



In Search of Survival? Exploring the Experiences of Children in Child-Adult Partnerships for Begging in Tamale, Ghana

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List of Acronyms

CRBA	Child Rights Based Approach
CRC	(UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child
DoC	Department of Children
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
EC	European Commission
HRAC	Human Rights Advocacy Center
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IGO	International Governmental Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SJP	Social Justice Perspectives
TaMA	Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Abstract

This paper explores the phenomenon of begging in Tamale, Ghana with a focus on child-adult partnership for street begging. It highlights the lives and experiences of children involved in the activity occasioned by certain defined set of livelihood arrangements deeply rooted in and regulated by social norms and values. The phenomenon is largely characterized by the disabled (usually blind men and women) being guided by non-disabled guides (children) who are either relatives or business partners with each arrangements presenting different forms of commitments, obligations and benefits. The paper discusses the intricate relationships of child vulnerability and agency relative to the relationships between the children and their adult disabled partners and/or families within the context of generational interdependence. It problematizes the over *romanticization* of the 'more empowered child' in contemporary childhood studies and argues for a more nuanced analysis of the lives and experiences of children that allows for the negotiation of their rights.

The paper is structured into five chapters. The Introductory chapter (chapter one) provides a general overview of the study. It presents the background of the study including the research problem, research objectives and questions as well as the relevance of the study. Chapter two presents the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the research. Chapter three presents the methodology that is employed for the generation of information and data for the study. Chapter four discusses the empirical data relative to the secondary data and the theoretical and conceptual framework discussed in chapter one and two. Chapter five offers concluding remarks and reflections on the issues being discussed.

Keywords

Begging, Social norms, Child agency, Vulnerability, Generational interdependence, Tamale, Ghana

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

“If one so much as scratches the surface of begging as a distinctive phenomenon, it reveals a seam of symbolic meanings and moral conundrums that is as perplexing as it is rich” (Dean, 1999:1).

The phenomenon of begging is complex and multifaceted. The spaces, the operations and the individuals associated with the phenomenon are defined and shaped by social norms and values across time and space (Erskine and McIntosh, 1999). Children as well as adults have been variously found to be involved in the activity of begging across the world. In Ghana and particularly Tamale (the study area of this research), begging is largely undertaken by the disabled with assistance of children, usually from 4 to 14 years old. This paper explores the phenomenon of begging in Tamale, with a focus on the children in the company of disabled adult beggars. It analyses how this practice works and seeks to gain insight into the interrelationships of the children with their adult partners both at the family levels and at the street level as well as the implications of these interrelationships on the level of agency and vulnerability of the children involved. Importantly, the paper highlights the experiences and voices of children in these relationships and how these relate with discourses of child rights. It also highlights the processes that lead to the manifestation of the phenomenon as we see it; i.e. why are children used as partners and not adults, and how that is influenced and shaped by power relations and the society’s understanding of what is right and wrong for the child.

A number of studies have been conducted on the phenomenon of child begging in various parts of the world. In Europe for instance, there have been studies by international NGOs such as Save the Children International (Save the Children, 2011) and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the European Commission (EC, 2010) on the various faces of the phenomenon and its implication on the welfare of the child. These studies including one by the ILO (2008) have identified child begging as one of the worst forms of child labour. There are also a number of academic studies on the phenomenon in some parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Abebe, 2008; Ballet et al (2010); Cerneva, 2011; Okugbeni 2013; Pakdeebanchasak, 2010; Swanson, 2008). These underscore the relative interest in the phenomenon in recent times, and also highlight the various dilemmas and complexities associated with it.

The activity of begging presents an interesting quandary in Ghana that potentially has serious implications on the rights and welfare of a child who engages in it. For instance, begging is unlawful in Ghana and is punishable under the 1969 National Liberation Decree 392 though juveniles¹ are exempted by the

¹ The terms juvenile in Ghana and per this very law refers to persons below the age of 17 years

law. This seems to be guarding against undue incarceration of juveniles but is not adequate in preventing their involvement in the ‘illegal’ activity in the first place. The law is silent on what should be done when juveniles are involved in begging. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Article 29 (b)) to which Ghana is a party, prohibits using children *in all forms of begging* (emphasis added). The UN Convention on the Rights of Children in addition to provisions for the promotion of child survival, participation and development also made provisions for the protection of children from exploitation and harm (including work that is stigmatizing). The Children Act of Ghana also sets out to protect children from exploitative labour, discrimination and degrading treatment.

Meanwhile apart from it being illegal, begging is considered by many Ghanaians as unacceptable, “stigmatizing” and “devaluing” (Kassah, 2008: 163; Orme and Seipel, 2007). Orme and Serpel (2007:492), in their study of the survival strategies of street children in Ghana revealed that, “Begging for money or food was considered unacceptable behavior in Ghana”.

With specific reference to Tamale, though begging is indeed seen by many as unacceptable, stigmatizing, degrading and devaluing (Weiss, 2007), it seems to be a normal and acceptable activity for the disabled. As a consequence of poverty, exclusion and marginalization occasioned by the interplay of socio-economic and deep-seated cultural norms and values, the majority of the disabled adults are pushed onto the streets to beg for alms (Kassah, 1997; Kassah, 2008, Ntibe, 2011). For this group of people begging is the only way of earning a living while maintaining a sense of self-worth and dignity but they require special assistance of others usually children as guides. The preference for children rather than adults as guides is both social and economic very much shaped by norms and values of kinship interdependence and reciprocity. As this paper reveals, the difficult conditions of these children are reinforced by a combination of power dynamics regulated by a range of social institutions – the family, child fostering for economic reasons and the market economy.

To all intents and purposes these children are placed in contrast with the ‘normative childhood’ envisaged in the child rights framework of the country. Most of the children that are involved in this activity get caught up either as business partners or by way of family commitments in the process of the search for survival of highly excluded and marginalized disabled persons. In some cases the children could be said to be active agents in the search for family survival, but at the same time the fact is they are exposed to the risks associated with street lives ((Obioha, 2010; Agbefu, 2010; Mizen and Ofofokusi, 2010; Nieminen, 2010). The long duration of the activity, the exposure to the vagaries of the weather and to the risks of traffic accidents all potentially have implications on their rights to education, health (physical, mental and psychological), dignity; survival and development. Yet, the plight of these children seems to be receiving little or no attention from relevant actors and agencies of the state.

In the media discourse there have been varied reactions or sentiments towards these children and their adult partners (Citifmonline.com, 2011; GNA, 2010; HRAC News, 2013) which reflects the norms and values of the Ghanaian society relative to begging. To some the plight of these children and their adult partners are sympathetic and thus deserve support in the forms of alms but to others they are simply a body of nuisance that need to be ridden off the streets.

The discussions on the nature of begging in Tamale and the perspectives and experiences of the disabled beggars and their guides (children) discussed are based on field research in Tamale, Ghana. The research adopted a qualitative approach and made use of in-depth interviews and observations for data collection. The concepts of begging, child agency, vulnerability, generational interdependence and discourses of child rights have been employed to aid the discussions and analysis.

1.2. Overview of Adult Disability and Begging in Ghana

There exists a body of literature on the social dimensions of economic globalization on people and societies across the world. It has been argued by various scholars that over the last two decades, economic globalization has brought with it a myriad of social consequences affecting almost every aspect of social life and almost all categories of individuals and peoples. The processes of economic globalization occasioned by neo-liberal principles has brought with it remarkable changes in the structure of families, particularly in developing countries with the hardest hit being the poorest members of the families. Taking the household as the unit of analysis, these consequences reflect in the generational relations of family members especially in developing countries, deepening the levels of inequalities among individuals and societies (Apt, 1993; Beall, 2002; Gunter and Hoeven, 2004; Sarkar, 2007).

The disabled, the poor and the aged in the Northern Region of Ghana and other parts of the country, it is argued, have had their fair share of these effects over the last few decades (Apt, 1993, Weiss, 2007).

In Ghana people with disability have faced one form of discrimination or the other across time and across different socio-cultural contexts. Most studies on disability highlight the socio-cultural and economic conditions that create and reinforce the non-functionality of disabled people in Ghana. It has been asserted that, the disabled people in Ghana are the largest disadvantaged group, they have little or no access to education, limited access to medical care, are the most impoverished with little or no access to employment opportunities, and mostly live at the mercy of their families throughout their lives (Kassah, 1997, 2008; Ntibeaa, 2011; Agbenyega, 2003; Abdul et al, 2013). Ntibeaa (2011) for instance notes that, families and societies turn to neglect their disabled members in almost all spheres of the socio-economic life of the Ghanaian society due to superstitions and feelings of hopelessness. The state has not also done much to deal with the undesirable situation of this group of people. Up until 2006, Ghana did not have a comprehensive law and policy on disability. The disability act that was passed in 2006 after several years of relentless efforts of civil society groups and human rights activist, although it is designed to remove all barriers that hinder the inclusion of disabled people in the Ghanaian society, seemed to have changed little in this regard. The infrastructural conditions and social inclusion services needed to make them active and productive citizens remained largely non-existent. Thus most of them turn to begging as their only means of livelihood (Kassah 2008; Ntibeaa, 2011, Abdul et al, 2013).

The concept and practice of begging is shaped by social norms and values of the Ghanaian society. Weiss (2007) observes that the traditional principle of kinship solidarity and support – where members of the extended family are obliged to assist one another during instances of hardship and crisis – has been

cited as the major basis of support for the not well- to-do including the disabled. His study on alms giving in Ghana reveals that families in Tamale detest having their relatives seen begging for alms because the stigma attached to the relative extends to the larger family. As such based on the principle of solidarity, families used to support their needy and disadvantaged relatives but the increasing hardships, poverty and unemployment situations have greatly challenged families' commitments to this kinship principle of solidarity presently. He quotes one of his respondents as saying: "the stigma of shame prevents most people from begging as the stigma also affects the family, who therefore usually take care of their poorer members" and concludes that, "one could argue that most beggars in Tamale are not out in the streets to make an easy living but as a consequence of the erosion or non-existence of traditional safety nets" (Weiss, 2007:74-75). Apt (1993) also points to similar conclusions when she asserts that, the extended family system of kinship solidarity support of members in times of need and crisis were increasingly given way to the dominance of the nuclear family system to care for the elderly and the disabled. And yet the increasing economic hardships that begun in the late 1980s pose serious challenges for children of the nuclear family to adequately meet the needs of their elderly and disabled. Hence most disabled people move onto the streets to beg for alms by relying on children to serve as their guides/aides. In this city it is not very common to see children independently begging on the street though there are a few exceptions (of a few occasional disabled children). It is not very clear why most of the disabled children are not on the streets begging, but it could be attributable in part to what Kassah (1997:70) explains as "family avoidance or management strategies of courtesy stigma" where families turn to hide their disabled children or relatives from the public so as to prevent the stigmatizing effect on the whole family. It could also be that as children the families still feel a sense of responsibility towards them and thus provide for their needs but as they grow old, they are left to fend for themselves in the face of growing hardship and an increasing sense of individualism.

1.3. The Research Problem

The phenomenon of begging presents very complex and intricate arrays of relationships and discourses. Generally, studies on child begging have been largely focused on children who beg all by themselves, with emphasis on the effects it has on their welfare and with the reference point being the life of the child on the street. Children associated with this activity therefore have been largely categorized as street children and those in the category of worst forms of child labour (SAVE the children, 2011; EC, 2010, Delap, 2009; ILO 2008). These to a large extent turn to overshadow other very important relationships of the children outside the street that defines and reinforces their involvement in the activity. Also, in Ghana, only a few studies have been conducted on begging the focus of which has been limited to adult beggars (Weiss, 2008; Kassah, 2008) almost to the neglect of children associated with it. Other manifestations of begging such as the child-adult partnership as observed in Tamale are yet to be explored. This phenomenon is largely characterized by the disabled (usually blind men and women) being guided by non-disabled guides (children) who are either relatives or business partners with each arrangements presenting different forms of commitments, obligations and entitlements.

The interrelationship of these children and their partners both on the streets and at the household level underscore very complex situations of the children's lives. These interrelationships are regulated by social norms and values of family social protection and interdependence. The nature of the partnerships, the circumstances under which these partnerships are established and the daily routine interactions of the two parties are all factors that border on children's vulnerabilities and agencies with attendant implications on their rights and welfare. The exploration of these interrelationships allows for an understanding of the intricate relationships of kinship interdependence, child vulnerability and agency with respect to begging. The study thus problematizes the over *romanticization* of the 'more empowered child' in contemporary childhood studies and argues for a more nuanced analysis of the lives and experiences of children that allows for the negotiation of their rights.

In so doing the study highlights three key dimensions of the phenomenon – the lives and experiences of those associated with it, particularly the begging child, social norms and values and the art or operations of begging.

1.4. Objectives of the Research

This study explores the phenomenon of begging with a particular focus on the child-disabled adult partnership for street begging in Tamale, Ghana. It seeks to understand how this practice works in Tamale and its implication on the rights and welfare of the child. Overall, the study contributes towards filling the enormous gap in the literature on child begging in Ghana and adds other dimensions to the phenomenon of child begging in general demonstrating the complexity and different facades of the phenomenon.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Explore the inter-relationships of child street beggars and their partners and/or parents
2. Highlight the voices and experiences of these children.
3. Reflect on the child rights implication of this phenomenon
4. Examine the understanding and perceptions of relevant authorities about the phenomenon of begging and its implication on the begging child

1.5 Research Question

The main research question is, how does the phenomenon of child-adult partnership for begging in Tamale, reflect the generational interdependence of family welfare systems and how does that relate with the idea of what is right and wrong for the child?

The sub-questions for the research are:

1. What are the interrelationships of the children and their adult partners both at the household /family and at the street level?
2. What are the children's own perceptions and experiences about the activity

3. How does this practice relate to the discourse of child rights?
4. How do the relevant authorities in Tamale, Ghana such as the Social Welfare Department, the Department of Children and the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly understand and perceive the phenomenon?

1.6 Relevance/Justification of the Research

A body of literature on child begging exists in other parts of Africa and elsewhere (Bop and Troung, 2014; Abebe, 2008; Swanson, 2008). However, in Ghana, except for media reports on the subject matter, one only comes across the concept of child begging/child beggars in existing literature as examples of street activities or street children without elaborate discussions on it (Orme and Seipel, 2007; Agbefu, 2010; Nieminen, 2010; Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi 2010). It could be that the phenomenon is not given sufficient attention by policy makers and implementers; or that the peculiarity of child begging is generally taken for granted and overshadowed by a general literature on street children in Ghana. Child beggars are often lumped together with other children on the street as a homogeneous entity. And yet, as Panter-Brick (2002) notes the term “street-child” does not adequately capture the real complexity and multiplicity of lived experiences of all street children. The general categorization or lumping together of children found on the streets create the tendency to regard every activity that these children engage in (including begging) as mere forms of survival strategies or coping mechanisms while being on the street. This suggests that these children are already either “on the street” or “of the street” – according to UNICEF’s categorization of street children (UNICEF, 1986, 1998) and only resort to begging as a survival strategy (Baffoe et al, 2002; Beauchemin, 1999). This kind of analysis simply takes the street as given i.e. as an independent variable, implying that all street children’s lives are almost always influenced by the street. There is thus the tendency to focus on the street as the starting point of analysis in a large part of the literature on street children (Alenoma, 2012; Baffoe et al, 2002; Beauchemin, 1999; Nieminen, 2010 and Orme and Seipel, 2007). This to a very large extent precludes attention on several forces at play prior to (and even during) many children’s (including child beggars) lives on the street. As UNICEF research on street children in Zimbabwe (UNICEF, ND: 93) revealed, children between the ages of 2 – 6 years (representing 45.7% of all the children studied) were being pushed on to the street by parents or relatives for the sole purpose of begging. What this suggests is that, but for begging, these children wouldn’t have been found on the street. The peculiar nature of child begging and the complexities associated with it, are thus worthy of exploring in its own right. As Sabates-Wheeler et al (2009:109) note, the homogeneous categorization of children “frequently under-predict and misdiagnose the range of vulnerabilities facing different groups” and policies arising out of this kind of diagnoses preclude the “structural vulnerabilities that emerge from and are exacerbated by exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization.”

Again, much of the literature on child begging focuses on independent child beggars (Abebe, 2008; Save the Children, 2011; EC, 2010) with the exception of very few studies (Bop and Troung, 2014). Yet there are many children who are involved in begging in the company of adult beggars. In Tamale

for instance as the researcher observed, there are more children in the company of disabled adult beggars than there are independent child beggars, hence the choice of Tamale for this study. An understanding of how this peculiar aspect of the child begging phenomenon works is very relevant for a richer understanding of the various facades of begging in general and child begging in particular.

Also significant is that, the experiences and practical realities of child beggars (particularly those in the company of disabled adult beggars) have not been given sufficient attention by relevant authorities. Their voices and experiences need to be heard if their rights are to be upheld.

1.7 A Brief Background of Tamale

Tamale is the administrative capital of the Northern Region of Ghana and the largest city in the North of Ghana. It is a relatively new city established in 1908 by the British to serve as an administrative center for the then Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (Weiss, 2007). It is the second largest city by area size in Ghana and per the 2010 Housing and Population Census (PHC), it has a total population of 371,351 (185,995 males and 185,356 females). A 2013 projected population of 562,919 makes it the third largest settlement and the fastest growing city not only in Ghana but in West Africa (GSS, 2012; Mongabay.com, 2013). It covers an area of approximately 750 km constituting about 13 percent of the total land area of the Northern Region. The city serves as a hub for all administrative and commercial activities of the entire Northern region thus becoming the political, economic and financial capital of the region. The metropolis also serves as a converging zone and commercial capital of the 3 regions of the north of the country (Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions).

The primary occupation of the people of the area is mostly subsistence agriculture with very few engaging in commercial rice farming. The bulk (71.2%) of the economically active population in the region is employed in agriculture. Only 5.7% of the population is made up of professionals, administrative or clerical staff and 23.1% in sales, services and transport and production (TaMA, 2009).

The city is inhabited predominantly by the Dagomba ethnic group constituting 80% of the entire population, 90% of them being Muslims. Traditionally, the society is organized around the extended family systems of kinship relations. The society traditionally operates on a system of interdependence based on kinship solidarity and reciprocity. Family members therefore help one another in health, or sickness, in poverty or plenty and in success or failure. They assume collective responsibility through children and grandchildren (Oppong, 1977; Rolleston, 2011; TaMA, 2009).

Chapter 2 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

2.1 Child Agency and Child Vulnerability

Agency can be understood as the ability of people to make effective choices, particularly in responding to opportunities and challenges. Child agency is a concept mostly used in child rights discourse to emphasize viewing children as competent and active agents rather than passive agents in social relations of power. The concept suggests that children need to be seen as capable of making decisions about issues that concern them, reflecting upon these decisions and recognizing the consequences of their action (Abebe, 2013). According to Robson et al (2007:135) “children’s agency is the ability to navigate the contexts and positions of their life worlds fulfilling the many economic, social, and cultural expectations, while simultaneously charting individual and/or collective choice and possibilities for their daily and future lives.” It is used to analyze children coping strategies in the phase of adversity (Panter-Brick, 2002) and how children make strategic life choices and negotiate with adults to do so. Abebe (2013:76) argues that “the extent to which working children exercise agency depends on the interaction between personal agency and complex social, economic and political structures that shape livelihoods opportunities and constraints.” Children’s agency may be influenced and affected by their geographic context, the activity they engage in and who they relate with (Robson et al, 2007).

Vulnerability as a concept on the other hand is used to analyze the limitation posed to individuals, groups or the society occasioned by the lack of power, resources and other attributes needed to protect their own interest (Levine et al 2004). The reality of children’s lives presents glaring images of coexistence of their vulnerabilities and what can be portrayed as their agencies i.e. agency and vulnerability live side by side in the daily lives of many children. This reality of many children lives warrants more nuanced analysis with reference to the rights discourse. The concepts of child agency and vulnerability have been employed to analyse the child-adult partnership for begging highlighting the conditions and the circumstances under which the children become involved.

The research utilizes these concepts in the analysis of how children negotiate their relationships with their partners on the streets and at home. It has also been used in the analysis of the household dynamics in terms of decision making as to how children eventually end up as child-guides/aides in the company of their adult partners. As Panter-Brick (2002:155) argues “the notion that children as individuals have inalienable rights must be negotiated with the notion of group and family rights”. Abebe (2013) on his part asserts that although children have personal agency that defines their individual life choices and desires, they are largely influenced by their environment and inter-personal relationships. The concept of child agency and vulnerability has also been used to analyze the voices and experiences of children that this paper seeks to highlight and its implications or how that relates with the dominant discourse of child rights.

2.2 Generational Interdependence

The concept of generational interdependence or what can be termed intergenerational contract (Whitehead et al, 2007) highlights the dependencies between generations (the young, the adult and the ageing). These interdependencies become much more intrinsic in the contexts where state level social security and protection systems are little or non-existent. In these circumstances the dependencies “require ways of securing reciprocities that ensure that the productive members of families feel responsible for those who either are not yet, or are no longer productive” (Whitehead et al, 2007: 5). This highlights the responsibility of children towards their parents and other adult members of the family and vice versa. Children as much as adults have certain commitments and duties towards the welfare and upkeep of the family (Abebe, 2013). In the Northern Ghanaian traditional society these kinds of relationships are very vital and form the basis of what can be termed kinship social protection mechanisms. In this regard the concept of generational interdependence becomes useful for a more nuanced analysis of this research problem as it relates to how children and adults negotiate their relationships in a process of decision making and choices involving survival and family welfare. In a patriarchal society like the Northern Ghanaian society where power relations are particularly gendered and relational, the concept is a useful tool in analyzing how at the family level, the various forms of identities of children intersect to arrive at a decision as to which child gets involved in the activity and how disability of parents or relatives as a particular form of vulnerability contributes in producing other forms of vulnerabilities of children.

The concept of generational interdependence is also useful in the analysis of the processes, and the interrelationships that shape the partnerships between the children (kin-related children) and their adult disabled partners. This helps to explain how different categories of people (including children) within a family are obliged by shared common principles and commitments on the basis of kinship solidarity to contribute to the general welfare of the family. In this case, where in the face of disability and non-existent public social protection systems families rely on children for support in their quest for survival strategies.

2.3 The Human (Child) Rights Discourse

The discourse of child rights is intrinsically linked to the notion of childhood. “As is the case with human rights, children’s rights are permeated with high flung ideals of social justice. Dealing as they do with strong and often competing normative frameworks, their coverage, relative weight or even precise content has sparked intense debate between proponents and opponents”(Reynolds et al, 2006:293).

On one side of the spectrum of the rights discourse is the conventional notion of human rights regulated by the international human rights treaties and bodies. It calls for the consideration of the best interests of the child in all matters concerning children. Central to the conventional rights discourse is the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). It refers to a framework that integrates the norms, perceptions and standards of human rights in responding to challenges with its driving force being the principles of entitlements, obligations and accountability. “By stipulating an internationally agreed set of norms,

backed by internal law, it provides a stronger basis for citizens to make claims on their states and for holding states to account for their duties to enhance access of their citizens to the realization of their rights” (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2006:1416).

It seeks among other things to create and strengthen mechanisms of citizen’s-government accountability and to reduce discrimination against marginalized and vulnerable groups. The emphasis of HRBA is the relationship between individuals and groups (right holders) and state and non-state actors with obligations (duty bearers). HRBA identifies the state as the principal duty bearer as far as the realization of the rights of its citizens is concerned. In this regards it imposes responsibilities and obligation on government to **respect** the human rights of its citizens (in this case children and the disabled) i.e. to refrain from interfering directly or indirectly with the enjoyment of their rights; to **protect** human rights (i.e. prevent third parties from interfering in any way with the enjoyment of human rights) and to **fulfil** human rights i.e. take positive steps to promote, support and provide for the realization of human rights (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; Charlene, 2011; Theis, 2004) . HRBA calls for existing resources to be shared more equally and for assisting the marginalized people in asserting their rights to those resources. It calls on states to extend special protective measures to a particular group of citizens who for various reasons are weak and vulnerable or have traditionally been victims of violations and consequently requires special attention for the equal and effective enjoyments of their human rights.

This study is at the intersection of two very important vulnerable groups (children and the disabled persons) that requires special protective mechanisms particularly from the state for the full realization of their rights. Ghana has a comprehensive human rights regime for the protection of the rights and welfare of children. These legal regimes includes both international conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and a number of ILO conventions and Protocols on children labour; as well as National laws such as the 1992 Constitution, the Children’s Act of Ghana (1998), and the Child Rights Regulation, 2002, LI1705. Besides these legal frameworks, the country has also created specialized institutions such as the Department of Children (DoC) and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to respond to and deal with challenges associated with vulnerable people including children and the disabled. The Children’s Act of Ghana (Act 560, 1998) primarily mandates the Department of Social Welfare for the implementation of the child rights Act. Its mandate includes ensuring that, the best interests of children are always protected under all circumstances. The Department was specifically created to promote and protect: the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups in the country; justice and administration of child related issues; and community care for the disabled and needy adults (Part VI, of sub-part I, section 105-114 of the children’s Act).

With regards to disability rights, in addition to the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ghana has also enacted the Disability Act (Act 715 of 2006) which among others provides for the

promotion of the interest of disabled persons, prevention of discrimination and protection from abusive and degrading treatment.

On the other side of the spectrum of the rights discourse is the growing number of literature that seeks to highlight how children life-worlds and practical realities are influenced by local notions of what is right and wrong (living rights) for the child (Niewenhuis, 2013; Nsamenang, 2006). This body of literature “critically examines the value of the language of children’s rights and the social significance of this language to working children”(Abebe, 2013:73). It explores the local normative ordering that shapes societies behavior and attitudes towards the child.

This study makes use of these discourses in the exploration of how the normative ordering and the value systems of the Northern Ghanaian society influence the preference for children in the partnership for begging in Tamale and how children’s rights are affected by it. The human rights based approach is employed in the discussions relative to the challenges and limitations of the promotion of the rights of the disabled beggars and their accompanying children as envisaged by the rights framework of the country.

2.4 Conceptualizing Begging

Begging has been seen differently in terms of the law and the society as well as by the beggars themselves. The phenomenon is characterized by legal and moral conundrums which define the space through which the activity takes place and the category of people who engages in it and this varies over time and space (Erskine and McIntosh, 1999). In some contexts like Tamale, the phenomenon and operation of begging is influenced by religious values and the traditional moral ethos of the society (Weiss, 2007).

In the literature begging has been conceptualized by some as a coping or survival strategy of a category of vulnerable person (Abebe, 2008) and as a form of employment or work merely from the interpretation of the beggars themselves (Kassah, 2009) and from the notions of both beggars and the public (Dean, 1999). As a form of work or profession, Dean (1996:6) sees it as “extremely hazardous... [as] people who beg risk violence and predation, not only from passers-by, but from others who get their living on the street”.

In the same way, Child begging has been conceived and perceived differently across the world both in terms of the law and the society. Though it has not been explicitly conceptualized in terms of the international universal child rights law (the CRC) (Cherneva, 2011), the ILO categorizes it as a (worst) form of child labour (ILO, 2008; Kuchrov, 1980). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on its part has explicitly made reference to child begging by prohibiting the use of children in all forms of begging underscoring the peculiarity of this type of activity amidst other forms of children’s work. In the literature it is either discussed in terms of child labour (some refer to it as a hazardous form of child labour – highlighting its exploitative nature), or related

to child trafficking especially when it is done in organized forms, involved migration and /or when there is force involved (Cherneva, 2011, EC, 2010; Save the Children 2011).

This study makes use of the conception of begging in discussing the varied understanding of the activity as an economic activity between beggars on the one hand and the public on the other.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This section discusses how the data for the study was gathered and the characteristics of research participants. The research utilized the following key processes and tools: research design, sampling procedure, data collection methods and analysis.

3.2. Research Design

Studying and understanding social phenomena is a very complex process. It requires the researcher to carefully think through all the processes of the research by carefully conceptualizing the research problem and then situate it into proper and relevant perspectives. This in turn guides the data collection and analysis processes (O'Leary, 2010). The study makes extensive use of a qualitative research approach. According to O' Leary (2010:114), qualitative research "...works at delving into social complexities in order to truly explore and understand the interactions of processes, lived experience and belief systems that are a part of individuals, institutions, cultural groups, and even the everyday." The qualitative approach is appropriate for the research as it enables the exploration of the inter-relationships of the children and their adult partners in the begging activity. It also allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of children themselves about their own activity. This approach also proved very useful for the study of the begging phenomenon which relates to complex and sensitive social issues such as culturally held beliefs and values of society, religion and economic and social status.

Doing research with children also requires their full participation in the whole processes and it demands viewing them as active agents rather than passive recipients of the endeavor (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Children are more interested in research when they are provided with the opportunity to participate actively in the process and when the relationship between them and the researcher is less formal. A qualitative approach was thus adopted for this study because it provided an enabling environment for children to participate. The use of an in-depth interview technique with open-ended and follow-up questions allowed for children to explain their experiences and understanding of the phenomenon in their own terms rather than being forced to select from fixed responses that often characterize a quantitative approach.

In order to adequately answer the research questions, as well as satisfy the stated objectives, both primary and secondary data were relied upon. Secondary sources of data relevant to the study were reviewed such as existing newspaper articles, journal articles and books. With the primary data, children, parents/guardians, alms givers and other key informants in Tamale were

contacted for in-depth interviews. An unstructured form of observation was also utilized for this study.

3.3. Sampling Procedures

The technique of accessing the research participants was non-random sampling, where the purposive, accidental and convenient sampling methods we used. The nature of the activity of the children and the lack of comprehensive existing data made the target population both hard to reach and difficult to define. Non-random, purposive and convenient sampling techniques therefore allowed for the flexibility of reaching out to them. As O’Leary (2004:91) argues “non-random selection offers researchers flexibility when working with populations that are hard to define and or access”. In this regard I purposefully reached out to both kin and non-kin related children in the partnership so as to understand how the different forms of partnerships work. I also purposefully targeted children of different age groups and gender to understand how age and gender play out in these partnerships. The purposeful sampling technique was also very useful in reaching out to key informants who have knowledge and experience on the subject, such as key officials from the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Children and the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. Members of the general public (both alms givers and non-alms givers) were also targeted and randomly selected for discussions on their own views on the phenomenon.

I contacted the leadership of the Federation of the Disabled Persons in Tamale who granted me the permission and facilitated an easy contact with the beggars. The beggars being largely disabled are members of this Federation where meetings are periodically held to discuss about the general welfare of disabled persons in the Metropolis.

In all 33 people participated in the study as research respondents. 15 children (comprising 8 females and 7 males) and 5 adult partners (3 females and 2 males) were contacted for in-depth interviews. Out of the 15 children interviewed, 5 were non-kin relations whilst 10 being kin relations. Out of the 10 kin-related children, 3 were biological and 7 fostered. 3 Key informants from the department of social welfare, the children’s department in Tamale and the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly were also contacted. 10 Members of the general public, both those who give alms to street beggars and those who do not, were also purposefully recruited for this study.

Table 1 Overview of Research Participants

Category of Research Participants	Number	Gender		Method of data collection
		Male	Female	
Child beggars	15	8	7	In-depth- Interviews and observation
Adults beggars	5	3	2	In-depth- Interviews and observation
Informants from the public	10	5	5	In-depth- Interviews
Informants from relevant government departments	3	3	-	In-depth- Interviews

3.4. Methods of Data Collection

In-depth interview and observation techniques were the two main methods employed for the purpose of gathering the primary data for this study.

In this regard individual (face-to face) interviews were conducted separately for children, their partners or families, to gain insight into the inter-relationships of these children and their partners and/or parents, and to gather children’s voices and experiences regarding their involvement in the begging activity. Separate in-depth interviews were also conducted with key informant(s) from the department of Social Welfare in Tamale, the Department of Children and the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly to gain their perspectives on the phenomenon. Alms givers and non-alms givers were also targeted to understand the public perception of using children in begging and how that is influenced by their understanding of what is right and wrong for the child.

Interview guides with open-ended questions (see appendices 1-4)) were developed to guide the discussions. A semi-structured interview was employed in this regard to allow for the generation of both intended and interesting and unexpected data that may emerge (O’Leary, 2005). The interviews lasted on average between 30-45 minutes for the various respondents. Manual notes taking was employed to record the proceedings of the interviews.

For the children and their adult partners, the interviews were conducted in an informal atmosphere. This allowed for the participants to feel as though they were engaging in a normal conversation and this facilitated the generation of information freely. Three main spots (behind Picorna Gardens Hotel, under

opposite the Tamale Main Barclays Bank Ghana Ltd and a by a wall opposite the Standard Chartered Bank) were the locations where the interviews were carried out. These spots happened to be the resting points of the beggars where they usually converge to eat, converse and pray usually between 13 and 15 hours. These were conveniently chosen by the interviewees as the appropriate location and time for discussions. The discussions were done in the local dialect (Dagbani) – a native language of both the researcher and the respondents. Hence there was no need for an interpreter. Being a native of the area also facilitated the rapport building process as the respondents could relate with me as if I was already one of them.

The interviews with the key informants were done in their respective offices and houses as primarily determined by them. The local dialect was used in the case of those informants who spoke the native language. For those who did not understand the dialect, English was used. For these conversations both manual note taking and tape recording were used to aid the capturing of information.

Observation was also employed and this proved a very useful tool in generating data about the mundane activities of the children and their adult partners as well as their interrelationships with members of the public. The three locations where the in-depth interviews were conducted were the same spots at which the observations were carried out.

3.5. Data Analysis

The information recorded from the field through manual voice recording was transcribed and, with the use of content analysis, categorized into themes and sub-themes based on the research questions and objectives. Content analysis as explained by Hancock (1998) is the categorization of verbal or behavioral data, for purposes of classification, summarization and tabulation. The information generated through note taking and observation was also organized along major themes and sub-themes and merged with the transcribed data for analysis and discussions. Key important messages or statements of the respondents are also reported verbatim where appropriate.

3.6. Risk and Ethical Challenges:

In doing research with people there are some ethical principles that need to be considered. There can be both legal and moral principles. These two forms of principles are not mutually exclusive. The moral are as important as the legal principles. In this regard I was primarily guided by the principle that the researcher's own ethical responsibility is the basic foundation for every research i.e. making sure that the research is morally acceptable (Skanfors, 2009).

The general ethical challenges and considerations that need to be complied with during the research process among others include the principle of informed consent, the principle of no harm and the principle of confidentiality.

The principle of informed consent requires that, the respondents are seen as competent, intellectual and matured beings capable of understanding the nature of the research and their involvement in it; that they are autonomous, making the decisions and choices by themselves; and that they should not be induced nor coerced. This is applicable to children as much as to adults. However, with children, because of their age, permission needs to be sought both from the child and the parent or person *in loco parentis* of the child (O'Leary, 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). This however does not go without challenges in that there may be difficulties in actually getting children to understand fully what the research entails. Also, parents may not want their children to be interviewed especially when they feel their interest may be threatened by the research. A considerable amount of time was taken to fully explain the research purpose both to parents and the children as something that is purely for academic purposes and that their anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly safeguarded. The leadership of the Federation of the Disabled of the Tamale Branch was my entry point with the participants. This proved very useful, they did most of the introduction on my behalf and the participants readily accepted me as if I was one of them.

The principle of no harm requires the researcher to ensure that the conduct of the research poses no threat and danger to the participants whatsoever. This means that, from the very beginning of interactions with the respondents through to the production of the research report, I acted in a manner that ensures the security of my research participants. I assured the participants of anonymity, and the places of interactions were chosen to meet the safety and convenience concerns of my respondents. I have also avoided the use of respondents' names in the references for messages quoted verbatim. The challenge however was, the interviews entails interrupting the daily economic activities of the respondents which has cost implications. The ethical challenge lies in how to make-up for the lost time whilst not also creating a perception of using money or items to entice participants. I handled this by giving them a token amount of money to take care of their lunch as a way of making up for their lost time.

Chapter 4 Begging and the Experiences of Children in Tamale, Ghana

The discussions and analysis in this chapter are based on primary data generated during field work in Tamale. This chapter discusses the nature of begging in Tamale, Ghana. It highlights the socio-economic and political factors that characterize the phenomenon and its implication on the lives and experiences of children associated with it.

4.1 An Overview of Begging in Tamale

Begging in Ghana and in particular Tamale is largely regulated and influenced by social norms and values rooted in religion and culture. Like many phenomena embedded in social norms and values, begging as it manifests in Tamale is multifaceted. In Ghana, begging is recognized and cast as a problem by the state as reflected in the legal framework of the country. However, at the societal level, though generally perceived to be devaluing, stigmatizing and unacceptable, begging is permissible at least for some group of people – it is seen as a legitimate activity for the most vulnerable largely the disabled. Series of observations and interviews with key informants revealed that various kinds of people are engaged in begging both on the streets and in the neighborhoods of the Metropolis for varying reasons and rationales. Those who give alms and those who seek for alms are guided by certain key norms and values rooted in religion and culture. Thus by law it is illegal but on the ground, it is justified and legitimized by cultural and religious beliefs of the people.

Largely a Muslim society, the conduct and behaviors of the people of Tamale are to a very large extent regulated by Islamic values and moral ethos as the findings of the research revealed. Islam in principle forbids people to beg. Good and pious Muslims are encouraged to strive and work hard to obtain their means of livelihoods but at the same time they are encouraged to give to the needy and poor in order to attain religious piety. Begging is seen generally as an activity of a last resort and largely a preserve of the disabled. Apart from the religion of Islam, the study revealed that other traditional cultural norms and belief systems also contribute to the way begging is observed and practiced in Tamale. For instance apart from the majority of the disabled and very few non-disabled aged who generally justify their resort to begging on the basis of Islamic teachings on almsgiving, others (particularly mothers of twins) engage in the activity as a result of a belief system embedded in tradition and culture. In the words of a 44 year old male almsgiver:

The mothers with twins are on the street begging because, they believe that the twins want to be used to beg. For many families, twins are special creatures whose desires and wishes must be met else misfortune will befall the family. So on many occasions, when these children are born and usually fall sick, consultations with traditionalists or spiritual leaders may reveal that they want the mother to send them out to the streets to beg. The mother has to oblige otherwise they may not heal or may even cause lots of misfortunes in the family.

Almsgivers in Tamale also vary in terms of the reasons and rationales of their offerings. Some give for the purpose of attaining religious piety. This group of people gives alms of any amount to any *deserving*² alms seekers relative to their incomes.

Others on the other hand give to avert misfortunes or to increase one's fortunes. The reasons or rationale for the offerings of this group of people are in the realm of cultural beliefs. A 51 year old male informant from the general public had this to say during an interview session with him:

Some people give out to the beggars to solve their own problems. I for instance, when I have a problem or wish to get something, I usually consult my Mallam³ and based on his assessment of my situation, he will ask me to give such and such to so and so person. He can ask me to give say GHC 20.00 or pieces of white and red cola nuts or a mixture of rice, millet, corn etc to say a blind woman, or a mother with male twins etc. Once I do that, my problem may be solved or my wish be granted.

There are currently no direct social services or social protection support schemes for the beggars as affirmed by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) and the Department of Children (DoC) during interviews with them. The only social protection support scheme under the DSW that is supposed to benefit the beggars is the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme but this is being implemented in the rural areas and benefits only a few selected poor. Hence the beggars in Tamale characterized largely by disabled people are not beneficiaries of this support scheme. Another potential programme of support to the disabled is the disability fund under the District Assembly Common Fund. The fund is supposed to benefit all disabled people in the various districts. The Tamale Metropolis implements this scheme but according to the key informant from the Assembly and corroborated with the interviews of the beggars themselves, the amount paid under this scheme is very irregular, not significant and only reaches a minority of the disabled. My interviews with the disabled beggars revealed that, none of those who beg in the metropolis had received any money from the Metro Assembly.

With little or no capacity to engage in other economic activities, and with no support from the state and or family, many disabled persons – justified by religious and cultural norms and values – resort to begging as a legitimized and an acceptable form of securing their livelihoods. Almost all the disabled particu-

² Based on the religious requirements of almsgiving, alms-seekers are profiled into genuine and fraudulent laying the basis for the identification of deserving and undeserving beggars.

³ A mallam is an honorific title given to learned Islamic scholars in Africa. For most people they have expertise in foretelling the future, in understanding the unseen aspects of life and capable of altering the (mis)fortunes of people.

larly the blind employ the services of children to serve as their aides/guides. Thus many children become associated with begging as partners to adult disabled beggars who as a result of the busy and risky nature of the streets are not able to effectively beg on their own.

What this highlights is that the phenomenon of begging as it manifests in Tamale is not only limited to the search for livelihoods of a particular group of people but is also characterized by varied rationales embedded in social norms and values. These norms and belief systems have further laid the basis for the categorization of beggars into *deserving* (genuine) and *undeserving* (false) beggars. With the increasing number of beggars on the streets in recent times, the public are becoming skeptical about who really are genuine beggars and who are not. The disabled are generally seen as the most genuine relative to the visibility of their vulnerability. This position finds expression in the words of a 35 year old female almsgiver from the public who indicated “because, their handicapped and powerless situation can be physically seen by everybody. They therefore elicit more sympathy from passers-by than those beggars who are not disabled.” Thus the notion of disability of the Ghanaian society and the norms and values associated with begging interact in creating a legitimate and a socially acceptable basis for begging by the disabled in a context where begging is otherwise legally forbidden and socially unacceptable.

The involvement of children in begging is largely linked to the society’s understanding of the role of children in generational interdependence. The people of Tamale have long operated on a kinship social protection system which requires that productive members of the family lend their support to non-productive members for the general welfare of the family (Arhinful, 2003). The disabled among the people of Tamale have been generally regarded as the most unfortunate members of the society and therefore require support from members of their families. Largely, children serve as a major source of support to the disabled. They run errands for them, support them in the search for their livelihoods and aid them to carry out their daily mundane activities.

The approach to begging adopted by the majority of the beggars with guides/aides is a combination of both active and passive forms of begging (see Dean, 1999; Delap, 2009; EC, 2012; Save the Children, 2011). They move from vehicle to vehicle asking people for money but at certain times of the day they also sit at vantage locations. The role of the child is to guide his/her adult partner from one vehicle to the other, who then prays for God’s blessings on the potential donor, both before and after the receipt of money or other forms of support. They do this during the early hours of the day (starting on average at 8:00 am) to midday (1:00 pm) where they converge at vantage locations from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm. This period of the day coincides with two of the five daily Muslim obligatory prayers. During this period of the day, there is a huge concentration of beggars at a place popularly known as ‘*Barimansi line*’ (translated in English as Beggars line). The five main traffic junctions located at the Tamale Central Mosque, Agric, Taxi Rank, Standard Chartered Bank and Barclays Bank also witness large concentrations of beggars. Other beggars (mostly made up of migrants from the Upper East Region) are also located behind Picorna Gar-

dens during this period of the day. They use these locations for their break time during which they offer their daily obligatory prayers, rest and eat whilst still attracting alms from passersby. During this period also, various kinds of food vendors move to these locations to sell their foods. The children run errands for their adult partners such as fetching water, buying of food and other items, as well as guide them to prayer places. If time is available, they play among themselves. After the second afternoon obligatory prayers have been observed, they move onto the main streets usually around 3:30pm till 6:00pm. These timings were observed to be strategic for the beggars in that, the early hours of the day witness the majority of people rushing to their work places and hence there is a huge concentration in the traffic of potential almsgivers. 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm is also lunch time of most workers who mostly ply the vantage locations where the beggars usually converge. And 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm is the period when most workers close from work.

Every day of the week is a working day for the majority of the beggars. An average fulltime beggar works approximately 10 hours a day or 70 hours a week starting from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm daily. Children within the age bracket of 4 – 7 years were generally brought in to serve as shadow guides/aides as the older children prepare to exit the activity. In this sense, 2 to 3 children could be seen guiding one beggar either at the same time or interchangeably (at different times of the day) – those who are brought in to learn the rudiments of the activity (the shadow guides/aides) and those who prepare to exit. With these arrangements, the older children still preparing to exit the activity combine other forms of activities such as vending, hawking or schooling with begging. Though it was generally observed that majority of the children were not attending school, three of the children who were interviewed combined schooling with begging. These children usually bring their partners to the specified locations where they sit and beg till they close from school at around 12:00 pm. With some other arrangements, there may be two children guiding the adult beggar inter-changeably. With this arrangement only one of them is enrolled in school, usually the older child, and is assisted by a younger one (who doesn't go to school) but serves as a shadow guide. With this arrangement, the older child guides the blind beggar and the younger child to the street in the morning before going to school or embark in other activities. The younger child and their partner then beg at less risky areas awaiting the return of the older one to takeover. On average each of these categories of children works approximately 6 hours a day or 42 hours a week.

The average daily earnings of the beggars were estimated at Ghc 10.00. For some of the beggars, on a good day, they make up to Ghc 20.00 or more but on a bad day they make Ghc 6.00 to 7.00. This is on average above the minimum wage of Ghanaian formal workers which is pegged at Ghc 6.00 (myjoyonline.com, 2014). Some of the children receive Ghc 1.00 for lunch plus Ghc 2.00 or less depending on the day's earnings for savings whilst the majority of them only receive money for lunch. But an undisclosed amount of money and foodstuffs are periodically sent directly to the immediate families of the children.

4.2. Preference for Children over Adults as Guides/Partners

The children involved in the partnerships approximately ranged between the ages of 4 and 16 years old and their adult partners ranged from as young as 35 years old to as old as 60 years. The majority of the children interviewed were within the age brackets of 8 – 14 years. Children within this age cohorts appeared to be the preferred children for this kind of partnership. Interviews with the adult beggars revealed that on average they had changed about 4 to 6 guides since they started begging with the exit point of children in this activity being from 14 years. It was observed that fewer girls than boys were within the 12-14 years brackets. This was corroborated with follow up interviews with the adult beggars who indicated that when they move with older children they face lots of harassment from the public as they are seen as capable of engaging in “normal” activities.

The research revealed that children were largely preferred as guides/aides to adult for several reasons. The sight of children with their adult disabled persons together portrays images of extreme vulnerability, thus pushing more people to support them. Able-bodied adults do not elicit public sympathy for alms giving as they are considered as *undeserving* of alms support. They are seen as capable of working to earn a living both for themselves and for their disabled counterparts. This was largely the reasons given for why children who reach adolescence quit the activity for other economic and productive ventures. Older children feel that begging is a less honorable activity for them due to stigma and public harassments. Adolescent girls in particular want to be involved in much more appreciated activities than begging because the stigma associated with it may drive potential suitors away.

Besides being able to court public sympathy by virtue of their childhood innocence and vulnerability, to their adult disabled counterparts, children are much more controllable than adults. They do everything being asked of them but do not ask for an equal share of the proceeds. For most of the children once decisions are made in the family for a particular child to serve as a guide there can be no negotiations or refusals. Most of the children are in it by default i.e. by virtue of either being born to a disabled beggar or fostered to him/her.

The moral conundrums associated with the activity of begging also influences why children are preferred to adults. Begging is largely unacceptable especially for non-disabled persons. The general assumption is that, the disabled persons found on the street begging have actually lost all the acceptable sources of livelihood support. Being seen with a non-disabled adult speaks contrary to this assumption and therefore, as the beggars indicated during the interviews with them would simply invite insults, harassments and statements such as “*why don't you allow this poor man or woman to stay in the house and look for a meaningful job to support him/her*”. With this kind of attitude and reactions from the public, it is not prudent on the part of the beggars to rely on adult guides/aides. Possible adult partners on their part simply prefer to stay their distance because of the stigma associated with begging. Children on the other hand (especially those within the age range of 6-12) are seen as not capable of engaging in meaningful pro-

ductive activity. This goes further beyond the notion of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ to the notion of ‘forms of work’. Generally begging is not seen as a form of work or at best a descent form of work to be carried out by able-bodied people. Thus the society’s perception and understanding of what constitutes descent work and for whom, also influences why children are preferred. Thus, the norms and values underpinning the phenomenon of begging in Tamale to a very large extent influence the category of people deemed most suitable for the begging activity. Children, by virtue of being seen as innocent, make the most appropriate companions of the disabled in the begging undertaking. However, the involvement of many children in this activity also reflects relations of power and control within the family collective. This moves further beyond the notion of childhood innocence to division of labour within the family. In the words of a 48 year old male blind beggar:

Children have the kind of work expected of them whilst adults have theirs. It looks abnormal for adults who look strong to accompany us for begging. People will not give us anything as they expect him or her to go and work and look after us. So it is good for my wife to stay and look after the home and the younger children whilst we (himself and his guide) work to bring money home.

The above expression illustrates the intra-household arrangements of division of labour of beggars and their families along patterns of generation and gender. What it signifies is that, the presence of the disabled beggar and the child on the street reflects the role expected of every member of the family for the welfare of the family collective.

The preference for children over adults in this partnership however is not only influenced by their contribution alone but also to an extent by the control and influence the adults have on them. Their seemingly powerless situation renders them incapable of negotiating refusals even if they detest the activity. This highlights the complex interactions of child agency and vulnerability. To the extent that the children’s involvement in this activity are very much linked to generational interdependence of the kinship social protection system, many of these children could be said to be exercising agencies by their contribution to this family welfare systems. But at the same time their agency is constrained relative to their social position in the family. Their powerless position as children vis-à-vis social relations of power makes them malleable to control and manipulation. Thus many of these children are subjected to some degree of compulsion and some form of abuse.

The study revealed that, girls as much as boys were involved in this form of partnership. The sex of the child guide also did not matter as to the adult being guided. Female children were seen guiding male adults and the vice versa.

Unlike Bop and Troung’s (2014) study on blind beggars and their guides in Senegal relative to the gender dynamics of the children who served as guides, this study revealed a gender neutral preference. Both boys and girls stood equal chance of being engaged in the partnership. The children were chosen based

on who is available in terms of age (usually the middle age cohorts among siblings within a family) for the activity. Therefore preference for children had to do more with the age of the child than with the gender.

Female children who engage in the activity are mostly with the younger age cohorts (from 6 to 10) with the exception of a few who were between the ages of (14 to 16), while male children were mostly older (12 to 14). The findings of this study holds true for Delap (2009) when she asserts that the level of children involvement in begging declines among children who reached puberty and not only because younger children are more likely to evoke pity but also because it becomes much more recognized as a shameful activity when the children grow older. Especially for girls it may be associated with the societal notion of marriage and honor. What this suggests is that children's involvement in begging responds to the wider social norms and values that regulate the phenomenon of begging – about who should and should not be associated with the activity.

Male children who were also relatively older mostly engaged in the activity voluntarily and with a clear vision of why they got involved and when they plan to exit the activity. Almost all the children wished their situation had been different – when they don't have to guide beggars all day but either continually go to school or engage in other forms of apprenticeship work that will secure better job opportunities for them. They see their situation as undesirable and hopes for external support to enable them exit the activity. For most of them sustainable and meaningful support should be geared towards helping their disabled counterparts and or family to become self -sustaining. As a 12 year old male guide indicated:

I don't like begging. I get tired everyday walking around the streets with the beggar. Some people insult us and some will just ignore us. Sometimes I feel discouraged and ashamed but I have to continue because, through this, I get money to support myself. We also send money and foodstuff to my parents every month to help support the family. I chose to come to Tamale with him. I come from Bongo in the Upper East Region. When he was looking for a child to guide him, I told my parents I could go with him so as to support them and my younger siblings.

Thus, although both boys and girls have the equal chance of being involved in the activity, the experiences and perceptions about the activity as well as the level of agency exercised by them varied as they grow older. Adolescent girls were more likely to withdraw from the activity earlier than their boys counterparts due to the stigma associated with it vis-à-vis the honor of marriage. On the other hand the older boys in the activity seem to have a sense of balancing the risks and hazards with the benefits by making conscious (and in most instances voluntary) decisions to be involved in the activity regardless of these risks.

4.3. Dynamics and Interrelationships Between the Guides and their Adult Partners

The child-adult partnership for begging is characterized by a complex web of family interdependencies especially for the partnerships based on kinship relations. The research found three forms of relationships in these transactions/partnerships. The first two with biological children and foster children of the disabled beggars are based on kinship relations whilst the third involving non-kin children is purely based on external family arrangements of mutual beneficial interest. The children, as the research revealed, had varied sentiments and perceptions about the activity and their life on the streets. Whilst some of them got involved voluntarily to support family income and to access other opportunities, the involvement of others is by compulsion relative to the power dynamics within the family. Most of these children are compelled to make hard choices in the face of the socio-economic constraints that characterized their livelihoods options. Thus for many of these children their involvement in the activity underscores their relative vulnerabilities in the light of the socio-economic constraints and opportunities. The reasons, obligations and experiences of the children varied relative to the type of partnership they are engaged in.

The majority of the children in these partnerships were found to be foster children. Seven out of the 10 kin-related children interviewed were foster children. This is an age old traditional practice where children are given out to other extended members of the family, usually aunts, uncles or grandparents to be raised and trained with the aim of fostering family bonding and unity. Fostering is one of the key pivots around which the extended system of kinship interdependence and care and social protection revolves. It has been regarded as a risk coping mechanisms employed by Ghanaian families to compensate for some form of economic and/or demographic hardships and to take advantage of resources through the extended family and other social networks (Kuyini et al, 2009). In line with this system, children are given out to provide assistance including running errands and searching for means of livelihoods for the disabled members of the family as a way of extending social support to them. Decisions are made through layers of consultations among family members when these children are being chosen to serve as guides /aides to the disabled. Children, siblings, uncles and aunts of the disabled beggars as the research revealed give out their own children with the consent of their spouses for this purpose. This arrangement revolves on a system of reciprocity – where the children on the one hand serve as guides/aides for their disabled foster beggars and in turn receive income and other material support from the proceeds of the activity and some form of informal settlement packages when they reach adolescence. These benefits also extend to the immediate families of the children. Foodstuffs and some proportion of money are periodically sent to the parents of these children. Thus the children serve as instrumental agents through which the otherwise non-productive members (the disabled) of the family secure a form of livelihoods that benefit the so-called productive members of the family. In the words of a 55 year old blind beggar:

The child was given to me by my younger brother and his wife to take care of me as I cannot see. She guides me wherever I go... to the toilet, to the mosque, and any place that I must go. She is my eye. I use to be in the village and receive support from family members. These days farming which is their main occupation is no longer good. I can no longer solely depend on them. So I was advised to come to the city where I can solicit help from people. My brother decided to give me one of his children to support me. As we get money and foodstuffs we also send part of it to support them in the village.

The involvement of many of the foster children was revealed to be characterized by some level of force and abuse. For most of them begging was the last thing they wanted to be associated with. The majority of them expressed their desire to be enrolled in school but had been denied. Others were even forced to withdraw from school to support their disabled counterparts in the activity and in extreme situations have been subjected to some form of physical and psychological abuse. As a 13 year old boy tearfully narrated his ordeal:

My parents and I used to stay in Accra. I used to attend school when I was staying with my parents. When my father died two years ago, I was brought to Walewale to live with my grandmother (my father's mother). My mother still lives in Accra but I am never allowed to visit her. When I first came to Walewale, I was enrolled in school but later my grandmother asked me to stop school and accompany her blind brother to Tamale to guide him to beg. I love to be in school but my grandmother says she doesn't have money to cater for my educational needs. I hate begging. People don't respect you when you beg. When I refuse to guide him, I am denied food for the day.

Though it was found that the majority of the disabled beggars were married or had been married and had children only a few were guided/aided by their own biological children. The majority indicated that, their own biological children were grown up (had reached adolescence or married) and were no longer suitable for the begging activity. Those who had divorced indicated that the children were staying with the other spouses. For those who had their children guiding them, the reasons for the children involvement in this activity were straight forward. The children were basically in it for the simple reason that, begging was the only source of livelihood for the family in question and their contribution in this regard is to guide their parents to beg. What was also generally observed was that for those who had their biological children guiding them, both spouses were blind beggars. In other words, majority of the disabled beggars were married to one another with their children serving as their guides. According to a 40 year old blind female beggar:

The father of the child who guides me is also blind. He also begs and you can find him at the other traffic junction near the bank. He is guided by the elder sister of this child. We both beg because that is the only thing we can do for a living. Our children understand our situation be-

cause we are blind but we gave birth to them. We do not get any support from our extended family or the state, so if they do not support us to beg, there will be no food for all of us. We use our own children because they understand our situation. If you use a child from outside, he/she may steal some of the proceeds.

For most of the biological children, their involvement in the activity is based on the moral notions of children's obligations and duties to their parents. They are held by moral commitments to support their disabled parents to search for livelihoods for the family upkeep. In the words of a 12 year old boy:

You see I was staying with my mother in her village and attending school and doing very well as my class teachers use to tell me. But when news got to me that my blind father no longer has any child to guide him, I voluntarily decided to withdraw from school and to offer my support to him. We are saving the money we get from begging and very soon we will use it to do farming and animal rearing. With this my father will no longer have to beg and I can also go back to school. I can combine the farming activities with my education. As for begging nobody likes to be associated with it if not compelled. People look down on you as a beggar.

The non-kin partnerships on the other hand are characterized by some level of complex arrangements and relationships. Whilst the majority of them are engaged in the activity through the arrangements between the beggars and their parents, others were engaged in it voluntarily or at least with negotiations with their families. Some even get involved in the activity and continue with it in the face of parental disapproval. They decide to get involved in it having assessed the financial situation of the family and the ability or otherwise of their parents to live up to their financial obligations. They feel a sense of responsibility to lend their support for the upkeep of the family.

For instance, one 14 year old boy indicated that he was first introduced into the partnership by an older friend of his who was originally guiding the said blind beggar but was preparing to quit. The older friend had enticed him with gifts and money from the proceeds of the activity and advised him to follow them out for begging anytime he closed from school. He started by shadowing his older friend who eventually quit after two months. His parents initially disapproved of it but because the boy was able to support the family income and to provide for his own educational and other needs, they finally consented to it. In his own words:

When I started guiding the blind man, my parents didn't know. I was first introduced to him by a friend who used to guide him. When my parents got to know that I was guiding him to beg, they asked me to stop. But I couldn't stop because, they don't have money to support me in school. As I continue to take care of my needs and also support them from the proceeds I get, they later approved of my engagement in the activity.

The rest of the non-kin partners mostly from the Upper East Region were given out to their adult counterparts on the basis of some form of informal contractual arrangements. Most of them had migrated from the Upper East Region together with their adult counterparts. For most of them the reasons for their engagement in the activity is the promise of better opportunities and social amenities in the city. In the words of a 10 year old girl:

I used to stay in the village with my parents. There I was attending school but the quality is not good. One day the old man came looking for a child to assist him to beg in Tamale. He is from our village but stays in Tamale. He used to be guided by another boy who left for Accra. My parents convinced me to accompany him as the schools in Tamale are better than the one in the village, so I did. But he has not yet sent me to school. He says we will have to work and save to buy school uniforms and books before he enrolls me. I have been here for more than a year now. Sometimes he sent money and foodstuffs to my parents in the village.

Generally the prevalence of education among the children in the activity was very low as was revealed through observations and interviews. Very few children particularly the non-kin related children from the Upper East region combined their activity with schooling. Three of the non-kin related children who were interviewed had agreed to the partnerships because they were promised of educational support. As a 13 year old boy indicated:

I am accompanying this woman because of my education. My parents asked me to follow her to Tamale to guide her to beg so that I can continue my education. Though my parents also benefit from this, the main reason for engaging in the activity is my education. I am planning to quit the activity and go into other activities with the little savings I am making now. I can't continue to guide her to beg forever.

As promising as it may seem, the level of attendance of the children is characterized by truancy and non-punctuality. Some of them complain of poor performance in school because of the lack of time to study. According to an 11 year old male guide:

I wish I could perform better than I am currently doing. But I don't get time to study after school hours. Very early in the morning, I bring the old man to the spot behind Picorna hotel where he begs while waiting for me to close from school so that we can roam around. Long hours of walk during the day make me very tired in the night. So I sleep very early without even opening by books to revise. I wish my parents could afford my educational expenses so that I wouldn't have to do this work and will be able to learn like my other colleagues are doing.

Also, for some of the children the assurances of better education may just be a ploy to lure them into this partnership as their dreams of ever attending school in the city were yet to be fulfilled. In the words of a 10 year old girl:

I was told by my parents to follow the old man to Tamale. He is not a member of our family but he lives close to our house. My parents told me when I follow him here he will send me to school. I have been here for 2 years but he has not sent me to school yet. He always says he will send me when he gets money but he sends money and foodstuffs to my parents in the village. His wife is also blind and she also begs. Another boy guides her. That boy is also not their son; we are both from the same village.

Almost all the beggars and children interviewed had migrated from surrounding villages and towns both within the Northern Region and from Upper East Region. The findings confirm Weiss' (2007) study on alms giving in Tamale which revealed that, most of the beggars in Tamale are not natives of Tamale but had migrated from other parts of the region and country for the purpose of begging. As he noted, the reason for the non-involvement of natives from Tamale in the activity has to do with the shame and stigma attached to begging. This together with other reasons such as the cosmopolitan nature of the city, the religious underpinnings of begging in Tamale, the growing depletion of consistent sources of livelihoods in the rural areas and the breakdown of kinship social protection systems in the villages were found to be the reasons why the beggars and the associated children in this study had migrated from other parts of the country. As a 45 year old blind beggar aptly puts it:

As a blind man, there is only little I can do for a living. I largely lived at the mercy of my family members when I was growing up. But now that I have a wife (who is also blind) and children, the support we get from family members cannot sustain all of us. These days, everybody looks after their children and wives alone. They expect us to also fend for ourselves which we can only do through begging. But I feel ashamed begging in my own village where everybody knows who I am. In this city I can stand in front of anybody to beg freely because nobody knows me.

A general sense of disaffection about the activity was observed during the interviews with the adult beggars and their child partners. Most of them described the activity as demeaning and stigmatizing. Almost all the children wished they didn't have to guide beggars but either continually go to school or engage in other economic activities. As a 10 year old girl indicated:

Begging is very difficult. Sometimes you go to stand in front of people and they simply ignore you and some even shout at you and insult you. Sometime you will walk for hours without anybody giving you anything. I wish my grandmother had stopped this activity. I can't ask her to stop because she says if we stop we can't get food to eat.

The above discussions show very complex relationships between the children and their adult partners regulated by intricate arrays of family survival strategies. Begging serves as an economic activity for otherwise non-productive members of the family (disabled). And through a system of family interdependence and reciprocity, children become instrumental agents in making these people more effective in their activities. The intricate relation between children and adults in kinship/ generational interdependence has been noted by Abebe (2008, 2013) when he asserts that, children as much as adults have certain commitments and duties towards the welfare of the family and that the level of the exercise of child agency is heavily shaped by a complex socio-economic and political factors of livelihoods opportunities and constraints. His assertion that, although children have personal agency that defines their individual life choices and desires, they are largely influenced by the environment and inter-personal relationships holds true for the children found in this partnership. Their involvement in the activity is not only determined by the extent to which they individually benefit from it but also by the extent to which it benefits the larger family.

The voices and experiences expressed by the children underscore the complex nature of the lives of children associated with the begging partnership. An understanding of the nature of their situations requires a deeper analysis of their lives and interrelations both on the street and at the family levels. Their involvement in the partnership relates with what is perceived as their contribution to the welfare of the family collective. They serve as active agents in the search for livelihoods and family survival. On the other hand, they face major constraints in achieving their individual rights as defined and provided for by the dominant rights framework such as their right to dignity, survival and protection; right to education and health, underscoring a sense of vulnerability faced by them. Thus as has been noted earlier, the reality of many of these children's lives presents glaring images of the co-existence of vulnerabilities and what can be termed as their agency. Understanding the situation of many working children including child beggars requires a more nuanced analysis of what they exhibit as their agency vis-à-vis their relation to the larger family.

Although for many of these children, their involvement in this activity is defined by their understanding of their contribution as children to the family income, but to the concerned outsider and casual observer they are delinquent, risky and gone outside childhood in the normative sense (Abebe, 2008) of the term and thus deserve protection. Tensions thus arise between protection and participation rights of children and between the notion of children as having both needs and rights. As Suski (2009: 206) argues “while contemporary childhood studies have embraced a model of a more empowered child, which positions children as active participants in their own socialization, the conception of the “empowered child” proves difficult for the negotiation of children's rights.” For instance the CRC requires that the best interests of the child must be paramount in all matters concerning children. But how do we determine and negotiate the best interest of the child relative to their participation in begging – an activity that is deemed socially as stigmatizing and risky but to most of the children and their families a means of survival and livelihoods?

4.4. The Beggars Notion vis-à-vis the Public Notion of the Activity of Begging

With the absence of a comprehensive state social protection scheme combined with the gradual erosion of traditional family social safety-nets, most disabled persons are left with no option than to beg. Being disabled, especially in the Northern Ghanaian society, you only live at the mercy of other members of the society. Most of the beggars in the study, had initially engaged in other forms of productive activities such as farming, petty trading, animal rearing, rice parboiling, sheabutter processing etc but had to abandon it for begging because of changing economic situations and lack of support from members of the family.

Among the beggars and the public there has been mixed understanding of the description and justification of begging. Some of the beggars regard it as a form of work through which they earn their livelihoods whilst others simply view it as seeking assistance from well to do members of the society. Both those who see it as a form of work and those who see it as mere form of seeking assistance from the well to do largely depend on the religious moral teachings on alms giving as their main justification for begging.

Many of them also use the activity as their main source of socialization and consolation for their predicament. Without coming out to the street to beg, they are often confined into the house during the day when everybody else moves out to seek livelihood opportunities. It is the activity of begging that offers them the opportunity to also come out and interact with the public and among themselves. Seeing other people in similar situations as theirs, might give them encouragement to live. As a 51 year old blind woman beggar puts it:

I come out here everyday so that, people will see my situation and support me. Through that I can also buy food and clothes as well as support my children. Also, as I come out here, I see my colleagues in similar situations and this gives me hope and consolation. I have been doing this for more than 20 years now. I have a house that I have built and rented out to people. That is for my children when I am no longer there and that is why they should help me to beg. I can't stop begging because I earn a living from it and it also provides me with a sense of hope and belonging.

To the children and their adult partners, the children are not beggars but are mere guides/aides. They are only in the activity temporarily and will at a stage quit the activity and engage in productive activities.

Interviews with some members of the public revealed seeming differences among members of the society on the descriptions, morality and justification of begging and the use of children in it. For some, giving alms to the needy and poor is a religious moral virtue enjoined on believing men and women. The

disabled are therefore a good fit of their definition of needy and poor. By giving to the disabled, therefore, they are fulfilling their religious obligations. The children who accompany the adult disabled beggars are seen as innocent and helpless dependent on their adult counterparts and therefore deserving public sympathy and support. For these members of the public the children and their adult partners are both beggars. The sight of the child with a disabled adult simply portrays images of extreme vulnerability and therefore propels them to come to their aid. This group of people gives not only to either the child or the disabled adult but to both.

But to others, begging on the streets goes against the teachings of religion. Religious requirements for alms giving do not necessarily mean that people in need must come out to beg from passersby. They see the children as mere victims of the exploitation by the disabled adults and/or their families. To these people the children for those hours of the day should be in school but they are rather found on the streets in the face of the obvious risk of traffic accidents and the vagaries of the weather begging for alms. Therefore, given to beggars on the street and especially those who use children, means that, they are contributing to the exploitation of the children thereby ruining their future.

It is interesting how the different schools of thoughts base their argument on the religious teaching of alms giving but come to different conclusions as to whether to give or not to give to beggars on the street. Thus begging as it is observed in Tamale defies a common understanding or definition by the society. Depending on one's religious, social orientation and status, begging can be seen as a form of work, an illegal activity or a licit activity (for a comprehensive analysis of the distinction between legal and licit activities, see Kalir and Schendel 2012). This also speaks to the complexities associated with the phenomenon and the challenges in having a comprehensive approach to dealing with the problem of begging in Ghana. Though there exist an official law on begging that prohibits begging and destitution, none of the beggars as well as members of the public from whom opinions were solicited for this study were indeed aware that, begging and destitution is illegal in Ghana. Thus the social underpinnings of begging overshadow the official law that is supposed to regulate it. Except for some periodic knee-jerk reactions of force evictions of the beggars from the street, there hasn't been any comprehensive government level intervention on this issue. The major concern of the authority with respect to the phenomenon is that, it is a social menace and eye-saw to visitors. It should not be done on the principal streets of the city. They are often sent away by the Police on the authority of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly but they always return to the streets. The authorities have little concerns when they beg around the mosques or other areas than the principal streets. But to the beggars the main streets are where they attract sympathetic passers-by. The frustrations of the several failed attempts to rid the beggars out of the streets through force eviction have led to the adoption of a somewhat lukewarm attitude to the issue by the authorities. According to the Regional Director of the Department of Social Welfare in Tamale;

The beggars are not supposed to be on the street begging. The laws of the State prohibit begging. But for my 39 years of work with the Department of Social Welfare, I am yet to witness any beggar being prosecuted by the law. We often show a human face to their situation. How can you jail someone who is in need and simply begs people to come to his aid? Those found on the streets are among the vulnerable people in society. The state is supposed to support them, but we are often constraint with resources. We have never even conducted any research into this issue, this we should do but we don't have the resources.

Another key informant from the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly indicated:

We have never arrested any beggar as the law stipulates. These are extremely vulnerable persons and prosecuting them will only increase their woes. Though the law exists, there is always a human face to the law. We have however occasionally driven them off the streets because it is risky for them, their presence on the streets is a nuisance and an eye saw to visitors. They can beg around the public mosques places and not on the major streets.

The above expression speaks to the inappropriateness of the official law to deal with the problem of begging in the light of the social norms and values that underpin it. To the extent that the belief systems and moral conundrums hold sway on the people of Tamale, state authorities have been constrained to intervene directly in dealing with the problem of begging despite it being outlawed in Ghana. The application and enforcement of the law have given way to a showing of human face to the people who largely have been perceived by the society to be extremely vulnerable. In the absence of social protection support for the disabled, who have been largely rendered unproductive by socio-economic and political forces, the state has not been bold enough to enforce the laws on begging. This underscores the gap between laws in the books and laws in actions and reinforces Eugen Ehrlich's conception of "living law" which seeks to explain how peoples and groups experiences shape their understanding, attitude and actions towards the law and how local normative systems continue its "dominance and influence" despite claims of state authority and official law (Berman, 2009:227; Hertogh, 2004). What this highlight is that, giving the socio-economic conditions that characterize the phenomenon of begging in Ghana, the law alone is not adequate in dealing with the problem if social protection mechanisms are not put in place to support the most vulnerable in the society.

The children associated with the phenomenon are regarded as most vulnerable groups of children. Their involvement is attributed to poverty and breakdown/weak kinship social protection/care systems. Yet, there hasn't been any specific programme in the metropolis targeting these children and their partners. No research has been conducted into the activity by the state departments – no official records/data on the phenomenon.

This makes the promotion and protection of the rights of children as stipulated in the child rights framework of the country such as the CRC, the ACRWC and the Children's Act of Ghana very difficult to achieve. Whilst some children have resorted to the activity voluntarily in order to access education or to secure a form of livelihood for themselves and their families, for most other children it is a matter of force some of whom have been subject to some form of abuse. Even for those who engage in it because of their education, their situation still lives much to be desired. Their experiences are marked by irregular attendance in school, poor performances and some were yet to realize their dreams of attending school. The situation of the children in this activity presents serious concerns with regards to the role of government in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of its vulnerable citizens (in this case the disabled and children). The ACRWC for instance prohibits against using children in all forms of begging. It is not for nothing that the framers of the ACRWC came out with a direct prohibition of the use of children in begging. Begging by its very social and moral underpinnings poses serious and somewhat subtle challenges to children who engage in it. This requires the state to put in necessary measures such as sustained social protection support scheme for the disabled and their associated children. Showing a human face to the law on begging with no direct support scheme from the state does not seem to be the best form of support for these people. As many of the beggars and children indicated, with sustained support from anywhere, they will never engage in begging. This bring to fore the relevance of the child/human rights based approach that calls on governments to promote, protect and more importantly to fulfil the human rights of their citizens.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The study sets out to explore the phenomenon of child-adult partnership for begging in Tamale with the overriding focus on how the phenomenon actually works in practice relative to the norms and values of the society and how this affects the lives of children who are involved in the activity. It specifically focused on finding out the categories of children involved in the activity; the interrelationships of the children and their adult partners in relation to generational inter-dependence, the children's own perceptions and experiences about the activity and the perceptions and understanding of the state or government about the phenomenon with its implication on child agency, vulnerability vis-à-vis the rights discourse

The child adult-partnership for begging in Tamale, as discussed above, is a very complex phenomenon shaped and influenced by socio-economic and political factors that define livelihood opportunities and constraints especially for the disabled. The manifestation and the justification or otherwise of its practice is very much influenced by social norms and values rooted in religion and culture rather than the official law. Generally, begging is seen to be socially unacceptable but with exceptions. The exceptional ones are the disabled whom the society perceives as being poor and needy worthy of external support in the form of alms. Socio-economic and political factors at the micro (family) level, the Meso (the societal) level and the macro (the state) level have in various ways interacted and contributed in rendering the disabled almost non-productive thereby *legitimizing* begging as their only source of livelihoods in a context where it is socially unacceptable, stigmatizing and legally forbidden. The study have further highlighted how begging, largely seen as a social problem and an ill of society is somewhat legitimately resorted to by two distinct group of perceived vulnerable groups (the disabled and children) as a crucial form of economic activity through which they offer livelihood support to the larger family. Thus the child-adult partnership for begging is at the intersection of the societal notions of disability, notions of childhood, child responsibility and norms and values of begging.

Children involvement, experiences, agencies and vulnerabilities have been very much defined by the daily interactions and relationships at the family level and at the street level. Various kinds of children (foster, biological and non-kin) were found to be involved in the activity with varying reasons and under varying obligations and commitments. The kinds of relationships between the children and their adult partners and/or family had a significant influence on the extent to which children exercised their agencies or level of vulnerability. The agency of these children is defined by the relationships that organize and regulate the partnership for begging. They feel a sense of worth by their contribution to their family income and welfare. Generally, however they face ma-

major constraints in achieving personal wellbeing in terms of their aspirations for education and other economic opportunities. Relations of power at the family levels intersect with the societal notions of rights and obligations relative to the family collective that together redirect the ideas of children's rights.

The perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon by relevant authorities is heavily influenced by the social norms and values that regulate it. The state position on the phenomenon relative to the official law on begging, to very large extent, is compromised by the societal norms and values that regulate the way begging is experienced and understood in Ghana. This limits the state ability to protect, promote and fulfill the rights of the people engaged in the activity as enshrined in the relevant child rights and disability laws and treaties to which the country is a party. Giving the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon relative to social and economic crisis vis-s-vis the system of generational interdependence and reciprocity, the rights of these children as enshrined in the relevant legal framework of the country will not be achieved if sustainable alternative for the disabled are not provided for. Preventive and rehabilitation programme need to define children needs by responding to their social experience as they relate to the welfare of the family collective.

In order to deal with this phenomenon and to allow for the effective protection of the rights of the children and their disabled partners, cultural and social barriers that render the disabled non-productive have to be overcome. Changes in values and increased understanding at all levels of society about disability has to be promoted, and social and cultural norms that perpetuate myths about disability and begging have to be put to rest.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Guide for Children

Introduction:

I am a student from the International Institute of Social Studies, pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. This interview guide is meant to collect information for academic purposes only. Information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Guided questions:

1. Demographic Data:
 - a. Name
 - b. Sex
 - c. Age
2. Since when have you been in this partnership or activity?
3. What is your relationship to the beggar?
4. How were you selected from the family to accompany him/her?
5. Do you currently attend school? If yes, how do you combine the activity with schooling
6. Are you a drop-out? Since when did you drop out? What level were you when you drop out? What was the reason for drop out?
7. How many hours do you engage in the activity per day?
8. How is the division of labour negotiated?
9. How is the revenue from the activity distributed in the family (for kin relations)?
10. Who manages the proceeds from the activity?
11. How is the revenue shared between you two (for non-kin relations)
12. Do you have a fixed location or do you roam about?
13. How do you see your role in this partnership?
14. What do you like or dislike about your activity?
15. Could you share your general experience about the activity?

Appendix 2 Interview Guide for Adult disabled Beggars

Introduction

I am a student from the International Institute of Social Studies, pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. This interview guide is meant to collect information for academic purposes only. Information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Guided questions

1. Demographic Data:
 - a. Name
 - b. Sex
 - c. Age
2. Ever been to school?
3. Ever engaged in other economic activities besides begging?
4. How and why did you become a beggar? Probe
5. Would you want to engage in different economic activities besides begging? Probe
6. How long have you been in this activity?
7. What is your relationship with the child in your company? Probe...
8. How was she/he selected?
9. Is she/he your first guide or aide for the activity? Probe...
10. Does she/he attend school? Probe
11. How is the division of labour negotiated between you and how is the revenue shared?
12. Why don't you use adult as your guide or aides? Probe...
13. What do you like or dislike about your activity and the partnership?
14. Do problems arise between you and your guide?
15. Could you share your experiences about this activity and the use of children?
16. What is your understanding about child rights?

Appendix 3 Interview guide for Key informants from Relevant Agencies

Introduction

I am a student from the International Institute of Social Studies, pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. This interview guide is meant to collect information for academic purposes only. Information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Guided questions

1. What is your position in the organization?
2. How long have you been working in the organization and in this capacity?
3. How do you perceive the phenomenon of begging in Tamale? Probe
4. What do you think account for the phenomenon in Tamale?
5. What policies or programmes are in place for the children and their partners?

6. How do we deal with the children in the begging activity vis-à-vis the rights of the child?
7. What is the plight of those engaged in the activity of begging relative to the laws of Ghana?
8. In your opinion what do you think can be done to respond to the plight of children engaged in the activity of begging?

Appendix 4 Interview Guide for Key informant from the Public

Introduction

I am a student from the International Institute of Social Studies, pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. This interview guide is meant to collect information for academic purposes only. Information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Guided questions

1. Do you give alms to the beggars on the street?
2. What is your reason for giving or not giving?
3. What are the factors that account for begging in Tamale?
4. Does the use of children in the begging activity influence your decision to give or not to give? Why?
5. In your opinion what do you think account for the use of children rather than adults in the partnership for begging
6. What is your understanding about child rights?

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