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Supporting Street and Vulnerable Children's Schooling

A Case Study of Street Children Empowerment Foundation

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In this thesis, I examined how a social work organization called Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) supports street and vulnerable children's schooling in James Town. James Town is a neighbourhood community located in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

This case study had a qualitative approach. The purpose of this thesis was to provide SCEF with information that could be used to evaluate and develop its current practices. The primary data were collected by using semi-structured interviews with 12 SCEF beneficiaries. The focus was on the beneficiaries' experiences of their challenges in schooling and the support they have received for schooling from SCEF.

The theoretical framework in this thesis was based on the socio-pedagogical concept of social inclusion. The resource systems -model by Pincus and Minahan (1973) was also used. The results in this thesis depicted how various factors, such as an unstable home environment, inadequate financial resources and stigmatization caused difficulties in schooling. The interview answers presented how SCEF works in cooperation with families and schools to ensure that children attend school appropriately. The general feedback on SCEF's services was rather positive, but some important areas of concern emerged.

SCEF aims to achieve sustainable changes in the lives of street and vulnerable children in James Town. Although the interview answers placed great emphasis on financial and material support, the complexities encountered with schooling would suggest that a more holistic approach to supporting schooling is vital. In order to do this and to achieve sustainable change, a balanced combination of financial help and social and emotional support is needed.

Keywords	street and vulnerable children, beneficiary, schooling, social inclusion, resource system

Tekijä Otsikko Sivumäärä Päivämäärä	Tanja Saariaho Katulasten ja muiden heikossa asemassa olevien lasten koulunkäynnin tukeminen. Tapaustutkimus Street Children Empowerment Foundation -järjestöstä. 45 sivua + 3 liitettä 3. marraskuuta 2014
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Opinnäytetyön aiheena oli katulasten ja muiden heikossa asemassa olevien lasten koulunkäynnin tukeminen Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) -järjestössä. SCEF tukee haavoittuvassa asemassa olevia lapsia James Town:ssa, joka on köyhä kaupunginosa Ghanan pääkaupungissa Accrassa.

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tuottaa tietoa, jonka avulla SCEF voisi arvioida omaa toimintaansa ja tunnistaa mahdollisia työn kehittämistarpeita. Kvalitatiivisin menetelmin toteutettu tiedonkeruu pohjautui pääasiassa SCEF:n tukemien lasten ja nuorten teemahaastatteluihin. Haastattelut jäsensivät lasten kokemuksia koulunkäynnin ongelmista ja siitä, kuinka SCEF on vastannut koulunkäynnissä kohdattuihin vaikeuksiin. Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä käytettiin sosiaalipedagogista sosiaalisen osallisuuden käsitettä sekä Pincusin ja Minahanin (1973) voimavarajärjestelmä-mallia.

Haastatteluihin osallistui 12 lasta ja nuorta. Heidän kokemustensa perusteella koulunkäyntiä vaikeuttavat etenkin perheessä koetut taloudelliset vaikeudet, mutta myös hajanainen perherakenne, hyvinvoinnin kannalta riittämättömät elinolosuhteet sekä stigmatisoituminen ja koulukiusaaminen nähtiin haasteina. SCEF:n koettiin vastaavan koulunkäynnin ongelmiin kiitettävästi tekemällä yhteistyötä perheiden ja koulujen kanssa. Esiin nousi myös tärkeitä aiheita, joihin SCEF voisi kiinnittää vielä nykyistä enemmän huomiota.

Ghanalainen koulutusjärjestelmä sisältää erinäisiä koulunkäyntiin liittyviä kuluja, jotka ovat monelle perheelle taloudellinen taakka. Haastatteluvastauksista ilmenikin, että taloudellisilla resursseilla on vahva rooli koulunkäynnin tukemisessa. Kestävän muutoksen aikaansaamiseksi lasten koulunkäynnissä on kuitenkin tärkeää ottaa huomioon myös koulunkäyntiongelmiin liittyvä moniulotteisuus. Taloudellisen ja materiaalisen avun lisäksi on painotettava myös sosiaalista ja emotionaalista tukea.

Avainsanat	katulapsi, haavoittuvassa asemassa oleva lapsi, koulunkäynti, sosiaalinen osallisuus, voimavarajärjestelmä

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List of Acronyms

SCEF   Street Children Empowerment Foundation

NGO   non-governmental organization

UN   The United Nations

UNCRC   the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

MDG   Millennium Development Goal

OHCHR   Office of the United Nations High Committee on Human Rights

NPAOVC   Ghana National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

DSW   the Department of Social Welfare of the Government of Ghana

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"Every purposeful story has a successful ending, and every successful person has a purposeful story to tell. So that is my thing, that anytime I go to study I always remember that motivational statement."

- *A boy, 18 years, James Town. Interviewed on 21st May, 2014.*

1   Introduction

Many children in today's world struggle to attend school. Among these children, the most vulnerable are those who are connected to the streets. For these children, the street can play a vital role as a full-time abode or a space for economic opportunities and creating social relationships (Report of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, pp. 4-5). Despite the challenges encountered by these children, not enough political action is taken to ensure their rightful protection and education.

Street children and children at the risk of becoming street-connected form the target group of this study. Supporting their schooling is of paramount importance as the negative implications of exclusion from education (UNESCO 2010, p. 8) severely violate children's rights. It is an unfortunate fact that commitments to ensure educational access for all children by 2015, a target set by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, has seemed to miss many street children (Benitez 2011, p. 40).

The purpose of this study was to provide a Ghanaian organization called Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) with information that could be used to evaluate and develop its current practices. The need for this study came from SCEF who was also the partner organization of this thesis. I became familiar with SCEF when I conducted my internship in SCEF during March – May 2014. There were two research questions to guide the process: What kind of hindrances to schooling have the beneficiaries in SCEF encountered? How have the beneficiaries experienced the support they receive for schooling from SCEF? The main tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview with the children and adolescents supported by SCEF.

The theoretical perspective which guided data collection derived from the concept of social inclusion. Social inclusion is a key term in social pedagogy, the main theoretical framework in studies of social services. The theory of resource systems by Pincus and Minahan (1973) was also applied. It provides a practical comprehension of how individuals are dependent on their social surroundings.

It is important to become aware of global social issues, such as the world's street children. As today's world is increasingly inter-connected on economic, social, cultural and

political levels (Wilson 2012, p.16), it is nearly impossible to avoid the impact of globalization in our everyday lives. Thus, regarding global social issues is highly relevant to local social work.

2   Children's Rights

Everyone is entitled to be treated with universal human rights as set by international conventions. The rights of children are particularly important to address as children need special protection and care provided by adults. Despite wide recognition in global politics, there is much to be done before children's rights are fully and universally implemented. This is especially evident in the case of street children.

In 1990, the World Summit for Children held by the United Nations (UN) produced the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The Declaration stated:

> Each day, countless children around the world are exposed to dangers that hamper their growth and development. (…) millions of children suffer from the scourges of poverty and economic crisis - from hunger and homelessness, from epidemics and illiteracy, (…).

There has been a global effort to respond to the many problems faced by children around the world. It was in the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child that the world recognized for the first time children´s rights. The declaration covered various issues including food, health care, delinquency and exploitation. After this, a more comprehensive document emerged when the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child was adopted (1959). This declaration addressed, among other things, the importance of education. It covered education for the disabled and free and compulsory primary education for all children. (Ensalaco 2005, pp.10-11.)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. The convention covers a wide range of rights and recognizes children as rights holders. Having almost universal ratification, the UNCRC reflects the importance of safeguarding basic rights for all children (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p.3).

There are four main principles underpinning the UNCRC:

1) The prohibition of discrimination

2) The primacy of the best interests of the child

3) The right to survival and development

4) The obligation to respect the views of the child according to his/her age and stage of development

Some of the rights stipulated by the UNCRC are the right of the child to life (art. 6); to education (art. 28) and to an entitlement to special governmental protection if the child's family is unable to provide adequate care (art. 20). Regarding the child's healthy development and right to education, the convention also notices the negative impact of child labour (art. 32):

> (…) the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

On a global scale, the UNCRC was a crucial milestone in developing children's rights. It was the first legally binding instrument aiming to comprehensively address the issue of treating children with appropriate care and respect. However, the convention does not specifically mention street children. Recently, some global attempts to recognize the rights of street children has taken place. On 24th March 2011, the UN adopted a resolution addressing specifically the rights of street children (The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Human Rights Council Resolution 16/12). This is significant, as the previous UN resolution on street children's rights was from 1994. Another example is from 16th June 2011, when the African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child dedicated the Day of the African child to street children. (Benítez 2011, p. 2.)

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also place importance on children's well-being. The MDGs, adopted in 2000, define targets to be reached in global partnership by 2015. Fundamentally, the millennium agenda aims at reducing extreme poverty in the world. The MDGs are significant as they prove to be a remarkable attempt to reach sustainable and social development in international cooperation. One of the MDGs is the millennium development goal of reaching universal primary education.

3   Street Children

On a global level, street children have not received widespread attention or understanding as a phenomenon. Street children seem to be under-represented in the discourse of national policy making and international development cooperation. (Myllylä 2009, p. 110.) Safeguarding street children's rights is prominent, but the recognition for their agency as active subjects with an entitlement to human rights appears to stumble on public attitudes:

> A rights-based approach starts from the premise that all children are "rights holders." In reality, children in street situations are deprived of many of their rights – both before and during their time on the streets – and while on the street, they are more likely to be seen as victims or delinquents than as rights holders.
>
> (Report of the OHCHR High Commissioner 2012, p. 7.)

Street children form a diverse group with various connections to the street. They also represent one of the most vulnerable populations on the globe, placing their protection under great importance in global social work and international policy making. To understand the phenomenon better, there needs to be an apprehension of what the term "street child" refers to.

3.1   Definitions and Figures

The UN Commission on Human Rights in 1994 used the term "street children" to describe:

> [...] any girl or boy [...] for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults.

This definition had already been developed during the 1980s. Street children were then categorized into two main groups: children *on* the street and children *of* the street. Children on the street worked on the street but returned to their families at night. Children of the street, by contrast, lived on the street and had very few family connections or were entirely abandoned. (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p.4.) However, this definition has been recognized as posing a risk of simplifying policies for children who have diverse connections to the street (Benitez 2011, p. 10).

Nowadays, researchers question the common ways of categorizing and defining street children. This is due to an increasing awareness of the diversity of the street children phenomenon. (Benítez 2011, pp. 7-10; Owoaje, Adebiyi & Asuzu 2009, pp. 10-11.) Street children are understood as active agents who create new relationships on the streets whilst managing connections they already have with their families, communities and schools (The UN Human Rights Council Resolution, 2012, p. 5). To take the diversity of street children into consideration, Rio Criança (2007, p. 18) has used a definition which understands street children as "children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives" (cited in Benítez 2007, p. 2). This definition is more inclusive of children with various connections to the "street life".

Even the term "street child" is contested as it does not seem to capture the entire nature of the multi-dimensional situations and various experiences of children with connections to the street (Benítez 2007, p. 2). The word "street child" also appears to create negative connotations. In the developed countries, for example, "street children" are often re-placed with terms such as "runaways" or "homeless" (Abro 2012, p. 21). In its report on the protection and promotion of street children's rights, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2012, p. 6) has used words such as "street-connected children" and "children in street situations" to describe street children.

"Street children" should be understood as a socially constructed word, referring to children who form an immensely heterogeneous group (Benítez 2011, p. 8). Nevertheless, the term "street child" will be used in this thesis. This choice was determined as the partner organization of this thesis, Street Children Empowerment Foundation, uses this term in its daily practices. However, to acknowledge the individual situations of different street children, the definition of a street child in which "the street is a reference point and plays a central role in the child's life", as was cited in Benítez (2007, p. 2), will be applied.

It is challenging to present exact figures of the quantity of street children. One of the reasons is the different categories used. Street children are also very mobile, making it practically impossible to build reliable statistics of them. (Volpi, 2002, pp. 4-5.) Approximately from late 1980s onwards, international estimations have been circulating from tens of millions to circa 100 million street children in the world (Benítez 2011, p. 4).

3.2   Causes that Lead to the Street

Poverty, a broken family structure and abandonment have generally been perceived as the most common reasons for children to have street-connections. Nowadays, this viewpoint has been questioned. The majority of children living in economic poverty do not end up on the streets. Hence, poverty alone cannot explain street-connectedness in a child's life. It is also rare for a street child to be orphaned or entirely abandoned. (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p. 6.)

Reasons for children to become connected to the street typically stem from their families' experiences of hardships. The child's balanced schooling is severely damaged if, for example, the home environment is unstable and violent. An unsafe home environment can decrease the child's educational performance and social relationships. Problems experienced in families are often multifaceted and occur in a context of inadequate social protection services. (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p. 6.)

Factors leading to children's street-connectedness can also be identified as "push" or "pull" factors. Push factors, such as experiences of abuse at home, force or encourage children out on the streets. Pull factors, by contrast, might make the "street life" appear glamorous or attractive. This can include financial independence or street-based friendships or gangs. Nonetheless, pull factors represent a minority. Most children become involved with the street due to various push factors. (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p. 6.)

3.3   Experiences on the Street

Boakye-Boaten (2008) interviewed 11 children about their experiences on the streets of Accra, Ghana. It was discovered that the children had experienced several adversities on the streets, including threat of violence and sexual abuse and health-related risks. The same study depicted how boys tended to protect themselves from harm by forming groups, whereas girls engaged in sexual relationships with boys who could protect them. This has led to a so called second generation of street children: children who are born on the streets to parents who live on the streets or have to make a living of the streets. (Boakye-Boaten 2008, p. 83.)

Several challenges make a life connected to the streets tough. A myriad of negative public attitudes imposed on street children is one of them. Street children are often per-

ceived as "delinquents" instead of "rights holders". Street children also encounter challenges in balancing several connections they have with their families, friends, the police and other government officials, NGO workers and employers. Some other factors street children are confronted with on the street include exposure to pollution and traffic accidents, weakened access to basic services, such as health care and schooling, and substance abuse problems. (Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p. 7.)

4   Context of the Study

In this chapter, the thematic framework of the global street children phenomenon and right to education will be examined in the context of Ghana. An overview of the street children situation in Ghana will be explored before moving to schooling in Ghana.

Apart from public efforts, some non-governmental agents also aim at assisting vulnerable children to access and complete basic education. One representative under this mission in the third sector is Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF). SCEF is a non-governmental organization (NGO) operating in James Town, a neighbourhood community in the capital of Ghana. SCEF was the partner organization of this thesis. Through my degree programme, I completed an internship of three months in SCEF during the implementation of this study.

4.1   Street Children in Ghana

Ghana is located in the North-West coast of Africa. Its capital is Accra. The country's whole population was approximately 25.9 million in 2013. (The African Development Bank Group n.d.) Ghana is bordered by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. It was a British colony until its independence in 1957. English is an official language but several other languages, such as Ewe and Ga, are also used. Natural resources and agriculture products include gold, diamonds, cocoa, coffee and timber. The currency is cedi (GHC). (Nations Online n.d.)

Picture 1. Map of Ghana. (source: BBC News Africa: Ghana Profile. 2014.)

The street children situation in Ghana is challenging to present due to a lack of statistical data (Boakye-Boaten 2008, p. 77). Some general characteristics can still be drawn. For example, a distinction between push and pull factors can be identified with Ghanaian street children. Some of the push factors include economic hardships, parental neglect, violence at home, collapse of a nuclear family system and a large family size. The main pull factors are the economic opportunities that cities are believed to offer. (The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of the Government of Ghana et al. 2011, p.15.)

Many children in Ghana are forced to migrate from sparsely populated rural areas to the more populated southern cities. This north-south migration is caused by differences in Ghana's socio-economic development between the north and the south. The northern areas are left behind due to scarce access to natural resources. Thus, many children migrate to pursue better income opportunities. In the big cities, children might work on the streets as head porters, mechanics or street vendors. (Kwankye, Anarfi & Castaldo 2009, pp. 8, 18.)

According to estimations, the number of street children in Accra seems to have substantially risen over the past 20 years. An estimation of about 4000 street children was counted in the beginning of 1990s. When broadening the scope to cover the whole region of greater Accra, there were over 61 000 street children in 2009. From a sample drawn from this figure, 41.6% had dropped out of school. 58.4% had never been to school. Many children in the sample had become school-drop outs because their parents could not afford their schooling expenses. Some children also avoided school due to personal reasons, such as poor academic performance, punishments at school and bullying. It was also discovered that twice as many females as males had never attended school. (DSW of the Government of Ghana et al. 2011, pp. 11, 23.)

4.2 Schooling in Ghana

According to Ghana National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPAOVC 2010, p.8) there has been an improvement in Ghanaian children's enrolment to schools. The number of children completing their education has also increased. Ghana is estimated to be able to reach MDG 2 (universal primary education) and MDG 3 (gender equality in schools) by 2015. The NPAOVC acknowledges that access to education and the quality of education are essential focus areas for development.

Abolishing school fees for basic education has been stated as one of the main contributors for the positive development in Ghanaian schooling. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics database suggests a decline in the amount of out-of-school children of primary school age in Ghana. According to this database, there were around 1 million children outside primary school system in 2000, but the figure reduced to somewhat less than 500 000 children in 2013. This change is significant, nonetheless much work still needs to be done to support those Ghanaian children who are still struggling to have basic education.

Ghana was the first signatory to ratify the UNCRC on February 5th, 1990 (The UN Treaty Collection; official listing of the UNCRC ratifications). The child's right to education, as set by the UNCRC, is also taken into account in Ghanaian policy making. For example, the Ghana Children's Act (1998) states a child's right to education and well-being (section 8). Despite all the positive development, there are many children in Ghana who are unable to complete their education and are at danger of dropping out of school. Although tuition fees have been scrapped, many other supplementary schooling-related costs pose an economic burden on some poor families. These costs include, for example, purchasing a school uniform, a school bag and other necessary school materials.

Some political efforts are in place to support the schooling of Ghanaian children. For instance, the Capitation Grant Scheme introduced by the Government of Ghana in 2004 aims at supporting children's schooling by allocating more resources to schools' operating budgets in the primary school level. In 2007, the capitation per enrolled child was about 30 GHC. (Akyeampong et al. 2007, p. 13.) The capitation grant is meant to cover different costs and levies, such as examination, facilities management, security charges and sports lessons. These expenses often manifest themselves in the form of "school fees" paid by families whose children attend a public school. (Osei-Fosu 2011, p. 56.)

Despite the capitation grants, some challenges remain as the unit cost of providing schooling to a child at the primary school level appears to be more than what the capitation grant is capable of providing (Akyeampong et al. 2007, p.13).

4.3 Street Children Empowerment Foundation

Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) is a small grassroots level social work organization in Accra. It was founded in 2010 and is mainly led by Ghanaians (SCEF n.d.). Since its establishment in 2010, SCEF has cooperated closely with Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Every year, Metropolia provides its students a possibility to complete their internship in SCEF. Metropolia's student union METKA also supports and cooperates with SCEF in its development cooperation -related student activities (METKA n.d.).

SCEF's headquarters is located in James Town which is a low-income neighbourhood community. According to the SCEF Annual Report (2013-2014, p. 3), the main mission of SCEF is to achieve sustainable improvements in the lives of street and deprived children in James Town.

Altogether, SCEF has registered around 240 children and adolescents on its database (SCEF Annual Report 2013 - 2014, p.10). They are SCEF's "direct" beneficiaries as SCEF has also a number of "indirect" beneficiaries, mainly parents of the children. This thesis will proceed by using the word "beneficiary" to refer to direct beneficiaries and those who were interviewed for data collection.

Apart from street children, SCEF aims to protect children referred to as "vulnerable". In SCEF's work this means children who are at risk of dropping out of school. These children may not yet be involved with a life on the street but are at risk of moving into that category. This might mean that there is inadequate financial support for schooling at home, or possibly substance abuse and mental health problems in the family. An unstable home environment increases the risk of a child from dropping out of school.

SCEF offers financial support to its beneficiaries through fundraising activities and a godparent program. The organization attempts to cover the expenses of children's schooling. In addition, SCEF operates a variety of after-school complementary education ser-

vices. These include a reading club, sports club and an arts club. These clubs offer possibilities for children to practice and develop their skills in reading comprehension, physical education and diverse forms of creative arts. SCEF also organizes events and programmes to advocate for children's rights, such as holding seminars that raise sexual abuse awareness.

Alongside hired field workers, SCEF has volunteers from different countries operating on the field. The volunteers' field work includes regular visits to local schools, during which beneficiaries are interviewed. The objective is to monitor children's performance at school to ensure that SCEF´s funds are appropriately used. The class teachers and sometimes the headmasters are also interviewed regarding the schooling of SCEF's beneficiaries.

If schooling-related challenges occur, SCEF tries to investigate the root of the problem. Cooperation with beneficiaries' families is tightly connected to the daily work of SCEF. There is also a social enterprise programme for the beneficiaries' mothers, which aims at teaching useful skills related to business and investing.

SCEF's headquarters is located in James Town. It is one of the oldest communities in Accra and mainly populated by the indigenous Ga people who speak the Ga language. The James Town area suffers from neglect in terms of basic infrastructure and sufficient living conditions. For example, there are not enough adequate in-house sanitation facilities. The main economic activities contain small-scale trading and fishing in the informal sector. Many households depend on fishing for livelihood. (Mahama, Acheampong, Peprah & Boafo, 2011, pp. 1-2, 17, 25.)

According to the SCEF Annual Report (2013-2014, p. 9) only about 1/5 of the population in James Town has secondary or vocational/technical education. Around 40% of the population are young people aged 15 - 29 years. The average household size in nearly 56% of the population is 6 - 10 people. James Town also suffers from other problems, including high illiteracy and high school dropout rates, early pregnancies, a high unemployment rate and, in many families, inadequate protection and care for children from their parents.

It is important to regard James Town in SCEF's work, as the children on its programme have been recruited from the streets of the James Town community. Hence, understanding the general living conditions in James Town will provide the right context to understand the experiences of children supported by SCEF.

5 Theoretical Framework

The following chapters present the theories that guided the thesis process. An overview of social pedagogy will be portrayed as it is the core theoretical framework in the studies of social services. The concept of social inclusion will be then examined with further detail, as the main emphasis in socio-pedagogical work stems from inclusion of people in difficult life situations to their social communities.

As the principles of social pedagogy and social inclusion are rather vague by nature, Pincus' and Minahan's (1973) theory of resource systems was also used to create concretion. The resource systems provide a simple, structured understanding of the individual's dependence on his social environment in order to lead a meaningful, balanced life. It also clearly depicts how a social welfare professional can work to assist the individual to become connected to different resource systems in order to be socially included.

5.1 Social Pedagogy

According to Hämäläinen (2003, pp.136, 138, 147), social pedagogy could be described as a practical science aimed at alleviating and preventing social problems. It examines how to support individuals in a difficult life situation so that they would be able to cope with their daily tasks and be part of a social system.

Typically, social pedagogy is described as being concerned with difficulties that people have in becoming socially included (e.g. Storø 2013, p.16; Hämäläinen 2003, p.139). Hämäläinen (2012, p. 12) states that "problems in person-society relations" are social pedagogy's "focus area". Social pedagogy is perceived to examine how the relationship between the individual and his social environment develops and how to support a healthy development in this relationship. (Nivala 2007, p.78.)

The socio-pedagogical practice contains diverse interventions aimed at inclusion in social communities, helping to solve social problems and increasing people´s own problem solving capacities (Storø 2013, p.16). Social pedagogy is more a way of thinking in which social and educational perspectives are present instead of a strict set of specific methods (Hämäläinen 2003, p.135).

From a socio-pedagogical viewpoint, one area of interest for research is the difficulties that individuals encounter in integrating to such communities and societal systems that enhance their quality of life and social participation (Hämäläinen 1999, p.32). The idea of social inclusion was also the focus point of this thesis. This leads to questions of "inclusion" and "exclusion" which will be examined further in the following chapter.

5.2   Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion

According to Sheppard (2006, p.10) socially excluded groups are those who undergo poverty, unemployment and other associated disadvantage, are deprived of their rights as citizens and have impaired or broken social ties. Giddens (2001, p. 323) has described social exclusion as a process in which different mechanisms and factors cause exclusion from opportunities available for the majority of society. It is not enough to have basic needs met: in order to be socially included, people should have access to important goods and services. Giddens continues to describe the nature of social inclusion:

> In order for a community or society to be socially integrated, it is important that its members share in common institutions such as schools, health-care facilities and public transport. These shared institutions contribute to a sense of social solidarity in the population.

Poverty is often connected with the idea of social exclusion. Lyons and Huegler (2012, p. 38) note that exclusion is to be understood as a broader concept than mere poverty. According to them, exclusion is connected with identity, location, health, self-determination and discrimination, thus expanding the concept from a simple notion of access to resources.

There is an attempt within academia to try to find more specific definitions and understandings for the vaguely used terms of social exclusion, social inclusion/integration and marginalization. Helne (2002, p.170), for example, sees that the marginalized are more

"included in the system" than those who are excluded. Exclusion, portrayed like this, reflects characteristics of ostracism to a greater extent than marginalization.

The focus in the exclusion discourse has conventionally been on the marginalized, but researchers demand for a wider perspective. It is "equally important to address public attitudes and the practices of professionals" (Lyons & Huegler 2012, p.42) and more attention should be brought to examine excluding forces; in other words, who and what causes exclusion of certain groups (Ruotsalainen 2005, pp. 49 - 50, 60).

For the purpose of this thesis, a definition of social inclusion by Barry & Hallet (1998, p.1) was used. According to them, social inclusion means "the attempt to re-integrate, or to increase the participation of, marginalized groups within mainstream society". The process of thesis implementation was mostly guided by a focus on social inclusion, although juxtaposition between social inclusion and social exclusion is artificial since they are connected as "two sides of the same coin" (Sheppard 2006, p.5).

5.3   Resource Systems by Pincus and Minahan

Pincus & Minahan (1973, p. 3) emphasised a focus on interactions between people and systems in their social environment. These systems provide people with resources they need in managing daily life. Pincus and Minahan detected three types of systems: a natural or an informal system, a formal system and a societal system.

Natural resource systems consist of informal relationships between the individual and the family, or other helpers such as neighbors, friends and co-workers. Help provided by these systems can emerge in various forms, such as giving advice, borrowing money or offering to baby-sit. (Pincus and Minahan 1973, p. 4)

The formal resource systems are composed of membership organizations and formal associations that work to promote the mutual interests of their members. An example of a formal resource system is a labour union. Formal resource systems offer direct service distribution to their members, but they also provide assistance in negotiating with different societal resource systems. (Pincus & Minahan 1973, p. 4.)

Finally, the societal resource systems are those which have been established by the government. These include schools, hospitals, legal services, vocational training programmes, day-care centres, social security programmes and alike. People become connected to different governmental agencies and services through their age or a social role they perform in society, such as being a student. (Pincus & Minahan 1973, p. 5.)

Several obstacles might hinder people's capacity to use the resources in their environment. For example, the support available may prove to be inappropriate or inadequate. People may not know about the existence of the resource systems around them or obtaining needed resources is difficult due to certain policies. Individuals struggling to cope with life can also be overwhelmed by physical, economic, social and emotional conditions, thus finding it hard to search for and use various resources. (Pincus & Minahan 1973, pp. 8-9.)

Pincus & Minahan listed several methods a social work professional can use to assist the individual in obtaining more resources to cope with daily tasks (1973, p.15):

1. Enhance people's problem-solving skills and coping capacities
2. Establish initial linkages between people and their resource systems
3. Facilitate interaction, modify and build relationships between people and societal resource systems, and between people within resource systems
4. Contribute to the development and modification of social policy
5. Dispense material resources
6. Serve as agents of social control

These functions go in accordance with social pedagogy's core aim of supporting social inclusion. Social pedagogy does not simply focus on the problems that people have in becoming socially included but also examines how to assist people to cope with life. Although the resource systems model stems from the 1970s, it can still be regarded as a useful tool for work in the social field.

6 Conducting the Study

This chapter focuses on narrating the main steps in the thesis implementation process. The designing and scheduling of the study will be first portrayed, sequenced by the actual

stage of data collection. Finally, the process of data analysis will be explained before moving to study findings.

6.1   Study Methodology

This thesis had a qualitative approach. According to Alston and Bowles (2013, pp. 80-81) a qualitative study aims at exploring the meanings that are subsumed in people's experiences. The aim is to understand the social reality of human beings. Often, because of such focus, a qualitative study examines only a small sample which does not necessarily represent the whole population. This affects generalization of findings but often produces rich, in-depth data about the experiences of people.

Several sources were used to obtain information and to strengthen data validity. This is also known as data source triangulation (Kananen 2013, p. 34). Secondary data were obtained by informal discussions with SCEF workers, a visit to the local social welfare office and examining electronically saved monitoring sheets. The monitoring sheets are used to monitor beneficiaries' schooling in SCEF, and I used them to see what composes as beneficiaries' most common schooling hindrances. The primary data were provided by semi-structured interviews with SCEF's beneficiaries.

6.2   Designing the Study

During my first three weeks in Ghana I focused on observing and familiarizing myself with the context of the study. During this time, SCEF expressed its wish to obtain information on how its services have reached the children. Therefore, I became curious to study what kind of schooling hindrances the children have encountered and how they have perceived SCEF's services. After determining my area of interest, I designed my research questions and scheduled the data collection. I also designed a tentative interview schedule. Families and the home environment were incorporated in the interview schedule as an important topic to be examined since home is the basis for children's upbringing and overall wellbeing. SCEF also works extensively with families. The interview schedule was first introduced to SCEF workers and volunteers in a staff meeting to obtain comments and feedback. The interview schedule was then modified to some extent. The structure used in the actual interviews can be seen in appendix 1. The interview

questions and my recorder were pre-tested with another SCEF intern before any interviews were actually conducted.

I structured my interview according to a set of principles of how to form and conduct a basic interview (Alston & Bowles 2013, pp. 130-131, 138-147). As I was planning to collect information of the experiences, thoughts, opinions and feelings of beneficiaries, a qualitative approach seemed a natural choice. For the same reason, I decided to use a semi-structured interview model.

A semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions and is typically favoured by qualitative researchers. The interviews do not strictly replicate each other as the interviewer is allowed to explore additional topics which may not appear in the basic interview schedule. The questions on the interview schedule set directions for the interview but additional questions may be asked as the respondents raise new subjects. A semi-structured interview can be an ideal data collection tool when the researcher does not know how the respondents think about the examined topic. Good interviewing skills are needed to conduct semi-structured interviews. (Alston & Bowles 2013, pp. 142-143.)

SCEF hoped for 20 beneficiaries to be interviewed. The available resources suggested that it would be unnecessary and unrealistic to aim for 20 respondents by qualitative means. The resources referred to were an inadequate amount of time and staff, as I conducted the study alone and was simultaneously completing an internship for SCEF. The sample size was finally determined as a compromise and the aim was to interview at least 10 beneficiaries.

The cycle from topic formulation to the actual implementation phase were constantly negotiated with SCEF. SCEF was actively participated by asking for advice and feedback. The SCEF workers were supportive throughout the process. They provided me with background information, helped contacting the interviewees and arranged places for the interviews. They also introduced me to the head of the local social welfare office. During data collection I had the chance to visit the social welfare office to obtain a more comprehensive idea of the context of my study. Overall, cooperating with SCEF workers made it easier to keep track on and develop the direction of data collection. Once a week, during staff meetings, my thesis progress would be collectively discussed. Having an active partner organization made thesis implementation easier and more productive.

6.3   Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample for data collection. The actual sample composed of 12 beneficiaries whose general background profiles are described in chapter 6.3.2.

6.3.1   Sampling

Purposive sampling was used. This means that the sample was chosen for a specific purpose, and all in the examined population did not have an equal chance to be selected in the sample (Alston & Bowles 2013, p. 97). There were two criteria for choosing interviewees: age and SCEF field workers' understanding of the beneficiaries they wished to obtain feedback from. Discussions with SCEF workers came to the conclusion that having older beneficiaries who could formulate in-depth answers would be most beneficial for a qualitative interview. SCEF workers also hoped to have feedback from some of the beneficiaries whose life situation had been very tough before becoming SCEF beneficiaries. The workers wished to hear how these beneficiaries had experienced the support they had received so far.

The sample size was ultimately determined by resources. I reached the point of 10 interviews as originally planned. As there was still enough time before my internship in SCEF would have ended, I decided to continue interviewing and finally ended with 12 interviews.

6.3.2   Characteristics of the Sample

The chosen sample composed of 7 girls and 5 boys whose age range varied from 12 to 19 years. Five of the interviewees could not anymore be defined as children according to the UNCRC, which defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.
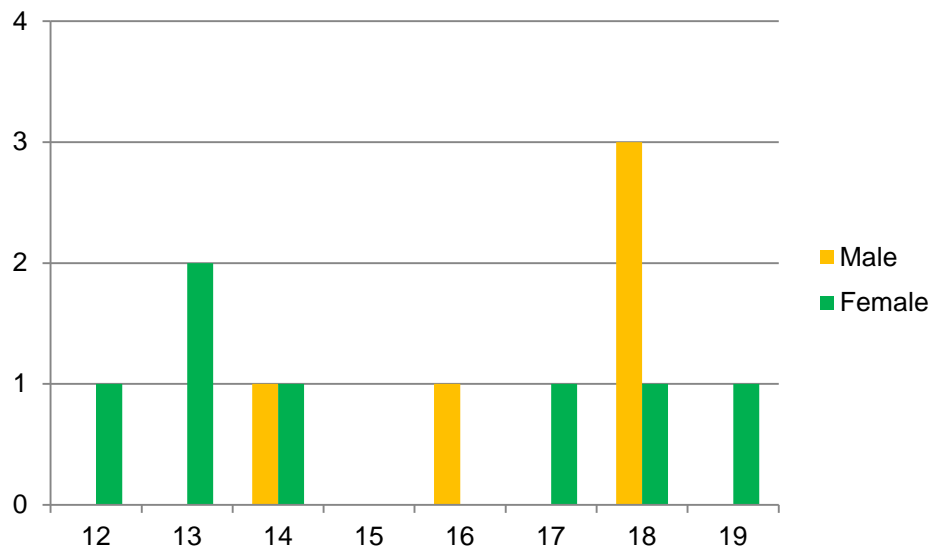
Diagram 1. Age Distribution (n=12)

The sample's school grade distribution represented grades from primary school, junior high school and senior high school. The grade range varied from first year in primary school to the last year in senior high. Majority of the interviewees represented second year in senior high school. It is noticeable that some of the beneficiaries were older than they should be in the grade they represented. In these cases, some delays have disturbed their normal time to start primary and secondary level studies.

The interviews also examined whether beneficiaries had needed to repeat a grade. This would have given direction for investigating what type of hindrances might have caused grade repetition. Interestingly, none of the beneficiaries in the sample had needed to repeat their current grade in school.

Seven beneficiaries went to a private boarding school at the time they were interviewed. Five attended a public governmental school. The boarding school interviewees attended the same school located in a town called Cape Coast.

Regarding godparents, majority of the interviewees enjoyed financial support to their education through SCEF's godparent program. Those in a boarding school are supported by two godparents. This is to cover private schooling expenses. In the sample, most of the beneficiaries attending a public governmental school also had a godparent. There were only two beneficiaries who did not have a godparent during the time of the interviews.

6.4   Conducting the Interviews

I conducted the interviews within a timeframe of approximately 6.5 weeks. Altogether, 13 beneficiaries participated in the study but one interview was discontinued based on mutual agreement. Thus, the material obtained from this encounter was not used. The interviews took place at the SCEF office in James Town and in a boarding school located in a town called Cape Coast. A recorder was used in the interviews. I also used a notebook and a pen to make notes whilst interviewing. A laptop was used in one case for making notes due to technical difficulties with the recorder. All of the interviews were conducted in English with the exception of one. One beneficiary did not possess adequate English skills. In this case, a SCEF worker was present to interpret from Ga to English. I did not know any of the interviewed beneficiaries beforehand.

As already mentioned, there was one case where an interview was discontinued. The interviewee seemed hesitant to talk about the topics on the interview schedule. In this case, I emphasised voluntary participation and stated that the comfort of the interviewee was most important. Discontinuation was then agreed on with mutual understanding. The material from this session was not used in data analysis due to its incompleteness.

All interviews covered the topics incorporated in the interview schedule. Some supplementary questions were also asked to either clarify or explore some areas that the beneficiaries expressed during the interviews. As my knowledge of the emerging topics increased, I was more capable of recognizing key themes as data collection advanced. Thus, the interview situations did not strictly replicate each other since I asked some supplementary questions in the later interviews which I had not thought about in the beginning of data collection. For example, the beneficiaries in the first interviews would mention subjects that would not appear in the later interviews. I partially guided my direction in the later interviews based on the previous knowledge I had obtained from the first interviews.

The length of the interviews differed greatly. Some interviews lasted around 45 minutes whereas some were conducted briefly in 20 minutes. One reason for this was the very different backgrounds the beneficiaries had, meaning that some had more experiences to share than others.

I also visited the local social welfare office in James Town on 29th April 2014. The purpose of the visit was to obtain background information of Ghanaian social services offering help to vulnerable children and their families. The welfare office provided me with an insight on some Ghanaian policies aiming to support vulnerable children's schooling. I also received ideas of where to search for more information of the street children situation in Ghana. The topics covered during this visit can be found in appendix 3.

6.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis does not rely on quantification of data as heavily as quantitative analysis. The main emphasis is on using logic and theoretical and methodological principles. Interpreting and searching for meanings in people's experiences form the core in qualitative data analysis. (Alston & Bowles 2012, p. 268.)

The interviews were first transcribed to have the data in a more manageable form. I decided to use only partial transcription with the main focus on the respondents' answers and subjects that were clearly connected to schooling hindrances and SCEF. The complete transcription of 12 interviews would have been too time-consuming. The transcribed data were listened to once more before deleting the recordings. This was to ensure accuracy in my transcription. The interviews lasted altogether nearly 6.5 hours. With Arial font size 11 and a space lining of 1.15, the partially transcribed material mounted to a total of 59 pages.

The first task of qualitative data analysis is to organize the collected and transcribed data (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, p.150). This can already happen after the first interview since data analysis often occurs simultaneously with data collection (Silverman 2013, p. 233). This was also the case in this study. Whilst conducting and transcribing interviews I searched for patterns and common features in the answers. For example, I listed which factors seemed to have an impact on ambivalence in school attendance. Key themes were identified according to their frequency in the answers or how heavily a theme had hampered schooling in an individual case.

I chose to analyse data by using content analysis. According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2012, p. 93), the researcher using content analysis classifies data according to different subjects. This makes comparing different themes between interview answers easier. I

started by using thematic organization (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2012, p. 93). In thematic organization the data is divided and organized based on what has been said about the key themes in the data. I chose to arrange my data under three main themes: 1) schooling before SCEF, 2) current schooling, and 3) SCEF's role in beneficiaries' schooling. Under these themes, I collected categories from the interview answers based on how they contributed to the main themes. Some of the categories were further divided to subcategories (appendix 2).

The data analysis was first heavily guided by the collected data. After identifying key themes and core categories, I tried to see connections between and similarities in the answers. I used quantification to see how frequently certain categories appeared in the answers. After obtaining a clearer picture of how the sample experienced their schooling and SCEF's role in it, I used my theoretical framework in further analysis. I perceived the beneficiaries' schooling hindrances as obstacles to social inclusion in schools. I tried to detect any socio-pedagogical elements in SCEF's work: how SCEF seems to support the integration of its beneficiaries in schools. In addition, I used the resource systems model to explain how the family, school and SCEF provide vital resources for the beneficiaries. Thus, the data analysis was also guided but not fully led by theory.

7   Findings

This section presents results from data collection. Hindrances to schooling in the past are generally explored before moving to schooling difficulties in the present. Finally, SCEF's role in supporting its beneficiaries schooling will be examined.

7.1   Schooling before SCEF

Before becoming SCEF beneficiaries, the interviewees' school attendance varied from almost daily attendance to complete absence. Their success in schooling appeared to be dependent on the level of comfort experienced at home. Having enough emotional and financial support were the main subjects considered as important for balanced schooling, yet many interviewees' had lacked adequate support for their education.

7.1.1   School Attendance

Most of the interviewees were able to attend school just before becoming SCEF benefi-
ciaries. Seven interviewees had been able to attend school most of the time, with finan-
cial difficulties being the major obstacle to schooling. Two beneficiaries seemed to attend
school nearly every day despite the challenges they faced. Three beneficiaries were not
attending school. One of them was living at home and two were living on the streets.

Table 1. School Attendance of Beneficiaries before Becoming Part of SCEF (n=12)

School Attendance	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Nearly everyday	2	17 %
Most of the time	7	58 %
Not attending	3	25 %

7.1.2   Home Environment: Family Structure

Having a fragmented family structure emerged frequently from the interviews. Only 1/3
of the interviewees lived together with both of their parents. Many respondents stayed
with other relatives than their biological parents, for instance with their grandparents.

In three cases the father had left the family and was not taking responsibility of upbringing
the children. In two cases the other parent, the mother, had passed away. In both of
these cases the mother had been the main caretaker who provided for the family.

> *My auntie take care of me. After she [the mother] passed away my father did not
> take care of us.* -int. 5.

> *There was some time in life when I decided to stop schooling. I almost stopped for
> a year. I sat in the house, doing nothing. (…) So it was at that time when my mother
> also died. (…) When she died, I thought maybe that's the end of my life. She is the
> only to take care of me. At that time my father was also irresponsible. He was not*

> *also taking care of us. It can be maybe three months or four months and we would not see him. So my mom was the only one to take care of us.*
> -int.12.

7.1.3   Home Environment: Support for Schooling

Most of the interviewees stated their families being emotionally supportive of schooling. By this it is meant that family members wanted the interviewees to attend school. One of the interviewees even had a mother who actively took part in the interviewee's school board activities. Only one interviewee did not specifically mention parents being mentally supportive of schooling at home.

> *My grandmother? She didn't school to the highest level. She stopped at the JHS [junior high school] level. She didn't want me to also stop there.* -int. 12

Inadequate financial resources appeared to hinder schooling more than a lack of emotional support from family members. Some of the family members were unemployed or only able to attain small and irregular income. This caused several strategies to ensure school attendance and daily survival in households. Some interviewees had asked their classmates to borrow school materials or to lend money for covering exam fees. Some family members had borrowed money from friends and relatives to support their children's schooling. In the most extreme cases, children had had to sell items on the streets to support their education. Five interviewees stated having had to sell on the streets. They would sell water sachets which are common in Ghana where tap water is not drinkable.

> *So that time I sat down and think that I have to do good to myself. And so, I sell pure water. (...) I sell pure water and was able to go to school every day.* -int. 6

In one case, the interviewee had had a supportive family. One day, the local congregation had accused the interviewee of being a "witch". Many traditional practices and beliefs are still deeply rooted in the Ghanaian culture, and this includes beliefs linked with witchcraft. After the incident, the family stopped supporting the interviewee's schooling. Due to high stigmatization and discrimination at home and in the neighbourhood community, the interviewee had eventually decided to leave home and went to live on the streets. According to the interview, the interviewee had spent several months on the street before becoming a SCEF beneficiary.

7.1.4 Home Environment: Living Conditions

Some of the respondents described their living conditions at home as unhealthy and uncomfortable for a child to grow and develop. Lack of nutrition was the main concern which emerged in nearly all of the interviews. Families often struggled to provide the whole family with sufficient meals on a daily basis. A large family size or unhygienic places to sleep at were also mentioned. The living conditions would determine how much safety, support and comfort the interviewees would experience at home.

> *In the house it's like, there are too many. So in the room we are we cannot even get space for ourselves to sleep through.* -int.2

> *(…) sometimes I won't eat and I sleep. In the room where I'm sleeping is not good. Is like a refuse dump. (…) Like, they put rubbish, all sorts of things.* -int.6

> *We don't sleep properly. There is no space. (...) I sleep outside. All of us, my sister and me. So we need mattresses.* -int.10

Two of the interviewees had run away from home and lived entirely on the streets. This made living conditions extremely challenging as it meant having to ensure daily survival without proper protection by adults. The interviewees were not attending school as their full attention was focused on daily survival. The living conditions on the streets expose easily to various threats, including health-related risks from sleeping outside without a proper shelter. Both of the interviewees mentioned selling water sachets and sleeping in front of stores at nights.

> *Because... because there is not money. And (…) I don't have someone who could take me to school. So I have to sell, sell before I get money for school. (…) Like, if I did not sell, I will not get food to eat.* -int. 4

7.2 Other Factors Affecting Schooling

Other factors affecting schooling were related to physical and mental health. These represented a marginal position in the interview answers. For example, one interviewee stated feeling pain in the legs after sleeping outside every night without a proper bed. In

one case there was a mental health problem in the family, which caused emotional distress to the interviewee. Some of the health-related factors, such as occasional physical sickness, seemed to be stressors adding to the main difficulties in schooling. Other factors, such as experiences of mental health difficulties in the family, appeared to have a heavy impact on an interviewee's schooling as it would burden the general atmosphere experienced at home.

7.3 Present Schooling

Many interviewees expressed feeling content about their current schooling. Financial difficulties still composed a hindrance to education, but many thought their financial situation regarding schooling was in a better position than before. Some other hindrances interviewees' encountered were bullying in schools and inadequate parental support.

7.3.1 Current Hindrances

One interviewee seemed to be overall satisfied with current schooling and did not even feel that financing studies were facing specific difficulties at the moment. Most of the interviewees felt they had no severe schooling hindrances at the moment. Financial difficulties seemed to be the main obstacle for balanced schooling. Financial issues would manifest, for example, in forms of lacking proper meals every day or not receiving provisions. Provisions contain food items and are normally sent by families to children in a boarding school.

> It is not every time that my mother will send me provisions. (...) Sometimes, it's, like, difficult for me to ask people for things. (...) Sometimes I help people so that if I come they will buy things for me. -int.6

A concern appeared when one interviewee expressed having to sell "gari", powder made from cassava plant, during vacation times and holiday programmes. The interviewee thought that the family did not like it, but felt there was no other way to fully support the household. The interviewee mentioned feeling uneasy to raise the issue to SCEF.

There were only two beneficiaries who did not have a godparent at the time of the interviews. Those with a godparent were able to be financially supported even to the extent to be able to attend a boarding school. Those with a godparent or two godparents

seemed to face less financial difficulties than those without. This was visible as the two beneficiaries without a godparent stated having difficulties with financing some of the basic schooling expenses. Having to sell "gari" on the streets alongside schooling was mentioned as an example to obtain more financial resources. By contrast, those supported by a godparent did not seem to picture schooling as burdening a struggle although financial difficulties were still present. Those in a boarding school had the strongest position regarding finances and school attendance.

Three beneficiaries mentioned being bullied in school. Bullying appeared in forms of emotional and physical violence, such as calling names, insults, stealing of school materials and physical fights. Talking about bullying seemed difficult as the interviewees would lower their voices or draw their looks on the floor. Two of the bullied interviewees mentioned being labelled as a "witch". Both of them felt uncomfortable and confused or even heavily distressed about carrying a witch stigma.

> *Yeah, she's trying to talk about one of the challenges she's facing, having the stigma. They call her a witch. (…) That's why the former school where she was attending, at [school's name], she stopped that school. Yeah the same thing happened that they usually insult her, calling her witch. (…) This is one of the challenges that she's facing in school.* -int.1

Being stigmatized would trigger chronic and systematic bullying. In any bullying incidents, the teachers were reported to be mostly helpful in intervening. There appeared to be no emotional support at home in cases of bullying.

There was also a concern about a discouraging attitude towards schooling at home. One interviewee stated having to deal with a relative who is very unsupportive. The relative wanted the interviewee to stop schooling after senior high school and start working whereas the interviewee expressed will and motivation to further studies to the university. According to the interviewee, the relative was "fed up" with schooling costs since higher level studies cost more than primary education. There were also others in the family to be supported so canaling more money to further schooling was not seen as a priority.

7.3.2 Thoughts about Schooling

All of the beneficiaries stated positive feelings about being able to attend school. The beneficiaries would use words such as "happy", "proud", "comfortable" and "fine" when describing their feelings. Eight beneficiaries talked about the importance of education in relation to a successful future.

> *Because I am able to acquire skills and ways that I can help my family and help myself and others in society.* -int. 8

> *Because, if you don't go to school, normally you cannot get job to do. And you, it's a way that you will suffer. You and your wife will suffer.* -int. 2

> *Because it's good to find how to arrange your future. (…) How to be a man, get my, like, some of they teach if you don't go to school and you'll have a good job they will cheat you if you don't know anything about it.* -int. 9

Many answers reflected the notion of being able to take care of one's own family and community after good education. Others stressed the importance of simply finding a good job with a proper educational background.

7.4   SCEF's Role in Supporting Schooling

According to the interviewees, SCEF works in cooperation with families and schools to build a support network for the beneficiaries' schooling. SCEF was mentioned to use several methods. Feedback on SCEF's services was mainly positive, with the main emphasis on SCEF's role in the social education of parents and families about children's rights and the importance of education.

7.4.1   Methods to Support Schooling

According to the answers SCEF uses a variety of methods to support its beneficiaries schooling. The methods mentioned in the interviews included:

- making a follow-up visit to the beneficiary's home if the beneficiary has not been to school
- speaking to families about schooling
- making a phone call to parents

- providing a shelter for a beneficiary without a home

- giving advice to and having motivational discussions with the beneficiaries
- organizing events that encourage to think about the future in a positive light
- organizing a reading club to help in English reading comprehension
- visiting the beneficiary's school to monitor schooling performance

- providing financial support for schooling expenses
- providing financial support for daily needs, such as food or medicine

The theme which appeared in all of the answers was the importance of financial support. SCEF had purchased school materials, such as pens, pencils, mathematical sets, bags and school uniforms, and also paid for various additional costs, such as exam fees. In some cases, SCEF had also helped families by providing financial support for food and medicine.

Providing advice and motivational discussions also appeared frequently from the answers. For example, one interviewee told that a SCEF worker had advised on how to divide time, so that the beneficiary would have time for homework. It was mentioned that SCEF speaks with the beneficiaries about their schooling. SCEF's regular visits to schools were one example during which motivational discussions would take place.

> *So anytime they come they always come to ask from the staff; our class teacher and ask them how I'm doing about my studies, my performance in class. They also talk to my house master to ask him my attitude towards class, and the number of hours I study. So they always tell me to focus much more on my education and not think about what I face in my life.* - int. 12

When asked what the beneficiaries thought of the cooperation between SCEF and their families, positive opinions emerged. SCEF was mentioned to discuss matters related to schooling with parents, but also educating them about children's rights and parenting responsibilities.

In 11 interviews SCEF was mentioned having spoken to families about schooling and the importance of education. One interviewee said that SCEF had not spoken to the family about schooling. Some beneficiaries told that SCEF makes a follow-up visit to their homes if a schooling-related issue is reported. Sometimes the guardians would take the

initiative and visit the SCEF office to ask for help or to discuss about the schooling of their children.

Two interviewees spoke about the occasional events that SCEF organizes for its beneficiaries. These events usually revolve around a specific theme with the overall aim of empowering participants to have a positive outlook on themselves and life. These interviewees stated positive feelings about the events they had participated in.

> *I was able to meet people who were able to talk to us, and also I was happy because I was able to get more advice from them and that advice encouraged me to focus on my education. It also encouraged me (...) to forget the kind of situation that I'm in and also no matter what the situation is I can do it. -int.11*

7.4.2 Feedback on SCEF's Services

All of the beneficiaries stated having positive feelings about SCEF. What was emphasized was the general idea that without SCEF's support, schooling in the current stage would not be possible. All of the respondents felt that SCEF's services had been adequate in their case.

> *SCEF bought me things that I've asked and they are able to send. SCEF bought me materials that I need in school. SCEF paid my school fees. They feed me well. And sometimes they visit me at home. -int. 6*

Some mentioned that SCEF workers listen to and take them seriously. SCEF workers were perceived as helpful, and especially the aspect of receiving advice from them was heavily stressed.

> *They make sure that whatever we need, they get it for us. -int. 7*

> *Like, they are good people. Yes, very helpful. And they advise and they try to motivate you. - int. 3*

On the other hand, two interviewees felt that the approach to their difficulties when entering the SCEF office was not always friendly. They wanted SCEF workers to pay more attention to the way they deliver verbal messages to children who come to ask for help.

> *Sometimes (…) we feel scared to come and (…) we don't feel that confident to come. We will sit and think about how to approach them. (…)* - int.11

SCEF was hoped to tackle better the issue of stigmatization. The impact of stigmatization seemed to cause severe hindrances to social inclusion in the community and school.

> *(…) there is one crucial thing she needs SCEF to do. That is to help educate the kids to stop the stigma that she's currently going through in the school.* - int. 1

The importance of parental responsibility was a heavily stressed concern for many. Educating parents was perceived as imperative. Some wished that SCEF would speak more with the family about how to support the beneficiary's schooling. There were also wishes for SCEF to help the family members not only with meeting basic needs but with solving family fairs at large.

> *They should talk about how they can help me in school. About how my grandmother should help me go to school (…)* - int. 9

> *SCEF should continue educating the girls, the parents and the society.* - int.8

> *He [a family member] (…) is expecting me to go and sell on the street. But SCEF said I don't have to be selling on the streets again. So if I refuse to do it and he's like: ´Those people do they think they are the ones who give birth to you? And they are telling you not to do this, not to do that.´* -int. 3

Other minor remarks focused on school supplies that some of the beneficiaries were still lacking and wished to receive from SCEF. SCEF's after school supplementary clubs also received some positive feedback. Especially the reading club was seen as supportive means to schooling.

7.5   Conclusion

Overall, the beneficiaries' schooling situation seemed to have changed towards a positive direction. Especially those in a boarding school appeared to be more satisfied and content with their schooling compared with their past. Those in a boarding school would often state having no major hindrances in schooling at the moment. They would use phrases such as "it's a little bit OK" or "yes, it's better" when describing their financial situation at the moment.

The main schooling hindrances were linked with the overall wellbeing of families. Factors that affected the interviewees' schooling negatively included inadequate income in households together with a broken family structure, a large family size, lack of parental support, uncomfortable living conditions, mental health difficulties and discrimination caused by stigmatization.

SCEF was perceived to tackle problems in schooling adequately. The most common need SCEF responded to were financial difficulties in the families. SCEF was perceived as an important contributor to balanced schooling, but SCEF's critical role as a credible agent for social education in the James Town community was also emphasised. Many interviewees thought it was important that SCEF works to educate families about children's rights and about the importance of education. SCEF was also perceived to be of emotional support in forms of motivational discussions and giving advice.

8   Discussion

A wide scale of difficulties reflects the complex nature of the beneficiaries' schooling. For instance, unemployment, mental health difficulties and the loss of a parent together with a broken family structure caused ambivalence in the beneficiaries' school attendance. What is essential is that these difficulties affected the overall wellbeing of families, which influenced the beneficiaries' wellness and schooling. At worst cases, the beneficiaries had sold items on the street or lived entirely on the street due to several problems experienced at home. Thus, working with beneficiaries without searching for the root cause of difficulties in the home environment cannot provide a pathway to sustainable change.

The main determinant of schooling difficulties appeared to be economic hardships experienced by families. Unemployment or small and irregular income together with other factors, such as a large family size to support, would burden households. It is important to remember that poverty alone does not determine whether a child ends up on the street (e.g. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012, p. 6). Nevertheless, the economic poverty experienced in families seems to be a major risk factor that complicates children's balanced schooling. This is also noticed by previous studies (UNESCO 2010, p.10).

One theme which was not frequently present in the interview answers but reflected an enormous emotional impact on an individual level was bullying. Those who shared their experiences of being excluded from social groups in school felt sad or confused about their encounters. This is important to regard, as there might be other beneficiaries who share similar experiences but feel shy or embarrassed to talk about them. Teachers were mentioned as helpful in tackling bullying, but as a social work organization SCEF could provide emotional support and practical help by teaching beneficiaries how to handle stress and anger in schools.

Bullying was mainly triggered by stigmatization. A report of marginalization in education (UNESCO 2010, p. 11) has stated: "Stigmatization is a potent source of marginalization that children bring with them to the classroom." In my thesis, stigmatization was caused by being labelled as a "witch". This was the only clear difference between boys and girls. Three girls had encountered discrimination from being called as witches. This reflects how some traditional beliefs are still vividly present in the Ghanaian culture. Discrimination encountered by these interviewees raises an important question of how to use social education more effectively to tackle bullying and discrimination, especially that caused by accusations of witchcraft.

Considering education, the overall situation seemed to have improved in the sample. School attendance appeared to have become more stabilized, and those who had dropped out of school in the past were now enrolled back through SCEF. Although financial difficulties still occurred, it seemed that schooling expenses could be relatively well covered in most cases. Many interviewees felt good about going to school, which could indicate that beneficiaries in the sample feel more socially included in their schooling than before.

An important aspect in ensuring that principles in the UNCRC are respected is preventing children from selling on the streets. One beneficiary in the sample confessed having to sell "gari" during holidays from school, which raises a concern for all of those beneficiaries who are selling something on the streets without SCEF's awareness. Finding a sustainable solution to this issue would probably require resources which SCEF does not possess. As Pincus and Minahan (1973, p.15) have stated, one role of social work is to contribute to the development and modification of local social policy. This is also what SCEF needs to continue doing in its effort to safeguard children's rights.

In the interview answers, SCEF was generally perceived as an important source of support for schooling. The interviewees reported feelings of satisfaction with their current schooling and SCEF's services. Yet, these results need to be examined with caution. In the actual field work in SCEF, many beneficiaries might find it difficult to understand the importance of schooling before entering work life, and negative attitudes towards education can appear. According to Alston and Bowles (2013, p. 192) it is relatively common for client satisfaction surveys to generate high levels of satisfaction. This can be caused by, for example, having little choice of service or being worried to criticize a service which is desperately needed. To my interpretation, the results in the sample reflected relatively high satisfaction because SCEF's services respond to a great need. For example, for those coming from very vulnerable conditions, criticizing services which offer financial and material support for education and even some aid for food and medical expenses might seem ungrateful. There is also a possibility of some beneficiaries answering what they thought they were expected to reply instead of how they truly felt.

Social inclusion, as defined by Barry & Hallet (1998, p.1), was "the attempt to re-integrate, or to increase the participation of, marginalized groups within mainstream society". Social inclusion was used as a supporting concept in this thesis. Since the emphasis of SCEF's work is on supporting vulnerable children's education, SCEF could be described as aiming towards the social inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in schools.

SCEF's beneficiaries could be described as children and adolescents placed in a marginal position in education. This is evident when comparing their schooling hindrances to the aspects emphasised in social exclusion. Social exclusion was viewed as a process where several factors contribute to someone's excluded position from the mainstream society. Various factors apart from economic disadvantage, such as identity, health and location add to the experiences of "being left out". In this case, as a community of multiple deprivations, the area of James Town also needs to be considered as a risk factor for social exclusion to the residents in the area. This means that the effort placed to support James Town's children in their schooling is highly important.

To be able to attend school successfully, the interactions between beneficiaries and their resource systems needs to be in balance. The basic perspective taken in this thesis pictured the beneficiary in the middle with connections to his natural resource systems (mainly family), formal resource system (SCEF) and the societal resource system

(school). The focus was on the impact that these systems had on the schooling of the beneficiary, and in the way SCEF connects with the other resource systems to support the beneficiary's education.

One important area in SCEF's work is cooperation with families. Families compose the main natural resource system for beneficiaries, and previous studies (e.g. The DSW of the Government of Ghana et al. 2011, p. 20) support the notion of a broken family structure seeming to have an impact on children's street-connectedness. It is likely that not all of the hardships experienced in families were shared during the interviews, but the importance of a stable home environment is evident. For example, many beneficiaries seemed to build their motivation to schooling from the hardships their families had experienced. This was reflected from answers where education was seen as means of supporting family members in the future. It is important for SCEF to continue working in tight cooperation with families to ensure a unified support network for children's schooling.

Although distributing material resources is characterized as one of the roles of social work, it is important to remember that material support should not be the main emphasis of social services (Pincus & Minahan 1973, p.30). Therefore, it is noticeable that beneficiaries stated SCEF workers as people who, for instance, listen to them, give advice and provide motivational discussions. It is positive that socio-pedagogical principles are present in SCEF's work, such as aiming to have a comprehensive approach to inclusion in social communities and helping to solve social problems (Storø 2013, p.16).

Other possible resource systems, such as legal social services for families, were not the focus of this study. Nevertheless, the possible support of other resource systems should not be ignored. This aspect was emphasized during my visit to the local social welfare office. The office communicated its concern of families not seeking official social help due to unawareness of the services and governmental support schemes they are entitled to. As a social work NGO, SCEF has a key role in connecting children and their families to systems that can provide them with resources for better coping in daily life. Establishing initial linkages between people and resource systems was one of the essential functions of social work mentioned by Pincus and Minahan (1973, p.15).

Programmes focusing on social inclusion should be two-generational (involving children and parents), non-stigmatizing, multifaceted (targeting a number of factors), persistent enough to make a real difference, locally driven, culturally appropriate and sensitive to

the needs of children and their families (principles of Sure Start programmes, cited by Byrne 2006, p. 158). Many of these elements are also present in SCEF's work and can be seen from its mission, work approach and working methods. Persistency remains a question, and it is to be seen how sustainable a change SCEF is able to make in the lives of street children and others unable to attend school properly.

A crucial concern is what happens to beneficiaries after they exit the SCEF programme. SCEF's focus is on primary education. Although basic education is important and noticed in various political agendas, such as the MDGs, it is noteworthy to consider whether primary education is enough to build sustainable development and comprehensive social inclusion in children's lives. According to one study, higher level education can be critical in the process of comprehending information and building motivation to apply new knowledge into practice (Rihani 2006, p. 27). Thus, an important question is how to ensure that those beneficiaries who wish to attend tertiary level studies will continue to be supported and socially included after exiting the SCEF programme.

In conclusion, SCEF can be said to work with an attempt to re-integrate or to increase the participation of its beneficiaries in schooling. The approach it has incorporated supports the socio-pedagogical concept of social inclusion. Certain aspects in SCEF's work could still be emphasised even more, as the interview answers reflected mainly the experienced usefulness of financial and material resource allocation. Supporting beneficiaries' individual, societal growth into responsible adults is the core. Helping beneficiaries to utilize their own problem-solving skills and coping capacities is essential and would go in accordance with a socio-pedagogical ethos (Storø 2013, p.16).

8.1   Limitations

It is noteworthy to address the method for choosing the sample. Purposive sampling has the risk of presenting a biased representation of the examined population. In this thesis, 12 beneficiaries were chosen from around 240 beneficiaries in SCEF. The chosen sample does not represent the whole population of SCEF's beneficiaries which affects the generalization of findings. Yet, the main emphasis was not in generalization. The idea was to explore how beneficiaries have experienced their schooling and the way SCEF has worked to support their education. Thus, a large sample size was not ideal.

It is important to contemplate how the fact that I did not know the beneficiaries beforehand has affected the interviews. I considered a few aspects which eventually led me to use interviews with beneficiaries although I did not know them. Providing children with the opportunity to express their thoughts might give them a feeling of adults regarding them and taking them seriously. Having children's voices heard is also considered to provide a very rich insight and key information of the world's street children phenomenon (Benitez 2011, p. 17).

Interviewing children I did not know had the advantage of rather good objectivity. As the beneficiaries were unfamiliar to me, I did not have any preconceived ideas of what and how the interviewees would respond. Moreover, the beneficiaries might have felt comfortable to discuss some matters without a SCEF worker's presence.

There was one case, though, where a SCEF worker was present. This has probably imposed various effects on the interview. Some issues might have been left unsaid or put in other words. On the other hand, the worker and the interviewee already knew each other, which might have made the interviewee feel safer to discuss and possibly reduced the chances of lying in the answers.

Some technical difficulties were also present. My recorder did not function properly during one interview, and I decided to use a laptop instead. The interviewee had been waiting at the office for a long time, which affected my decision. It was holiday from schools and I was uncertain when the next ideal time would come. I also type relatively fast. Thus, I decided to use a laptop and was able to catch the interview quite well. This of course created a very different setting from the other interviews. Typing meant, for example, that I could not pay as much attention to the interviewee's body language. Having no recorded material meant I could not go back to the interview to check if my typing had captured everything.

The interview settings were not always ideal, as the SCEF office did not provide enough room for a proper interview. These were challenges that simply had to be tackled. Often, some quiet and isolated place outside would work as an interview setting. The opinion and level of comfort was always checked from the interviewees. It was also a challenge to conduct semi-structured interviews in a strange environment when I had not interviewed social work clients before. I had previously used interviews as part of my studies when interviewing different social service providers in Finland.

My background had also an impact on the study process. My gender, age, interests and previous knowledge might have affected the direction of study implementation. For example, I did not have previous experiences from working in an NGO and with street children. My perspective as a social services student was determined by a socio-pedagogical comprehension of the phenomenon of street children and SCEF's work. Thus, I was possibly blinded to other perspectives that might have been relevant to regard in this study.

8.2   Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, reliability is determined by how systematically data was analysed and how reliable were the criteria for producing interpretations from the data (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen 2010, p. 27). In this study, interpretations regarding schooling difficulties were based on the frequency of certain categories in the interview answers. If a category appeared frequently, I interpreted it as significant for my thesis topic. The level of negative consequences a certain category would have on an individual's schooling would also mark the category as a hindrance to schooling. Interpretations were partially guided by the theoretical framework of my thesis: social pedagogy, social inclusion and resource systems by Pincus and Minahan. I analysed data and searched for key themes and patterns while collecting data.

The purposive sampling method presents a limited way to provide insight on the experiences of SCEF's beneficiaries. To take this into account, the chosen sample represented beneficiaries with diverse backgrounds, which improves data validity. The sample included beneficiaries with varying degrees of complexity in their schooling difficulties. Some had only had financial problems whereas some had even had to live on the streets. Data validity was also increased by transcribing the interviews and choosing to use a semi-structured interview about a phenomenon that I did not have much previous knowledge about.

Data source triangulation was used to strengthen data validity. I did not only interview beneficiaries but I also examined SCEF's electronically saved monitoring sheets which include information of how the beneficiaries' schooling is progressing in different schools. I also discussed with the SCEF field workers and visited the local social welfare office to obtain background information of and different perspectives to the topic of my study.

9   Ethics

Since the sample was chosen by purposive sampling and the SCEF workers knew the beneficiaries, it was of paramount importance to present the findings in a way that would create no harm to the interviewees and their families. Confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation to the interviews were addressed. In the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself, presented the main ideas of my study and explained what the interview questions were meant for, what they would include and how the data would be used. I asked a permission to record the interviews and explained how the recorded material would be used and deleted. Voluntary participation meant that the interviewees did not have to answer a question that felt uncomfortable, and they were also given the opportunity to leave at any time from the interview. Anonymity was addressed by coding each interviewee with a unique letter abbreviation and a number, e.g. "int. 1". Names of people or schools were also censored to protect everyone's privacy.

As some of the topics on the interview schedule would potentially trigger negative feelings and memories, I aimed at creating a comfortable and safe interview setting. Having a familiar place where outsiders would not hear and listen to the interviews was important. For this purpose, the SCEF office and the boarding school served well as interview locations. Communicating empathy had to be in balance with remaining objective and continuing with the interview questions. Knowing that some of the topics might be sensitive, I allowed much initiative to the beneficiaries. They could determine their own level of comfort in the interview topics.

An informed consent to participate in the study was not required from the guardians. When becoming a SCEF beneficiary, the child's guardians sign an agreement for SCEF in which they state their allowance to information being collected from their children for the purpose of SCEF's work.

10 Conclusion and Suggestions

Social problems are rarely simple by nature, and in this study the complexities encountered in schooling were often a sum of various factors, too. It is noteworthy to keep in mind that economic poverty does not alone cause a child to end up on the streets (The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012, p. 6). Yet, this study depicted economic

hardships as a major contributor to a child's school absenteeism and engagement on the streets.

Although school staff is the main body to whom address issues of bullying, it would be worth considering whether to take action on this in SCEF as well. After all, being a social work organization, supporting children's social inclusion in schools is relevant. Not all of the families are necessarily supportive at home, yet children carry the psychological impact of stigmatization outside the classroom. One idea for future practices could be a vacation programme or a workshop where children could be taught about bullying as a phenomenon: what forms can bullying take, what kind of an impact it has on schooling and individuals and importantly, what to do when encountering bullying either as an active participant or a distant observer. In the interviews, violence was mentioned as a strategy to respond to bullying. It would be important to teach children non-violent ways of dealing with stressful situations in school.

Sometimes children felt shy to raise important topics to SCEF workers. When examining SCEF's monitoring sheets as a source of secondary data, I noticed that not all of the volunteers focus on filling the monitoring sheets appropriately. What creates restrictions to field work monitoring are time limitations, since monitoring is normally done during school breaks and different schools have breaks at different times. Nevertheless, volunteers should be taught about the importance of the monitoring as it forms the basis of SCEF's fieldwork. Many volunteers do not have a social work -related educational background and may not know what kind of supplementary questions to ask or how to look for clues in non-verbal communication. Focusing on the proper training of volunteers regarding field work monitoring is needed to better tackle the issues that beneficiaries might be struggling with.

SCEF already has over 240 registered direct beneficiaries. With the small amount of staff, supporting everyone's schooling comprehensively forms a great challenge. The areas to focus on are not only dispensing material resources or financial help, but strengthening the social education of children and parents. Important topics to continue working with include children's rights and parenting responsibilities. This is done by active field work and ensuring that each beneficiary's home is visited to establish a unified basis to support schooling. Another important area which should not be ignored is focusing on the individual support of a beneficiary. With scarce resources it is often difficult to devote time to individuals, and help might be too easy to depict as simply in material and

financial forms. Providing motivational discussions alongside helping with coping capacities and problem-solving skills is of equal importance.

The data collection was mainly led by beneficiaries. The aim was not to have a systematic and comprehensive assessment of SCEF's specific services, but to explore what types of issues the beneficiaries regard as important in terms of schooling and SCEF's work. It might be interesting to have a more systematic and analytic evaluation of specific areas in SCEF's practices, such as fieldwork monitoring or after school clubs. Another interesting aspect to study more could be SCEF's work with families. Family members could be interviewed about their experiences with SCEF. This would naturally require help from someone who knows the local language and the local culture well. One more interesting area to study in the future could be the cooperation between families and schools: how the families are connected to schools, what kind of cooperation takes place and how the linkages between families and schools could be improved. This type of information might provide SCEF with a useful insight on how to develop the quality of cooperation between schools and families.

The deadline for reaching the MGDs comes closer with plenty of children in the world still struggling to attend school. The post 2015 agenda needs to trigger more actions to safeguard the rights of children in vulnerable conditions. As one of the interviewed beneficiaries stated: "'Cos the strength of the nation is among the youth. I think when the youth is not going to school we'll not be able to see our future years."

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Interview Questions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age?
2. Gender?
3. How long has the child been a SCEF beneficiary?
4. Which school level the child currently attends? For how long has the child attended it? (Has there been a need to repeat a grade)
5. Does the child have a godparent?

SCHOOLING BEFORE SCEF

6. What kind of difficulties the child had in attending school before becoming a SCEF beneficiary?

SCHOOLING AT THE MOMENT

7. How does the child feel about going to school at the moment? Why?
8. Currently, what are the child's main hindrances to schooling?
9. How are these hindrances dealt with at the child's home?
10. How are these hindrances dealt with in school?

SCHOOLING AND SCEF

11. If the child faces difficulties in attending school, what will SCEF do about it?
12. Overall, what are the things that SCEF has done to support the child's education?
13. In what ways has SCEF been working with the child's family?
14. Has the cooperation between SCEF and the family been useful for the child? Why?
15. Has SCEF's support been adequate for the child's schooling? Is there something that SCEF should have done differently in the child's case?
16. What should SCEF focus on more or continue doing in the future?

Thematic Organization of Data

Main Theme	SCHOOLING BEFORE SCEF	CURRENT SCHOOLING	SCEF'S ROLE
Category **Subcategory**	School Attendance - Degree of Absenteeism	Hindrances - Hindrance Types - How Hindrances Are Dealt with in School - How Hindrances Are Dealt with at Home	Work Methods - Material Support - Financial Support - Motivational Support - Other

Category
 	
Subcategory
	Conditions for Schooling
	
	- Family Structure
	
	- Living Conditions
	
	  1. Hygiene
	  2. Nutrition
	  3. Health
	
	- Employment of Family Members
	
	- Support for Schooling Provided by the Family
	
	  1. Financial Support
	  2. Emotional Support
		Thoughts about Schooling
		
		- Motivation to Go to School
			Feedback
			
			- Adequacy of SCEF's Services
			- Experiences of SCEF's Services
			- How Workers are Perceived
			- Future Directions for SCEF's Work

Category **Subcategory**	Hindrances to Schooling - Hindrance Types		

Questions Covered during a Visit to the Social Welfare Office in James Town on 29th April, 2014

1. What kind of public welfare services are available for vulnerable children and their families in Ghana?

2. Is it common for families to seek support from public welfare services in Ghana?

3. How well does Ghana seem to be doing in reaching universal primary education (one of the MDGs)?

4. Can the social welfare office act somehow in a case where a child is not attending school?

5. How does the social welfare office perceive the current street children situation in Ghana?