



Children Moving on their own in Developing Countries

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WHO?

- Children moving on their own within the developing world within their own countries, or regionally
- Age range
 - Some under 10's
 - Some 10 - 12,
 - **Majority 13 – 17 (are adolescents)**
- 'moving on their own'
 - without parents
 - not accompanying siblings
 - not necessarily travelling alone; or living alone at destination;
 - may also move to live with more extended family members

Children's Experiences: Findings from DRC Research

- About 400 children in 6 projects in Bangladesh, Ghana, Burkina Faso, India
- A continuum of experience from good to very bad
- Many children are positive about their experiences
 - they value the opportunities to earn, to gain experience
 - they feel proud of their ability to send money to their families
 - they sometimes gain informal training or schooling.
- Some children have negative experiences of migration and report considerable hardship and being abused and exploited

Reasons Children Give for Migrating

- the desire to earn incomes
- the need to earn cash for a specific purpose – perhaps for school fees, for better clothes or for a trousseau
- to get access to training or education
- to move to live with siblings or other extended family members who only have young children
- the desire for experiences that will help them grow up.

Children's Motives and Objectives

- Children have many motives – work, income, education, social

“...when we walk around in search of customers, we see lots of things that we’d never seen in the village and we also get a better understanding of how life is. If you’re hungry back home, you can make some tô (millet porridge) but here you’ll need to get out your money, otherwise you won’t eat. In my opinion, this is why migrant life in the city is a way to mature, because you’ll know that without sweat you can’t eat.” Bakary, an 18 year old working as a seasonal migrant shoe shiner in Ougadougou

Children's Migration: a Search for Opportunity and a Signal of Constraints

- Children are by no means always 'victims' of migration processes
- Many view migration as a significant opportunity to exercise their own life choices and to improve their opportunities
- But most come from areas with few opportunities and high rates of adult out-migration
- the children seeking to meet their own goals also frequently feel compelled to make decisions in relation to family well being
- So what is experienced as a sense of agency by the child/young person appears to outsiders as the child having very few options and choices
- Some children, with parents ill, disabled, or destitute, speak wistfully of what they have had to give up in order to keep the family, especially younger siblings, going.

A Significant Mismatch

- Mobile children are vulnerable and do face many risks, on the journey and where they live and work BUT
- Child Migrants often understood to be
 - street children
 - sent by parents
 - abused and exploited
 - victims
 - Trafficked

Academic Research

- Covers the whole range of children who are moving, including rural to rural and those living with close relatives
- Adopts Context specific perspectives

Much Advocacy Research

- Focus on children who **have** suffered exploitation and abuse, especially those using services provided
- Adopts universalistic perspectives

How the Policy Space is structured

- The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- A range of ILO conventions: inc. Minimum Age Convention 138 (1973), and Convention Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182, (1999)
- UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)

Convention on the Rights of the Child

- establishes a legal definition of age of adulthood (18) below which a person is a child
- establishes the rights of children to exercise life choices
- establishes that actions concerning children should have their best interests as their *primary* concern.

Trafficking Protocol

- removes 'coercive means and deception' for moving children: children's consent irrelevant
- ambiguous notion of exploitative work becomes key to defining a trafficked child
- measures punish traffickers and repatriate or return the children.

Decision making

.....about a child's migration is complex

- In many cases it is the child's decision: some of them will negotiate with parents; in other cases the child takes precipitate action ('runs away')
- In all cases the child or adolescent's decision is embedded within his or her sense of family responsibility
- Some children do move because of a parent's decision

Castle and Diarra: Negative Consequences of Anti-Trafficking Measures in Mali

Children travelling without an intermediary were much more likely to be exploited or harmed

Measures put in place to protect children can have negative effects:

- o Requiring and checking identity cards and other documents and exploited as a basis for bribery by the police
- o Methods and routes of travel have to change
- o Journeys become more clandestine and dangerous
- o Children are forced into the hands of potentially unscrupulous drivers or intermediaries

Neither Victims or Heroes

The point is not to be FOR or AGAINST child or adolescent migration but to promote real options and choices for older children and adolescents.