

Children as 'invisible' contributors to household poverty reduction in Ghana

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Abstract

Poverty reduction in Ghana has attracted varied approaches. Over the recent past decade, the government implemented a number of programmes tailored to reduce poverty. These include the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), School Feeding Programme, National Health Insurance Scheme, Capitation Fund and Poverty Reduction Support Credit. Recent data on poverty indicate that Ghana has achieved the first target of the Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG 1). Beyond these poverty reduction programmes are children who contribute immeasurably to household poverty reduction, yet are largely unnoticed and least focused. As 'invisible' contributors, children's role in socio-economic activities in agriculture (farming and fishing), commerce and other household endeavours are worth studying and reporting.

The paper used both quantitative and qualitative data from a child-mobility research in four different settlement types namely urban, peri-urban, rural and remote-rural settlements in both Central and Brong Ahafo Regions. Using a survey questionnaire, a total of 1000 in-school and out-of-school children aged between eight and 18 years. In addition, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories and ethnographic dairies were used to collect qualitative data from children and adults in each of the settlements. Selected children from basic and secondary schools as well as personnel from the Departments of Geography and Regional Planning and Population and Health constituted the young and adult researchers.

The findings revealed that a week preceding the survey, 55% of the children assisted parents/guardians on the farm, about 25% sold at the market (largely by hawking) and less than 3% took care of herds in the fields on behalf of their parents. Some of the children who sold earned between GH¢7 and GH¢15 per day to support household income. In addition, the children undertook varied household activities such as taking care of younger siblings. This enabled their parents to have adequate time to engage in socio-economic activities.

Children's contribution to household income and by extension, poverty reduction cannot be underemphasised. Their involvement in the socio-economic space needs to be further explored as a means of evaluating and reconceptualising their contributions. By so doing these invisible contributors can be recognised and acknowledged.

Introduction

In Ghana, the quest to reduce poverty has led to the implementation of a number of policies and programmes outlined in both the First and Second Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I & II) documents (GPRS II, 2005; Government of Ghana, 2007) towards household poverty reduction and wealth creation. While the GPRS I aimed at maintaining microeconomic stability through prudent fiscal and monetary policies, the GPRS II sought to accelerate private sector-led growth, ensure vigorous human resource development as well as good governance and civic responsibility (GPRS II, 2005; Government of Ghana, 2007). Through both GPRS I and GPRS II, poverty reduction interventions instituted at the micro level include the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), School Feeding Programme, Capitation Grants Scheme, National Health Insurance Scheme, Social Investment Fund and Poverty Reduction Support Credit. In the last two years, distribution of free school uniforms and exercise books to basic school pupils has been added to the interventions (Tanle, 2012).

Through these programmes, Ghana has reportedly achieved the first target of the MDG 1 (reduce by half, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day) and also attained a Lower Middle Income status in 2010 after the rebasing of the economy (Tanle and Kendie, 2012). In spite of these formal ways of reducing poverty in the country, some households engage children either directly or indirectly in various economic activities as a strategy for reducing household poverty. Traditionally, children contribute in diverse ways to household income legitimately. As social assets, over 97% of children in Ghana provide direct economic services at the farm, market and other economic centres as household heads or under the dictates of their parents (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011; Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2008). For instance, the Ghana Living Standard Survey (round 5) show that almost 13% of children aged 7 to 14 are economically active (GSS, 2008). Similarly, children play diverse domestic and non-economic roles to enable their parents and guardians to practice their economic endeavours (Esia-Donkoh, Abane and Esia-Donkoh, 2011).

A critical review of poverty reduction literature shows that children's contribution is usually less emphasised and highlighted in policy discourse. The limited literature or surveys that touch on this subject largely provide statistics about child employment but scarcely discuss children's socioeconomic activities that contribute to household wealth creation or poverty reduction. Perhaps, the difficulty to do this is as a result of constitutional frameworks and international conventions regarding children and work. It is therefore not uncommon for

some writers to conceptualise, perceive and generalise all child work as labour. This continually makes children ‘invisible’ contributors to household poverty reduction.

However, it must be stressed that not all work that children engage in constitute child labour. While some work tasks provide a platform for the development of children to adulthood, others contribute to household ‘socioeconomic’ survival (UNICEF, 1997; United Nations, 1989; Fyfe, 1989). This has initiated the call to re-examine and re-conceptualise the concept of childhood (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011). The main objective of the paper is therefore to examine the main activities that children engage in either within or outside the household and whether or not such activities yield some income for the household.

Theoretical and empirical perspectives

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

Per review, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has three broad categories of rights: provision, protection and participation. Critically, the issue of participation transcends into the domains of socioeconomic activities. Therefore, economic participation of children in farming, fishing, and other enterprises as well as domestic (or housekeeping) involvement of children also need recognition.

It is undoubted that household poverty is the cause of child work. Similarly, it is unarguable that children contribute to household survival. This has evidently been highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Poverty, however emerges as the most compelling reason why children work. Poor households need the money, and children commonly contribute around 20 – 25 percent of family income. Since by definition poor households spend the bulk of their income on food, it is clear that the income provided by working children is critical to their survival (ILO, 1997, cited in Rose, 1998).

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

The issue of age however becomes a concern when discussing subjects such as this. For instance, culturally, puberty marks the beginning of adulthood irrespective of one's chronological age. There are also instances where physical and mental development of some children surpass those older than them. It is therefore not surprising to see children less than 13 years engaged in economic-related activities in Ghana (GSS, 2008) and elsewhere (Understanding Children's Work Project, 2006). The relativism associated with the concept of childhood challenges the status quo and normative definitions available (Agbényiga, 2012).

In sub-Saharan Africa, traditionally, children are part of household wealth and also the future generation of the family lineage and clan. They are expected to learn the skills, trade or occupations of their parents so that they could assist their parents (Porter, Abane, Blaufuss and Acheampong, 2012) and later takeover from their parents when they (parents) become old (Clerk, 2012). Consequently, activities that are assigned to children within or outside the household constitute part of childhood training and upbringing. This explains why children are involved in many economic activities within or outside the household. In Ghana, for instance, agriculture engages more than 89 percent of the services of close to five million children between the ages of 7 and 14 years. Others work in areas such as the trade, fishing and the hotel and restaurant sectors (GSS, 2008). In most instances, children are not paid or are under paid for services rendered. This may be attributed to the fact that most of these children are family members who are expected to do some work as their contribution to household livelihood activities.

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

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

The research is guided by an adapted version of the Wennekens and Thurik Model (1999). The original model was used to synthesise disparate strands of literature to link entrepreneurship to economic growth (Wennekens and Thurik, 1999). The adapted model has

four key variables namely level of analysis, household conditions to work, crucial reasons to work and impact of work on household. Each of these variables is related to a corresponding variable that explains it. These include the individual (who is the child) and characteristics of children and parents. The characteristics of the child comprise the age, sex and educational status while that of the parents include occupation. The (adapted) model has four key variables namely level of analysis, household conditions to work, crucial reasons to work and impact of work on household. Each of these variables is explained by a corresponding activity or description. These are:

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

This model is premised on the assumption that children irrespective of sex and residence contribute to household income which by extension, also contributes to the reduction of household poverty.

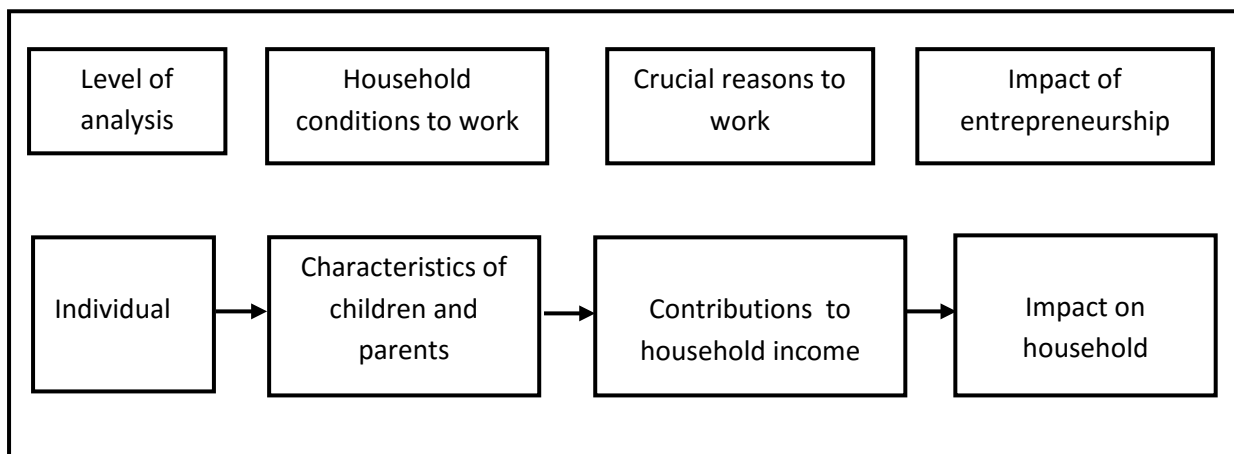


Figure 1: A model on children’s contributions to household poverty reduction

Source: Adapted from Wennekers and Thurik (1999).

Data and methods

Data were extracted from a five-year collaborative research project titled: Children’s, Mobility and Transport Problems in sub-Saharan Africa, which comprised Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. For details of the project and its research design and methodology relating to Ghana, see Porter et al (2010, 2011). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by trained staff from the University of Cape Coast (the implementing institution in Ghana). The data were collected from eight purposively selected settlements in two ecological zones (Coastal and forest) comprising four settlements in each zone: urban, peri-urban, rural and remote rural. In line with definitions used by the Ghana Statistical Service (2002), a rural area

is defined as a settlement with a total population of less than 5000 people while an urban settlement has a population of at least 5000 inhabitants (Tanle and Agblorti, 2011).

The selection of the research zones and settlements was influenced by spatial dynamics, socio-economic characteristics and access to social services such as health facilities, schools, telecommunication and transport. These social services vary in number and quality from the urban to the remote rural areas where in some cases no social service exist. The respondents were children and young people aged between eight and eighteen years. The assumption is that at age eight or above a child could understand simple instructions and also be able to carry out some errands within and around his/her immediate environs.

A total of 125 children and young people were interviewed at each site using a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on themes such as household background characteristics, activities that children engage in which involved walking or the use of transport services and problems that they encountered in the discharge of these different activities. In addition, various qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus groups discussions, life histories, accompanied walk and observation were employed to collect data from children, parents, community leaders, other adults and opinion leaders including assembly men/women and head teachers.

Results

Background characteristics of respondents

In all, about 53% of the respondents were females (Table 1). Nearly 52% of the girls interviewed lived in the coastal zone while a little over 51% of their male counterparts resided in the forest zone. Slightly more than 20% of all the respondents lived in an urban, peri-urban, rural or remote rural settlement.

More female respondents than males were interviewed in the urban and peri-urban settlements at the coastal and forest zones respectively. However, there were generally more males interviewed at the peri-urban settlements in the forest zone than any other settlement in the two ecological zones.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

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

Total % (N)	25.7 (129)	33.3 (167)	24.7 (124)	16.3 (82)	100 (502)
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Source: Child Mobility and Transport Survey in Ghana

About 87.2% of the respondents were enrolled in school. Specifically, 92.6% and 82.4% of the boys and girls respectively were enrolled in school a week preceding the study. About 49% and a little over 20% attended public Primary and Junior High School (JHS) respectively. Nearly 94% of the respondents indicated that their mothers were alive while 91% and 87% of the girls and boys said that their fathers were also alive. The main occupation of the parents at the time was farming. However, three out of ten of the mothers were engaged in trading.

Engagement in domestic-related tasks

At the household or domestic level, children play diverse roles either directly or indirectly which in some cases yield some income for their parents or for household upkeep (and at times for themselves). Usually, they take up some important domestic roles such as fetching water, washing their siblings and/or parents' clothes, carrying some wares to the market, going to the mill with loads of grains and caring for younger siblings particularly in the absence of their parents. As children perform these tasks, parents get relief and therefore are able to engage in some income-generating ventures (Clerk, 2012). Nevertheless, when quantified they could be relevant in assessing children's contributions to household income. The excerpts below are some of the common responses from the in-depth interviews about the roles some children play in their households:

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

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

Also, there were other tasks that the respondents said they performed a week preceding the study which contribute to the survival of the household. Some of them indicated that they carried non-farm wares to the market for their parents to sell while others were engaged in head portorage of food crops, fuelwood and charcoal from the farm to the house or to the market.

Involvement in economic activities

Children also serve as a crucial human resource in many household livelihood activities. With most of their parents engaged in farming and farm-related activities which requires more

labour, children become part of the labour needed in most of these activities. Results from the qualitative data indicate that most of the children were engaged in one economic activity or the other which generally ranged from weeding on the farm, working in a poultry farm through carrying of all kinds of loads from the farm to selling all kinds of wares by head portorage. But on the basis of ecological zone and type of settlement, the study showed that in rural and remote rural areas in both ecological zones, children of both sexes assist parents in farming activities while some other male children serve as livestock herders. The sale of both farm and non-farm produce is characteristic of children of both sexes in peri-urban areas in both ecological zones while in urban sectors the most common economic activity reported particularly by female children was the sale of provisions or cooked food. Through these economic activities children contribute to household income and also earn some income for themselves in some cases. In an in-depth interview, some of the respondents remarked that:

Children are involved in varied economic activities either to cater for themselves or as their contributions to household income. Some of the parents are old or invalid so the children in such households work to feed the household in general... some of them farm, provide labour at poultry farms while others serve as casual farm labourers through which they earn some income (Male, about 45 years, forest, rural).

I used to sell kenkey when I was staying with my grandmother. I started selling at age 10 for her because she is old and cannot sell. She used the proceeds to cater for me and other two siblings. Anytime I sold, she also gave me 20Gp apart from being fed. I kept the money and used it to buy items and share with my other siblings. For instance if we did not want to eat kenkey, I used it to buy rice (Female, 12 years, coastal, rural).

Besides the qualitative data, the quantitative data were analysed to illustrate the extent to which children are involved in farming and sale of wares which are the main economic activities.

Working on the farm

Working on the farm is not an uncommon phenomenon in Ghana particularly and Africa in general. Literature available indicates that children usually assist their parents in household occupations (Esia-Donkoh et al, 2011, Morrow and Vennam, 2009; Rice, 1999). It is therefore not surprising that more than half (54.8%) of the children reported that they worked in the farm in the week preceding the survey. Almost 50% of the children were involved in farm activities in both the coastal and forest zones. Also, a substantial number of children were engaged in farming across the various types of settlement in both ecological zones (Table 2).

Table 2: Farm work per day by ecological zone and type of settlement

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

Source: Child Mobility and Transport Survey in Ghana

Similarly, more males (56.4%) than females (43.6%) were engaged in farming and farm-related activities in both ecological zones in the week preceding the survey. At both the coastal and forest zones, more males (55.4% and 57.5%) than females (44.6% and 42.5%) respectively were engaged in farming in urban areas while the opposite was the case for females in rural areas particularly in the forest zones (Table 3). This is consistent with the fact that in Ghana females dominate males in agriculture, particularly in the forest zones (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2003).

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

Working on the farm in ecological zone by sex	Settlement Type % (N)				Total % (N)
	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Remote rural	
Coastal Female	0.8 (01)	31.7 (38)	37.5 (45)	30.0 (36)	100 (120)
Male	1.3 (02)	26.2 (39)	36.9 (55)	35.6 (53)	100 (149)
Total % (N)	1.1 (03)	28.6 (77)	37.2 (100)	33.1 (89)	100 (269)
Forest Female	8.6 (10)	25.6 (30)	39.3 (46)	26.5 (31)	100 (117)
Male	12.0 (19)	35.5 (56)	32.9 (52)	19.6 (31)	100 (158)
Total % (N)	10.6 (29)	31.3 (86)	35.6 (98)	22.5 (62)	100 (275)

Source: Child Mobility and Transport Survey in Ghana

Children's core work on the field comprises weeding, planting and harvesting of crops. In addition to these, they carry planting materials to the farm and loads of food crops to the house for consumption or to the market for sale. It was realised from the study that more than 73% of the respondents carried loads on the head to and/or from the farm. Specifically, about 77% of girls and 71% of boys carried loads a week preceding the survey. On the basis of settlement type, more than 70% of all the respondents except those in urban settlements (53%) carried loads to and fro the farm.

Selling of wares

The sale of farm and non-farm products is one of the main economic activities that children normally engage in (Esia-Donkoh et al, 2011). The survey results showed that more than 20% of the children were engaged by their parents to sell various wares; some of the children reported that they sold in all the days of the week preceding the survey. Five out of ten children in the forest zone compared to four out of ten in the coastal zone were engaged in the sale of various wares (Table 4).

Table 4: Selling per day by ecological zone and type of settlement

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

Source: Child Mobility and Transport Survey in Ghana

Comparatively, slightly more (51%) children were involved in selling in the forest than the coastal zone a week prior to the survey. About 68% of female children were engaged in selling in general while 75.8% were involved in the same activity in the coastal zone compared to 56.3% in the forest zone. Slightly more children in urban settlements than the other settlement types particularly in the coastal zone were engaged in selling (Table 5). However, there were more males involved in selling at the rural and remote rural in the forest and coastal zones respectively.

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

Selling in ecological zone by sex		Settlement Type % (N)				Total % (N)
		Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Remote rural	
Coastal	Female	43.5 (30)	33.3 (23)	17.4 (12)	5.8 (4)	100 (69)
	Male	40.9 (9)	27.3 (6)	4.6 (1)	27.3 (6)	100 (22)
Total % (N)		42.9 (39)	31.9 (29)	14.3 (13)	10.9 (10)	100 (91)

Forest	Female	38.9 (21)	31.5 (17)	24.1 (13)	5.5 (3)	100 (54)
	Male	31.0 (13)	21.4 (9)	40.5 (17)	7.1 (3)	100 (42)
	Total % (N)	35.4 (34)	27.1 (26)	31.3 (30)	6.2 (6)	100 (96)

Source: Child Mobility and Transport Survey in Ghana

Also, information from the qualitative data confirmed the fact that female children are often engaged to sell for and on behalf of their parents, usually mothers. However, there are few other children who sell to cater for their personal needs and that of the household. One of such children is a 14-year old female in a peri-urban settlement in the coastal zone who sells charcoal to take care of her personal and household needs. She indicated that:

...the charcoal business is my own business. I use to sell with my mother. Now, I am on my own, the money I get is for me but I give some to my younger siblings.

As explained with Figure 1, individual children in both ecological zones and the settlement types were involved mainly in farming and trading. This is largely attributed to the fact the most of these children's parents are farmers and traders. Thus, the main occupations of parents are likely to determine the type of work their children may engage in to contribute to household income.

Children's contribution to household income

Children contribute to household income directly or indirectly and in diverse ways. As has been espoused earlier, their engagement in domestic and economic activities contributes substantially to household income. That is, they either earn income directly for the household through the various economic activities that they are engaged in or households make some savings indirectly through the free services children render which otherwise would have cost the household some amount of money. For those who earn income directly, information from both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions reveal that in both ecological zones and across the various types of settlements, children were engaged in economic activities that brought income ranging between GH¢2.00 and GH¢5.00 per day or more than GH¢50.00 per year. Some of them earn fairly regular incomes. The excerpts below give verbal accounts of incomes that children earn through various economic activities:

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

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

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

From the above excerpts, it is clear that economic activities that some children are engaged in go beyond the domestic spheres but ultimately they earn some income for their households and also for themselves. In fact, some even remit money to their parents to take care of their other siblings as indicated above.

Discussion and conclusion

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

Household income and poverty are inversely related. Therefore, holding all other things equal, an increase in household income reduces poverty. As shown in the Figure 1, there is an impact of children's contributions to household income on household poverty reduction. The call is how to make these contributions (to poverty reduction) visible in poverty reduction analyses. In doing so, two issues may arise. The first is how to define the work children engage in as legitimate and not child labour. In as much as this paper advocates for the acknowledgement and further computation of contributions by children to household income, it also recognises issues that bother on legitimacy and legality. For instance, there are national, regional and international frameworks that govern and regulate the activities of children including work. Making children's contributions 'visible' takes into cognisance issues of child labour and child skills development (Esia-Donkoh and Mariwah, 2011; Esia-Donkoh et al, 2011; Mariwah and Esia-Donkoh, 2011; Porter et al, 2011). This is critical to avoid the tendency of rationalising an illegality (child labour).

The second critical issue for consideration is the analysis of the impacts of children's contributions to poverty reduction at the micro (household) level and the macro (national) level. In developing countries such as Ghana, where governments do not have sustainable social welfare systems to address the poverty of its citizens, especially the children and the aged, children will continue to constitute social assets in this regard. This makes the call for the re-conceptualisation of childhood imperative. Given the tasks they do, their contributions to personal income and that of the household, and remittances sent to siblings and parents in other social and geographical contexts provide a good platform for this debate. Age does not

provide the best of measure to evaluate and conceptualise childhood. Thus, an eclectic analysis becomes appropriate to delve into its re-conceptualisation within the realm of sustainable contribution of children as a factor for conceptualisation.

Closely related to the issue of re-conceptualisation of childhood are the legal and operational definitions of some of the key concepts used in international frameworks. For instance, in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, participation is one of the critical broad classifications. Participation of children in the economic sphere is scarcely envisaged in the Convention, but its discussion is critical given the contributions of children to household survival.

Finally, the wages children receive or do not receive after work need clarification. Perhaps, adults still see children's economic roles as part of the socialisation process (Agbényiga, 2012; Clerk, 2012; Boakye-Boaten, 2010). This cultural orientation contributes to no or inadequate wages paid to them. In some instances, these contributions are not recognised at all or are taken for granted by adults. With the cultural perception that children are to be seen and not to be heard, children find it difficult to exercise any effective agency to seek for better wages. As a survival strategy, children might be unwilling too to challenge the status quo. These explain the need for a formal admission, acknowledgement and the necessary systems and structures to be activated to compute the contributions of children to poverty reduction in Ghana. This is necessary to make children's contributions visible.

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