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Locally-Developped Child Protection Practices Concerning Mobile Children in West Africa.



Terre des hommes

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Founded in 1960, Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss organisation for child relief. Tdh helps to build a better future for disadvantaged children and their communities, with an innovative approach and practical, sustainable solutions. Active in 30 countries, Tdh develops and implements field projects to allow a better daily life for over 1 million children and their close relatives, particularly in the domains of health care and protection. This engagement is financed by individual and institutional support, of which 85% flows directly into the projects of Tdh.

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This report was written (in English) by a consultant, Mike Dottridge, who worked in West Africa in the 1970s and who has visited the region regularly. His work on human rights issues focuses on migration, exploitation and human trafficking, including child labour and child trafficking. In the 1990s he was director of a non-governmental organisation that pioneered attempts to end the exploitation of child domestic workers, both in West Africa and other parts of the world (Anti-Slavery International).

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Mike Dottridge, July 2014.



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Glossary.

Child

The word child is used in this report in accordance with the definition contained in Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: *“For the purpose of this present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”*.

Debt bondage

The practice of obliging someone who has taken a loan to repay this by working (or sending someone else to work), when the value of the work far exceeds the value of the loan.

Fostering (a child)

A social practice that consists of confiding a child to a member of the (extended) family for the purpose of his or her education.

Landlord

Term used throughout West Africa for members of the same ethnic or other social group as migrants, who provides accommodation for new arrivals when they arrive in a city and usually helps them find a job for them, sometimes arranging ongoing communication with families at home.

Mallam

The term ‘marabout’ is used in French-speaking countries to refer to an Islamic teacher or religious cleric. In English-speaking countries in West Africa the Hausa word ‘Mallam’ (used for addressing any Muslim man) is sometimes used as the equivalent.

Mobility Platform

The collective of eight organisations which has focused on learning about the mobility of West African children and how best to protect them from harm.

Separated child

Separated children are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may therefore include children accompanied by other adult family members.

susu

A savings scheme in use in Ghana and elsewhere (‘small’ in the Akan language).

Trafficking in persons (also known as ‘trafficking in human beings’ and ‘human trafficking’)

The definition used is the one used in the UN Trafficking Protocol (also known as the ‘Palermo Protocol’):

The recruitment, transport, transfer, accommodation or receipt of persons (adults or children or both);

- in the case of adults, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person;
- in the case of children, it refers to the recruitment, transport, transfer, accommodation or receipt of children, whether or not these means are used.

In both cases (of adult and children), it is for the purpose of certain forms of exploitation, including the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Unaccompanied child (sometimes referred to as unaccompanied 'minor')

Unaccompanied children (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Worst forms of child labour

Defined by ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour (adopted in 1999) to include:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Out of the four categories, States which ratify Convention 182 are required *"to take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination... as a matter of urgency"* of categories 'a', 'b' and 'c', while they are required to organize a tripartite consultation, involving government officials and representatives of organizations of employers and workers (trade unions) in order to determine what types of work are covered by 'd' (and to review and revise the list periodically).

Abbreviations.

This list of abbreviations has been kept in both English and French to facilitate the work of any readers who work in one language but are interested in reports published in the other.

AEJTB

Burkina Faso Association of Child and Young Workers

AMWCY

African Movement of Working Children and Youths

AIDS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

ENDA

Environmental Development Action in the Third World (NGO based in Dakar, Senegal)

ESAM

African and World Children in Solidarity (NGO in Benin)

ETD

Territory and Development Enterprise (NGO in Togo)

ILO

International Labour Organization

IOM

International Organization for Migration

MAEJT

African Movement of Working Children and Youth

NGO

non-governmental organization

—

Locally-developed or endogenous child protection practice(s)

Tdh

Terre des hommes

UN

United Nations

UNHCR

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

AEJTB

Association des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs du Burkina Faso

MAEJT

Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs

SIDA

Syndrome de l'immunodéficience acquise

ENDA Tiers-Monde

Environnement et Développement du Tiers-monde (ONG basée à Dakar)

ESAM

Enfants Solidaire d'Afrique et du Monde (ONG au Bénin)

ETD

Entreprise Territoire et Développement (ONG au Togo)

OIT

Organisation Internationale du Travail

OIM

Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations

MAEJT

Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs

ONG

Organisation non gouvernementale

PEP

Pratique(s) endogène(s) de protection des enfants

Tdh

Terre des Hommes

ONU

Organisation des Nations Unies

HCR

Haut-commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés

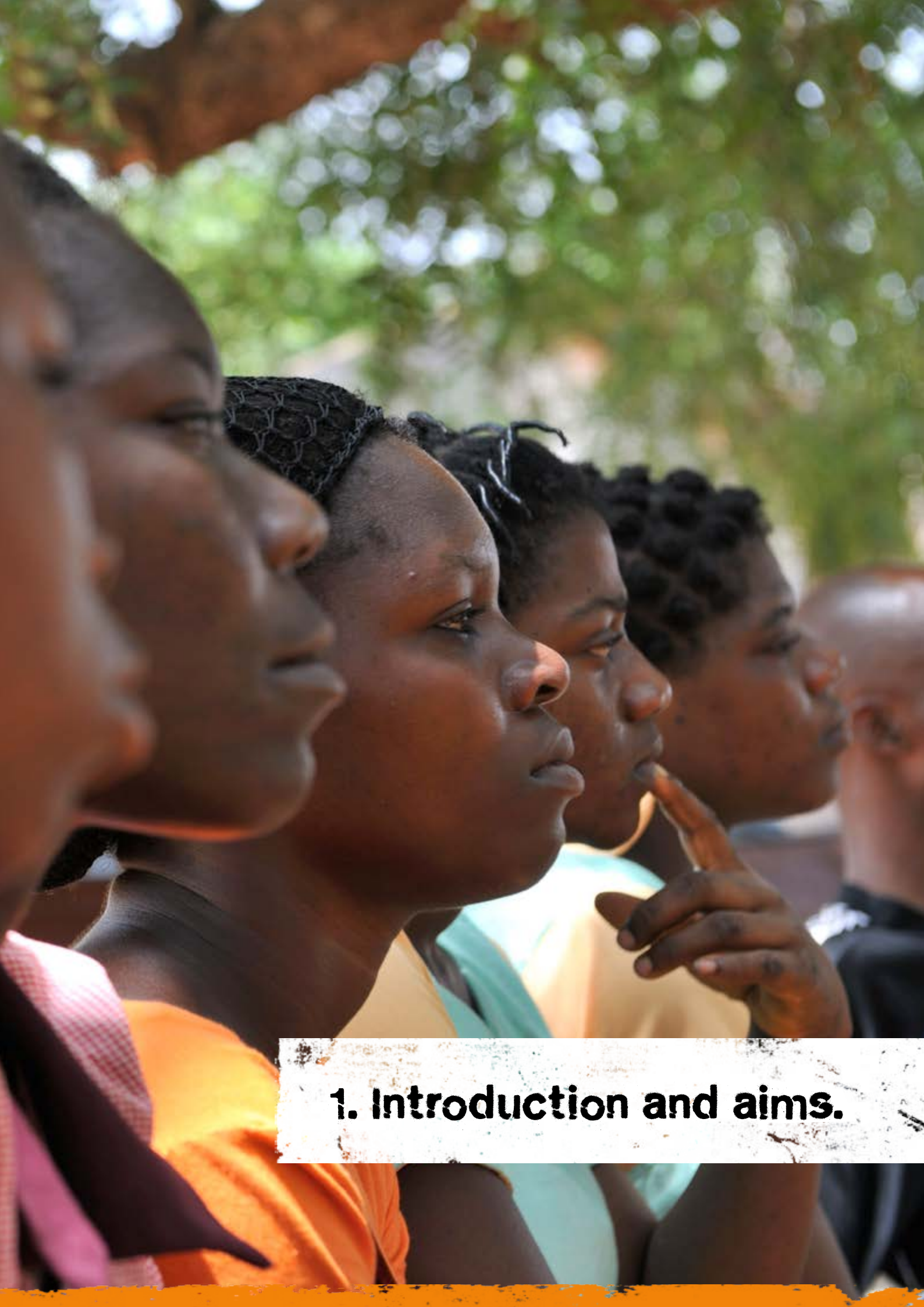
UNICEF

Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'Enfance

ONUDC

Office des Nations Unies contre la Drogue et le Crime





1. Introduction and aims.

This study, commissioned by Terre des hommes and co-edited by the Regional Working Group on Child Protection in West Africa, represents a round-up of information available about locally-developed (or 'endogenous') practices^[1] that have the effect of protecting children who leave home to earn a living away from home, whether the practices occur before children depart, while they are travelling or once they reach their destination. A special effort was made to collect information in five countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Togo), though the bulk of the information available concerns children in Burkina Faso and rather more was found to be available on some other West African countries, such as Ghana, than for either Guinea or Mali. However, the findings are considered relevant for most countries in West Africa and for both Anglophone and Francophone countries in the region.

The study was commissioned as part of a wider project in which Terre des hommes is working to improve the protection of unaccompanied children in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the same five countries. These are:

- Enfants Solidaire d'Afrique et du Monde (ESAM) in Benin;
- The Association des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs du Burkina Faso (AEJTB), Burkina Faso Association of Child and Young Workers;
- Sabou Guinée in Guinea;
- ENDA (Environnement et Développement du Tiers-monde) in Mali; and
- Entreprise Territoire et Développement (ETD) in Togo.

Moreover, this study is one of a number of child protection initiatives being carried out in the wake of a 2011 regional project on the mobility of children and youths in West and Central Africa, reviewing

what sorts of protection were appropriate for so-called 'mobile children' (or 'children on the move') in West Africa (Projet Mobilités 2011) and which resulted in a publication issuing recommendations regarding the protection of children on the move.^[2] It was carried out by eight organisations united in a 'Platform on Child Mobility'.^[3] This Platform has since merged with two other regional groups into the Regional Working Group on Child Protection in West Africa, which continues to work on the question of the protection of children on the move and aims to operationalise the recommendations that came out of the publication.

The regional project reviewed the causes and consequences of the various forms of mobility and migration involving children in the West Africa region and the ways by which they could be protected. In doing so, it put both positive and negative aspects of children's mobility in the balance and highlighted the risks and opportunities that movement represents for children according to their particular characteristics (i.e., their age, sex, social and family situation, etc.) and the conditions in which they prepare to move and make decisions to depart, as well as the actual circumstances in which mobility occurs. This implies taking action to limit the negative effects on children, together with the risks caused by this mobility due to their heightened vulnerability (such as trafficking, exploitation and abuse) by establishing a secure and protective way for unaccompanied migrant children to move.

The regional study noted that the government officials who in principle have prime responsibility for taking action to protect children (i.e., are considered under international law to be what are generally known as 'duty bearers') are not necessarily in a position to provide satisfactory services to protect children on the move adequately, particularly if required to do so all by themselves. A range of

^[1] Known in French as "pratiques endogènes de protection" or PEP.

^[2] O. Feneyrol, Protecting children on the move. Our positions and recommendations, 2012.

^[3] The members of this Platform were: the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Mouvement Africain des Enfants et des Jeunes Travailleurs (MAEJT), the African Movement of Working Children and Youth), ENDA, Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des hommes Foundation and UNICEF.

both local and international organisations with child protection expertise are therefore involved in reviewing the most appropriate ways of protecting unaccompanied children who move and live away from their parents. This study represents just one of the options being explored. As such, it is also linked to the international “Destination Unknown” campaign,^[4] initiated by the Terre des hommes International Federation, which aims to join forces to develop ways of protecting children on the move, raise awareness and advocate for policy change.^[5]

The intention at the outset was to bring together all the information available in West Africa about locally-developed practices linked to child mobility, which have an effect of protecting children against some form of harm. As explained in Chapter 2, these practices are not quite the same as the ‘community-based child protection mechanisms’

which have been the subject of many studies by other organisations (see Columbia Group 2011). Chapter 3 explains the methods used to categorise and analyse the various protective practices that have been noted. The following four chapters (4 to 7) describe practices that relate to four different stages of a child’s mobility, using a standard format to do so. Although some practices occur in several different countries, a specific example of each is presented, following which any information available about variations elsewhere is summarised and the potential for the practice to deliver better protection is considered. Finally, Chapter 8 presents some conclusions and suggestions on what still needs to be done to ensure that mobile children in West Africa benefit more from the protective practices that have been documented.

^[4] www.destination-unknown.org.

^[5] Several members of the Regional Working Group are a member of this campaign, notably Service Social International (SSI) and the Tdh Foundation.





2. Concepts concerning the protection of children in West Africa who move from one place to another.

From the mid-1990s onwards, concern was expressed about the way that unaccompanied or separated children^[6] in West Africa were exploited while working away from home. Initially this led to a focus on concepts developed in international legal instruments, such as child labour,^[7] the 'worst forms of child labour'^[8] and child trafficking (the term was used in West Africa both before and after a new Protocol on trafficking in persons was adopted by the United Nations in 2000^[9]).

By the middle of the last decade, however, some institutional actors in West Africa recognised that there were many cases of children working away from home that did not constitute child trafficking and that many of the conventional approaches to stopping either child trafficking or child labour were inappropriate or ineffective (Projet Mobilités 2011). In particular, the eight organisations belonging to the Platform on Child Mobility pooled their experience and knowledge to identify suitable ways forward, using concepts derived from child protection work around the world.

While child rights organisations in other regions have started using the term 'children on the move' to refer to children migrating within their own country or between countries, the various organisations involved in monitoring child migrants in West Africa

agreed that the word 'mobility' was a better label than either 'migration' or 'movement' and consequently referred to 'mobile children', rather than 'children on the move'. This is because they want to focus on more than just the geographic movement of young people from one place to another and also understand the resulting social mobility of the young people concerned.^[10]

Numerous publications have argued that it is vital to listen carefully to the experiences recounted by children working away from home before launching initiatives to protect or assist such children (Sambo & Terenzio 2013). The publication issued by the Mobility Platform in 2011 distinguished explicitly between locally-developed level or "endogenous" protection, on the one hand, and "institutional protection" on the other, that is protection provided by governmental and non-governmental organisations or others from outside a community (Projet Mobilités 2011:37). Nevertheless, there remains some confusion between various terms and concepts in use, which this chapter aims to clarify.

^[6] These terms are explained in the Glossary.

^[7] See ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973) and article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

^[8] See Glossary and also ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).

^[9] The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

^[10] One of the researchers consulted by the Mobility Project noted that "*The choice of the word 'Mobility' by the members of the West Africa Mobility Platform denotes careful reflection as to the notion of movements of children and young people in geographical and social space. 'Mobility' has been chosen over migration, trafficking and displacement to accommodate, without bias or prejudice, an exploration of the social dynamics of children's journeys (either with their families, with peers or alone), the multiple motivations behind them, together with their social and economic causes and consequences*" (Castle 2009:11).

2.1 The concepts of child protection and 'child protection systems'.

International child protection specialists define 'child protection' in terms of the various forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect mentioned explicitly in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the measures required to prevent such abuse and to enable children who experience them to recover. Under the terms of the Convention, governments are expected to take measures to protect children, to prevent them suffering from such abuse and also to protect and assist those who do experience them. The Convention mentions economic exploitation linked to child labour, sexual exploitation, "trafficking in children" and "all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare" (defined respectively by articles 32, 34, 35 and 36 of the Convention).

Child protection systems involve the combination of approaches and actors that are required to protect children satisfactorily. Several definitions have been developed by international organisations, and a multi-agency conference on the topic, organised in Dakar, Senegal, resulted in the publication of a "Call to Action" in 2013 to strengthen child protection systems specifically in sub-Saharan Africa (see Inter-Agency Group 2013). This noted the need for "a multi-disciplinary response" to the complex problems faced by children in the region.

The Terre des hommes Foundation's thematic policy on enhancing child protection systems comments that such a system is intended to be "a coherent set of actions and actors, in which the child is the starting point and which aims to guarantee the rights and well-being of the child by constructing synergies within and between protective environments" (Terre des hommes Foundation, 2011:6).

According to UNICEF, "Child protection systems comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection-related risks" (UNICEF 2008).

A definition of a child protection system developed in West Africa (Sierra Leone) provides more detail and helpfully identifies some of the actors who could be expected to play a role in a West African context:

"an interlocking, dynamic set of institutions, mechanisms, norms and practices at different levels (e.g., family, community, district, society) that, in combination, have nationwide reach and protect children by preventing, responding to, and mitigating the effects of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children. A national child protection system may include Government institutions such as a Ministry of Social Welfare, police, and a judiciary, and many civil society mechanisms such as traditional chiefdom practices, customary law, and community-based mechanisms" (Columbia Group 2011:25).

All these definitions indicate that the system should involve a combination of the actors that UNICEF mentioned when it previously developed the concept of a 'protective environment' for children (UNICEF 2008). This means combining a top-down approach (determined by national-level actors such as government ministries and legislators) with a bottom-up approach (reflecting norms and practice at local level).

The “Call to Action” mentioned above issued by ten organisations in 2013 spells out what needs to be done:

“The strengthening of child protection systems in sub-Saharan Africa ideally centres on the child and the family, broadening out to include community and kinship mechanisms and traditional authority and mediation structures. Non-governmental organisations of various types may also be involved together with government authorities and agencies. Local culture, tradition, knowledge, attitudes and practices shape how these different elements work together at the community level to prevent and respond to protection risks. Patterns of socialisation, approaches to childrearing, and the relationships between children and adults also influence their interaction” (Inter-Agency Group 2013:3).

Nevertheless, up until 2013 international organisations tended to focus mainly on national-level actors, as well as focusing on standards developed at international level. When national-level actors or international organisations have invested in attempts to develop local-level (or ‘community-based’) systems for protecting children over the past decade and a half, this has been done mainly in a top-down way, expecting local actors to enforce standards adopted at international level (standards

accepted by national governments when they ratify or accede to international conventions), rather than adopting a bottom-up approach that builds on how ordinary people live their lives and on their institutions, mechanisms, norms and practices.^[11]

For example, more than ten years ago an evaluation of anti-trafficking measures in Mali observed that the ‘vigilance committees’ established in various villages, ostensibly to stop children from being trafficked, actually played a markedly oppressive role for adolescents who wanted to leave home, being composed uniquely of older men in the community who generally had little understanding of the term ‘trafficking’ and assumed that it required them to stop any young people from leaving home (Castle & Diarra 2003).

As attempts are made to develop more of a bottom-up approach, the “Call to Action” quoted above notes some of the risks that need to be taken account of:

“Child protection systems strengthening efforts in sub-Saharan Africa need to be well-informed about the potential protective and harmful nature of the more and less formal elements within the system. Stakeholders should seek to design and regulate the system to achieve an optimal balance and interplay between them” (Inter-Agency Group 2013:3).

^[11] The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity has noted that “A significant disconnect exists between the formal child protection system and community based child protection mechanisms... Lack of access no doubt contributed to this disconnect. A deeper source of the disconnect, however, was that local people had a different world view and set of narratives, meanings, and social rules and customs than those that underlie the national child protection system. It was as if the people in the villages lived in a different world than that inhabited by policy makers and workers in the national child protection system” (Columbia Group 2011:19).

2.2 The development in West Africa of 'community-based child protection mechanisms'.

The idea that social development initiatives should be rooted in local communities rather than imposed from above is not a new one. During the 1990s, in response to the recruitment in West and Central Africa of children by armed militias and opposition groups, there were a multitude of efforts to develop community-based committees to discourage such recruitment, usually led by influential local actors, such as village chiefs. A review published in 2009 described "community-based child protection groups" as,

"[A] collection of people, often volunteers, who aim to ensure the protection and wellbeing of children in a village, urban neighbourhood or other community – for example, a camp or temporary settlement for internally displaced people. These groups operate at the grassroots (such as village) or district level, although they are often linked to groups at the national level" (Wessels 2009b:2).

The review noted that such groups go under a variety of names, *"such as child protection committees, child welfare committees, local anti-trafficking groups, community care groups, orphans and vulnerable children committees, child rights committees and community watch groups"* (Wessels 2009a:1).

Commenting on the functions of such groups, the same author noted:

"These groups are a vital means of mobilising communities around children's protection and wellbeing. Organised with care and in a contextually appropriate manner, they make it possible to:

- *identify, prevent and respond to significant child protection risks;*
- *mobilise communities around child protection issues;*
- *and provide a base of local support and action that can be taken to scale through links with other community groups and with national child protection systems"* (Wessels 2009a:1).

In theory such groups could respond to risks identified within their communities, as well as threats they are told about from outside and are urged to counter. However, the review noted that most of the information available was about "externally initiated or supported community-based child protection groups" (Wessels 2009a:4). A salient characteristic of most such groups in West Africa, therefore, has been that they have received support from outside the community and have involved a structure of some sort that aims to help protect children. It may be called a 'committee' or a 'mechanism'. As such, though local in their composition, the groups are not themselves initiated at local level. This is in marked contrast to the practices which are the focus of the present report and which are described in the next section of this chapter.

2.3 The concept of locally-developed or "endogenous child protection practices".

While most organisations concentrated their attention on improving the effectiveness of structures established at community-level to protect children, by the middle of the past decade the focus of some organisations in West Africa was on a different aspect of what was happening at local level. A 2007 report noted that,

"In Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo, the Terre des hommes Foundation is in the process of identifying indigenous practices associated with child migration and employment which have a protective element... Instead of a top-down approach, which allows a community-based system such as a Village Vigilance Committee to be imposed from above by the government, this envisages a bottom-up approach which builds on and develops local cultural strengths" (Dottridge & Feneyrol 2007:5).

As a result the organisation coined the term in French "pratiques endogènes de protection" (PEP). Literally translated into English, this means "endogenous protection practices", with 'endogenous' meaning 'locally-developed'.^[12] These two terms, 'endogenous' and 'locally-developed', are used interchangeably in this report. The word 'endogenous' refers to whatever grows or originates from within, but is seldom used in English. Consequently, it has sometimes been translated more straightforwardly in English as 'indigenous' (i.e., "indigenous child protection practices"), though the terms endogenous and indigenous do not mean the same thing. The term 'indigenous' is widely used in English, particularly in the context

of the promotion of the human rights of indigenous peoples.^[13] However, a similar sounding word in French, 'indigène', sounds derogatory (much as the word 'native' does in English), for the French colonial authorities in West Africa maintained an almost apartheid-like distinction between people with French citizenship and others categorised by the authorities as 'indigènes'. At a scientific level, the terms 'endogenous' in English and 'endogène' in French avoid these derogatory connotations. However, in practice they sound sufficiently similar in French to cause confusion. Indeed, this appears to be one reason why child rights organisations and other professionals in French-speaking countries have been slow to start using the concept of "pratiques endogènes de protection" (PEP). It is an additional reason for referring to them in English as 'locally-developed protection practices'.

There is consequently an overlap between the term 'endogenous' and the concept of initiatives that are 'community-based'. The difference is that the term 'endogenous' focuses on practices and techniques developed by local people, rather than introduced as a result of ideas or practical support from outside, which can be the case for community-based practices.

The term 'practices' refers to patterns of behaviour, some of which may be cultural practices observed widely throughout West Africa, while others are restricted to particular social groups or even to people who respond to similar problems in a relatively standard way. The term implies that a pattern can be observed, so it involves more than

^[12] The same term, 'endogène' or endogenous, has been used in the Republic of Benin to refer to a variety of other locally-developed practices or methods. See, for example, Kokouvi Eklou, 'Bénin : Le couple Bill et Melinda Gates s'intéresse aux pratiques endogènes', *Lebeninois.net*, 25 December 2012, accessed on 6 March 2014 at www.lebeninois.net/benin-le-couple-bill-et-melinda-gates-sinteresse-aux-pratiques-endogenes.

^[13] The word 'indigenous' refers to whatever belongs to a particular place, as opposed to whatever is introduced from outside. In a human rights context, the English term 'indigenous' also relates to the rights of indigenous peoples (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007) whereas the French term 'indigène' does not (in French this same Declaration is entitled the 'Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones').

a one-off technique or method used by a child or adult in a specific situation. In East Africa, a team reporting on similar practices has referred to them as “mechanisms”, referring to “endogenous, non-formal mechanisms for child protection” identified in Nairobi slums (Kostelny et al 2013:139)

In summary, the term “endogenous protection practices”, which was adopted by the Mobility Platform during the research project, has been used to refer to:

“The attitudes, behaviour and actions that protect children, based on beliefs, knowledge and ways of doing things that have emerged from tradition or experience. Both individual and collective practices have been identified through research and the process of institutional learning. Practices (such as blessings, gifts of money, information about routes and risks, accompanying young people while on they travel, and so on) are intended to reduce risks. They also perform the function of providing children with a buffer or involve direct action to help children in distress, thereby providing mobile children with a minimum of well-being, safety and education. Other functions encourage the success of mobile children and their endeavours, maintaining societal control, etc. Preventive measures are taken in some communities to postpone the age at which children leave and to reduce what the community considers to be mobility at a premature age...” (Projet Mobilités 2011:37).

The importance of reviewing endogenous or locally-developed protection practices was emphasised in a report prepared for UNICEF and others in West Africa:

“Because past studies of community practices have focused almost exclusively on the negative aspects of traditional practices, future studies should look at both protective and harmful endogenous community processes and examine ways in which formal system actors can strengthen the former while working in partnership and open dialogue with communities to minimize or transform the latter.

“What remains clear, however, is that some community practices are strongly protective, and because these form the first line of protection for the overwhelming majority of children in West Africa, it is critical that child protection actors understand how they function and how they can be supported and bolstered” (Child Frontiers 2011:50).

The term ‘community-based’ can be applied to both approaches, but otherwise this focus is quite different. In contrast to the committees, groups and other structures mentioned in the previous section, this focus is on what happens in practice, in the specific context of children’s mobility and economic activities, in the absence of any initiatives by outsiders, whether they are national government officials, international organisations or others. The practices that the study is especially interested in are those which are part and parcel of the informal economy, rather than ones that communities have invented deliberately to assist or protect children.

Finding out about such practices potentially means reviewing a wide range of behaviour linked to children’s mobility and their working lives, in order to distinguish between practices that have some protective effect from those that do not. It also means reviewing how some general cultural practices in West Africa, such as child fostering and both seasonal and longer-term migration, affect children who move away from home, without being drawn into wider arguments about cultural relativism and the impact, positive or negative, of some cultural practices.^[14] Rather than concentrating on the benefits of various interventions by government ministries, NGOs or others, this approach starts by documenting what happens in the absence of any intervention by outsiders, as well as noting the effects of any attempts to strengthen such endogenous practices, either by those using them or by outsiders. It may appear to some to be a rather anthropological approach. However, similar approaches in the past in West Africa have been critical to enabling planners and others to modify incor-

^[14] Such as early marriage, payments of bridewealth (on marriage), child fostering and female genital mutilation.

rect understandings of what is happening, to get rid of erroneous stereotypes and to adopt more effective methods for encouraging social and economic development (such as Hill 1963 and Meillassoux 1964), notably with respect to migration within the region (Cohen 1969 and Hill 1966).

This approach evidently puts a heavy emphasis on the importance of listening to children (in this case children who have experience of migration and of working away from home) and documenting the coping techniques and other methods or practices they use, as well as the techniques, methods and practices used by others which have a direct impact on them. This means that this report is concerned quite broadly with the informal systems, mechanisms or practices used at the local level which have the

effect of reducing the abuse and exploitation of children who leave their family home.^[15] Some may be used quite generally, in several countries; some may be used specifically by one ethnic group or by young people arriving in a specific destination or taking on a specific form of work in just one place, such as the girl child domestic workers in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

In a field where so many initiatives are taken to affect children, there remains a potential for confusion. Therefore, the following table is included to clarify the terms being used, supplementing the explanations contained in the Glossary.

Table 1: Key terms related to 'endogenous (locally-developed) protection practices'

Term	Meaning
Community-based	Any practice or institution that is developed or occurs at local level, e.g., in a village (if in the countryside) or at ward-level (in a town). The term 'community' sometimes refers to a specific social group (such as members of one ethnic group living in a town where there are many such groups), but 'community-based' does not necessarily imply this.
Coping techniques	Any practice or methods used to avoid harm or abuse or other difficulties, notably by mobile children. When used systematically and known to have a protective effect, these constitute endogenous protection practices.
Endogenous	Whatever develops or originates from within, rather than being introduced from outside. The term is seldom used in ordinary English, so the term 'locally-developed' is used in this report to mean the same thing.
Endogenous (or 'locally-developed') protection practices	Any practices developed at local (or community) level, in towns or in the countryside, generally in the context of the informal economy, which have some protective effect.
Endogenous child protection practices	Any practices developed at local (or community) level which have a protective effect on children (whether they are mobile children or children living with their own families). This report focuses on such practices that specifically affect mobile children.
Indigenous	Refers to whatever belongs to a particular place, as opposed to whatever is introduced from outside. In a human rights context, 'indigenous' relates to the rights of indigenous peoples
Traditional	Refers to practices or traditions that are considered to have been in use for some time (often generations) and to be valued because of this. However, some traditions are not endogenous and some endogenous practices are novel and not traditional.

^[15] For further information on how this method is being put into practice, see Fondation Terre des hommes 2014.



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2.3.1 A concept that overlaps with 'resilience'

While it is only in West Africa that the term “endogenous (child) protection practices” has been widely used, elsewhere in the world there have been a variety of attempts to learn directly from the coping techniques used by migrant or working children, as well as those used by migrants more

broadly. More than a decade ago, Save the Children reported on the findings of research about ‘positive deviance’ among children who were not trafficked in one South Asian location (Van Gaalen, 2003), i.e., comparing the experiences of children who were trafficked with those who were not, in order to learn what techniques or life decisions were made by the latter which were associated with the fact that they had not been trafficked.

The past decade has also seen many lessons learned about children’s resilience, both in terms of their ability to avoid harm and their ability to recover from it. For example, a report about the resilience of children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation in one district of Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia) noted that *“A resilient child copes with adversity better than he or she should”* (Yntiso et al 2009:20).^[16]

While there is certainly a link between some of the practices described in this report and the resilience of the children concerned, resilience is essentially a personal characteristic of particular children. The key common element between inquiries concerning children’s resilience and the present study into locally-developed child protection practices is the focus on how children themselves cope with challenges. A recent publication comments that the focus of resilience research has been *“on the ‘positive adaptations’ of children rather than their vulnerabilities”*, marking a *“paradigm shift in thinking about childhood”* in contrast to previous research that *“focused on a ‘deficit model’ of children as vulnerable and weak, with most studies revolving around disorders, risks, problems or illnesses of the child or his/her situation.”*^[17] *In contrast, resilience research views children as competent and focuses on their positive adaptations – how children succeed despite adversity”* (Veitch et al 2014). The current focus on protective practices is part of this paradigm shift.

2.3.2 A similar but different approach: modifying traditional practices to reduce abuse

The approach of identifying endogenous protection practices is similar but not identical to a strategic approach taken in relation to harmful practices in West Africa. In the 1990s attempts were made to influence the tradition in parts of southeast Ghana inhabited by the Ewe ethnic group of sending a girl family member to live and work with a local shrine priest to atone for sins committed by another member of the family. Rather than seeking to prohibit the practice and clashing head-on with shrine priests, local activists worked with a group of priests and persuaded them to accept other forms of donations (mainly livestock) as a form of atonement.^[18]

More recently a similar approach has been taken in southeast Togo and the Republic of Benin to try and reduce the amount of time that school-aged girls are required to spend at traditional shrines (detracting from their schooling). Adolescent girls were reportedly spending an average of two to three years at shrines, during which time they were unable to attend school. Their families also paid out substantial amounts of money for ceremonies when the girls left the shrines. In the case of Togo, in the middle of the last decade a former government minister of health, Suzanne Aho Assouma, started exploring ways by which priests responsible for

^[16] This report on children in Ethiopia echoes the explanation of what constitutes ‘resilience’ given on the website of the Oak Foundation’s Bamboo Project (www.oakfnd.org/node/1318), noting that, *“While there is no absolute definition of resilience within the Bamboo project, some characteristics of a definition have been agreed: Resilience encompasses growth as well as resistance and coping in the face of adversity*

- *It is a long-term process, or a life path*
- *It may need adversity to develop. Hence the phrase “in the face of adversity” rather than “in spite of adversity”*
- *A resilient child copes with adversity better than he or she should*
- *Resilience should be seen as a process in interaction with the environment, not an inherent quality in the child*
- *It needs more than positive qualities or resources – actively using the resources is required*
- *It may be seen in individuals or in the group environment*
- *It is never absolute, but varies with circumstances, with time, and from person to person.”*

^[17] Veitch et al refer here to University of Philippines (2002), *Integrating Child Centred Approaches in Children’s Work*. Quezon City, Philippines: Center for Integrative and Development Studies, Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program.

^[18] The girls and women who were dedicated to shrines were known as ‘trokosi’. After a five-year campaign focused on the predicament of such girls and women, Ghana adopted a law in 1998 making it a crime to subject a person to “ritual or customary servitude”. The new law did not put an end to the practice, however, although significant numbers of women were formally released from their role as trokosi and given support in recovering and establishing themselves in alternative occupations. See Nirit Ben-Ari, *Liberating girls from ‘trokosi’*. Campaign against ritual servitude in Ghana, *Africa Recovery*, Vol.15(4), December 2001, page 26, reporting on 128 women who were released in 2001 (accessed at www.amengansie.com/trokosi.html).

religious shrines in this area could be persuaded to agree that girls should spend less time at the shrines. Alongside a general campaign asserting that girls who were being initiated at shrines should attend school, shrine priests were persuaded to agree that the period of time that they spent in shrines should be reduced to three months and that the costs of ceremonies were reduced (Tdh Togo 2009).^[19]

In both cases, a major reason for adopting the strategy that was used to bring about change was the sensitivity surrounding religious practices and any attempts to modify them. There are similar sensitivities in those parts of West Africa where boys are sent away from home to receive a Qur'anic education and are frequently required by their teacher to beg for alms, to teach them to be humble, as well as to provide themselves and their teacher with sustenance (the students are known

as *talibés* in some French-speaking countries and as *almajirai* in northern Nigeria). Concern has been voiced in many places that the boys are exploited or abused by their teachers.

In each of these cases, the strategies adopted to reduce the exploitation of the children involved have tried to gradually modify the religious practice that occurs, rather than to stop it straight away. They have taken advantage of local beliefs and power structures to bring about change on behalf of children. However, in each case specific actors have taken the initiative to bring about change. This is a different strategy to the one that involves identifying locally-developed (endogenous) protection practices.

^[19] For further information on how this method is being put into practice, see Fondation Terre des hommes 2014.





3. Methods used for this review.

This report is based on a literature review both of documents explicitly mentioning endogenous child protection practices (PEP in French) and other documents that include information about coping techniques used by child migrants within West Africa. The first category of information has been generated almost exclusively by Terre des hommes offices in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo. Both published and unpublished reports covering this category were reviewed. The second category is much broader, involving a variety of studies by different organisations and authors of mobile and working children, not only in these five countries but also in others in the region, notably Ghana, Niger and Senegal. However, only a sample of such publications was reviewed.

The review was intended to focus on five countries in West Africa where the regional mobility project of Terre des hommes is being implemented: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Togo. A consultant based in Benin, Abou-Bakari Imorou, visited each of these countries. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo, country-based consultants prepared summaries of the information available (Rufin Traoré in Burkina Faso, Dramane Satao in Mali and Romain Outcha in Togo). In Mali, relevant information was also available as a result of earlier studies (notably Castle & Diarra 2003), but little information gathered in 2013 turned out to focus on locally-developed practices protecting mobile children in the informal economy. Likewise in Guinea, most information made available in 2013 concerned institutional child protection efforts and little came to light concerning locally-developed protection practices. In both cases, this appeared to be due to the ways that researchers had framed questions and local activists had responded, rather than to any evidence that protective practices have been less developed at local-level than in the other three countries.

The sources of information cited in the publications and unpublished documents that were reviewed were themselves varied, meaning that the quantity and quality of the evidence available about specific protective practices varies from case to case. In three out of the five countries (Benin, Burkina

Faso and Togo), Terre des Hommes staff and consultants, as well as other organisations member of the Regional Child Protection Working Group, had already been engaged for several years in trying to identify endogenous protection practices and, in some cases, in trying to strengthen these.

Burkina Faso is the country where there has been most effort to document the use of protective practices and also where there is some experience of trying to gradually modify them to increase their protective effect. The process for identifying endogenous protection practices there has been described as involving three stages (Feneyrol 2013:61):

- i. "identification of actors recognised by their community and children there as having a protective role (fathers, aunts/ others, landlords, "big sisters", people from the same area, foster parents, employers...);*
- ii. identification of the protection practices associated with these various actors (what they do that is perceived by children, the family and the community as serving to protect children);*
- iii. assessment of the scope and limitations of these practices on the basis of various objective criteria and the legal framework governing the field of child protection in Burkina Faso.*

"Terre des hommes facilitators first used their own knowledge of the places where their organisation was active and where their activities gave them an opportunity to collect information in the course of observing and interacting with others. Processing and analysing their findings was done with the support of Terre des hommes specialist staff. A sociological study^[20] was then carried out by independent consultants to go into more detail than the first survey and to assess the impact of actions taken to enhance and strengthen the endogenous protection practices".

In the case of Togo, a study focused attention in particular on the way that children who were actually on the move protect themselves from harm (Imorou 2013, reporting on Togolese children crossing to neighbouring Benin, sometimes to work there and other times to continue onwards to Nigeria).

^[20] A 62-page report reviewing the various protective practices used by girls from Sourou who move to cities to find employment as domestic workers (Some & Hema 2010).

3.1 The questions asked about each possible ‘protective practice’ presented in a standard format.

To assess information available about both locally-developed protection practices and other practices that might have a protective effect, a list of relevant questions about each practice was prepared, checked with a steering committee composed of members of the Regional Working Group on Child Protection, and modified subsequently in the process of using it. This table format was intended to identify some key points about each practice and

thereby enable the authors to assess the evidence available about the practice and its impact. It was initially expected to be a ‘score-card’ that would generate a clear score for each practice, indicating how suitable it might be for further development, but this turned out not to be feasible. Table 2 reproduces both the long version of the questions that were asked and a short version (in the right-hand column) that is used in the rest of this report.

Table 2: A standard format for assessing locally-developed (endogenous) protection practices

Long version	Short version
1. In each case, describe the practice or action that is deemed to have a protective effect and the category of children who are expected to benefit from it.	1a Description of the practice 1b Category of children who benefit
2. Note in which place/geographic space a practice or action occurs (even if its effects on a child are expected to occur in a different place): a) Place of origin (of mobile children or children on the move) b) During transit c) Destination/place to which a child migrates	Place where it occurs
3. Note against which risks, types of abuse or problems this practice/action is intended to protect a child; and	Abuse being avoided
4. Describe the protective effect of the practice/action (based on the evidence and testimony available).	Protective effects
5. Identify and describe the role of the main actor/ actors (apart from the children who are intended to benefit).	Role of the main actors
6. Note whether: a) The intention of the actor or whoever uses this practice is to protect one or more child; or if b) The practice has a protective effect, but the (main) motive behind it is not to protect a child (in which case what is the motive?); or if c) The practice seems mainly to have a symbolic value.	Intentions
7. Note the level of social acceptance of this practice/action (and if it has a significant level of social legitimacy, whether or not it is regarded as acceptable by the authorities).	Social acceptance
8. Note the status of this practice with respect to the law in the country concerned.	Legal status
9. Categorise the level of evidence available to demonstrate the protective effect of this practice (strong/medium/weak)	Evidence available
10. Note if children are actors in carrying out this practice or action, or merely the beneficiaries.	Are children actors or merely beneficiaries?

11.	Note if the children who are the intended beneficiaries have commented on the effects (on them) of this practice.	Have children who benefit commented?
12.	What secondary effects of this practice have been identified? (either counter-productive ones or positive ones other than the main intended protective effect).	Other effects
13.	Note the information available about the origins of this practice or action (for example, is it a cultural practice, was it introduced by a specific group of working children, etc.).	Origins
14.	Are there reported to have been any changes or developments in this practice/action (whether positive or negative) as a result of some external influence? If there have, what measures were taken, by whom, and with what effect or results?	Modifications
15.	Has the practice been put to use by any other actors (such as associations, organisations, other communities or officials in government-run organisations)?	Put to use by others?
16.	Main sources of information	Source(s)

It swiftly became clear that many of the protective practices had been documented in special detail by Terre des hommes in Burkina Faso, but that much the same practices were also occurring elsewhere. Rather than compile a table reflecting the variations in a specific practice, the tables in the chapters below contain the data collected in a specific place and are followed by a section entitled '*Variations on this practice*', summarising the additional information available. Although the table contains a row (15) reporting on whether the protective practice has been developed or put to use by others, each table is followed by further comments on '*The potential to*

build on this practice' as perceived by the author of this report and others consulted in the course of its preparation.

In countries other than Burkina Faso, the information collected about endogenous protection practices was sometimes so thin that it did not merit being presented in table form. In such cases, a summary of the information available is included, but it is clear that further investigations are needed to explore and analyse the practice's impact.

3.2 Difficulties encountered.

Needless to say, the quantity and quality of information available about different practices varied greatly. Some specific shortcomings were found in the questions listed in Table 2, leading to the conclusions that the questions were inappropriately worded or redundant. A quite different difficulty was encountered in communicating the concept of an endogenous (or locally-developed) protective practice to some of the researchers involved and enabling them to distinguish relevant practices from cultural practices in general.

A fundamental problem that researchers investigating any aspects of children's mobility in West Africa have faced in the past decade was summed up by one author who noted that, "*The sensitive nature of the phenomena of [children's] mobility and its links with trafficking, abuse and other violations of children's rights have made the main informants reluctant to talk about it*" (Imorou 2013:8). In effect, efforts to improve the protection of children are impeded by efforts in the recent past that put an emphasis on stopping children from migrating (on the grounds that they were being trafficked or entering full-time employment when they were too young).

More specifically, the authors of the documents consulted (whether published or unpublished) and the consultants asked to seek extra information were generally not explicit about precisely who had provided information on a practice and the extent to which the actors or children benefitting from it had commented on its effects. Finding out whether the children supposed to be benefitting have commented and, if so, what they have said, is important for many reasons, notably because adults tend to assume too easily that a particular practice is beneficial for children when the children themselves turn out to have a quite different view! Indeed, some practices have the effect of strengthening 'social (or societal) control', that is to say, potentially perpetuating the traditional social order at the expense of children's interests, particularly those of girls.

3.2.1 What was learnt about the standard questions (in Table 2)

When describing the possible protective effects of a practice (as required when answering Question 4), researchers tended to refer to certain practices as beneficial in a generic way, without citing specific evidence or answering all the questions in the assessment table. Question 6 sought information about the intentions underlying a particular practice, notably whether it appeared chiefly to have symbolic value. Little information was provided in response, possibly reflecting the sensitivities that researchers (as well as their informants) have about questions linked to religious practices and beliefs. Consultants appeared to find Question 9 hard to answer (it asks what level of evidence is available about the effects and side-effects of a practice), so a simple classification about the available evidence was used in the end (strong/medium/weak). Finally, next-to-no information was forthcoming in response to Question 13 about the origins of particular practices. This does not mean that no information is available, but rather that people questioned offered personal opinions which were difficult to substantiate.

3.2.2 The difficulties experienced by researchers investigating protective practices

Once the phase of collecting information about protection practices was over, it was evident that both the various researchers involved and many of those they had consulted had experienced difficulties in distinguishing between 'endogenous child protection practices' and a range of other practices, such as religious ceremonies, general education and socialisation practices and conventional child protection methods used by specialist institutions.

Some researchers endeavouring to identify protective practices and respond to the questions in Table 2 found it difficult to distinguish between general cultural practices that are common to many parts of West Africa (such as early marriage, child fostering or even the common pattern found in most cities of girls from rural areas migrating to find employment as child domestic workers) and the practices which have been developed more specifically in the context of children travelling away from home and seeking to earn a living.

Several researchers assumed that they should collect general information about child-rearing customs in West Africa. Indeed, such practices are certainly relevant. However, they found it difficult to distinguish between practices that relate specifically to what happens to children once they leave home (and contribute to keeping them safe) and other social practices in general use. When they were unable to provide evidence about the impact of such practices (in response to the questions in Table 2), they are not mentioned in this report. Nevertheless, some general child development and socialisation methods almost certainly help children to assess risks, to maintain their self-esteem and to keep themselves safe after they leave home, while others may have the opposite effect. However, the particular methods used during the preparation of this report did not result in the benefits of such methods for mobile children being identified. Further research will be required

to identify factors that contribute to the resilience of particular children, notably factors that relate to their upbringing before leaving home.

Both researchers and informants referred to some traditions and cultural practices (such as the use of songs or stories when bringing up a child) as 'endogenous protection practices' without identifying how the practices concerned affected or benefited mobile children. So it appeared that there was a danger that using the term 'endogène'/'endogenous' (or other terms denoting 'locally-based' traditions or behaviour) encouraged researchers to report on the positive aspects of culture and traditions (so often ignored or under-valued by so-called experts from other parts of the world), but without subjecting them to the level of scrutiny required by the present exercise, i.e., without finding evidence to support the claim that a particular custom or practice has a protective effect.

Researchers reported also finding it difficult to explain to their own informants what sorts of behaviour and protective practices they were interested in. It was apparent to the consultant who visited different countries in West Africa that the NGO staff in some countries (notably Guinea) found it difficult to conceive of a child protection 'practice' other than the methods that they and other child protection professionals habitually use to protect or assist children. In such cases, it was the consultants' respondents who found it difficult to change their focus to identify what children do (or what those around them do) that helps keep them safe.

A related issue relevant to migration and children's mobility concerns religious practices. One researcher (Traoré 2010:51) noted the following ceremonies as significant and having some protective effect before a child left home:

- *"Initiation ceremonies;*
- *Family rituals such as weddings, naming ceremonies (baptisms) and scarification (a sign of belonging, identity recognition) provide security to the child;*

- *Some ceremonies and community activities such as wearing a mask (which is done by a particular peer group);*
- *Family-based avoidance or prohibitions and totems are measures or mechanisms for child protection that existed almost naturally among some peoples".*

Some of these relate to a child's identity (notably belonging to a particular ethnic group or having particular religious beliefs) and the countless ways in which interaction with people who share the same identity act as a form of protection after a child leaves home. The ways in which shared identity contributes to the protection of foreign migrants have been documented across the world, even though the protection methods used are frequently regarded as unacceptable by law enforcement or child protection officials in the countries concerned (because they do not respect the letter of the law). Nevertheless, when preparing this report, the authors felt that general practices associated with growing up and defining a child's identity would not be appropriate to mention unless information had been obtained about the specific ways in which a mobile child benefits subsequently. So, a religious ceremony at the time a child leaves home would be considered relevant, while religious rites in general, including ones marking other rites of passage, would not be.

Some researchers analysing protective practices reviewed a series of protective practices together, all of which deliver benefits for the same group of children (such as the girl domestic workers in Burkina Faso who have been the subject of much research by Terre des hommes), without distinguishing between the different places where a practice occurred or where children feel the benefits (Question 2). For the purpose of this review, they are presented separately in the following four chapters.

3.3 Methods for analysing the data that was collected.

Previous descriptions and analyses of protective practices in West Africa have focused on homogeneous groups of children (the best documented being girls from Sourou in Burkina Faso who seek employment as domestic workers in cities in their own country or in Mali). This approach is effective in identifying patterns of behaviour with a protective effect, but less helpful in identifying patterns which may be common to children from a variety of different places, who travel to take on different types of work.


In order to make a more generic analysis of the protective practices used in different parts of West Africa, a decision was made to move away from descriptions of the experience of homogeneous groups of children (such as child domestic workers or boys migrating to work on cotton or cocoa farms) and to categorise the practices according to their function and the place where they occur. The next four chapters consequently distinguish between practices which have a protective effect in different places along a child's journey, dividing them roughly (and sometimes arbitrarily, as the effects of a single practice can be noted in several places) between:

- Place of origin (before migration);
- In transit/while on the road;
- Upon arrival at their destination (whether a short-term or long-term destination);
- While staying at the destination over the longer-term.

The practices recorded at destinations fall fairly clearly into two sub-categories, the first concerning what happens immediately upon arrival and the second concerning rather different practices used once children are working (or 'engaging in income-generating activities', as the literature prefers to describe it, evidently not considering some activities, such as prostitution or begging, to constitute 'work'). Consequently, these two are presented in separate chapters.

In each case, the chapter starts with a brief reference to some of the risks that children face and then presents one or more tables about particular protective practices.



A photograph of a rural setting. In the foreground, there is a dirt path. In the middle ground, a mud-brick building with a corrugated metal roof is visible. To the right of the building, there is a structure made of sticks and branches. In the background, there are green trees and a blue car parked on a dirt road. The sky is clear and blue.

**4. Protective practices
in the communities from
which children migrate,
before a child leaves.**

4.1 General information available about the risks that parents or children anticipate and the action to attenuate them.

Many children who leave home are aware before they set out that they will face risks and have to overcome obstacles, even if they are inadequately informed about the details. In many cases their parents have personal experience of such mobility, so are even better informed. Indeed, a variety of terms for referring to risk are used throughout the region.^[21]

A variety of methods are reported to be used before children leave home that are intended to benefit or protect them subsequently. For example, a researcher in Burkina Faso noted the following methods in use prior to departure (1-16) and in the course of travelling (Hien 2010:26):

Table 3: A list of techniques used prior to departure and in the course of travelling

1.	"Asking for parents' blessing before leaving home;
2.	Reassuring and encouraging oneself by saying that one is not so different to other young people and that 'if others have been successful, why not me?';
3.	Spiritual protection according to tradition (consultation with marabouts/ mallams or diviners);
4.	Talismans/amulets given to children and young people before their departure are considered powerful for protection (but less and less common these days);
5.	Rather than travelling at random, tradition says that certain days are suitable for journeys;
6.	If the first person you meet after leaving is a woman, you have to turn around and start again, as otherwise the journey may be unlucky;
7.	Organising trips in a group with others;
8.	Parents who have agreed to a child's departure entrust them to God to protect and undertake certain rituals to ensure their child's protection;
9.	In the case of children who leave without getting their parents' permission, it is the children who entrust themselves to God;
10.	By making friends in the community where a child finds work;
11.	Seek good advice before leaving on how to behave and on the purpose leaving;
12.	Being monitored from a distance by parents;
13.	Get information and identify people who come from the same place of origin in a child's destination (especially in the case of girls);
14.	Seek a foster parent (or employer) before leaving home;

^[21] Commenting on perceptions of risk in the area in northwest Burkina Faso where Terre des hommes has investigated child mobility, one author notes, "The local people in the area we were researching have a specific term to convey the idea of risk, referring to "gwɛlɛya" [difficulty] in the Dioula language" (Some & Hema 2010:29).

15	Give a child money to pay for both the outward journey and a return journey, so the child can return home in case of difficulty;
16	Obtain a birth certificate and identity card;
17	Drivers come to an agreement with the police ('Driver, you must tick a number') and give them money or alcohol in order to pass checkpoints without being stopped...;
18	According to one driver, there is no solution to the difficulties he encounters; for him, he has to put up with it. 'Coxers (brokers) know we are not allowed to travel with children, so the solution is for the Coxer to fork out the money if we have to pay someone to let the vehicle pass and even pay for the petrol if we have to turn around';
19	We have to make passengers aware that children need identity papers; drivers tell parents to go to Social Workers to get the right documents to give their consent to their children travelling;
20	Police make a correct decision to refuse to sign documents, for by paying a bribe, traffickers can get birth registration documents for the children they want to take with them;
21	Borders are very porous and children who have no documents get out of the vehicle before it reaches a checkpoint, accompanied by an adult who helps them circumvent the checkpoint (and document checks) before getting back into the vehicle later on;
22	The Burkinabe part of the journey is not easy, it's not possible to negotiate one's way out of difficulties, it's essential to make detours, for a child who is stopped is sent back to his or her village or referred to the TON Association [an NGO responsible for child protection]. However, increasingly police let children and young people through on account of the lack of facilities and resources to look after children – on the part of the CVS [the official Vigilance and Monitoring Committee] and the TON Association. Some provinces refuse to look after children because you have to pay 3,000 CFA Francs per child to get them released (from official custody)".

It is noticeable that many of these methods rely on an exchange of information, i.e., mainly other actors in the transport system providing information to mobile children or their families. Some of these constitute endogenous protection practices, though not all have been investigated or analysed adequately. This is particularly the case concerning the first half dozen practices that relate to religious beliefs and to others that might be regarded as superstition (such as '6'). In such cases, identifying the effects on an individual is challenging, for the

practices may well have a protective effect, but the protection bestowed may be in terms of enhanced self-confidence rather than anything more tangible. Yet other items in this list of 22 involve interventions by agents of the state (and hence are not endogenous or locally-developed). However, a good many others could be regarded as endogenous (7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15), though their impact has not been analysed in any detail.

4.2 Examples of protective practices.

Table 4: The role of mothers (in Sourou, Burkina Faso) in preparing their daughters' departure to find domestic work

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	Girls talk to their mothers or aunts, but not to their own father, about the possibility of going to a city to find employment as a domestic worker. Their mother or aunt helps with the preparations and uses her own social network in the destination city to provide contacts for the girl. The girl's father is said not to play an active role in the preparations.
1.b Category of children who benefit	Girls living in Sourou (Burkina Faso), generally shortly before or after puberty.
2. Place where it occurs	Place of origin (a village in Sourou), although the practice involves social contacts in an intended destination.
3. Abuse being avoided	A variety of problems upon arrival at a destination which a girl is not familiar with.
4. Protective effects	Girls are put under the control or influence of a trusted person in the destination town (someone from the same village or from the same group of villages). This person is reckoned to be capable of keeping an eye on the child concerned.
5. Role of the main actors	The girl's mother (or sometimes aunt) is usually the first person to be informed of a girl's intention to seek work away from home. Indeed, sometimes mothers or aunts are reported to take the initiative and suggest that a girl should go away and work. At one level the adult woman involved mobilises her own social network to take care of her daughter (a network that she may have developed when she, as a child, went to work as a domestic in a city). Evidently the adult woman concerned relies herself on others in her social network to provide advice and assistance. At a different level, she prepares for her daughter's departure by making ritual sacrifices, as instructed to do by a Muslim marabout or other religious expert. In a few cases, a girl's mother actually travels to the city to make arrangements personally.
6. Intentions	To provide support for a girl in both practical ways and at the religious level.
7. Social acceptance	Girls' migration for domestic work appears to have a strong level of social acceptance, both in Sourou and in the cities where they work.
8. Legal status	Nevertheless, the law in Burkina Faso suggests that the minimum age for entry into employment is 16 (law that is not at all systematically applied).
9. Evidence available	Medium
10. Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Girls themselves often take the initiative to migrate, but are the beneficiaries of a protective action taken by their mothers or aunts.
11. Have children who benefit commented?	Not apparent from the sources available.
12. Other effects	The mother or aunt of a girl who intends to migrate does not necessarily know appropriate people in the destination city to assist her daughter, or her contact turns out to be less dependable than hoped.
13. Origins	Reported to be a 'long-standing tradition' that involved the previous generation of women as city domestic workers when they were young. In practice, no evidence available about when this pattern started or about this particular practice.
14. Modifications	There was a suggestion that fathers used to play a greater role in organising their daughters' departure, but now refrain from doing so for fear of being accused of being a trafficker. However, no specific evidence was offered to support this claim.
15. Put to use by others?	Not reported in the Sourou case.
16. Source	Some and Hema 2010.



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Variations on this practice

Some fathers in Sourou are said to play a supportive role by carrying out a religious ceremony prior to their daughter's departure. They are reported to place a cinder from the household's cooking fire on the path out of the compound, while making a promise to sacrifice an animal to the ancestors if their daughter returns safe and sound. The family cooking fire has strong symbolic meaning in this area (Some & Hema 2010:34).

Relatives and friends of a similar age are reported in other areas to provide similar advice on where to go and how to get there. In Guinea, approximately

half the child domestic workers were reported in the middle of the last decade to work for relatives, while the rest worked for employers with whom they were unrelated (Thorsen 2012a:6).

The case of the Akebu in western Togo seems typical, with potential migrants opting for a destination where they know relatives or other acquaintances who are already living and working there (Djobokou 2008), with claims (and some evidence) that young migrants who continue onwards to other destinations encounter worse abuse. In northern Benin, young people planning to leave home and find work on cotton farms were reported in 2008 to seek the

assistance of brokers (referred to in French as 'tuteurs' – foster parents) who could provide them with advice and assistance: *"These are young persons, sometimes former child migrants themselves, who recruit, facilitate the journey and help children settle into work, sometimes employing the child migrants themselves. Children sometimes negotiate with tuteurs (or other kinds of intermediaries) without their family's knowledge. Sometimes parents are approached directly by a tuteur (who might be a friend or relative) and the parents might acquiesce or may oppose their children leaving"* (Anyidoho & Ainsworth 2009:16).

The potential to build on this practice

Organisations aspiring to protect children in West Africa from harm have mainly provided information to rural families on the risks to their children once they migrate. While this has not stopped children leaving home, it may have had other effects—such as persuading some parents to make more reliable arrangements for someone to look after or look out for their child after he or she reaches a destination. However, these effects are not themselves known to have been the subject of research. Child protection organisations could potentially help fill a gap and support rural families in all sorts of ways, if they were not so worried that they might be regarded as accessories to child trafficking or child labour.

4.3 Other practices.

Countless NGOs in both West Africa and other regions of the world have sought to delay the age at which children leave home and migrate (or to stop them leaving altogether). Often the emphasis is on persuading families to send their child (particularly daughters) to school or to keep them on at school, not only to delay their departure, but for other wide-ranging benefits. In other cases this is scarcely an option, for schools remain inaccessible.

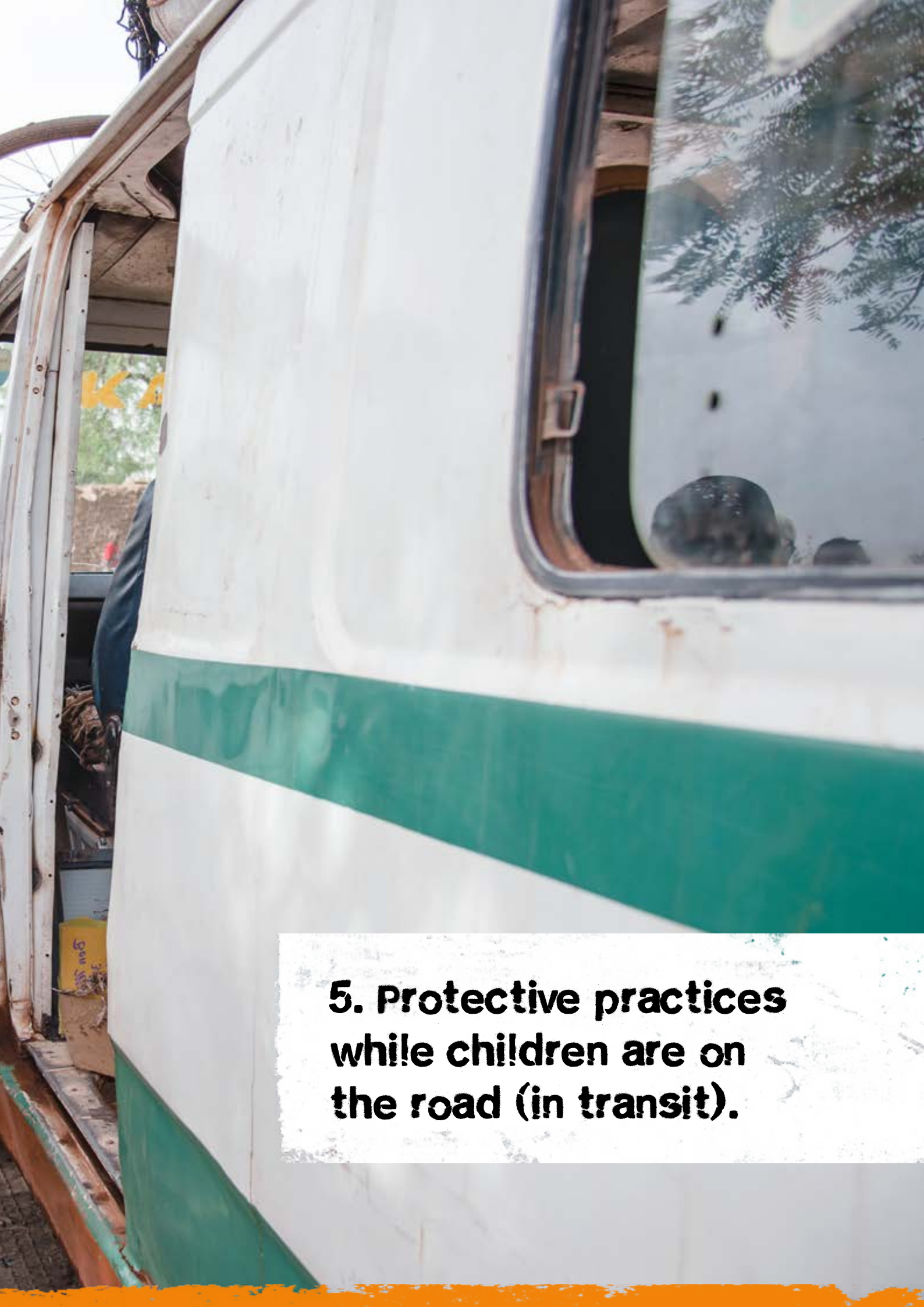
At a more practical level, other initiatives have sought to engage children in some form of economic activity that provides an income to them or their family (Delap et al 2004), particularly once they reach adolescence. For example, in Burkina Faso Terre des hommes has supported children aged 12 to 16 (especially girls) in acquiring and fattening a sheep that is eventually sold.

The intention is to enhance the children's worth in the eyes of their parents, as well as giving the young people themselves some purchasing power, and thereby reduce the pressures on them to migrate

and make money. Some initiatives of this sort have probably occurred without outside influence (and are endogenous), but the ones that have been documented invariably involve some outside influence and do not qualify as 'endogenous' practices. A range of other activities initiated in communities around West Africa that promote children's involvement in household or other economic activities may have the same effect—of delaying the age at which young people leave home—but have not yet been documented.

Some rural communities are reported to have taken action to address the 'pull' factors that attract young people to places away from home, by creating a village-level fund to provide services to children who remain in the village, notably social, educational and health services. Insufficient evidence was found to report on such initiatives, notably on the extent to which they are initiated in the absence of external support.





**5. Protective practices
while children are on
the road (in transit).**

5.1 General information available about the risks that parents or children anticipate and the action to attenuate them.

Travelling within West Africa can be dangerous, not only because lorries and taxis drive too fast on poor condition roads, but because of the host of officials who prey upon passing travellers, young and old. Sometimes the men in uniform (occasionally they are women) are upholding the law, but too often they act in ways that are intended primarily to bring personal benefits in the form of bribes paid in cash or services.

In West Africa, as in other regions of the world, mobility is facilitated by a range of actors in the informal economy, referred to variously as brokers, middlemen or drivers, with nicknames including “cox-eurs”, “cross men”, “charter men” (in Nigeria) and (in the case of women) “mama/maman”. For example, authors working with the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, the MAEJT, have noted that “Lorry drivers and their mates, including apprentice drivers, are approached by children and their parents in places of origin and by potential employers at destinations. These actors play a very important role in the phase between departure and arrival. They know the situation at both ends” (Sambo and Terenzio 2013:22). The role of these intermediaries is inherently ambiguous: regarded as a vital source of protection and assistance by travellers, including mobile children, they are sometimes denounced by government officials or others as traffickers and smugglers. One author summed it up: “*While some of them act as traffickers, others behave as true companions of children whom they protect as much as they can*” (Imorou 2013:27).

This means the role played by officials (or others) who try to stop children from moving, whether in the name of combatting child trafficking or for other reasons, is equally ambiguous, for such officials are viewed by mobile children and many ordinary people as a threat, not as child-friendly people who protect children. The negative impact on children and their families of some anti-trafficking measures has been documented in other reports (notably Castle & Diarra 2003 and Botte 2005), so need not be repeated here. However, in several countries it is reported to have made children’s journeys more hazardous, rather than less.

At the popular level, a variety of methods have evolved to cope with the threat of people in uniform. Passengers expect to benefit from some protection from the driver of their vehicle, who may be able to guarantee safe passage in return for a bribe or some sort of service rendered to a person in uniform. As this report looks at protective practices from the point of view of children who travel, it is also important to note that children, like adults, consider the officials at international borders to be a hazard to be avoided rather than a means of protection, so the second section below (5.3) reports on techniques used by children to avoid being stopped at border points.

5.2 Examples of protective practices.

Table 5: The pay on arrival ('arriver-payer') system (Mali and Burkina Faso)

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	The 'arriver-payer' (pay on arrival) system enables young migrants to travel without having the money to cover the costs of their journey. It takes two forms with quite different implications. The driver either expects to be paid on arrival by a relative or friend, or to place a child with an employer of the driver's choice, which may result in a worse contractual arrangement for the child. <i>"This migrant's first earnings are subsequently retained by the employer as payment for their ticket. Migrants who travelled using 'arriver-payer' were often charged substantially more for the journey than those who could pay before they left"</i> (Castle & Diarra 2003:72).
1.b Category of children who benefit	A wide range of children who have no money or insufficient cash to pay the costs of their journey, migrating for different types of work and in different countries (evidence available concerns Malians travelling to Côte d'Ivoire).
2. Place where it occurs	The arrangement concerned the phase of transit, but involves payments being made upon arrival. The research for the report occurred chiefly in in the Bankass in central Mali and in four communities in Kolondièba in the southeast of the country (the authors did not otherwise specify where they had noted this practice occurring).
3. Abuse being avoided	Being obliged to borrow money at extortionate interest rates or getting into difficulty while travelling as a result of having no money (and also being unable to travel because no money is available to pay for the costs of a journey). Of course, this advantage may be off-set by the child being subjected to debt bondage upon arrival and required to work for the person who paid the travel costs or for anyone else to whom the debt is transferred.
4. Protective effects	Particularly useful for children who travel without their parents' permission (i.e., who cannot obtain a loan from their parents) or whose parents are unable to contribute any money.
5. Role of the main actors	The costs of a journey are covered temporarily EITHER by a driver OR relatives or friends who pay on arrival OR an employer who pays the driver. In some cases interest is charged which may, in some instances, place the child in debt bondage.
6. Intentions	Gives benefits to a child by allowing him or her to move a long distance and reach a place to earn a living.
7. Social acceptance	Standard in some places (possibly more widely than revealed by the evidence available).
8. Legal status	Loaning money is not illegal, but such loans are ambiguous in places where lorry or taxi drivers have been urged explicitly to help stop children being 'trafficked'.
9. Evidence available	Generic and good, but not yet identified as in use in enough places to see how an intervention could be arranged at specific destinations to avoid children being placed by drivers in abusive situations.
10. Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Beneficiaries, not actors.
11. Have children who benefit commented?	Yes, Castle & Diarra 2003 reported on the comments of 12 child and young adult migrants. The report noted that, <i>"Arriver-payer was particularly useful for clandestine migrants whose parents were unaware of their impending trip and could not therefore contribute transport costs. Although they had to reimburse the price of their ticket costs, they were able to negotiate their salary and were apparently free to leave when they wanted. Again, a degree of protection was probably afforded by the fact that, in such situations, the employer was often a relative"</i> (Castle & Diarra:73).

12.	Other effects	The major disadvantage of this practice is that it potentially places a child in a form of debt bondage upon their arrival at a destination, especially if the costs of transport are met directly or indirectly by an employer. <i>"[A]lthough the arriver-payer system is certainly potentially exploitative, it should also be recognised that many migrants used it without any apparent difficulty. As described, of the 12 migrants who used it, three could be considered to have been trafficked as a result of travelling in this manner and two had the fare paid by relatives. The remaining seven did not appear to have any problem and accepted, and indeed negotiated directly with their employer that the first month or months of salary would serve to pay off their bus fare"</i> (Castle & Diarra 2003:72).
13.	Origins	Not reported.
14.	Modifications	None reported.
15.	Put to use by others?	Not reported. In theory it would be possible for child protection actors to provide a service when children arrive at their destination, in effect providing a loan to cover their transport costs and avoiding them being utterly dependent on their driver, who can place them in a particular abusive situation (such as prostitution) or on a harsh employer. In practice, those doing so risk being criticised for encouraging children to migrate to work.
16.	Sources	Hien 2010: 24 and Castle & Diarra 2003.

The pay-on-arrival system is clearly a 'coping technique' and is perceived by some mobile children as vital to facilitate their travel, even though they will be in debt subsequently. Child protection activists who regard migration and movement as inherently dangerous might not regard this as protective at all. However, it is a practice which is regarded as beneficial by many in West Africa and one worth taking into account in a report about practices that could help protect children.

Variations on this practice

This system highlights the role played by drivers of public transport (including taxis, vans, buses, lorries and, in urban areas, motorbikes). In Burkina Faso, long distance drivers are reported to play a protective role when they shuttle between villages and cities and are known to (and, to some extent, accountable to) villagers and the parents of the children they take to town (Some & Hema 2010). Informed of the specific address of a landlord (see next chapter) in whose compound a child is scheduled to stay, drivers are responsible for delivering mobile children there, rather than dropping them at the main bus station (usually a place used by all public road transport, so full of people with both friendly and unfriendly intentions). This avoids young people having to cope with the risks of sleeping in a bus station or having to find their landlord's

compound by themselves and getting lost. Some drivers also help children in cities maintain contact with their parents back home.

The potential to build on this practice

The inability of migrants to pay the cost of their journeys without getting into debt is a feature of migration in many parts of the world. In the worst cases, the debts incurred put the migrants concerned into debt bondage. Organisations wanting to support migrants can potentially organise credit unions or other informal banks. In the meantime, the pay-on-arrival system plays a key role in facilitating the mobility of poor people (adults as well as children). In this sense, while it may not be a protective practice as such, there is some potential to take action to influence the way the practice works, both to reduce the harmful outcomes (child workers being obliged to work for an abusive employer because of an outstanding debt) and to increase the chance of a positive outcome by ensuring that mobile children have access to capital upon their arrival at a new destination. Child protection organisations could adopt an integrated approach to several distinct protective practices (not only this one, but also Table 6 below) to make the way that children or others will pay the costs of the services provided to them more transparent.

Table 6: Being accompanied by other children or travelling as a group of children

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	Girls travelling to a city in Benin and Burkina Faso to seek work as domestics used to travel in groups of three or four together, reckoning this kept them safer while on the road than if they travelled alone or only in pairs.
1.b Category of children who benefit	Girls from Sourou (in Burkina Faso) and from a variety of other rural locations in West Africa.
2. Place where it occurs	Burkina Faso and other countries.
3. Abuse being avoided	Sexual harassment, extortion and other abuse along a child's journey.
4. Protective effects	Younger girls (and, to a lesser extent boys) gain confidence when travelling in a group and are less vulnerable to sexual harassment or rape than when they travel alone or only as a pair.
5. Role of the main actors	This practice involves the children themselves as actors.
6. Intentions	There may have been no explicit intention to avoid abuse when the practice started, but, once it became more difficult for girls to travel together in groups, it became apparent that they were more vulnerable if alone.
7. Social acceptance	This has been accepted as good practice at the social level (though government-backed interceptions of mobile children, apparently intended to stop children being trafficked, have made it risky for public transport to be seen to contain more than a few children).
8. Legal status	In some countries this method has been undermined by government or official strategies to stop child trafficking, with law enforcement officials deployed to stop vans or cars carrying a group of adolescent girls, on the grounds that they may be in the process of being trafficked. In northern Benin, one author noted that " <i>One immediate impact [of police stopping vehicles carrying children] has been a change in the way children move – now increasingly in small groups, and without an intermediary ('goutte à goutte'/drop by drop) (Imorou 2008)</i> " (quoted in Anyidoho & Ainsworth 2009).
9. Evidence available	Weak.
10. Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Actors.
11. Have children who benefit commented?	Not reported
12. Other effects	Not reported
13. Origins	Not reported
14. Modifications	See #8 above, i.e., a change that has apparently had negative repercussions for children.
15. Put to use by others?	Not to protect children. Officials involved in trying to combat child trafficking evidently considered that traffickers sometimes moved children in groups.
16. Sources	Philippe & Ky 2003

Variations on this practice

A variation on this practice was reported in eastern Burkina Faso in 2006, where anyone who travelled for the first time to find work on a cotton farm was reported usually to be accompanied by a boy who had made the journey before or to receive instructions from someone who had made the journey before, principally to ensure they reached the correct destination, as this was not a large town, but a suitable farm in another rural area (de Lange 2006:81).

The potential to build on this practice

Ironically, the main action required to make this practice effective would be to remove the threat of children travelling together being intercepted as possible victims of traffickers.

5.3 Crossing borders: protecting children or subverting protection?

International borders are potentially difficult for unaccompanied children to cross, even though ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) agreements guarantee freedom of movement between states. Commenting on the techniques used by children to cross international borders, authors working with the MAEJT, noted that,

“Illusion and evasion are arts that children on the move need to learn quickly to be able to complete their journeys. Borders are generally considered to be areas of high risk and are best avoided. There are two ways to get past them: by pretending that a relative has died in a nearby village, or by claiming that the journey has something to do with religious activities, such as the visit of a Muslim teacher (marabout). It is by creating illusions, perhaps supplemented by a little gesture (producing cash out of a pocket), that young people are able to move more easily” (Sambo & Terenzio 2013:21).

In practice, anyone who has used public transport in West Africa to cross a border is acquainted with other coping techniques: taxis and other vehicles routinely stop some kilometres short of a border to allow some passengers out who then walk across

the border, avoiding the official border point. They are collected again afterwards.

While national (and international) child protection organisations find the idea strange that borders and border guards are a hazard that require honest people to resort to coping techniques to avoid them, any report that attempts to reflect the views of travellers – particularly the point of view of mobile children – is bound to review how mobile children cope with risks at border crossings and protect themselves against what they perceive to be a risk. To adopt the contrary point of view – imagining that immigration officials deployed at border crossing points are there to help protect children by stopping them leaving their own country – would be naïve in a West African context. In other parts of the world, human rights organisations have described a range of methods used by irregular migrants, including children, to persuade border guards to allow them to pass, frequently involving bribes, sexual favours (transactional sex) or other abuse (Reale 2013). Those who are intercepted are also reported to experience further abuse. From the point of view of governments (reflected in the policies of international organisa-

tions that are accountable to governments), the various people who provide advice or assistance for informal border crossings are 'people smugglers' and therefore regarded as criminals. In a West African context many are regarded in much the same way as other brokers and intermediaries described in this report, as a helpful shield against abuse by people in uniform.

As the methods for crossing borders that are described here are inherently illegal, it was deemed inappropriate to use the standard table for presenting information about a 'protective practice'.

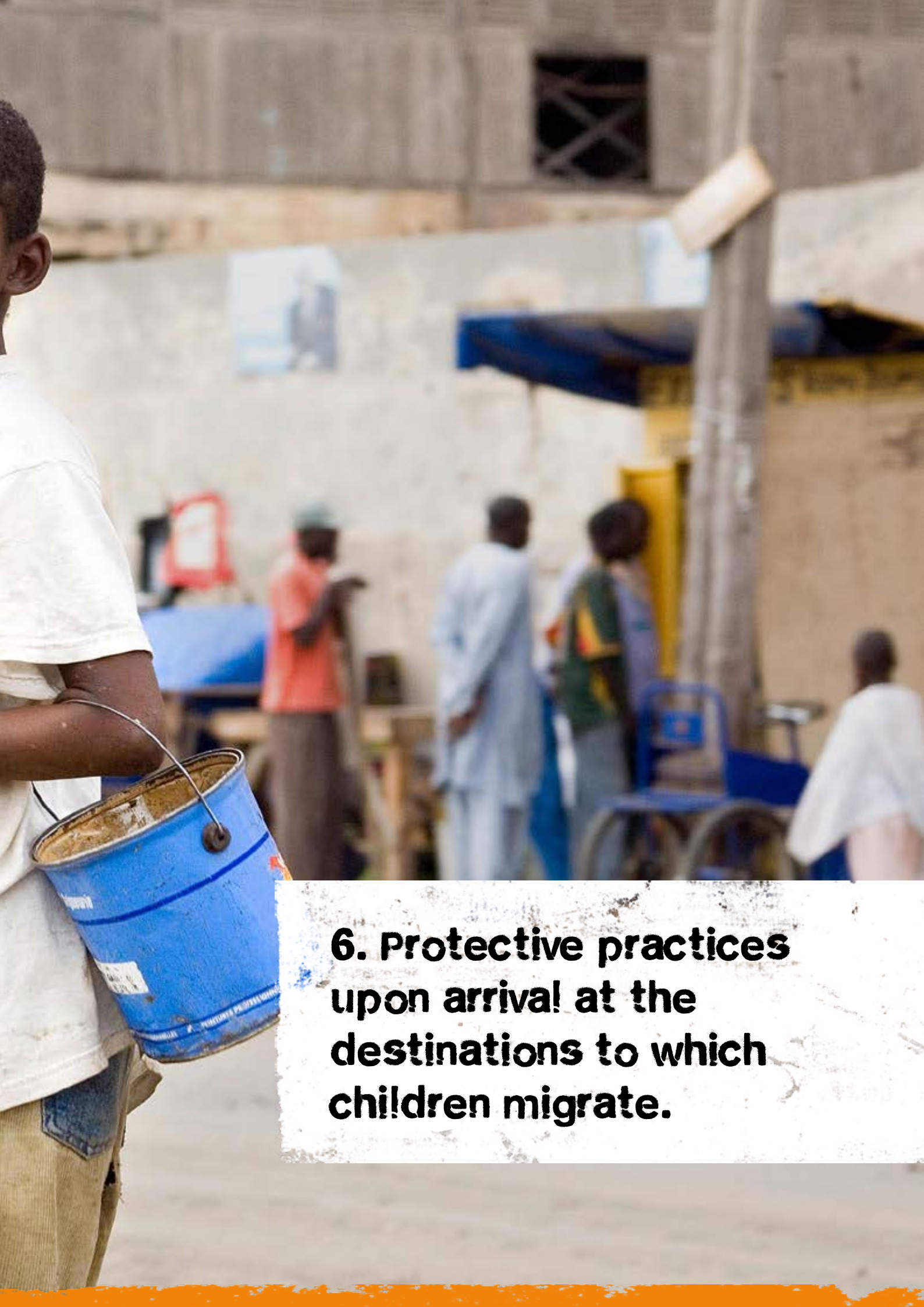
The main information found about this technique about crossing an international border concerned the border between Togo and Benin (Imorou 2013) and involved children from Vo, in the southeast of Togo, seeking to travel eastwards (to the Republic of Benin or Nigeria). While a few children have identity papers entitling them to cross the border and some children were reported to avoid border crossing points altogether, others were reported to seek the assistance of smugglers known as "cross men" who advised them on how to cross

without being detected. A routine method was to disguise themselves as a porter, wearing old clothes, carrying a headring in their hand or on their head, so that border guards would think they were carrying the luggage of other travellers rather than being travellers themselves.

A variety of other methods have been reported along the same border, for example involving brokers who provide accommodation and advice on how to cross the border while avoiding check-points.

While child protection professionals have a responsibility to avoid being involved in illegal activities and cannot support or condone informal or illegal border crossings, in some places (such as South Africa) they provide reception facilities for children who have just crossed a border, providing them with food, accommodation and advice. In such cases, some are able to make an informal assessment of the child's best interests or to influence how local officials make a best interests determination (Reale 2013).





6. Protective practices upon arrival at the destinations to which children migrate.

6.1 General information available about the risks that mobile children face and the action to attenuate them.

A migrant's moment of arrival at a new destination is potentially one of the riskiest points in their journey, particularly if there is no-one to welcome or look after them and if they throw themselves into the job market without knowing whom they can trust. Knowing where to go or whom to ask for is a safeguard and assistance in finding a good (or reasonable) employer is a way of avoiding a bad or abusive employer. These generalisations apply as much to mobile children in West Africa as migrants everywhere.

This chapter focuses on practices that have helped children in West Africa remain safe or reduce the risks they face at the time of their first arrival.

6.1.1 Child fostering

West Africa in general has a strong cultural tradition that is generally known as 'child fostering'. This involves parents sending a child to live with a relative or acquaintance, sometimes someone in a town or city where the child is likely to learn something new or have better opportunities than if he or she remained with his/her birth parents. Like many cultural practices, this serves many purposes. It also involves more than anything that is conventionally understood as 'fostering'. It concerns children, often under ten years of age, being sent to live and sometimes to work in someone else's household. On occasion, they end up working in exploitative circumstances (see: Goody 1982; Whitehead, Hashim and Iversen 2007; and

Anyidoho & Ainsworth 2009:17). For example, a report criticising the exploitation of child domestic workers in Guinea notes that,

"[C]hild fostering can be useful for economic survival, education and socialization. These systems can work well when there is a viable social network of persons monitoring the child's well-being... While studies in Africa have indicated that foster children and other nonrelated children are particularly likely to be kept out of school and experience abuse, biologically-related children are not necessarily shielded from neglect and violence by their parents either" (Human Rights Watch 2007:44).

Child fostering is widely viewed in West Africa as a protective practice, but takes so many different forms that it is not described in this report as a single protective practice. The terminology used in the context of fostering can also be misleading, with working children referring to their employer as 'aunty' (in English) or 'tutrice/tuteur' (in French), when the adult concerned treats the child primarily as an employee and not in a similar way to his or her own children.

Similarly, apprenticeships are also reported widely throughout the region, but are mentioned at the beginning of the next chapter, as they have less impact on a mobile child's arrival and more on their working life at their destination.

6.2 Examples of protective practices.

The best-known practice for enabling people in West Africa to travel and migrate with some degree of safety concerns people known in English as ‘landlords’ and in French as ‘logeurs’ and ‘logeuses’, that is to say people from the migrant’s own home community who run a compound (residence) in a ‘foreign’ area where

migrants can stay and get advice and assistance. The term ‘foreign’ does not necessarily refer to a different country, but rather to a place with different customs and language, or, for people arriving from rural areas, a city where life seems utterly different to the village. This practice has been reported for many decades.

Table 7: Role of landlords (logeurs/logeuses) in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	<p>‘Landlords’ in West Africa manage a large compound in a city and take in migrants from their home area (a village, a group of villages or a particular ethnic group). In Ouagadougou, the services they provide (on a commercial basis) to girls from Sourou include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing accommodation, food and drink for girls who have just arrived in the city and are seeking work, usually as a live-in domestic; • some act as a private employment agency (potential employers approach them to seek workers); • some record the addresses of girls’ employers, so they can get into contact with a girl relatively easily; • some allow their compounds to be used as a social centre for live-in domestic workers; • some receive salary payments on behalf of girl workers, in effect acting as a savings account or forwarding money to their parents; • most act as intermediaries between a girl worker and her family in her home village, for example acting as a postman and relaying messages between a them; • most intervene with employers when a disagreement or act of abuse is reported, such as failure to pay an employee, pregnancy, health problems and physical ill-treatment.
1.b Category of children who benefit	<p>Child migrants moving to a city which is a habitual destination for migrants from their home community, notably Samo girls from Burkina Faso’s Sourou province seeking work in Ouagadougou, who usually stay with a landlord who comes from the same village or near to their family home.</p>
2. Place where it occurs	<p>‘Landlords’ play a similar role all over West Africa. This has been documented by Terre des hommes in Burkina Faso and by others, including academics, elsewhere. Landlords from Sourou generally come from a village near to the children whom they assist, meaning that there is a relatively high level of accountability between them and the parents of such girls and also with others from Sourou living in Ouagadougou. Elsewhere, the kinship or social links between landlords and their clients are not always so close.</p>
3. Abuse being avoided	<p>A range of abuses which migrants might encounter when arriving in a city for the first time (without speaking the language of the city dwellers, having a place to live or knowing where to go or how to find employment), including having their possessions stolen, rape, recruitment into exploitative or hazardous jobs, etc.</p>

4. Protective effects	<p>Landlords from Sourou provide a temporary place for migrants to stay and support while they find a job (and sometimes later, when seeking a different job). <i>"In most cases their landlords remain the key people that girls refer to while they remain in a town. They are well enough informed about the problems routinely encountered by girls living in the city. Indeed, they are routinely requested by girls to help resolve problems that they encounter"</i> (Some & Hema 2010:35).</p> <p>By meeting other working children in a landlord's compound, those who have recently arrived also have access to knowledge and advice from other young people who share their background.</p>
5. Role of the main actors	See 1a above. In terms of international law, some landlords provide the services of a 'private employment agency', ^[22] while others provide a much wider set of services.
6. Intentions	Landlords provide a commercial service at the same time as meeting the needs of incoming migrants and being part of a social network that stretches back to the villages they or their parents originally came from. They are regarded (sometimes wrongly) as someone who can be trusted to look after girls arriving in the city for the first time, mainly because they are known to their own communities in sending areas, as well as the city and can, to some extent, be held accountable by them.
7. Social acceptance	High level of social acceptance, particularly in rural communities which depend on landlords as a link to relatives in the city. Also high among potential employers and migrants themselves.
8. Legal status	The mere fact of being a landlord is not a criminal offence, but the status of landlords is ambiguous, particularly when they provide services to young people (under 18 years of age). Burkina Faso's 2008 labour code (article 152) specifies that the minimum age for starting work "may not be less than 16 years" (though this law is not applied systematically, just as similar laws are not applied in other countries in the region; under a previous code the minimum age for starting work was 15, but this was also not widely observed). Trafficking children is an offence under the terms of Law No. 029-2008/AN on Combatting Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices. ^[23] The effect is to make child trafficking, including receiving a child with the intention of subjecting the child to economic exploitation an offence punishable by ten years' imprisonment. Some landlords are reported to have expressed fear that they could be indicted for trafficking children, though no such indictments have been reported.
9. Evidence available	Terre des hommes has focused in particular on their role in Burkina Faso, but also documented it in Togo and Benin. A range of publications describe the role played by landlords in different parts of West Africa.
10. Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Beneficiaries.
11. Have children who benefit commented?	Yes. E.g., four child domestic workers (girls) were interviewed during the preparation of one report (Terre des hommes 2007). One reported that, invited to her landlord's compound to celebrate Tabaski (Eid al-Fitr), she received numerous tips from other girls on what services she could expect the landlord to provide (e.g., looking after her money or loaning money to pay for health care). Others noted the limits on what they could expect from their landlord.

^[22] In 1991 the International Labour Organization adopted an international convention, Convention No. 181, on private employment agencies. Its provisions are intended to ensure that workers, notably migrants, are not charged fees for finding them work.

^[23] The texts of the anti-trafficking law was consulted at: www.africanchildforum.org/clr/Legislation%20Per%20Country/burkina%20faso/bfaso_trafficking_2008_fr.pdf.

12. Other effects	<p>Reports do not provide much information on how landlords are remunerated and whether such remuneration is sufficiently transparent to the migrants whom they assist (or their parents).</p> <p>Living conditions in some landlords' compounds are poor (accommodation and quality or quantity of food provided), especially at certain times of the year when there is a wave of new arrivals (e.g., after the agricultural season).</p> <p>Some landlords fail to react when a girl in 'their' network reports she is being abused; i.e., landlords regard certain forms of child abuse as acceptable or not worth complaining about. Once an abusive employer is aware of what they can get away with, this reportedly exposes domestic workers to further ill-treatment.</p> <p>The issue of the savings that domestic workers make from their small income is a sensitive one in the relationship between girls and landlords. Whatever the option chosen, whether a landlord keeps a written record or savings are retained by either a landlord or an employer, it is important that there should be transparency in the amount of income and its management.</p> <p>There are occasional reports in Burkina Faso that a girl has experienced abuse while staying in a landlord's compound.</p>
13. Origins	In general, early 20 th or even 19 th century. The date when mobile children began using landlords' services in Ouagadougou has not been recorded.
14. Modifications	Fear of arrest under the terms of anti-trafficking laws has persuaded some landlords in Burkina Faso (and others countries) to reduce their visibility and sometimes to stop providing reception facilities to younger looking children (e.g., ten-year-olds) as opposed to adolescents aged 15 and above.
15. Put to use by others?	In Ouagadougou Terre des hommes has worked with some landlords to improve their records (keeping a register of the places where individual girls are living and working; and records of salaries paid to landlords rather than young workers). Terre des hommes also supported an initiative by landlords from Sourou to draft a code of conduct.
16. Sources	Cohen 1969, Terre des hommes 2007 and Some & Hema 2010.

As mentioned in this Table, some landlords in Ouagadougou from Sourou have signed a code concerning the way mobile children are treated. In 2010 Terre des hommes organised a forum in Tougan (the main town in Sourou province) to discuss the situation of girls from Sourou migrating to cities to work as domestics. This was attended by various local officials and community leaders, representatives from Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso of an association of migrants originating from Toeni, together with landlords from Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso and a number of other organisations active in the field of child protection (AJDM, ENDA and UNICEF). The result was a code of conduct setting some minimum standards, signed by landlords along with representatives of the Toeni association. The seven-page code invoked traditional values as well as the landlords' legal obligations towards the girls who contacted them.

In the case of child workers in Burkina Faso, their landlord's compound remains an important point of reference in town, at least until they feel comfortable enough with their environment to cope by themselves. In notable contrast to adolescent domestic workers in other regions of the world, therefore, adolescent domestic workers in Ouagadougou do not congregate in a park or other public place on their day off or holidays.

Variations on this practice

The importance of the safety net provided by landlords and other brokers from a migrant's home community became even clearer when evidence was reviewed about what happens to mobile children in the absence of this sort of safety net. A 2008 report on the arrival in Accra (Ghana) of mobile girls coming from the area of western Togo inhabited by the Akebu (French Akébou) people notes that women from the girls' home area play

a role similar to that of landlords, but they are brokers who move between the Akebu home area and Accra without using their own compound in the city to look after new arrivals.^[24] They are referred to as 'ma' (mother) by the girls concerned. The women brokers negotiate contracts of employment for mobile girls and give them detailed instructions on what to do if they are hurt or abused, right down to where they should go if and when they run away from their employer. They also warn girls of the presence of so-called 'vultures' who may try to re-recruit them and transport them to places where their working conditions are likely to be much worse, often amounting to a human trafficking situation (Djobokou 2008:14). These more abusive recruiters were reported to use a variety of techniques reported in other parts of the world (pretending to be a lover or promising a rosier future) and to have taken girls as far away as Lagos (Nigeria), where they are completely cut off from anyone from their home area in Togo and correspondingly more vulnerable to abuse.

The potential to build on this practice

There is evidently a tremendous potential, at least in Burkina Faso and probably elsewhere, to bring about improvements in landlords' management of their compounds and the services they provide. However, the emphasis given since the 1990s by governments, donors and NGOs to stopping child trafficking has had a largely negative role, inhibiting others from working with landlords to bring about much needed improvements. One option would be for the government to introduce a system of regulation (and inspection).

Terre des hommes has invested more effort in building on (or developing) the protective aspects of the role of landlords than any other locally-developed protective practice in West Africa. There is potential, but the analyses commissioned by the NGO point out that some landlords allow abuse to occur, and highlight the challenges of bringing about improvements among landlords in general, when they do not have a professional body or other collective identity.

Evidently some of these challenges would be reduced if government officials were to recognise the positive contributions made by landlords, rather than regarding them as a cog in the informal economy that can be ignored, or as semi-criminals involved in trafficking children or finding jobs for children who have not yet reached the legally stipulated minimum age for entry into employment. For example, government officials could potentially convene a meeting of landlords representing different communities and providing services to different types of migrants, and urge them all to take certain steps to ensure improved conditions for the people they accommodate or to adhere to certain guidelines concerning the people (adults or children) they find jobs for. However, co-opting them into the formal economy and trying to treat them as private employment agencies is unlikely to be feasible or effective in most West African countries and might well give them an incentive to operate more secretly than at present (to avoid paying fees or bribes to government officials). In the meantime, NGOs can try and influence a limited number of landlords and, over time, may be able to develop some sense among them that they have a collective interest in observing some common minimum standards and in holding each other to account (rather than waiting for government officials to do so).

There is also a need to document the way that landlords help (and possibly cheat) young migrants in many other parts of West Africa, even if experience in Burkina Faso suggests that the best way of holding them accountable (and promoting improvements in their services) is to focus on the landlords who belong to a single ethnic group or otherwise share a common identity.

The next example could be regarded as a variation on the role performed by landlords, but is presented separately as the women concerned act as more conventional brokers, finding children jobs (or 'placing' them) in urban areas.

^[24] For more information, see Table 8 below.

Table 8: Role of women brokers supporting girl domestic workers in Accra (Ghana)

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	Adult Akebu women organise the journeys of Akebu girls to Accra, the capital of neighbouring Ghana, and find them jobs there. (In effect they perform a similar role to landlords, without providing a compound at the destination to perform all the same services).
1.b Category of children who benefit	Girls from the Akebu ethnic group in western Togo.
2. Place where it occurs	Accra, Ghana.
3. Abuse being avoided	<p>Women brokers are reported to warn girls as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the forms of abuse they risk encountering; • that girls should not delay leaving their place of work until the level of abuse has become too serious; • the danger of "vultures" who can persuade a girl to leave her job by offering her apparently better conditions, though 'better' routinely involves human trafficking; • if they do experience abuse, girls are advised to avoid being detected by the police or organisations specialising in child protection and welfare; • if they have to run away from their place of work, the broker suggests a specific place to meet, such as Accra's Aflao bus station where the girl should wait. If a "mama" recognises a girl at the station who is in trouble and who has been found a job by a woman belonging to her group, she will find her a new employer, inform her colleague on her return, and tell her who the child's new employer is. The broker who has found the child a new job deducts her charge from the employer, including the cost of transport from Akebu to Accra. This is a rule that is also applied to children who are already in Accra and who are 'relocated' due to abuse.
4. Protective effects	Girls avoid arriving in a large city with no contacts and find jobs with employers who the brokers think will treat them 'reasonably well' (alongside instructions on how to leave/escape if reasonable standards are not respected).
5. Role of the main actors	Recruiting girls, accompanying them on the journey to Accra and finding them jobs. Also undertaking to be contactable in a particular place in Accra if and when a girl abandons her employer and wishes to find a new employer or to return home.
6. Intentions	As in the case of landlords, this is essentially a commercial service along the lines of a private employment agency, which is intended to deliver some benefits to employers and employees.
7. Social acceptance	Well accepted in Akebu communities.
8. Legal status	At the time it was documented in 2008 women brokers were worried that they might be regarded as child traffickers.
9. Evidence available	Medium (based on only one investigation).
10. Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Beneficiaries.
11. Have children who benefit commented?	Some were quoted by the author, but in insufficient detail to assess what they found most positive about the role of women brokers and what they would like modified.

12. Other effects	<p>Djobokou noted that “Some intermediaries resort to devious means to increase their profits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when children and employers send money or gifts to the child’s relatives, the intermediaries do not transfer the money; • a very common practice is that, when negotiating a girl’s salary, part of the salary is deducted by the broker, though this is not revealed to the child. While negotiating with a potential employer the child is told to stay at a distance or the conversation is in a language she does not understand. Brokers take up to 50 per cent of a girl’s earnings. By doing so they are not respecting the initial contract agreed with the girl and her parents; • they can fool the employer by claiming that the child’s parents are seriously ill or that there is a death in her family and that there is an urgent need for cash to meet expenses; • some brokers entrust children to an employer and take a year’s salary in advance away with them. They then ask the child to run away after a few weeks and to find them at a specified location. Next, they find the same child a new job and once again charge the new employer for the girl’s travel expenses and a year’s salary in advance; • when brokers do not bother to check up on the children for whom they have found jobs, they sometimes lose track of them. To deceive the child’s parents, they visit the parents, bring small gifts, even though they actually have no idea where the child has gone”.
13. Origins	<p>Akebu people started migrating to Ghana in colonial times, when it was known as the Gold Coast. The numbers of children migrating are reported to have increased in the early 1990s, in part because of falling coffee and cocoa prices and in part in response to political crises in Togo.</p>
14. Modifications	<p>Not clear.</p>
15. Put to use by others?	<p>Terre des Hommes is reported to have worked with child domestic workers from Akebou in Accra and with the Akebou community association there (l'Association des ressortissants Akébou à Accra, ARAA), to improve the protection of children.</p>
16. Sources	<p>Djobokou 2008.</p>

Variations on this practice

In contrast to conventional landlords who provide more extensive services, Akebu women were reported to be providing the classic service of a broker, with some engaging in dishonest practices on the side. Women playing a similar role have been arrested in several countries and charged with child trafficking. In virtually every part of West Africa, brokers or other intermediaries provide similar services to these of the Akebu women. The extent to which their activities support, protect or simply exploit and abuse the children and adults for whom they find jobs varies considerably, though the author could not find any pre-existing analysis of these variations. The common characteristic to all such brokers is that the governments of West Africa have not sought to recognise them in any formal way as ‘private employment agencies’ or to regulate their activities.

The potential to build on this practice

With both supply and demand for child workers (particularly live-in domestic workers) appearing no sign of waning, there is some potential for government officials to regulate brokers or at least to urge them to improve the protective side of their operations (and to desist from cheating mobile children or their employers) rather than either pretending they do not exist or implying that they are criminals but doing little to enforce laws prohibiting their activities.

When compared to landlords, women brokers provide less protection to mobile children upon their arrival in the town where they are going to work, as well as after they start work. However, they generally bridge the stage between village and town, when mobile girls are otherwise dependent on bus

or van drivers to protect them. A particularly noticeable gap in the relative protection offered by Akebu women in Accra in 2008 concerned the rather vague arrangements made for girls who ran away from their employers. The existence of one or more drop-in centres in Accra, with or without 'crisis' facilities for girls/young women/children/young people in general to stay a few nights there, could

act as a vital 'cross roads' for putting girls in contact with their broker (or others from their community). However, to fulfil this role, the drop-in centre in question would have to function independently of the police or child protection services that aim to stop young children working or to send them back to live with their parents.





**7. Protective practices
while children are living
and working at their
destinations.**

7.1 Examples of risks and opportunities faced by children at work or outside work.

Working children in West Africa are reported to have experienced too many forms of abuse to list, with many starting work young (well before reaching the minimum age for entry into employment that is technically in force in their country) and many engaged in what are categorised by the International Labour Organization as worst forms of child labour. However, a major risk that is reported by working children and which is rarely mentioned is that employers frequently cheat children out of the wages they have been promised (De Lange 2006), either paying them less than promised or nothing at all.

7.1.1 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are reported widely throughout the region, particularly for boys and young men. They take many different forms, some of which genuinely educate children and young adults in a trade, while others allow exploitation and abuse. Once again, apprenticeships are not described in this report as a specific protective practice. In addition, numerous authors have already described apprenticeship schemes in West Africa involving a wide variety of occupations. Most studies have been written with a view to ensuring that apprenticeship schemes are used more efficiently to promote a country's development—that is to say, from

the point of view of national economic development goals, not from the point of view of the young people involved or the protection of child workers. The International Labour Office recently published a report about informal apprenticeships in Africa as a whole (including evidence from Mali), together with suggestions on how these can be improved (ILO 2012). Based on apprenticeships available in one West African country (Ghana), this lists 13 economic sectors where apprentices are employed (ILO 2012:123-124). An earlier ILO study summarised the findings of a survey of traditional apprenticeships in West Africa, noting that,

"Survey data confirm that apprentices tend to be better educated than their masters. A majority select their trade because it was something they had always wanted to do. Masters are often selected because they are relatives or family acquaintances. Costs of apprenticeship vary considerably among and within trades and from one country to another depending on demand and whether the master is a relative. Apprenticeship usually takes 3 or 4 years, and working hours are long. Apprentices learn primarily by watching their master and being 'corrected' when they err" (Fluitman 1992).^[25]

^[25] The same ILO report came close to advocating the approach of building on endogenous practices by criticising interventions that were perceived by employers to be "exogenous" (*"The uninformed adoption and enforcement of apprenticeship legislation inspired by exogenous circumstances is likely to be counterproductive; it would almost certainly reduce the willingness of masters to take in apprentices or force them 'underground'"* - Fluitman 1992:14) and pointed out (for the benefit of institutional actors who were considering intervening) that *"The challenge is to intervene, if at all, in a realistic and constructive manner so that all parties benefit"*.

7.2 Protective practices affecting child domestic workers.

The past two decades have seen an intensification of both research and advocacy concerning one specific group of child workers in West Africa and elsewhere—child domestic workers. Most, but by no means all, are girls. In many parts of West Africa, children are sent to live and work in the households of others as part of the region's tradition of child fostering, often when relatively young (before the age of ten). This has been institutionalised in certain areas, such as the south of the Republic of Benin, where the tradition is known as '*vidomègon*'. This has been denounced as a form of slavery by some organisations based outside Africa, but defended by others in Benin as a helpful way of socialising children and enabling children of poor families in rural areas to take a step towards bettering themselves in a richer household or an urban environment.^[26]

Child domestic workers in neighbouring Togo were among those in six countries around the world who were the subject of a study several years ago to assess their psycho-social well-being and to compare this both to a control group (of children who were not employed) in their own country and to child domestic workers in the other five countries.^[27]

The workers in Togo achieved the lowest psycho-social health score of any of those studied around the world and the workers with the lowest scores all shared particular characteristics found in other West African countries, such as living with their employer, having never attended school and not having anyone to talk to about their problems.

Much of Terre des Hommes' efforts to document locally-developed protection practices focused on children working as domestics in cities in Burkina Faso, particularly girls (belonging to the Samo ethnic group) from villages in Sourou Province's Toéni Department, an area in the west of the country, near the town of Tougan. In addition to documenting the protective (or potentially protective) practices of landlords (see previous chapter), they have focused attention on the role of older girl domestic workers, those who are more experienced, who act as mentors for younger girls. They are referred to in cities in Burkina Faso as "*nkoro mouso*" (or *n'koro mouso*), 'elder sister' in the Dioula language. A dedicated publication in 2010, *Saly, Grande Sœur* (Saly, Big Sister), documented their role, as did several more detailed reports.

^[26] See, for example, Kokouvi Eklou, « *Vidomègon* », un tremplin pour plusieurs cadres béninois, *Lebeninois.net*, 16 January 2013, accessed on 6 March 2014 at: www.lebeninois.net/vidomegon-un-tremplin-pour-plusieurs-cadres-beninois/

^[27] Anti-Slavery International 2013:27. The other five countries in the study were: Costa Rica, India, Peru, Philippines and Tanzania.

Table 9: 'Big sisters' supporting child domestic workers in Burkina Faso

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	Big (elder) sisters are a source of advice and support for girls arriving in the city to work as a domestic for the first time. According to a Terre des hommes social worker, they are able to draw on their own experience to share the lessons with new arrivals and, to some extent, provide a model for younger girl domestic workers (Tdh Burkina Faso 2010:13).
1.b Category of children who benefit	Girl child domestic workers who have just left home in Sourou for the first time to start work, often aged between 10 and 12 (Some & Hema 2010:29).
2. Place where it occurs	Cities in Burkina Faso, notably Bobo-Dioulasso and the capital, Ouagadougou. Big sisters who are not themselves live-in domestic workers (but who live independently, often sharing accommodation with other girl domestic workers) are especially well-placed to assist young girls living in the same accommodation.
3. Abuse being avoided	A range of abuse potentially inflicted by an employer, notably failure to remunerate child domestic workers and extremely long working hours.
4. Protective effects	<p>Younger girl domestic workers experience less abuse than would otherwise be the case, and are able to learn from the others who are in a similar position to themselves, but more experienced. The types of protection depend on whether a child worker was in contact with the 'big sister' in question before even leaving home or only after arriving in the city. So, the protective practices are reported to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping in touch: this concerns groups (big sisters and little sisters) from the same village who move to the same destination. Big sisters can provide information about a village girl's progress in town, and her development in her work. She is the first person to be informed if and when the girl gets into any difficulties; • accommodation and getting around: big sisters check on the accommodation available for a new girl, since they already have experience. Either she takes the younger girl to her own landlord or she takes her to the housing that she shares with others; • sharing experience and advice: it enables girls with no or very little experience to prevent abuse or exploitation and to find a solution; • finding a job and negotiating wages: big sisters know the lay of the land better and help younger ones to find work. • mediating between employers and girls: big sisters intervene with employers when problems arise.
5. Role of the main actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A big sister speaks up on behalf of others; • She advises others and defends them when the need arises; • She proposes solutions when problems occur; • She checks out what younger girls are up to; • She acts as an intermediary between her 'younger sisters' and the various services that play a role in protecting child domestic workers: landlords, ethnic associations and official organisations; • She also acts as an intermediary between younger child domestics and their employers and monitors the way the contract between the two is observed. <p>In recent years, since Terre des hommes in Ouagadougou became a place for child domestic workers to lodge complaints about abuse such as non-payment of wages, elder sisters also play a role in reporting possible cases of abuse involving younger girl workers to Terre des hommes staff. (Source: Tdh Burkina Faso 2010:17)</p>
6. Intentions	The intentions behind these practices are to benefit the younger girls concerned.
7. Social acceptance	The practice is reportedly widespread among girls from Sourou, but the documentation available does not indicate whether all city employers allow 'elder sisters' access to young girls who are live-in domestics, or only employers who are themselves from Sourou.

8.	Legal status	According to the law, the minimum age for entry to employment in Burkina Faso is 16 years, so the recruitment and employment of children under 16, although routine and socially acceptable, occurs in a legal vacuum.
9.	Evidence available	Strong as far as domestic workers in Bobo-Dioulassou and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) are concerned.
10.	Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	This is a peer-led system. Most 'elder sisters' are aged 17, 18 or 19; i.e., some are themselves still children.
11.	Have children who benefit commented?	The documentation concerned quotes some 'elder sisters', but not the younger girls who supposedly benefit from their attention. Consequently, some possible side-effects have not been investigated (such as some sort of abuse of power by older girls).
12.	Other effects	When intervening to protect younger girls, 'elder sisters' potentially place themselves at risk. They might also exploit their younger colleagues.
13.	Origins	No specific information.
14.	Modifications	Mainly as a result of Terre des hommes' intervention (see '15'), with 'elder sisters' now reportedly referring to Terre des hommes any reports they hear about of younger girls experiencing abuse.
15.	Put to use by others?	Terre des hommes has supported the development of clubs known as 'Points Espoir' (Places of Hope) in primary schools in Ouagadougou, where girls of different ages can meet, enabling young girls who are relatively isolated to come into contact with 'elder sisters'. The clubs have been described (Feneyrol 2013:8) as " <i>youth clubs dedicated to listening to children, empowering them and enabling them to participate</i> ". Terre des hommes has reportedly developed other ideas on how to strengthen the positive influence of 'elder sisters', in effect to enable them to play a stronger role in educating other girls.
16.	Sources	Terre des hommes 2010.

Variations on this practice

Groups of girl domestic workers who originate from the same village or from the same locality are reported to live together and look after each other in a wide range of places, from Dakar (Senegal) to N'Djamena (Chad). Describing girls from southern Chad working in N'Djamena, one author noted,

"The groups offer something else that is more difficult to measure in terms of input and output, namely affection, friendship, loyalty and solidarity. Walking behind these girls in town, one could often catch them holding hands and their small gestures of touching and closeness seem very natural. It is this kind of closeness and trust among peers that live-in domestics are normally deprived of, something that might make them emotionally more vulnerable" (Both 2010:100).

Investigating the way that employers of domestic workers treated their employees, the authors of a report on Burkina Faso suggested that certain forms of behaviour on the part of employers could be regarded as 'protective practices' (Some & Hema 2010:42), in particular:

- when employers agree a written or even oral contract specifying their employee's working or living conditions;
- when they facilitate access to a clinic for a domestic worker who is ill;
- when they deliberately desist from corporal punishment;
- when they encourage their own children to treat a domestic worker with respect (for others allow their children to insult or ill-treat child workers), including taking action to stop any sexual abuse or sexual activity with a domestic worker.

Evidently employers can treat employees (whether above or below 18 years of age) either better or worse, and it would be appropriate for anyone with appropriate influence (such as religious leaders and other opinion leaders, as well as government officials and NGO staff) to encourage better treatment. It would probably be appropriate to label some particular behaviour as a 'protective practice' if it has the effect of reducing the risk of abuse, rather than if it simply involves less abuse.^[28]

Among other more specific practices reported in various places, two that could be categorised as protective practices are:

- Informing a child worker where to go if s/he decides to run away from an abusive employer (or even where to seek help and in what circumstances). Table 6 above includes this practice (when brokers give advice to children whom they place in jobs with particular employers, knowing in advance that some will run away). In this case, relatives and other child workers are also known to give advice to children, particularly to those who live with their employer. The quality of the advice varies, and a key variable is whether any suitable safe haven exists.
- And, for child domestic workers, living in a separate place to their employer (such as in a landlord's compound or with a 'big sister'), on the grounds that this means the child is not available to work at all hours of the evening and early morning, and also that the child is in regular contact with other people, creating an opportunity to complain about any possible ill-treatment or for signs of such ill-treatment to be noticed by others. For example, in the late 1990s, about one third of child domestic workers in Dakar (Senegal) were reported to 'live-in' with their employers, while two thirds did not (Black & Blagbrough 1998:53, quoting information

provided by ENDA). In such cases, it is partly the local housing market that determines availability, along with the age of child workers, with some considered too young both by their own relatives and their employers to live anywhere except with their employer.

Older adolescent girls and young adult women are reported to have provided practical assistance or advice to groups of mobile children other than domestic workers. In the case of the Qur'anic students mentioned in section 2.3.2 above (known variously as *talibés* or *almajirai*), the following example was reported in Dakar:

"In a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, boys attending Koranic school (aged 7 to 12 years and known locally as talibés), who come from rural areas have found some 'big sisters'. The girls adopted them one by one, washing their laundry, sharing meals with them, and offering them what the boys miss most – affection. These children are lucky, as otherwise they beg and learn the Qur'ān (Koran) without anyone to take care of them except the Qur'ānic teacher, who is there to teach them religion and check that they all survive on their meagre income from begging. Stories about this first experience of WCY [working children and youth] girls adopting talibés soon reached other cities and even other countries, for the practice is now found in neighbouring Mauritania and Gambia" (Sambo & Terenzio 2013:24).^[29]

Mobile children are reported to engage in a variety of other forms of 'peer-to-peer' assistance in West African cities (MAEJT 2008).

^[28] During the 1990s, an NGO in Dhaka (Bangladesh) reportedly introduced a code of conduct that reportedly came to be widely accepted among employers of child domestic workers in Dakar. The NGO reportedly worked "for a change of attitudes among employers of child domestic workers to be aware of the limitations to the workload and chores that can be expected of children, and to allow these children to attend classes one to two hours per day" (Thorsen 2012a:16). In 2009 a group of NGOs in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Togo, led by WAO Afrique in Togo, issued a 'code of conduct' concerning child domestic workers in their countries. This was more of a charter concerning child domestic workers in general than a code aimed specifically at employers and their behaviour. It included issues such as the age of workers and methods for recruitment. (see www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/c/code_de_conduite_final.PDF)

^[29] A variety of other initiatives have been taken to improve the treatment or living conditions of Qur'anic students. While most have been initiatives by organisations outside the Qur'anic educational system, individual religious teachers have also taken action, though not on a systematic enough basis to label this a protective practice. For example, a teacher in Burkina Faso is reported to have acquired agricultural land in 2006 that students could farm, specifically so that they did not have to go out and beg (Sobgo 2007:21). Further information still needs to be collected about such practices, to assess if they are genuinely protective, or if they merely represent an alternative form of exploitation..

The potential to build on this practice

Encouraging older children to provide advice and even assistance to their younger peers could be one of a range of steps initiated by either community-based organisations or child protection organisations seeking to improve the protection of mobile children. In any situations where child domestic workers routinely congregate in particular places (to collect water, or while selling food or drinks in the streets, or making purchases at a market when not merely accompanying their employer), the more experienced ones could certainly be encouraged to talk to younger ones and offer them advice. They could also be provided with information on how to

seek help in any sort of emergency and asked to pass this on. A variety of other methods have been tried in regions outside Africa, mainly by providing a safe place where domestic workers can meet once a week and get access to a range of services (more than just advice: non-formal education, health treatment and leisure activities organised by the workers themselves). Other relatively homogenous groups of mobile children would benefit from similar initiatives (e.g., children working as market porters, boys and girls in certain activities or apprenticeships, such as tyre repairers and hairdressers).

7.3 Examples of other protective practices.

7.3.1 The role of ethnic associations and other associations composed of people who have migrated from the same area

Table 10: Sourou associations intervening on behalf of mobile children in cities in Burkina Faso

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	Two associations represent people from Sourou living in Ouagadougou. Members of both are reported to have intervened with employers to protect child workers who themselves come from Sourou. In particular they are reported to have provided assistance to girls who wanted to return home to their families after experiencing difficulties.
1.b Category of children who benefit	Children (mainly girls) from Burkina Faso's Sourou who live and work in Ouagadougou.
2. Place where it occurs	Destination.
3. Abuse being avoided	Ill-treatment by employer and inability to leave an employer or to leave Ouagadougou and return home.
4. Protective effects	Prevention of further physical abuse or prevention of further difficulties that might arise while remaining in Ouagadougou. Facilitating a child's departure from an abusive situation. Providing advice to children in Ouagadougou who come from the same area. The Sourou associations also act as a conduit for information between working children from Sourou and their families and relatives at home.
5. Role of the main actors	Two organisations composed of people from Sourou are active in Ouagadougou: the Association pour le Développement du Département de Toéni (ADDT), Association for the Development of Toéni Department (which has been officially registered as an association) and the Union pour la Solidarité des Jeunes de Kwarémenguel à Ouagadougou (USJKO), Union for the Solidarity of Youth from Kwarémenguel in Ouagadougou (which has not been officially registered). Members of both organisations are reported to have visited compounds where girls work, to check up on their working and living conditions, and to have passed information onto the landlords who arranged the child's employment. In some cases they have mediated between an employer and employee.

6.	Intentions	The intentions are good, though such associations potentially impose forms of behaviour on girls which perpetuate traditional values at the expense of girls' rights or interests.
7.	Social acceptance	High level of legitimacy within the Sourou community, though potentially less with employers who are not from Sourou.
8.	Legal status	The lack of formal status (in the case of the USJKO) potentially makes it more difficult to hold its members accountable, should a member be responsible for any act of child abuse.
9.	Evidence available	Weak.
10.	Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Only beneficiaries.
11.	Have children who benefit commented?	Not reported.
12.	Other effects	See #6 above.
13.	Origins	Not recorded.
14.	Modifications	Since Terre des hommes in Ouagadougou began intervening on behalf of abused child domestic workers, the two associations have brought some cases (of abuse) to the NGO's attention, or contacted social services, mainly when a landlord has not been able to resolve a case.
15.	Put to use by others?	Not reported.
16.	Sources	Some & Hema 2010

Variations on this practice

Ethnic associations exist in cities all over West Africa, but their role in assisting or protecting child workers has generally not been documented. A Human Rights Watch report on child domestic workers in Guinea noted that,

"The Malian community [in Conakry] is aware of these problems [domestic workers not being paid] and has frequently intervened to assist the girls get their salary. In one such case, a young woman in her early twenties was assisted by members of the Malian community to get her salary for about eight years she had worked as child domestic worker without pay. The employer finally paid about GNF 800,000 [Guinean Francs, about US\$20] to the woman" (Human Right Watch 2007:49).

Terre des hommes is reported to be working with the "Association des ressortissants de l'Akébou à Accra", ARAA (Accra Association of People Originating in Akebou), to improve the working and living conditions of children from Akebou (in Togo)

employed as domestic workers in Accra (Ghana). The association is reported currently to have taken on a range of responsibilities, some of which were previously played by women brokers (see Table 8) or landlords, such as providing temporary accommodation in Accra, helping children meet employers and influencing employers to improve the children's working and living conditions. Seven individuals, known as 'focal points', are involved in such work. They are also reported to visit domestic workers to check up on them in the houses where they work. The focal points also visit Accra's Aflao bus station to check when new children arrive from Akebou.^[30]

The potential to build on this practice

Further research to establish what actions are already undertaken by ethnic associations on behalf of mobile children is required in order to assess how extensive their interventions are and the extent to which they act to assist and support children, versus the extent to which they take action to assert control of 'their' community over them. Mobile children report that escaping con-

^[30] As a result of their work, in 2012, 25 Akebou children in potential need of assistance were identified, while 12 received assistance. In 2013 the numbers grew, with 99 identified, of whom 86 received assistance.

servative controls over their behaviour is one of the advantages of moving away from home to a city environment, so it is important to find out how much they resent this control before trying to build on the positive aspects.

7.3.2 Practices to avoid non-payment of wages and to keep earnings safe

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, non-payment of wages is a significant risk for many mobile children. Similarly, once wages are paid or money is earned, keeping this safe is also a challenge.

Anecdotal information suggests that some children deliberately chose short-term work (which results in payment at the conclusion of a short-term contract, if not before) to avoid spending long periods working before it becomes clear that they are not going to be paid or that they will be paid less than promised. One researcher compared what she had heard from a range of mobile children in south-west, central and eastern Burkina Faso: *“It suggests that children working on short assignments for different employers have greater control over their own situation and are less likely to be exploited. Those who work for one farmer in a system of deferred pay-*

ment, either in cotton or other sectors, appear to be in a more vulnerable position, in which the children share in the risks and misfortunes of the farmers, or suffer from their intentional deception” (De Lange 2006:39). Apart from this strategy for avoiding non-payment (which is a coping technique rather than a protective practice), child workers may well use other methods for ensuring that they are paid, but these have not been documented in detail, despite a substantial increase in publications concerning working children in West Africa over the past decade (some of which focus on hazardous working conditions and others on the mere fact that young children are working).

More substantial information is available about savings arrangements. The role of landlords in Burkina Faso (keeping child domestic workers’ savings and sometimes maintaining written records of the amounts saved) was mentioned in Table 6. A variety of savings or credit unions have been reported elsewhere. One of the better documented practices occurs in southern Ghana, where girls and young women who work as self-employed market porters have an informal savings system known as ‘*susu*’, a system which is widely practised by others in Ghana.

Table 11: The *susu* system for keeping savings safe (Ghana)

Questions	Information available
1.a Description of the practice	The <i>susu</i> system of saving money on a daily basis is reported in Ghana, “where accredited individuals go round the market places and even to homes on a daily basis to collect a stipulated amount that each client voluntarily decides to pay. This is saved and payments are made to the individual at the end of each month less the savings for one day, which is retained by the ‘ <i>susu banker</i> ’ as his/her commission” (Kwankye et al, 2007). The system is used by adults as well as working children.
1.b Category of children who benefit	Girls (mainly from northern Ghana) working as market porters (<i>kayayei</i>) in southern Ghanaian cities such as Accra and Kumasi (i.e., self-employed workers who are paid on a piece-work basis, not by an employer).
2. Place where it occurs	Concerning market porters it has been reported in southern Ghana. Similar savings schemes are reported in other sectors of Ghana’s economy.
3. Abuse being avoided	Theft of earnings.
4. Protective effects	Keeps earnings relatively safe, as workers have no safe place to store cash.

5.	Role of the main actors	An informal banker or 'susu keeper' visits the market porters at the end of each day and takes their savings. Both the market porter and the 'susu' keeper have their own copies of a daily savings card, in which they record each individual's daily savings. Researchers who interviewed one such banker in about 2012 reported she told them that "[T]he majority of the women save half of their weekly earnings. On the average a full time kayayoo saves 7 Cedis a week [i.e., 4.40 US Dollars at the exchange rate at the beginning of 2012], although some of the teenagers could save twice as much that amount. At the end of the month, she is expected to save 31 Cedis. Out of this monthly savings, the 'susu' keeper takes one Cedi as her commission for keeping the money. This means that if the 'susu' keeper collects 50 women's daily savings, at the end of the month, she earns 50 Cedis from the women's total savings" (Boateng and Korang-Okrah 2013:55).
6.	Intentions	To keep earnings safe and earn a profit for the banker.
7.	Social acceptance	Highly accepted in Ghana.
8.	Legal status	Some 'susu keepers' or informal bankers are legally registered, while others are not.
9.	Evidence available	Strong (in the way the system functions in general) and medium in the case of market porters.
10.	Are children actors or only beneficiaries?	Beneficiaries only.
11.	Have children who benefit commented?	Not reported
12.	Other effects	Possible embezzlement by <i>susu</i> keepers caused the Ghanaian government to introduce a system of regulation, by registering <i>susu</i> keepers. However, unregistered <i>susu</i> keepers continue to operate.
13.	Origins	Not known. <i>Susu</i> means 'small, small' in the Akan language used in southern Ghana. The <i>susu</i> savings system was reportedly documented in Ghana in the 1950s.
14.	Modifications	The <i>susu</i> system is reported to have evolved, though its specific development among girl market porters has not been detailed.
15.	Put to use by others?	Efforts linked to the introduction of micro-finance in general, but not specific to child workers.
16.	Sources	Agarwal et al 1997; Kwankye et al 2007; and Boateng and Korang-Okrah 2013.

Variations on this practice

Similar savings systems are reported to be in use in other parts of West Africa, though it is only in Ghana, among girl market porters, that researchers have recorded how it is used by mobile children.

The potential to build on this practice

The *susu* system has the potential to benefit any mobile children who are self-employed and who have to keep their earnings secure. As the practice is reported to be extensive in Ghana, it would be appropriate for child protection organisations in neighbouring countries to check whether self-employed workers in the informal sector already use similar schemes, or if there is potential to replicate the *susu* system.

7.4 Protective practices which have not yet been adequately documented.

A series of techniques and practices that appear to keep children safe (or safer than they might be otherwise) have been reported but not adequately analysed to assess their positive and negative effects or their potential to bring more benefits to the children concerned.

The simplest techniques (which probably do not deserve the label 'protective practice') concern the clothing worn by children, which varies according to cultural tradition and also according to the purchasing power of the young people concerned or their families. The author of a report for UNICEF noted that children working on farms can protect themselves against some basic hazards by wearing elementary protective clothing such as footwear. However, the extent to which they do so is reported to vary. For example, 69 per cent of children working in cocoa activities in Ghana were found to use some form of footwear and nearly 95 per cent used some body covering, such as trousers, long sleeve shirts or long dresses. In contrast, 95 per cent of the children working on farms in Guinea were found

to wear no protective clothing (Thorsen 2012b:10). The author noted that "*Although footwear like flip-flops, slippers and canvas shoes give inadequate protection, they are still better than bare feet*".

Working children who do not live with their employers are reported to use various accommodation arrangements to stay safe (Burkinabè adolescent domestic workers who rent their own accommodation and avoid living in their employer's compound were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter). Girls working as market porters in a Ghanaian city reportedly had no accommodation to sleep in, so explained to researchers that they slept in a group with other girl porters originating from the same places in northern Ghana, as a strategy to defend themselves against night-time assailants (Kwankye et al 2007): "*[T]hey live and sleep under the Kantamanto market sheds when the market is closed and sellers and buyers have left for their homes*".



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**8. The way forward:
recommendations on
main-streaming the
protective practices
identified in this report.**

Many of the practices outlined in the four previous chapters revolve around the role played by people who provide services to mobile children. As some of the services involved are provided on a commercial basis (such as those described in Tables 5, 7 and 8), even when underpinned by relationships of kinship or reciprocity, outside observers have tended to assume that the services concerned are purely exploitative and that they do not play any sort of protective role. Instead, once the issues of child labour and child trafficking came to international attention in the 1990s, there was a strong tendency by outsiders to regard all the adults involved with suspicion—and to expect officials employed by the government to assume the role of protecting or assisting abused children, even though there is substantial evidence that they are often unable or unwilling to do so (the briefest of conversations with mobile children and adults in the communities from which they originate or where they live

reveals that officials are generally regarded with suspicion and the actors in the informal economy are regarded as much more dependable).

The analyses of locally-developed protection practices in this report certainly suggest that they deliver sufficient benefits to reckon there is potential to build on them, although the evidence available also reveals many short-comings. These analyses confirm that it would be worth investigating the protective practices associated with other migration corridors and forms of employment where mobile children are found.

The first part of this chapter addresses the gaps in the information currently available. The second part looks at what could be done to develop protective practices that have already been identified into more effective ways of protecting children against harm.

8.1 Preliminary observations on what information is missing.

One reason why relatively little information is, even now, available about locally-developed protection practices is that child protection organisations and researchers both found the concept difficult to understand. Organisations assumed it was a reference to all community-based child protection initiatives. Researchers interpreted the concept too broadly, to include cultural and child socialisation practices in general (in the absence of adequate evidence about their impact on mobile children) and initiatives to modify traditional religious practices in particular.

To overcome this difficulty, the author of this report recommends that Chapter 2 ('Concepts concerning the protection of children in West Africa who move from one place to another') be disseminated as widely as possible among child protection organisations and researchers operating in West Africa.

Despite this difficulty, ample information is available about locally-developed protection practices concerning children who have, for various reasons, benefited from initiatives by NGOs that are interested in the idea of endogenous protection practices. Nevertheless, children in countless other places and occupations in West Africa have not been the subject of the same attention, either because no-one has documented their experiences or because researchers and NGOs observing them did not pay attention to the ways in which the children concerned took action to keep themselves or other children safe (or the ways in which other local actors did so). So, potentially many other protection practices remain to be analysed, in the five countries that were the focus of this study, as well as others.

Consequently, the second recommendation is that further primary research should be commissioned to identify locally-developed practices that protect mobile children (and, potentially, children in general) throughout West Africa.

As endogenous protection practices concern the way that mobile children help themselves and help each other, such practices are not limited to activities which are 'traditional', although some researchers contacted assumed that this was the case. For example, the way that children who have left home make use of mobile phones almost certainly helps some of them keep safe and deserves to be documented, even though this is a thoroughly modern method.

There are some gaps in the information available that seem particularly surprising and which relate to the moments when children are particularly vulnerable: when they first reach a new place and also when they run away from an abusive employer (or other abuse). It is not surprising that NGOs which endeavour to provide services to children on an ongoing basis have not been present to observe how mobile children cope at these moments, but these 'moments' deserve special attention, not only to note what the children's own coping techniques are, but also to see whether more could be done by the communities concerned or child protection organisations (or others) to protect the children involved.

Three gaps which the author reckons merit attention as a matter of priority are the following:

1 The public transport hubs that are found in every West African town of any size are important in the journey of virtually everyone in the region who travels to earn a living (the terms used to refer to them vary, but are often based on a word in French or English signifying 'station'). Academic researchers have observed such places. However, child protection organisations seem to have paid insufficient attention to the practices or systems in use at such places that

help protect children, which are almost certainly more numerous other than the ones reported in Chapter 6 of this report.

- 2** What do mobile children do when they have been abused and want help? Plenty of reports expose the acts of abuse experienced by children. Reports by NGOs describe the way the NGOs themselves have come to the assistance of such children. Some may choose to suffer in silence, but what about all the others? Are there some coping techniques which mean that a girl domestic worker who runs away from her employer can avoid having to resort to commercial sex or to finding another employer to survive? There almost certainly are, but children's responses to difficulties have not yet been investigated systematically.
- 3** As mobile children (more than other working children in West Africa) complain that they are often not paid the wages that they have been promised, what strategies do they already use to ensure that they are paid (apart from those mentioned in Tables 6 and 9)? The authors of a paper about children migrating from one rural area to another noted that there was a need to investigate further how children's contractual arrangements can "*be made and supported in such a way that the migrants receive the rewards expected from the migration? A closer look at the operation of complaints mechanisms would be fruitful*" (Anyidoho & Ainsworth 2009:26). As child protection organisations have paid scant attention to this gross abuse of the children's rights, there is a need to establish if particular categories of mobile children are affected more than others. For example, it might be that children working in relative isolation, on farms or in domestic work, experience this problem more than those in occupations where their employer could be shamed by his or her peers and thus held accountable. However, even this has not been investigated adequately.

It would be helpful to establish whether the three models for recruiting and organising employment that have been documented in this report (involving drivers, landlords and women brokers—see Tables 3, 5 and 6) are the same for many or most other mobile children, or if some alternative systems exist which have not yet been identified and analysed. Further, it would be useful to start use the standard table (Table 2) for noting the advantages and disadvantages of each of these models, to distinguish between recruitment practices that deliver better or worse protection, so that the better practices among them can be encouraged.

In addition to identifying locally-developed child protection practices, it would also be appropriate to identify other practices which have the effect of increasing the level of protection available to mobile children. For example, the intrinsic benefits of education (non-formal as well as formal) are well documented. However, for children who are generally isolated from others, such as live-in domestic workers, attending non-formal education classes has the additional benefit of getting them

out of the house and being seen by a teacher as well as other students.

As much of the evidence about the impact of locally-developed protection practices was ambiguous or its quality questionable, it is not surprising that the data available suffered from the same flaw as much other information about children's experiences: the precise ways in which relevant children have been consulted about the effects on them and the opinions they voiced were not recorded methodically. The third recommendation in this section is that child protection organisations engaged in documenting the effects of locally-developed child protection practices should work together with the MAEJT to develop a standard research protocol or format for recording such children's views, noting, for example: how many children were consulted, when and where and by whom; what they noted about a particular practice that was positive and what was negative or ambiguous; and what changes they themselves mention that might improve the benefits of the practice for children.

8.2 Next steps.

The findings of this report confirm that still more needs to be done to document the use of locally-developed protection practices and their effects on children, and that a West Africa-wide strategy is needed to enhance such practices and to build links between them and conventional child protection mechanisms.

At the stage of analysing the score cards and the other information available about locally-developed protection practices, it was apparent that the identified practices fell along a continuum. At one end were practices which not only appear to have a protective effect, but about which substantial evidence of the effects is available (see Tables 5 and 7). Further along are practices which are perceived by the children using them (or others) to help keep

them safe, but about which the evidence is less convincing. In some cases this is because the practice itself contains inherent risks for children. In others, it is because the practice is too much at odds with the law to conclude that it can be regarded as truly protective (see section 5.3) Finally, at the other end of the continuum, there are a series of practices which are routinely reported, but about which the author was not able to find objective evidence of the protective effects.

Some of the protection practices described in this report have already been the subject of attempts by NGOs or others to improve the level of protection available, with varying degrees of success. This raises a crucial question about the purpose of identifying and analysing such practices. Is the objec-

tive simply to facilitate the work of child protection institutions, in other words, to identify endogenous practices in order to enable exogenous (outside) actors to take advantage of them? Or is there potentially a much broader objective, which involves enabling the actors in locally-developed protection practices and the wider communities where such practices occur to become aware that such practices are beneficial and to play a role (or even take a lead) in developing practices that are protective and discouraging ones that are abusive? Meeting the second objective will potentially be more challenging than the first, but would also bring much greater benefits in the long run.

Terre des hommes has recognised the potential to pursue both objectives. Olivier Feneyrol summarised these when identifying two different aspects of work to strengthen endogenous protection practices (Feneyrol 2013:62):

- 1 improve existing practices by developing the skills of the actors, the tools used, the number of actors involved, the complementary relationships (synergies) between the stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluating the results;
- 2 strengthen the control over endogenous protection practices in which many different actors are involved and make the way they work clearer and more transparent to everyone (despite the fact that the practices are fundamentally informal); the challenge is to ensure that the actors themselves take action to reduce the risk of harmful practices (e.g., abuse of the vulnerability of girls by landlords or ill-intentioned "big sisters", or landlords levying charges for finding girls jobs or employers charging girls for any medical expenses) and bring them into line with the requirements of national legislation.

The obligation to identify such practices and to enable the communities concerned (as well as other actors) to develop them should be shared by all the actors involved in each country's child protection system. Child protection is, in the first place, the responsibility of States and governments, assisted by international organisations, specialist

non-governmental organisations and wider civil society. However, there has been an acute danger that the systems being developed (in West Africa and elsewhere) fail to recognise the rights or needs of children who move from one country to another, or even from one part of a country to another. This weakness has been noted throughout the world (Dottridge 2013). The importance of developing systems and methods to protect children who move from one country to another, or from one part of a country to another, is particularly acute in West Africa in view of the massive numbers of young people who migrate in search of a living, including tens of thousands who cross national borders. The efforts to identify suitable methods have not been effective so far, in part because they are widely perceived to be imposed from the outside or 'from above' (by central government) and thus to lack legitimacy and local support. Building on locally-developed protection practices, rather than spurning them as ineffectual or irrelevant (or even as inherently abusive), is a key to the way ahead.

There are numerous challenges to developing better linkages between locally-developed protection practices and the formal child protection system, not least those identified in this report concerning locally-developed practices which condone children entering full-time employment when younger (sometimes much younger) than the minimum age for entry into employment stipulated in national legislation. Indeed, instead of narrowing the gap, some governments have widened the gap, for example by adopting legislation committing their country to respecting higher standards (such as stipulating that children should only start full-time work when they reach the age of 16^[31]) which are not yet observed in some wealthier and more developed countries. This potentially makes it even more difficult to build linkages between idealistic standards and day-to-day realities in the countries concerned.

If governments appear unwilling at the policy level to take the initiative to build links between the formal and non-formal protection systems, specific government-run services can nevertheless make progress and other parts of civil society are already actively involved (including economic actors, such

as the public transport industry; political leaders, such as traditional chiefs; and social entities, such as migrant and ethnic associations). There is some potential for other influential economic actors, such as the businesses and organisations encouraging better protection of children engaged in cultivating or processing export crops, to play a role.

In areas where local government runs social services, these clearly have a role to play in designing services that synchronise closely with what happens in practice at local level (such as the locally-developed protection practices that this report documents in urban areas). Likewise, health services that provide medical care to mobile children can potentially identify better and worse practices affecting such children and are bound to favour the former. NGOs that are in contact with children have the potential to coordinate their own activities with both these actors, as well as with the civil society actors mentioned above, and to explain the benefits of identifying and enhancing locally-developed protection practices.

Whichever actors become involved, the linkages between the formal child protection system and the non-formal system (of child protection practices) need developing with care. As a recent report on child protection in poor neighbourhoods of Nairobi (Kenya) has noted,

“Attention should also be given to the process or the manner in which necessary linkages with the formal system are developed. If the linkages were imposed in a top-down approach, the likely result would be backlash and low levels of community ownership and willingness to actually use the linkage” (Kostelny et al 2013:140).

It is precisely such “low levels of community ownership” that have characterised some recent initiatives in West Africa to stop child mobility or to end the involvement of children in particular economic activities. In contrast, understanding what forms of abuse children and adults are keen to stop and working with them to develop existing protection practices may lead to more sustainable results. As the same report concluded (after referring to efforts to reduce teenage pregnancies in Sierra Leone),

“Such community-driven linkages are likely to be viewed as positive and helpful by the people, who tend to take ownership for them and work to support their use and effectiveness. In essence, this is a bottom-up approach that complements top-down approaches to strengthening national child protection systems” (Kostelny et al 2013:140).

^[31] The minimum age for entry into employment stipulated by national authorities are notified to the ILO by states which have ratified ILO Convention No. 138. In June 2014 details were found at www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0:NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312283:NO (though the list is not necessarily up-to-date, as the minimum age noted on this ILO website for Burkina Faso is 15 years of age, although this was changed in 2008 to 16). The listing in June 2014 noted the following minimum ages for countries in West Africa: Benin, 14; Burkina Faso, 15; Cameroon, 14; Côte d'Ivoire, 14; Ghana, 15; Guinea, 16; Mali, 15; Niger, 14; Nigeria, 15; Senegal, 15; Sierra Leone, 15; and Togo, 14. Evidently some of these reflect the government's aspirations, rather than currently enforced regulations. Senegal appeared to be the most realistic, noting formally (on this webpage) that the provisions of the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) “do not apply to traditional pastoral or rural work without remuneration carried out in a family setting by children of less than 15 years of age and which aims at better integrating them in their social surroundings and the environment”.

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Siège | Hauptsitz | Sede | Headquarters
Avenue de Montchoisi 15, CH-1006 Lausanne
T +41 58 611 06 11, F +41 58 611 06 77
info@tdh.ch, CCP: 10-11504-8



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