

## **Child Domestic Labour In Accra: A Juxtaposition of the Myths with the Reality**

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### **Introduction**

This paper examines certain myths about child domestic labour. Its main focus is to fill in gaps in some of the claims made about child domestic workers, such as, children's agency in accessing domestic service, their living conditions in such situations, the challenges they face and whether they are able to address these themselves. Accurate knowledge of the exact number of children in domestic labour, and child labour more broadly, remains elusive because many countries are unwilling to publicise these figures, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2004a). Nevertheless, the ILO (2004a: 8) estimates that 211 million children aged 5-14 years and an additional number (about 80 million) aged 15-17 years are 'economically active'. This high incidence of child labour is reflected in Ghana, where the research which forms the basis for this paper was carried out. The Ghana Child Labour Survey (GCLS, 2003: xii) estimated that about 2, 474, 545, about two-fifth of all Ghanaian children age 5-17 were engaged in an economic activity. Of this number, 1,273,294, which represent 64% of economically active children in the country, were deemed to be in occupations or positions which are prohibited by international legislation and conventions on child labour.

Child labourers have been found in both the formal and informal economic sectors of countries across the world. However, in developing countries such as Ghana, child labour is mostly concentrated in the informal sector, especially in agriculture, small-scale mining, small scale fishing, quarrying and hawking. Another prime informal area of work for children, which went unnoticed for long, is domestic service (ILO, 2004a: 23). The hidden, invisible and inaccessible nature of domestic service makes it difficult to estimate the number of children involved. In terms of gender however, it is assumed that about 90% of child domestic workers are girls (ILO, 2004a), an assumption which was corroborated by this research. By drawing on the narratives of a number of these girls, the paper will demonstrate that to a very considerable extent, life as a domestic worker is detrimental to children's development as well as other rights?

For clarity purposes, the use of child domestic labour in this paper refers to all forms of work done by persons between the ages 5-17 in homes that are not their parents', whether for pay or not, for upkeep or on the promise of pay to be made at a later date, as a result of a transaction made between the employer and the child or his/her parents or guardians. This definition is adapted from UNICEF, (1999: 2) which defines child domestic work as the phenomenon whereby children or those under 18 work in other people's households doing domestic chores, caring for children, and running errands, among other tasks. The children engaged in this kind of work are referred herein as child domestic workers (CDWs). The next section traces the genesis of child domestic work in Ghana, linking this to a review of the current literature and broader discourse on child domestic work. The section will highlight some of the arguments to which this paper aims to contribute.

### **Child domestic work: review of the literature**

Child domestic work is a fairly new area of focus in international children's rights and child labour debates in comparison to children's involvement in factories, brick kiln manufacturing, sweatshops and other prohibited places. The phenomenon long went unquestioned because in African settings such as Ghana, it was hidden within the fosterage system. The fosterage system has historically been a fundamental part of normal socio-cultural life in many communities. Under the practice, the burden of responsibility for children's care, upbringing and overall welfare is borne by their entire extended family, if not the whole community, and not only by biological parents (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Pennington and Harpending, 1993; Notermans, 2008). This is a point which Schlemmer (2000: 316) reiterates in his observation of child rearing norms and social parenthood practices across African communities: *"in the traditional, formerly self-sufficient, domestic family, each child belongs not just to a couple – its parents – but to the whole family group"*.

In view of the above, it was therefore common to find children living with family relatives or other members of the community, as opposed to their biological parents. This trend prevails even today because as Goody (1975, 1978) observed in her seminal exploration of the fosterage system in Ghana, it is not seen to be deviant. Rather, it is a cultural norm which has the functionalist aim of strengthening kinship ties and promoting cohesion, cooperation and unity within the community,

according to Bledsoe and Brandon (1992) and Alber (2004). An additional benefit for children themselves, as Castle (1996) and Foster (2000) have noted, is that being able to call on a vast pool of carers provides a safety net which ensures that their nutritional, financial, emotional and other welfare needs are likely to be met, especially in cases where their biological parents are not able to meet these responsibilities.

Essentially, the fosterage system can be placed on the same pedestal as parenthood and child upbringing practices in other parts of the world (Wusu, 2006). Like other child rearing norms elsewhere too, its advantages are not unalloyed, as Herskovits (1937), who studied the practice much earlier in Haiti, pointed out. As Goody (1982) also asserted, the informal and potentially unregulated nature of fosterage makes it easy for children to be exploited. As such, some children instead of being in receipt of care or having their welfare or developmental needs met end up in conditions which are more akin to domestic servitude. The very manner in which children enter into fosterage arrangements have also been shown to be problematic. Boonpala and Kane (2001) and Brown (2007) have highlighted how recruitment agents have commercialised the practice in some rural settings, leading to the trafficking of children into servitude, under the guise of providing them with foster care in cities.

Eventually, these abuses of the fostering system also came to be seen in a similar light as the exploitation of children in sweatshops and elsewhere, with calls for international children's rights policy makers to act (Sobhan, 1996; Case and Adrington, 2006). Such action demanded tact so as to avoid accusations that the fosterage system itself, and for that matter, the cultural heritage of those who practice it, was being undermined (UNICEF, 1998). The term child domestic labour, was embraced by children's rights policy makers to avoid this pitfall (Grimsrud, 2001). As others have asserted, child domestic labour is targeted for elimination under ILO Convention 138 as well as Article 32 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, because children involved are often below age 18 or the legal age of employment in their countries (Levison and Moe, 1998; Save the Children, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2009). Further, they may be deprived education and other development opportunities (Rahman, 1995; Munene and Ruto, 2010), just as they may also be subjected to physical and sexual violence (Blagbrough and Glynn, 1999; Blagbrough, 2008; ILO, 2004). In addition, the vast range of responsibilities

thrust upon them, and the prolonged hours they spend at these can also harm them physically and mentally (Nieuwenhuys, 1995; Jacquemin, 2006; UNICEF, 2005).

Categorising child domestic labour on the bases highlighted above was intended to isolate it from the fostering system itself and thereby garner wider support for its elimination. However, the range of claims in the literature on child domestic workers, suggest that disagreements still exist about how it is conceptualised and the solutions which have been put forward to address it. Many of these debates can also be traced to those on child labour more generally, and as evident in Boockman (2010), a primary one is the reliance on calendar age alone as a means of determining the calibre of persons who should not be found in domestic work. To call on James et al (1998) and Boyden et. al (1998), in certain contexts, approaching childhood issues from the perspective of calendar age can be misguided.

Besides age, another point which has also proven to be contentious is how children find themselves in domestic work. Black (1996), Boonpala and Kane (2001), Harrison and Khou (2004) asserted that child domestic workers tend to be victims of trafficking, bondage and other mechanisms over which they have minimal or no control. Kolokosso et. al (2007) make a similar assertion in their study on the trafficking and exploitation of children across West Africa. Conversely however, Leinaweaver (2007) argues that the push and pull factors for child domestic work require deeper scrutiny because not all children are victims of trafficking. Indeed, although Olga Nieuwenhuys (1995) also concedes that agents may arrange for children to enter into domestic work, she nonetheless cautions against overgeneralising the trafficking argument because some children actually agree to enter into domestic work due to the lack of viable livelihood options open to them.

Following on from the above, some therefore argue that the discourse on child domestic work can be quite disabling for children portrayed as victims of abuse and trafficking, when they are not (Camacho, 1999). As Punch (2003) also demonstrates in research in Bolivia such a totalising assumption casts children as passive or unable to make decisions about their own lives. And yet, Klocker's (2007) notion of thick and thin agency suggests that even when children are not forced or coerced to enter in such arrangements, socio-cultural expectations and practices still impinge on the extent to which they are able to make 'free' decisions about their lives or act against abuses carried out against them by their benefactors. In effect a variety of

arguments and claims have been made about child domestic work which calls for analysis and interrogation using empirical evidence. It is on such basis that this paper sets out to examine these issues using the narratives of child domestic workers in Accra.

### **Methodology**

This paper is based on data obtained from a mixed method study on the situation of child domestic workers in Accra between May 2009 and January 2010. The data comprised of a cross-sectional survey of 91 child domestic workers, 60 employers of domestics, and 300 heads of households in four communities in three sending areas. A case study of twelve Child Domestic Workers was conducted in addition to in-depth interviews with recruiters of Child Domestic Workers. The survey data was analysed at the univariate and bivariate levels whilst the case studies were transcribed and then analysed thematically.

### **The Myths of Domestic Labour as an arrangement of Patronage**

The first myth this paper seeks to debunk is that which suggests that child domestic labour is an arrangement of patronage. Kinship is central in the organisation of traditional Ghanaian society. It is critical in the articulation of social relations as many activities are organised along the lines of kinship. According to Nukunya (2007) the various aspects of traditional society cannot be understood without a thorough knowledge of the principles governing kinship. Thus, to understand the incidence and perpetuation of child domestic labour, kinship and the practice of fostering children to kin for training and to strengthen familial bonds cannot be left out of the analysis (Goody, 1973; 1982).

Though kinship and fostering have been used to explain and justify child domestic work in yore years, it is quite inadequate an explanation in present times because of the changes that have occurred and permeated all institutions in Ghanaian society. Education is available and accessible not only in the urban centres, but also in many rural areas. The factors of change have resulted in an increasing nucleation of the family as well as the participation in work outside the household by women. These conditions compounded by poverty, have led presently to a commoditisation of child domestic labour. Child domestic labour has become commercialised and more exploitative as is depicted in children's lived experiences

and accounts. It is in this light that one argues that viewing child domestic labour solely as that simple beneficial cultural phenomenon is a gross misconception. Hearing Child Domestic Workers recount their experience and tell their stories makes it clear that child domestic labour is quite less an act of patronage, than it is a practice of and for the exploitation of children's labour.

Related to the above also, is the myth that child domestic labour is a safe form of employment particularly for girls. Hence, compared to other forms of child labour such as street work or agricultural work, domestic labour is the preference of girls particularly if the girl has to work for relations or friends of relations. This is evident in the fact that the majority of children are recruited through kin-fosterage, non-kin fosterage and the informal agent recruitment methods. The preference for children to work for relatives is because of the assumption that they will be treated 'as family' and much better than non-relatives would. Thus, it is often assumed that Child Domestic Workers living with relations are more likely to have better work conditions than those not related to their employers. Interestingly, the evidence found in this study proved the contrary; Child Domestic Workers related to their employers had the most unfavourable work conditions. Indeed, the overwhelming majority (90.3%) of child domestics related to their employers had bad work conditions, with only 9.7% reporting average or favourable work conditions<sup>1</sup>. Obviously, Child Domestic Workers related to their employers do not have a contract, salary etc, because they are considered as family - children who are being helped (fostered) out of poverty or because they are orphaned. Thus, many Child Domestic Workers are at a disadvantage just because of their kin relationship with their employer; it is the reason for their denial of benefits such as a contract or a salary, which other domestics working for non-relations may have access to.

This notwithstanding, the several incidents of abuse reported by Child Domestic Workers challenge strongly the myth that domestic service is a safe form of employment for children. This evidence challenges the practice of kin-fosterage and the perception that Child Domestic Workers recruited to work for kin are better off than those employed by non-kin. The case study below provides a classic comparison between the treatment of a Child Domestic Worker when she worked for a relative (maternal aunt) and when she worked for a total stranger.

Vida is 17 years old from Ashanti/Akyem in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Vida dropped out of Junior High School because her father (a taxi driver) suffered a

stroke, and thus there was no financial support for her to continue her education. Her mother was a petty trader whose income, according to Vida, 'could not even sustain the family because all was spent on her father's medications and care of her and her siblings'. As a result, Vida was sent to live with her maternal aunt as a domestic. Vida said:

*I woke up at 4am daily and did all the house chores (swept/scrubbed/ took the trash out/ fetched water to fill all the water reservoirs etc). After these I wash the big towels and the king-size second-hand bed sheets that my auntie sold. I have to keep turning these towels and bed sheets so that all the sides will dry in the sun. Afterwards I roll them into bundles, tie them up, and carry them to a certain place where they are ironed. In fact, the job was too difficult for me - I was only 14. The bed sheets were too big that sometimes I told my auntie, I couldn't wash them. But the day I would dare say I cannot wash or carry these heavy sheets, my auntie would insult me throughout the day and would not give me food. In fact on many occasions when she gave her children 'chop money' (because they always don't cook at home), I was left out. I had to be washing the clothes of a man in our house (we lived in a compound house) to earn some little money for food. Again, many times when they shared clothing (some of the second-hand clothes) I am left out. Indeed, my auntie maltreated me so much it was unbelievable. I had a rude shock because I had hoped before going to her in Kumasi that she was going to take good care of me as her own niece. But, it didn't turn out that way.*

Though this account is of an individual domestic, it reflects the situation of many of the child domestics interviewed in this research. Several indicators of abuse, discrimination and exploitation are evident here. This child, like many other Child Domestic Workers, was engaged in work that was too tasking for her age. These children rarely get to rest and are punished should they dare complain about the difficulty of their tasks or any other matter. Often they are denied food, clothing and constantly abused verbally. The punishments may sometimes also be psychological, where other members of the household may not be on speaking terms with the Child Domestic Worker. Thus, Vida, like many Child Domestic Workers, are starved of positive social interaction and are treated 'as if you are not part of humanity. They speak to you as if you are not human at all - just because you live with them as a domestic' (Vida, a Child Domestic Worker).

However, after leaving her maternal aunt, Vida found work as a domestic with a non-relation and says:

*So I went to a woman who bakes pies and asked her for a job. I lived with her for about nine months. She was very nice to me in the beginning. She would sometimes give me food, rice and other foodstuff to send to my mother and younger siblings on Saturdays. However, before I decided to leave, the relationship turned sour because her niece who came to live with us was jealous of her auntie's good treatment of me and told lies about me to her.*

Thus, even though this relationship turned sour, Vida considers that she was treated much better by this non-relative employer than she was by her own aunt. Hence, she, like many other Child Domestic Workers interviewed in this study, are of the opinion that it is relatively better to work as a domestic for a non-relation (stranger) than for a relation because the former often tend to treat you better than one's own relations. This, according to Vida, is because:

*Your relations think they own you and your labour and so do as they please with you. They know that you have no-where to go to. But the stranger would most likely treat you better because s/he knows that you are somebody's child/royal so that if s/he maltreats you, your family could come and question him or her about it.*

These accounts emphasise that treating Child Domestic Workers 'like-one-of-family' is just a myth. The notion is only used to mask the poor, exploitative conditions under which children live and work. (Anderson, 2001; Parrenas, 2001).

### **The Myth regarding Recruitment and Children's Agency**

Yet another myth about child domestic labour that this paper questions is that relating to the recruitment and placement of child domestics. Because of the age of these children, it is often assumed that they are 'sent' into domestic labour by their parents or guardians. Though adults often act on behalf of children in placing them in domestic service, some children make the decision to go and search for employers on their own. This is evident in the significant number (14.3%) of Child Domestic Workers who reported that they had approached their employers themselves to ask for the job. In addition, some of the respondents in the communities surveyed also indicated that their children had gone on their own to search for employment as domestics. Thus, the notion that child domestic labour 'always happens to children' is not the total reality. Instead, what we see is that some Child Domestic Workers



have themselves exercised agency and gone in search of jobs themselves. Many Child Domestic Workers have explained that their decision to go into domestic service was as a result of parental neglect and the need to fend for themselves at an early age. Thus, out of need, some children have faced up to the odds and exercised agency, going out to work on the street and in several other fields including domestic service. These children find their own employers and negotiate their own terms of employment and remuneration, which they manage and use as they deem fit. Employing the child walk-in method of recruitment (the description given to children who went in search of jobs by themselves in this study), Child Domestic Workers in this study have exhibited their capacity to exercise agency in matters that concern them (Corsaro, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). Consequently, the myth that children are passive agents, acquiescing to the status quo is debunked.

Thus, child walk-in recruitment has both benefits and challenges for Child Domestic Workers. First, it gives children control over their earnings. However, some children as a result of inexperience are ignorant of, and unable to negotiate contracts and good terms and salaries. Thus because they do not have any adult 'guardian' they may be exploited and cheated by employers. But even when they have been exploited and maltreated, some Child Domestic Workers still exercise agency and find creative ways to either cope with their situation or to leave their employer. For instance, some on their own seek new employers as seen in the case of Adwoa:

*I do not want to go back to the village. I have started asking around for an employer<sup>ii</sup>. If I get one, I will call my mother/sister to tell them that my first employer sacked me so I am with a new person. I would appreciate it if you can help me get a new employer.*

This strategy of seeking new employers derives significantly from domestic workers' awareness of the unstable and transient nature of their employment and their own perceptions and use of their employment as a means to an end. In this regard, Raijman et al, (2003) report that many domestic workers consistently sought and maintained a large number of jobs such that 'job seeking is not merely a strategy for employment but part of the job itself' (Raijman et. al., 2003: 739). Thus, domestic workers do not 'settle in' in a job because they know it is temporary. They cope with this transitory nature of their job by always being on the lookout for other jobs or holding more than one job at a time if they do not live in their employer's homes.

Thus where 'better' opportunities are available, domestic workers may leave their old employment.

Again, like their adult counterparts in other settings, Child Domestic Workers may employ several strategies to contest and manage their employment conditions. Depending on the degree of their frustrations, domestic servants might, as a way of coping, "vote with their feet" or indulge in 'foot dragging, go-slowing, pilfering, sulking, and non-responsiveness' and also in ridiculing their employers through gossip, but without openly challenging the dominant ideology' (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 184). Cock (1980: 102 - quoted in Nyamnjoh, 2005: 183) suggests that the 'non-committal attitude', the 'cheerful incompetence', the 'silence of the maids' and their 'mockery of their employers' could be seen as 'muted rituals of rebellion' a 'crucial mode of adaptation', 'a line of adaptation' that helped them to cope and maintain their personality and integrity. Indeed petty pilfering which, in many instances, was an act of survival could be employed as an 'expression of situational rebellion' by maids (Cock, 1980: 103). Besides the use of 'muted resistance or agency', Rollins (1985) reports that some domestic workers refuse to complete tasks they consider demeaning and actually confront employers over working conditions. This study found that many Child Domestic Workers, like their adult counterparts, are not passive victims of exploitation in the homes of employers. Aware of being caught between a rock and a hard place domestic servants derive strength from being able to 'compare and contrast two evils: abject poverty versus ultra-exploitation or miserable wages; asphyxiating patriarchy versus abuse or dehumanisation by employers; losing one's own family (*and perhaps oneself*) to hunger, ignorance and disease versus temporarily sacrificing it through the enslavement by employers and their families...' (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 185).

### **The myth of Domestic Service as Beneficial to Children**

Related to the notion of safety is also the perception that child domestic labour holds benefits for the children engaged therein. Child domestic service is seen as a means out of poverty to attain formal education, skills training and some capital for trading and indeed as a stepping stone to better things (Miles, 1998). These are the expectations children have for entering domestic service and the promises made to them by recruiters and/or employers at their placement. However, these expectations are rarely fulfilled as is evident in the accounts of Adjoa:

*He promised to help me learn a trade (hairdressing) after a while (unspecified time) and open a shop for me. He said he treats house-helpers well and it was these promises that made my sister and parents agree that I come to Accra. However since I came, no mention has been made of when I would be enrolled in apprenticeship. I have asked about it a number of times but she (employer's wife) does not mind me when I ask so I have stopped asking about it.*

And Dufie:

*I don't think it is a good thing for children to work as domestics. Though some children may be lucky to have their employers treat them as their own children, many of us are maltreated. Our employers start off well with us but end up hating and maltreating us. They do not honour the promises they made to us or to our parents. For instance, I am not paid. My employer has even threatened to take back all the used clothes she has given me since I came to live with her. I am therefore going to go back home empty-handed, with nothing to show for all the time I have served her and her children.*

Thus, Child Domestic Workers conclude largely that though domestic service makes a child relatively independent, it is largely detrimental to children's well being. Domestic labour often leaves children with no skills and opportunities for the future and often only succeeds in perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty. These views, shared by many domestics are summed up in the words of Vida:

*... domestic service is bad because it wastes one's time and life: some relations or employers, instead of sending you to school or placing you in apprenticeship, will make you serve them for years for nothing. In the end you have no formal education, no skill and no money to even start a business. You would have then wasted your years.*

It is gleaned from the view above that domestic service which is often considered a temporary, instrumental short term measure to attain some benefits becomes a winding, unending long term journey to nowhere. Children become stuck in a dead-end job, with rare prospects of change whilst they hope and wait that the promises made to them would be fulfilled.

### **The myth that CDWs are engaged solely in domestic Work**

Another myth that this paper seeks to question in relation to domestic service is the one that assumes that child domestics are engaged in tasks only in the

domestic private homes of their employers. This study found contrary evidence that more than a third of Child Domestic Workers i.e. 32 (35%), in addition to their household tasks, were engaged in work outside the household for their employers. They worked in restaurants and bars, but the most (26 child domestics) sold in the market and on the streets. Obviously then, they have one employer but two jobs. For some Child Domestic Workers their tasks also involved going to work in the households of relations and friends of employers. The domestics spend between one and twelve hours daily on these out-of-home tasks, with most (30.7%) of them spending between seven and eight hours daily at such tasks.

Though a few domestics are informed prior to their recruitment that they would be engaged in these two work settings, many are not aware that their work schedules would be in dual settings - in the homes and in the businesses of their employers. That domestic worker's tasks include work in businesses of employers is conspicuously absent in the ILO's listings of the job description of a domestic worker/cleaner. According to the ILO, domestic workers and cleaners sweep, vacuum clean, wash and polish, take care of household linen, purchase household supplies, prepare food, serve meals and perform various other domestic duties and tasks which include: sweeping, vacuum cleaning, polishing and washing floors and furniture, or washing windows and other fixtures (Anderson, 2000: 15). Thus, work done in employers' business is invisible. In effect Child Domestic Workers are often engaged in dual job roles which should require double remuneration, but for which, as is often the case, neither or only one is remunerated.

The ILO's description also fails to capture the entirety of work Child Domestic Workers are made to do. Clearly, care work, for children, the aged and the sick is not captured, even though this is one of the main job descriptions of Child Domestic Workers in the Ghanaian context. The care Child Domestic Workers give is both tangible, such as, bathing, feeding, cleaning of children or the sick, and intangible such as an emotional investment which cannot be quantified for remuneration. For instance, it will be difficult to place value on the companionship Child Domestic Workers gave to the eight employers who engaged the latter because they are alone, the one employer who has never had children and the six employers whose children have left home for school and/or to marry.

That the work of child domestics is not confined to the home alone, but to work outside the home raises a number of issues. First, domestic labour cannot be

really called '*domestic*'- since the work done involves work outside the household. Secondly, Child Domestic Workers cannot only be considered as private informal sector employees, but also as employees of the public sales and services sector since they work in employers' businesses outside the domestic sphere. Thirdly, Child Domestic Workers must have different terms of employment for their work as 'domestics' and for their jobs as 'salespersons' in their employer's businesses. Indeed, they should receive a double remuneration for the work they do first, in the household of their employer and second, in the businesses of the latter, in the case of those who work outside the home. This is because these persons would have been paid separately if they were engaged solely in employer's businesses. Finally, we cannot continue to consider domestic labour a 'hidden' form of child labour, when many domestics are out in the open on the streets and in shops and businesses of their employers.

### **The myth that CDWs are employed only by High Income earning Households**

Some studies (Appiah and Afranie, 2001) have assumed that child domestics are employed only by high income earning households. This paper however points out that the use of child domestics is not the preserve of the so-called rich or middle class. Those in the lower strata of society also employ the services of child domestics. Indeed, they tend to use the latter more because they are those with limited resources, who find it a challenge to pay others to do housework or to provide childcare for them. They, thus, turn to relations or to the use of child domestics which is relatively cheap (Tetteh, 2005). A comparison of the conditions of Child Domestic Workers employed across high, middle, and low earning households was made in this study. This comparison was based on two assumptions: 1) that the working condition of a CDW is correlated with the class of household in which she is employed; 2) that the availability or otherwise of resources necessary to make a CDW's conditions favourable or otherwise, depends to a large extent on the class of household. The findings indicated that compared to CDWs employed by high income earners in high class residential areas, CDWs in middle and low class households were almost thrice as likely to have satisfactory work conditions as those from the so-called first class areas/households. A sociological explanation of this may be that those most farthest removed from the conditions of CDWs, i.e. the rich people are

least likely to treat them well as compared to poorer folk, who perhaps may themselves have grown up in relatively similar circumstances.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

This paper has identified and debunked five myths and perceptions about child domestic labour which are not an accurate reflection of the lived experiences of child domestics presently in the Ghanaian context. First, this paper challenges the myth that child domestic labour is an act of patronage by benevolent relations and employers. Indeed, whilst some employers may be concerned about their domestics, large proportions do not have the interests of these children at heart. The latter are often considered as tools to attain an end: help with housework and childcare, and cheap labour for employer's businesses. This paper does not deny that domestic labour presents some children with a home and opportunities unavailable in their natal homes (Apt, 2005). Rather, the argument being put forward here is that that we must not deny that Child Domestic Worker experience 'brutal forms of exploitation and extreme verbal, physical or sexual violence' (Jacquemin, 2009:12). This, in fact, is the reality for many Child Domestic Workers as the evidence above portrays. It is important to recognise the heterogeneity of the work conditions and experiences of Child Domestic Workers since the experiences of child domestics are dynamic and diverse. The experiences of domestic service may vary from child to child and indeed for the same child in the same household or even in different households over different periods of time. Being kin to an employer is not a guarantee to better work and living conditions.

Again, it is apparent that children are not passive actors in this activity. Using illustrative examples, it has been shown that that Child Domestic Workers have not been completely passive, but instead, have demonstrated agency not only in the decision to go into domestic service, but also in devising coping strategies and/or strategies of flight from domestic employment. This point is worth emphasising because as Grier (2007) asserts, many studies of child labour in Africa and elsewhere assume passivity, dependency and victimhood on the part of young people in the labour force, when, in fact, children exercise agency and influence and shape their childhoods and many aspects of their work situations.

This paper has revealed that about 32 of domestics, in addition to their work as domestics in households, are also engaged in the businesses of their employers.

This aspect of the nature of domestic labour has not been captured in scholarly work. Hence, the myth tends to be that child domestic labour is confined to the households of employers. In order to correct this misconception, the suggestion is made for a change in the terminology and description of child domestic work- to reflect the new and expanding spheres of the work of domestics. Where Child Domestic Workers are engaged in the businesses of their employers, they could be said to run a double/dual shift at home and/or in the shop/business of the employer. In this regard then, the term 'domestic labour' is misleading. There should be a delineation of domestics on a single-shift (confined to work only in the household) and domestics on a dual-shift (combining household/business work). In other words, a more appropriate terminology which captures the reality of many Child Domestic Workers would be 'single shift child domestic labour' and 'double shift child domestic labour'. The relevance of this categorisation is to enable a proper recognition, appreciation, analysis and assessment of child domestic labour; identifying the wide range of tasks children are engaged in and the implications for the child. Though some evidence exists in the literature about employers using their domestics to work in the homes of friends or relations, it is still work done in the domestic sphere, which adequately could be captured under single shift domestic labour. Should employers use their domestics in the businesses of friends and/or relatives, these adequately could be captured then as a form of double shift domestic work. This argument is in line with the widely accepted feminist viewpoint that women working in and also outside the home ran a 'double shift' (Hochschild, 1989).

A revision in the terminology of domestic work would not only help to properly capture the scope of domestics' tasks but also adequately describe Accra's Child Domestic Workers. The latter cannot only be described as 'multiple place children' because they can be found in the household, in school and in the business/services sector, but also as 'no-where children' because their presence and contributions in these contexts are not captured, which makes them visibly invisible.

To conclude, one must emphasise that child domestic labour is a dynamic phenomenon, varying in extent and manifestation across countries and households. There is a need therefore to conduct periodic and comprehensive studies of the situation of child domestic workers in order to capture changes and new trends to influence effective policy planning and actions on behalf of such children.

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<sup>i</sup> Favourable (good) or unfavourable (bad) work conditions were defined in this study as the presence or absence of a written contract, a regular (monthly) salary, a defined salary (of not less than fifty cedis), and a rest period of not less than one hour in a day.

<sup>ii</sup> Adjoa's current employer has threatened to send her away with nothing. Hence her plan to find another employer in the city before her current employer carries out her threat, This is to ensure that she does not have to find money for transportation to return to the city should she be sent back to the village by her current employer.