holliday 2007, 140.)

When it comes to this research, my cultural background and the research setting culture are very different from each other. However, I recognized my own attitudes and interpretations which is particularly important because of the ethnographic nature of this study. I seek for genuine understanding and interpretations produced by the data.

I was involved in the field work during the data collection, and because of previous work experience in Africa and in street children work, it was relatively easy for me to



adjust to the research setting. However, personal involvement and emotional charge can also prove to be a disadvantage. The researcher is the arch designer of data collection but excessive subjectivity is to be avoided (Holliday 2007, 93). More about the relationship of the researcher and people in the research setting is discussed in chapter 8.

## 5.2 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out between 28<sup>th</sup> of September and 18<sup>th</sup> of December in 2009. Data were collected through two different methods: 1) by interviewing professionals who work with street children or in child protection in general and 2) by keeping a field diary that consists of descriptions of institutions, conversations and events.

### 5.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were carried out between 6<sup>th</sup> of October and 8<sup>th</sup> of December in 2009. I interviewed six people, and interviewees represented professionals from both non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions. Interviews were carried out at the interviewees' work places, and English was used as the interview language. The street children themselves were not chosen to be interviewed mainly because of language barriers and the short period of time the researcher was able to spend in Ghana. To get reliable information from a group of street children, time would have been needed to earn their trust.

Interviews were themed, and a few main questions were used as a framework (appendix). Interviews were recorded and then transcribed word for word. Transcripts of the interviews formed approximately 26 A4 -pages of text. Interviewees were numbered (interviewee 1, interviewee 2 etc.) for the purpose of analysis, and some of the information the interviewees gave about themselves, for example professions and ages, was left out in order to ensure anonymity. All the interviewees were Ghanaians. Three of the interviewees were women and three were men.

Interviewee 1 was a man who works for a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with street children. The interviewee has worked for the NGO for six years. Interviewee 2 was a man who works for a non-governmental organization that works with

street children. The interviewee has worked with street children for six years. Interviewee 3 was a woman who works for a non-governmental organization that works with street children. The interviewee has worked with street children for about 13 years. Interviewee 4 was a woman who works for a governmental institution, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). The interviewee is working in a program that is responsible for child protection. She has worked for the DSW for 13 years. Interviewee 5 was a woman who also works for the DSW. The interviewee is working in a program that is responsible for community care. Interviewee 6 was a man who works for a non-governmental organization that works with street children. The interviewee has worked for the NGO for a year.

### 5.2.2 Field Diary

Keeping a field diary is a traditional tool in ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 141). In this study, a field diary was kept throughout the internship and the data collection. The original plan was not to collect data by keeping a field diary, but it proved to be an important method. This is typical when the data collection process has an ethnographic approach. The researcher employs a relatively open-ended approach, because the orientation should be an exploratory one. The researcher participates in the field work with all the senses open because the idea is to get a holistic picture about a certain aspect of the lives of the people who are being studied. Therefore, the researcher gathers whatever data are available to shed light on the studied issues or phenomenon. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 3.)

As a data collection tool, diary material can be extensive (Holliday 2007, 62–63). In this study, the field diary includes descriptions of institutions, conversations and events. The term field diary is used because it describes the nature of the diary better than the term research diary would. The diary data were collected through visits to different institutions and through informal conversations and observation.

An essential part of the field diary data are conversations I had with a 15-year-old street boy. The boy did not know that he was a subject of research, because the conversations started as occasional encounters between me and the boy, and they only became significant to me after the data were collected. The conversations were not interview situations

but informal discussions. However, I had systematically recorded the encounters in the diary, and I see them as an essential part of the data as they offer a different point of view from the one the interviewees offer. Collection of data using various methods enables to bring tensions out, which is important when a holistic understanding is required.

The diary data present my subjective view of the encounters but were recorded with as much care and self-conscious awareness as possible. However, it is impossible to maintain a total objectivity since the notes are always a personal interpretation of a certain situation. Field notes are also selective. It is impossible to capture everything. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 142.) The encounters and conversations that I had with the boy took place in real life contexts, usually when the boy was working on the streets. The encounters and conversations were not recorded during them but after them which is normal in ethnographic research. When field notes are written, if they can be written at all, depends on the research, the setting and the role taken by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 141). English was the language of the conversations. The boy's real name is not used, but I call him Eric in this study.

### 5.3 Data Analysis

The starting point of a qualitative analysis, or an ethnographic analysis, is usually a clean table without areas of bias or definitions. Qualitative analysis is data based analysis: the data that have already been collected produce themes. However, the themes often grow in the researcher's mind throughout the research process. In ethnographic research, the analysis often begins before field work, in the formulation of research problems, and continues throughout the process of writing the report. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 19; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 158; Holliday 2007, 94.)

Ethnographic analysis is rarely systematic or comprehensive but selective and limited in scope. Ethnographic analysis aims to represent the social world from the participants' perspective by representing the researched phenomenon in depth and detail. The analysis involves interpretation of functions, meanings and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local contexts. It is not

enough to manage and manipulate the data. Data are materials to think with. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 3, 158; Wilkinson 2004, 183.)

In this study, the analysis process has reformed the research problems. The aim has been that the interviews and the field diary create their own priorities, views, meanings and understandings. Therefore, as already mentioned, cultural understanding is an essential part of the analysis in this study. This means recognizing the concepts of interpretation and meaning, and understanding that reality is built of them. Through interpretations, people and societies create patterns and policies. (Alasuutari 1993, 39, 42, 46.)

When it comes to analysis, cultural influences of the researcher are also important. Influence of the researcher is unavoidable, since, in the end, the research is a product of the researcher's own thinking (Holliday 2007, 94, 137). In this study, I have recognized my own attitudes and interpretations, many of them created by previous experiences in Africa. These experiences and the knowledge produced by them might have been an advantage in many stages of the research process but when it comes to the analysis, I have systematically tried to keep my own attitudes aside. I have sought genuine understanding and Ghanaian interpretations produced by the data. However, as already stated, total objectivity is impossible to achieve.

## 6 RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to find out how the street children situation is in Tamale and how it has developed in the new millennium, what kind of street children work is done in Tamale, and what kind of policies and practices have been implemented to improve the street children situation in Tamale in the new millennium. The results are presented according to themes that the data have produced.

### 6.1 Definition of Street Children Produced by the Data

Defining street children is problematic, and street children have always been defined in various different ways. Therefore, it was important for the subjects of this study to offer their own definitions. In this study, five out of six interviewees defined street children as children *of* the street and children *on* the street, according to the UNICEF definition. Children *of* the street are street based street children: they live on the streets. Children *on* the street are home based street children: they spend a lot of time and possibly work on the streets but return home at the end of the day. One of the interviewees stated that street children are solely street based: they are children who sleep on the streets instead of sleeping at home.

The division to children *of* the street and children *on* the street can be problematic and labeling but it seems well-grounded since children *of* the street face the hardness of the street life from a different angle than children *on* the street, even though both groups spend majority of their time on the streets, trying to make a living. However, two of the interviewees emphasized that street children are individuals and cannot automatically be labeled as, for example, bad children according to any categorization. Still, street children themselves can identify with the definition and even label other street children.

*I talked to Eric today. He is a 15-year-old street boy. He works on the streets as "a tourist guide". I was asking him if he sleeps on the streets. He told me that he stays with a friend's family and would never sleep on the streets. He said that once you sleep on the streets, you become "bad", involved in bad activities. (Field Diary, 13<sup>th</sup> of October, 2009.)*

Three of the interviewees also stated that street children are children who are forced to be on the streets because their survival depends on it. Love of adventure is not enough to make someone a street child. Street children are on the streets because their basic needs are not fulfilled at home.

## 6.2 Number of Street Children

The number of street children in Tamale, as well as elsewhere, is very difficult to quantify, and none of the interviewees was able to give exact numbers. Street children move from place to place: they work and spend time at different stations and market areas, and occasionally even children *of* the street can get temporary accommodation. Their situations are constantly changing which makes it difficult to research the street children phenomenon. However, five of the interviewees stated that numbers have increased because of poverty, natural population growth and continuing rapid urbanization. One of the interviewees believed that there were thousands of street children. One of the interviewees did not want to estimate whether the number is increasing or decreasing because there are no statistics.

The government of Ghana has acknowledged that rapid urbanization is a challenge: it is creating enormous environmental and social problems. It has been estimated that by 2010, 52 per cent of Ghanaians would live in urban areas (Apewokin 2009), and Tamale is reputed to be one of the fastest growing cities, not only in Ghana, but in West Africa. In the northern parts of Ghana, life is dominated by food crop farming which is seasonal because of hard weather conditions. Therefore, people often migrate to Tamale, the regional capital, with a hope of better employment opportunities and a better future.

## 6.3 Street Children Work in Tamale

In Ghana, as in every developing country, the public sector is not able to take full responsibility for offering social security for the citizens because it is lacking resources. Therefore, the non-governmental sector compliments the government's work in providing social services. In fact, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both local and foreign, and religious bodies usually have the primary responsibility for the service de-

livery, especially regarding specialized fields, such as street children work. This was recognized by all the interviewees in this study. The two interviewees who represented DSW also stated that they do not have a lot of knowledge about the street children work in Tamale.

When it comes to non-governmental sector, local NGOs or private foreign groups with affiliates on the ground are often better at executing projects than large, international organizations. They are usually closer to the people they serve, better at adapting local conditions, and they are not as bureaucratic as large agencies. Therefore, big international NGOs and large multilateral organizations are focused on raising awareness and funds which they subcontract to smaller groups to actually implement the projects or use to fund activities of smaller NGOs. Good examples of this are the UN agencies, such as UNICEF. They may have credibility as multilateral agencies but the ability to implement projects and provide policy advice is usually weak. (Moss 2007, 121–122, 128–130.)

*UNICEF has an important role of raising awareness about children's rights and welfare but it does not necessarily have anything to do with specialized areas of the work with children, such as street children work. I visited the UNICEF office of Tamale today. I was told that they can't really help me to get information about street children since UNICEF Tamale does not have a Child Protection Unit. The closest one is in Accra, about 450 km as the crow flies. (Field Diary, 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2009.)*

In Tamale, two local NGOs are specialized in street children work. NGOs too, however, are struggling with funding which makes the work load even heavier. As stated, funding of the local NGOs usually comes from international NGOs or multilateral agencies, and is granted for a few years at a time. Therefore, maintaining funding is an ongoing task and a huge challenge. Funding gaps make it difficult for the NGOs to maintain sustainability which is unfortunate for both beneficiaries and employees.

In this study, the interviewees that represented local NGOs, emphasized funding challenges and government's slight role, both on a nationwide and a local level. Some of the interviewees even criticized the government and called for fulfillment of plans, such as the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, to tackle poverty and its different side issues.

Social networks and the role of the family is also an important part of African life. Therefore, participation of extended families and communities is not to be forgotten when discussing street children work in Africa.

### 6.3.1 NGOs Working with Street Children

During the internship and the data collection, I found out about two local NGOs that are specialized in street children work in Tamale: Youth Alive and Youth Idleness Control Centre. In this study, all the interviewees representing NGOs were representatives of Youth Alive and Youth Idleness Control Centre.

Youth Alive is the biggest organization working with street children in the three poorest regions of Ghana: Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions. Youth Alive started its work as an Action Aid initiative in 1995, and was called the Tamale Street Children's Project. The project aimed, however, to become an independent local organization, and finally, in 2002, the project registered as an autonomous NGO, under the name Youth Alive.

Youth Alive supports the education of street children and provides apprenticeship to learn trades, such as dress making, carpentry, welding etc. After learning a trade, Youth Alive helps the beneficiaries with establishing their own enterprises. At the time of fourth quarter report 2009, Youth Alive had 14 beneficiaries in the vocational training sector and 156 beneficiaries in the educational sector. Youth Alive also has a centre where the children can spend spare time, study and interact with each other and the employees of Youth Alive. In addition to these, Youth Alive provides credits to parents of street children to raise their income levels and take more responsibility as the primary breadwinners.

Youth Idleness Control Centre (YICC) is also a local NGO established in 2003. YICC provides, for example, guidance and counseling, entrepreneurial workshops, skills training and curriculum design. YICC also does outreach work on the streets. The aim of the organization is to empower the street youth with tools to take self-initiatives for improvement.



Funding being an ongoing challenge, representatives of both NGOs stated that in addition to service delivery, advocacy and reintegrating the street children with their families and communities are an important part of the work.

### 6.3.2 Extended Families and Communities

In a country, where the government's social security system is weak, the role of extended families and communities is stressed, especially when talking about street children. Street children are exposed to various threats on the streets but there are no accommodation services for street children in Tamale. Therefore, reintegrating children into their communities and working to empower not only the children but also their families is a significant part of street children work in Ghana. Traditional family, marriage and gender relations are instrumental in determining the social organization of the society, though traditional Ghanaian family structures are undergoing a rapid transformation due to education, migration, urbanization, economic changes and global influences in general (Salm & Falola 2002, 125, 142).

Ghanaian families are large. They can consist of extended families spanning three or four generations sharing a single residential compound. Men still largely control traditional Ghanaian society. Men retain power in community life and in traditional households, and the most common lineage system is patriarchal descent. Therefore, in most tribes, a child belongs to the extended family of the father. This is also the case among Dagbon, the most predominant tribe in Tamale. Men are expected to provide for the well-being of their wives and children which, in some cases, can mean several wives and multiple children since polygamy still exists in Ghana. It is also common for Ghanaians to take care of the financial needs of their elders and other relatives if required. (Mahama 2004, 136; Salm & Falola 2002, 126, 133, 140.)

Among Dagbon, as well as other tribes in Ghana, it is also common that children are not always raised by the parents but by other members of the extended family. It is usual among Dagbon that a child is given to a relative, for example a paternal aunt, uncle or grandparents, to bring the child up. The purpose of this replacement is to train the child: every child needs to learn social norms and necessary skills. If a child is given to a relative, the parents are no longer responsible for the upbringing of the child. The new

guardian is solely responsible for the child, though every adult in the household is participating in raising the children living in the household. (Mahama 2004, 146–147.)

It is obvious that these types of traditions may increase children's homelessness. It is a huge challenge to provide for large families, and sometimes it simply is impossible. In West and Central Africa it is also recognized that sometimes placing children in other households is simply a survival strategy, and the practice may be used to exploit children's labour (UNICEF 2006, 50). Welfare of children is not always a priority, and a child may end up in a situation where nobody is taking care of his / her needs. This makes it relatively easy for the child to end up on the streets, trying to survive. Often street children, especially children *on* the street, also support their families with the earnings they make on the streets.

Where the extended family culture can be a cause of children's homelessness, it can also be a solution. When organizations working with street children are trying to reintegrate the children with their families, the solution might be found anywhere among the extended family or the community. Traditional chieftaincy also plays a big role in the processes to do with communities.

The constitution of Ghana protects the institution of chieftaincy and the use of customary law. Each community has a traditional chief, and even though the chiefs no longer have executive or legislative power, they provide advice on all matters relating to customary law. The chiefs are opinion leaders, and they are highly respected. (Salm & Falola 2002, 18.) In fact, many observers are defending the continuing vitality of chieftaincy in Ghana. Throughout the history, the chiefs have continued to carry out their duties, and even now, an effective chief can substantially promote the development of the community, for example, by winning official backing for local development projects. (Nugent 2004, 123–124.) Therefore, working with chiefs can be seen a part of street children work. Since the chiefs know the communities and are usually trusted by the members of them, they might have solutions nobody else could find.

## 6.4 Improvements in the Street Children Situation

During the last decade, there have been several practices and policies that have improved the street children situation and general well-being of children in Ghana. The policies are not watertight, however, and a lot remains to be done. Practices and policies have the challenge of keeping up with the rapid urbanization and population growth.

### 6.4.1 Education

The government of Ghana has implemented various policies and interventions to achieve universal primary education which is the target of the MDG number two. One of the interventions is a Free Compulsory Basic Education Programme (FCUBE) launched in 1996. The main goal of the FCUBE Programme was to provide an opportunity for every school-aged child in Ghana to receive free quality basic education by the year 2005. As it was not effective enough, in 2003, the programme was complemented with the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) covering 2003-2015. Concrete policy strategies, such as abolishing school fees, were adopted, and the Capitation Grant system was officially implemented in 2005. Instead of pupils paying school fees, the government is solely responsible for funding basic education through different instruments, including the already mentioned Capitation Grants, District Assemblies Common Fund and The Ghana Education Trust Fund. Resources for funding basic education come mainly from the traditional sources, such as taxes and special levies. Local governments – District Assemblies – are meant to share the costs of educational infrastructure. (Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson & Schrofer 2007, 2–4; Ghana's Government c; United Nations Economic and Social Council 2007.)

There have been substantial improvements since the launched interventions. The primary gross school enrolment rate rose from 86,5 in 2003/2004 to 92,1 in 2005/2006, and according to the most recent statistics, the rate is 97,5. However, in practice, the situation is not entirely satisfactory. The net enrolment rate remains fairly low, being 72. (Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson & Schrofer 2007, 6; UNICEF 2009, 135). Education remains expensive for the poorest families, and non-governmental sector has to complement the government's work. In this study, all the interviewees highlighted this.

One the interviewees emphasized that the Capitation Grants covering school fees did not automatically mean that education is cheaper for the families. Some of the levies can be so high that the costs can, in fact, be bigger than the school fees used to be. There are also a lot of costs that are not covered by the Capitation Grants or levies: school uniforms, shoes, examination fees, some school equipment and books etc. In Tamale, Youth Alive is supporting street children with these costs.

Besides the formal education, informal education has been provided. Youth Alive provided informal, preparatory classes for street children who have not been to formal school or have had gaps in education. However, due to lack of funding, Youth Alive stopped providing these classes in 2007.

As already mentioned, Youth Alive and Youth Idleness Control Centre also provide skills training and vocational training for street children who are too old to start their basic education or who, for other reasons, choose vocational training. There are also several other organizations providing education and vocational training for poor children in Tamale. The organizations are not specialized in street children work but street children can be among the beneficiaries. For example, Girls Growth and Development (GIGDEV) has provided vocational training, such as community catering, hair dressing, sewing and making batik, for vulnerable girls since 1998, and The Regional Advisory Information and Network Systems (RAINS), registered in 1996, is providing services in a wide range of areas, such as empowering the youth through education and training.

NGOs have a heavy workload, though, and the government should continue improving the education system. Basic education cannot be called universal since it is still too expensive for so many children who want to be educated. During the field work in Tamale, I got an impression that the street children respect education, and it is seen not only as a personal investment but an investment for the whole family's future. However, if a child lives or spends time on the streets for a long period, the threshold to receive education may become high.

On the other hand, attendance and the quality of education also remain a challenge, even more so when the enrolment rates get higher. Besides getting children to school, it is also a challenge to keep them there and get them to pass. When it comes to quality,

there still is a demand for additional staff, equipment, infrastructure and a universal school feeding programme.

#### 6.4.2 Health Care

Lack of health remains one of the biggest factors threatening the well-being of street children in Ghana, though, a lot has been done to improve the health care system. In 2005, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was launched in Ghana. It was part of a policy to improve access to health care for the poor and to promote financial sustainability of the health care system. One of the biggest aims of the NHIS was to eliminate the system of user-fees which was limiting access to health care services for the poor. Ghana has implemented the Insurance Act through revenue collection and membership registration. There have been several challenges, though, and in 2007, a Health Insurance Project 2007-2012 was launched in cooperation with the World Bank to improve the NHIS. (The World Bank b.)

The key challenges in implementing the NHIS have been poor coordination and communication among stakeholders, maintaining financial sustainability, poor management of public expectations and difficulties providing effective coverage for the poor. The system soon became overloaded because of inadequate preparation and limited information on how the system works. This has led to a negative public opinion about the NHIS. There have also been delays in issuing the health identity cards to those who have been registered and problems with inadequate equipment and insufficient human capacity. (The World Bank b.)

The data of this study showed different views about the efficiency of the health care system and whether the health care services are accessible to street children or not. Despite of improved access to health care, street children tend not to seek health care services unless it is really necessary. It is difficult to say whether this is because of the challenges of the NHIS or because self-medication is very common in Ghana. Even antibiotics are available without a prescription. The NHIS presented a possibility, though, for NGOs struggling with funding to step aside from providing health care services. For example, Youth Alive stopped running a clinic soon after the NHIS was launched. Therefore, improving the NHIS is essential in guaranteeing health care ser-

vices for street children. NGOs' role is advisory: they offer counselling and direct children to health care services.

Regardless the diversity of opinions about the influences of the NHIS, it is agreed that lack of health remains one of the biggest factors threatening the well-being of street children. More about the health situation is discussed in chapter 6.5.1.

#### 6.4.3 Advocacy and Empowerment

*I have a philosophy which says that - - - if you give someone fish to eat, he eats for one day. But if you teach him how to fish, he eats forever. (Interviewee 2.)*

Three of the interviewees stated that advocacy and education are an essential and increasing part of street children work, and one of them emphasized that, in fact, advocacy should play a bigger role than service delivery. Through advocacy, people are educated about children's rights, street children and street life. The aim is to make adults pay more attention to children's welfare, and to make people understand that street children should not be considered as a homogeneous group of criminals who are a threat to the mainstream society. Street children are children, just like other children.

Development of technology and media has opened new forums for advocacy. For example, Youth Alive has had radio programmes about street children. Community forums are also held to educate families and communities.

Part of advocacy is also to empower street children themselves. Street children should know their own rights and get knowledge about various areas of life. Therefore, Youth Alive and Youth Idleness Control Centre provide counselling to street children.

#### 6.5 Life and Welfare on the Streets

*I met Eric today. I hadn't seen him for a couple of weeks, and I got a bit worried. The rumour had it that he had been beaten up. However, he told me he'd had malaria and typhoid, and he had been hospitalized for several days. He seemed tired so we sat down. I bought him a coke and we had a chat. I asked about the rumours, and he said that some of the other*

*boys don't like him, because he's reported on some of their thefts to the police. (Field Diary, 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009.)*

Despite the various policies and practices implemented during the last decade to improve the street children situation in Tamale, the life on the streets remains harsh, and various factors are threatening the children's welfare. At the same time, the same factors, such as social relations, can be those protecting the children in their everyday lives on the streets.

#### 6.5.1 Living Conditions and Health

Lack of health remains one of the biggest threats to street children, mainly because of the weather conditions and the lack of hygiene. Four of the interviewees emphasized the hard weather conditions, just as four of the interviewees emphasized the lack of hygiene.

The climate is tropical in Ghana, and the seasons can be divided into three in the northern parts of the country: a hot season, a rainy season and a season called harmattan. Harmattan is a cold, dry wind blowing yearly from Sahara to the Gulf of Guinea. Harmattan makes the days hot and dusty, whereas the nights can be very cold. During the rainy season, on the other hand, the rainfall is heavy and relatively continuous for quite a while, since the northern Ghana only has one rainy season in a year. During the hot season, the temperature can reach almost 40°C. Therefore, for street children, the weather conditions are difficult throughout the year.

One of the biggest health problems for street children is malaria. Malaria is a widespread, life-threatening disease in tropical regions where it occurs throughout the year, especially during the rainy season. Malaria is transmitted by bites of infected mosquitoes, and mosquitoes reproduce in water. In 2008, there were an estimated 243 million cases of malaria in the world, and the vast majority of the cases – 85 per cent – were in Africa. The number of malaria deaths in 2008 was estimated to be 863000, of which 89 per cent were in Africa. (WHO 2009, 27.)

However, malaria is preventable and curable. It can be prevented by wearing proper clothing and by sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net. The use of bed nets

has increased drastically in Ghana in the new millennium (UN 2009, 36) but is a difficult matter when it comes to the street children, especially children *of* the street. They do not have permanent places to sleep at but they sleep in various different places, and naturally do not carry mosquito nets with them. Therefore, children *of* the street are constantly exposed to mosquitoes and malaria. Malaria can be diagnosed by a test but, as already stated, self-medication is common in Ghana. However, the staff of pharmacies and drugstores in Ghana is not always qualified, and there are deficiencies in self-medication.

The street children can also catch colds and secondary diseases, such as pneumonia, which was mentioned by two of the interviewees. The children do not have proper shelters or clothing to protect themselves against the weather, especially the heavy rains and the cold nights of harmattan.

Beside the weather, the lack of hygiene and sanitation facilities, which was mentioned by four of the interviewees, causes many diseases. One of the interviewees, however, also emphasized that street children are usually not undernourished such as some of the poor children staying at home. The street children chose not to stay at home and submit to poverty but left to make a living on the streets. The problem is the quality of the food they eat and the conditions in which the food is prepared. In addition to that, having a bath or even washing hands is difficult. Therefore, taking care of hygiene is very challenging for street children which can lead to diseases such as typhoid in Eric's case. More minor and common but still awkward diseases are worms and skin diseases.

Only one of the interviewees mentioned that because of the harshness of street life, some of the children also have mental problems, such as depression.

#### 6.5.2 Social Relations

Children *on* the street obviously have some kind of relationships with their families but, in general, street children are lacking adults' supervision and guidance. Especially children *of* the street do not necessarily have any relationships with their families or the relationships are very loose. Therefore, street children form different kinds of relations on the streets.



Three of the interviewees emphasized that street children, especially children *of* the street, are organized: they form groups, and the groups even have leaders. They have their own rules and norms, and for an outsider it can be difficult to approach the street children without getting in touch with the leaders first. Sometimes the children also enter into alliances with homeless adults or other adults who benefit their lives in any ways. The street children form their own communities – alternative societies – to protect themselves and each other, and, in fact, they do take good care of each other. This can be the case because main stream society has always had a negative attitude towards street children, and street children have learned not to trust outsiders. Attitudes have started to change only in recent years.

On the other hand, peer relations and activities on the streets also cause lack of security. According to four of the interviewees, using intoxicants, such as alcohol and cannabis, and getting involved in petty thefts are common among street children. The interviewees emphasized, however, that all the street children are not criminals, and the context of the thefts should be taken into consideration. According to one of the interviewees and Eric's case told in the beginning of chapter 6.5, some of the street children also want to emphasize that they are not criminals and even want to help solving thefts which can lead to conflicts among the street children.

One of the problems the street children face is a different kind of abuse. One of the interviewees stated that the street children do not get to define how much they charge for the small jobs or services they do, and people tend not to give appropriate imbursements.

*Eric came to the office today. We discussed different issues, such as his work on the streets, saving money and a possibility of going back to school in the future. Eric said that making money on the streets is not easy, since people do not always pay when he helps them. He talked about a case where he had helped a white woman with a police matter. (Field Diary, 23dr of November, 2009.)*

Giving money to street children is a problematic issue. Some people do not give any money because it can be considered supporting the street children phenomenon: the children do not want to look for alternative ways to live if they make a lot of money on

the streets. On the other hand, many people are willing to receive the services of the street children to ease their own lives but are not willing to pay for them.

Another form of abuse the interviewees mentioned is sexual abuse. Especially the girls are often targets of sexual abuse and can easily end up working as prostitutes. Often the street children are also in their teens, and sexual relations become relevant, even though the appropriate guidance is not available. Therefore, the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections and HIV is high among the street children, and transmitting the homelessness to the next generation is a possibility.

## 6.6 Final Conclusions

A lot has been done to improve the welfare of children and children's rights in Ghana in the new millennium but the population growth and urbanization remain rapid and somewhat uncontrolled. Therefore, the street children situation continues to get worse. There are no statistics about the number of street children in Tamale, and it should be surveyed, although a lot of resources – both financial and human – would be required to carry it through.

The local NGOs working with street children are motivated and working hard, but they simply do not have the resources to eradicate the phenomenon of child homelessness. Therefore, the government should focus more on the work among specific marginalized groups, such as street children and prevention of homelessness. For example, focusing to improve agriculture to create year-round opportunities for livelihood is essential in the Northern parts of Ghana.

When it comes to the street children situation of Tamale, many of the children are still lacking all the basic elements of welfare, except drinking water and nourishment. Safe drinking water is relatively inexpensive and available - even to street children – in Tamale. Usually the street children also have food to eat because they have chosen to go and look for nourishment on their own, and they have evolved various ways to do that. According to Maslow (1987, 16-17), need for food is the most important need of all: for a human being who is extremely hungry, no other interest exists but food, and the per-

son aims at relief of hunger. This is not to say that the street children always have enough to eat or drink, or that the quality of nutrition is always good.

Excluding nourishment, street children of Tamale, especially children *of* the streets, are lacking all the basic elements of well-being. Allardt (1980, 50) emphasizes health, living conditions and education, which belong to the 'having' category, as the most fundamental welfare values. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most fundamental needs are physiological needs, such as already mentioned food, water and clothing. After that come safety needs, such as security, stability and protection. (Maslow 1987, 15-18.) According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children have the right to survival, health, shelter and education, and children should be protected against any kind of violence, abuse and exploitation (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights).

Street children of Tamale lack safe places to sleep, because there are no accommodation services, and they are lacking sanitary facilities. Therefore, they are exposed to diseases, abuse, violence and harmful activities. In general, they are lacking safety. In most cases, they are also lacking education, and the policies and practices that have been implemented to educate all the school-aged children in Ghana, have not been adequate.

One of the factors providing some kind of safety for the street children is relations the children form on the streets. Human beings have a need for belonging, solidarity and companionship: this is one of the elements welfare consists of. Unity is a resource that helps an individual to search for other welfare values. (Allardt 1980, 43; Maslow 1987, 20.) Street children form groups and protect each other. On the other hand, those same relations can also be harmful to street children and cause continuous stress and lack of safety.

According to Allardt (1980, 45), comparing welfare values is necessary. What kind of unity prevents other welfare values from existing, and, conversely, what kinds of relations are necessary from the aspect of overall welfare? Street children are facing these questions on a daily basis, even though it seems an overwhelming task. These children are not only left alone to face these challenges but are also judged because of the

choices they sometimes make. It is a continuous calculation for the children: what pays off? How do I get food to eat? What keeps me safe?

Children, in general, are developing their identities, and they need love, care and guidance from responsible adults. Children should not have to take responsibility for fluency of everyday life or fulfilment of basic needs. Street children, however, are children living in an adult world, and it should be emphasized that street life can have tremendous psychosocial influences on the children. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children should live in a loving, understanding family environment, and children should have the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Children also have the right to be encouraged and developed to the fullest. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.)

Therefore, focusing on advocacy has been a step in the right direction: people need to be educated about children's rights and development. However, institutional care services should also be provided for the children who do not have the option of returning to their families or communities.

It would also benefit the street children work in Tamale to focus more on outreach work. Getting to know the culture the street children have created and getting information from the street children themselves is essential in empowering street children, especially children *of* the street, and developing the services offered to them. This has been difficult because, as already stated, resources are limited. The focuses of the work are often marked off, and sectors working with street children have to focus on very limited areas of work. Some outreach work is done, and two of the interviewees also stated that they have done outreach work of some kind with their own resources in their spare time but they have stopped because of various reasons. However, the street children gain knowledge and develop many skills on the streets, and that could be capitalized upon through outreach work and different kinds of activities, such as music, arts and alternative education methods.

Freire (2008) emphasizes empowerment as an awakening of critical awareness and critical education. According to him, integration with one's context is more than adapting to it – it is also the ability to make critical choices and participate. Responsibility

can be acquired only through experience, and submitting to the decisions of others is not expedient. (Freire 2008, 4-5, 12, 30.) This is important especially when talking about children *of* the street because the threshold to go back to school and receive formal education may become high while living on the streets. Using alternative education and work methods has proven to be valuable in many parts of the world.

There have been good experiences in using different methods, such as music, to empower street children all over the world. For example, in Venezuela, El Sistema has used classical music to empower hundreds of thousands of poor and vulnerable children (CBS 2008), and on a smaller scale, Manzini Youth Care in Swaziland has formed a group of street boys who play marimbas. I had a chance to observe the group while I was doing an internship in Swaziland in 2008. The extent of the activity is irrelevant but regular training, commitment, motivation and goal-orientation are important.

Cooperation of different sectors would also benefit the street children work in Tamale. However, cooperation is one of the areas that is threatened because of funding challenges. For example, NGOs are constantly looking for funding or trying to maintain the existing funding which has led to a kind of a competitive position between NGOs.

In general, lack of funding and the challenge of maintaining funding are the biggest problems for street children work in Tamale. NGOs are forced to focus on limited areas of work and they have to concentrate an enormous amount of energy on matters that are irrelevant from the point of view of the children and their welfare.

## 7 STUDY ETHICS

There are ethical issues surrounding every human activity, including social research. The aim of research is to produce knowledge but it cannot happen at any cost. Human dignity is to be valued throughout the research process. When it comes to the research process, some of the main ethical challenges are to do with the behaviour of the researcher, collection of the data and use of the data. (Eskola 1998, 52-53, 56; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 209.)

Before the research process can start, the researcher needs to think about getting consent to carry out the research. It can be argued whether such consent is always needed, especially when talking about ethnographic research. In ethnography, where covert participant observation can be used as a data collection tool, an ethnographer may carry the research out without the participants knowing that research is taking place. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 210.)

In this study, I told the interviewees and the representatives of different institutions where I visited that I was a Finnish student and that the information was being collected for my thesis. As already stated, descriptions of conversations I had with the 15-year-old street boy are also an important part of the data in this study. The boy did not know that he was a subject of research, because the conversations started as occasional encounters, and they only became significant to me after the data were collected. The conversations were not interview situations but informal discussions. The boy knew that I was interested in the street children phenomenon and was doing an internship for an organization that is working with street children.

Another frequent concern about ethnographic research is maintaining privacy. The concept of privacy is complex, and the division of private and public is rarely clear-cut. However, the researcher needs to consider the possibility of harm caused by the publication of the findings. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 212-213.) In this study, a lot of information the interviewees gave about themselves was left out in order to ensure anonymity. When it comes to the case of the street boy, maintaining anonymity proved to be difficult. His real name is not used in this study, and the encounters were recorded

with care. However, I introduced the boy to people who work with street children because the boy wished so, and his life was discussed with them. Therefore, the boy may be recognized. The boy was not a beneficiary of any NGO, though, and he thus did not have relations that could be jeopardized. The boy's situation was not exploited but help was offered for him to go back to school.

The multiplicity of cultural influences also needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about the relationship between the researcher and the culture(s) in which the research is being conducted, during the data collection. The researcher comes into the research situation with personal opinions and understandings. (Holliday 2007, 140.) However, the researcher needs to be sensitive, and condemnation is to be avoided. It is important to understand that cultures cannot be prioritized: no culture is better than another.

## 8 RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research is not about verifying arguments but discovering, revealing and understanding factors about the subject. In ethnography, the researcher is usually doing it through field work: the researcher is participating in people's daily lives. Therefore, the influence of the researcher is unavoidable, and the research is always a product of the researcher's own thinking. At the same time, excessive subjectivity is to be avoided. Thus measuring reliability is difficult, and there is no single method of doing it. (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 3; Hirsjärvi etc. 2001, 152, 213-214; Holliday 2007, 93-94, 137.)

In qualitative research, reliability may be improved if the research process is described carefully. Conditions of the data production should be revealed clearly and truthfully. (Hirsjärvi etc. 2001, 214.) In this study, I have aimed to give a truthful description of the research process.

I have also spent a lot of time thinking about the difficult relation between objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative research, and I have recognized my own attitudes and interpretations, many of them created by previous experiences in Africa. I have worked in an HIV/AIDS project in Zambia (2006) and done an internship in Swaziland (2008). Excessive subjectivity was avoided, especially during the data analysis, but on the other hand, my previous experiences and knowledge produced by them might have been an advantage in many stages of the research process, especially during the data collection. Previous experiences have given cultural understanding and tools for multicultural interaction, and it was relatively easy to adjust to the research setting. However, cultural understanding would obviously be even better if I had spent more time in Ghana and knew the country better. In any case, pursuing cultural understanding is significantly important. Nothing in the world exists *per se* but through interpretations and understanding (Alasuutari 1993, 42-43).

It should also be taken into consideration that although the researcher always comes into the research situation with personal understandings, the people in the research setting are as culturally skilled as the researcher. They also have the potential to be involved in



negotiating the research process. (Holliday 2007, 140.) In this study, the question of negotiating was highlighted when I started having conversations with the 15-year-old street boy. The boy was earning his living by working as a “tourist guide”, offering his services mainly to white people. I did not want to have a situation where the boy would offer information for money or the boy would give information he thought I wanted to hear. Even though I did not yet know that the boy’s role in the research would be significant, I did not want to get conditional information and was careful with my own role as a white woman. Different kinds of roles were taken, though, because of the first encounter: the boy met me when I arrived in town with my boyfriend and his brother, both of who were Ghanaians. The relationship between the boy and I took on a personal tone because the boy became very fond of my boyfriend and became interested in my personal life. These types of events may increase the credibility of the researcher (Holliday 2007, 153-154). In this case, I was not seen only as a white woman but as a spouse of a Ghanaian. The boy was not trying to offer his services to me but sometimes I bought him a drink etc.

It is also essential that both the researcher and the informants understand each other. In this study, I found it difficult in some cases to make the interviewees understand what the research was about. Therefore, time was spent explaining the purpose of the study, and communication assistance was received from the staff of Youth Alive where I was doing an internship. However, the achievement of a clear separation between the roles of a researcher and an intern was attempted. In the interview situations, I was not a representative of Youth Alive. Humour was used to break the ice between me and the interviewees.

However, there is always a possibility that the informants do not understand the researcher or the other way round, especially when the research is carried out in a culture that is different from the researcher’s own culture. Therefore, it is important that the themes according to which the data are analysed are formed by the data itself. The researcher cannot stick to her own ways of thinking. (Hirsjärvi etc. 2001, 213-214.) During the data analysis of this study, I tried to keep my own attitudes aside. The aim was that the data would produce interpretations. I also aimed at holistic understanding which was achieved by using different methods of data collection. The reliability of research

may be improved when data collection is carried out using various methods (Hirsjärvi etc. 2001, 215).

Sometimes the circumstances of the data collection were challenging. The people were late for appointments, technology rarely worked properly and interviews were interrupted by outsiders or calls for prayer (an Islamic practice). However, local customs were accepted and respected. I acknowledged, though, that the data could be more versatile and reliable if I had been able to spend more time in Ghana.

## 9 DISCUSSION

Carrying out this research process has been personally rewarding. Time spent in Ghana was full of learning experiences and joy. However, the research process could have been even more productive if the period spent in Ghana had been longer.

Naturally, challenges were also faced during the research process. Working and carrying out research in a culture that is different from the researcher's own culture can be tiring and frustrating at times. One must adjust to the local ways of operating. However, I received a lot of assistance from my supervisor at Youth Alive, and many interesting and analytical conversations were had throughout the internship and the research process. That gave me a great deal of resources.

One of my personal aims is future employment in Africa. African cultures and developmental issues are interesting, and my interests have been in international and multicultural work throughout my studies at DIAK and even before that. Therefore, carrying out this study was an interesting journey of finding out how child protection is implemented in Ghana, and it raised a lot of questions about the West's participation in African social work and development in general. From my point of view, better multicultural communication is needed and all the features of neo-colonialism should be eliminated for the work to be sustainable and well suited to its purpose.

It remains to be seen how this study will benefit other people or groups, such as people working with street children in Tamale. This study offers a good overall view to everybody who is interested in finding out how the street children phenomenon appears or how child protection is implemented in Ghana.

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## APPENDIX

### THE STREET CHILDREN SITUATION IN TAMALE

#### Main Interview Questions

-Background of the Interviewee: age, nationality, profession, work experience with street children

#### Definition of Street Children

-How do you define *street children*? What is the background of your definition?

#### The Number of Street Children

-From your point of view, how has the number of street children changed in Tamale in the last ten years? What is your opinion based on?

#### Welfare of Street Children

From your point of view

-How are the living conditions and safety on the streets? How has the situation changed during the last 10 years? What is your opinion based on?

-How are the accommodation services and institutional care services of street children? How has the situation changed in the last 10 years? New institutions, NGOs or projects? Closed / finished institutions, NGOs or projects?

-How are the education services of street children? How has the situation changed during the last 10 years? New institutions, NGOs or projects? Closed / finished institutions, NGOs or projects?

-How is the health situation and quality of nutrition among the street children? How has the situation changed during the last 10 years? New institutions, NGOs or projects? Closed / finished institutions, NGOs or projects?

-What kind of relationships children form on the streets? Are street children in contact with their families / relatives / other important adults? How has the situation changed during the last 10 years?

-From your point of view, what work practices or other factors have had an effect on the changes?