



Service Social International Afrique de l'Ouest  
Servizo Social Internacional África Occidental  
International Social Service West Africa

# Baobab

Official News Bulletin of International Social Service - West Africa

## Special Edition

### Child and Youth Mobility in West Africa

Issues and Best Practices from Around the World

Dakar, Senegal  
November 2019





## **Editorial**

It might seem almost trivial today to talk about mobility or migration in the very specific area of child protection. It must be said that after a decade of intense advocacy based on an empirical argument, led by actors in the field in the direction of "makers" of international agenda, the theme has become central and sometimes even a strategic shortcut for all those who want to raise funds in so-called migration contexts. Added to this is the politico-media psycho-dramatics of a perceived invasion by masses of migrants threatening Western ideological, cultural, social and economic balances.

In terms of responses, it remains difficult to navigate the complexity of the phenomenon that has now been accepted as a priority by all actors of child protection. In the West Africa region, ECOWAS has made it one of the five pillars of its regional protection strategy.

What characterizes the mobility of children? What challenges do all those working in this field face? What are the different responses proposed to protect children and young people rendered vulnerable by their mobility? How effective and adaptable are these responses in the contexts in which they are applied? Are there reference models in this area? Can good practices be highlighted?

These are the questions that this special issue of our "BAOBAB" newsletter is trying to answer. As a multidisciplinary and multicultural institution specialized in the cross-border protection of children and young migrants and their families, the ISS-WA defends a model and tools, (the scaling-up of which in recent years) has given the organization a reference

status whose expertise is now sought around the world. This expertise is constantly being reinforced in order to adapt services to diverse challenges of children's mobility around the world.

This special issue of "BAOBAB" gives us the opportunity to share with you a photograph of the phenomenon as well as a panorama of good practices that can inspire child protection service providers.

Dr. Djibril Fall,  
Director

## Contents

### **I. Child and Youth Mobility Drivers in West Africa**

1. Poverty and youth unemployment
2. Lack of Access to Education
3. Conflicts
4. Natural Disasters
5. Harmful and Dangerous practices
  - a. *Child Marriage*
  - b. *Children accused of Witchcraft*

#### **Pull Factors**

### **II. Risk factors of Mobility and Vulnerabilities**

1. The Person of the Child in Mobility
2. The Environment of Mobility

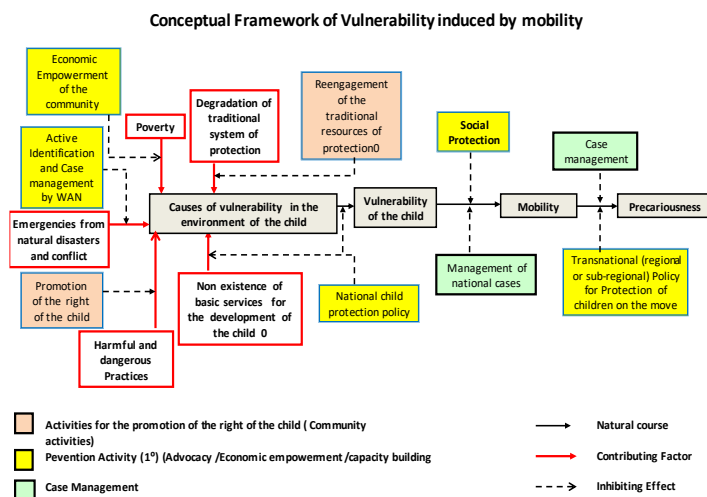
### **III. Issues and Good Practices**

1. Legislation, policy, strategy and planning
2. Transnational service delivery and Collaboration
3. Social Workforce and Community-based protection

### **IV. Recommendations**

- Transnational protection service delivery
- Social Workforce
- Continuum of Community-based protection service and individual outcomes
- Child Protection Signage

The conceptual representation of vulnerability induced by mobility “shows the natural course of events from the environment of the child to the precarious situation engendered by mobility” (ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants 2016).



The framework shows poverty, harmful and dangerous practices, conflicts, natural disasters, inexistence of basic services (education, health and protection) for the development of the child, and the degradation of traditional system of protection as the main push factors. At the policy level, the framework identifies lack of mention and provision for children on the move in national child protection policies as well as the nonexistence of a regional or sub-regional policy for the protection of this group of children as a vulnerability factor. It also depicts the pathway of the problem as well as packages of actions to take to reduce/eliminate the severity of the problem on the individual child and to protect other children from the problem. This conceptual framework is centred on vulnerability as the major problem.

### 1. Poverty and youth unemployment

41% of Sub-Saharan Africans live in extreme poverty<sup>i</sup>. The World Bank considers youth unemployment to be a form of social exclusion, particularly in developing countries. Youth are more likely to be unemployed in countries where their numbers are large<sup>ii</sup>. Of the 75 million unemployed youth in the world, 38 million are in Africa, an average rate of 10.3% on the continent. These unemployed young Africans are between 18 and 35 years old<sup>iii</sup>. Dramane Haidara, deputy director of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Senegal<sup>iii</sup>.

### 2. Lack of Access to Education

The 24 countries that make up the West and Central Africa region have some of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world. Nigeria, for example, has 8.7 million primary-school-aged children who do not attend school. Wide gaps exist between the number of boys who go to school and the number of girls, particularly at the secondary level<sup>iv</sup>. Rural, semi-urban and remote areas in particular are

In Burkina Faso, 53.4% of children living in rural areas and 51% from poor households are out of school. (Institut national de la statistique et de la démographie, Burkina Faso)

highly disadvantaged in terms of access to education as compared with urban areas. Children excluded from education systems in WCA are found to be from the most vulnerable groups of children: children from low-income households; those living in remote areas; girls; children from marginalized groups; children with disabilities; children who work; orphans; nomads; refugees and internally displaced persons (UNESCO, 2012)<sup>v</sup>. Poverty is the main barrier that hinders access to education. It is followed by the long distances many children must travel to attend school. Other barriers include health problems, disability and a lack of confidence in the quality of education provided in the region’s schools. (Unicef)

#### What youths say: Mobility exposes the irresponsibility of parents

<p>"There are parents who have no means to support children and, instead of taking one wife, they prefer to take 3 or 4, and have many children. After they are unable to feed the children and they send them to town. And if someone comes to ask for fostering, they accept without thinking ... " <b>(Boy over 18, Benin)</b></p>	<p>"I was with my parents, my younger brothers went to school. I told my dad I wanted to go to school, he said no! That women are not made to go to school, they are made to stay home and get married. So whenever I went to school he beat me. My mother decided to send me to work in a family. She had to because my father did not leave me in peace ... " <b>(Girl of 18, Aboisso village, Côte d'Ivoire)</b></p>
<p>"You are forced to be guardian of tradition. But we, the youth of today, our lives are different from that of our parents. So, if you do not want, you will have to leave to go on exodus and some do not come back. " <b>(Girl of the Senoufo tribe, based in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire)</b></p>	<p>"Working a lot and without rest, you're still in the fields, without any compensation because the father is already funding the food and other needs of the family. No economic support to meet the private needs. In addition, crops are not shared. " <b>(Boy of 21, Kollokoro region, Mali)</b></p>

### 3. Conflicts

Apart from natural disasters, conflict remains the biggest and most violent push factor of children and youth in large numbers into mobility in a short period of time. Coping mechanisms and safety options from relatives living in other areas away from the conflict are quickly exhausted and many children find themselves outside any form of formal or informal protection. They are exploited, exposed to danger and are overwhelmed by the circumstances of their situation.

Children displaced outside their own country may face particular challenges: 1) may have limited rights access due to foreign, sometimes unrecognised citizenship, 2) possible limited language knowledge, 3) reduced/weakened family and social ties, 4) host communities may hold prejudices or

Out of the 17,700 vulnerable households in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger profiled by UNHCR's vulnerability screening, 18 per cent (6,800 households) have unaccompanied or separated children, including:

- 14 per cent (5,400 households) with orphans, due to the conflict;
- 15 per cent (4,900 households) have children hawking or begging;
- 3 per cent (1,100 households) of displaced households reported their child to be missing (UNHCR 2017, Nigeria Situation)

openly discriminate. Children displaced within their own country face some of the same dangers and uncertainties as children forced across national borders. They are exposed to violence, discrimination and exploitation as well as experience disruptions accessing basic education, health and well-being.<sup>vi</sup>.

#### 4. Natural Disasters

Major disease outbreaks, droughts and floods are the commonest natural disasters that affect the West Africa sub-region. Unicef (2016) reports that the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak outbreak, which started in March 2014 and lasted through December 2015 infected over 28,000 and killed over 11,000 people. 22,000 children in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia lost one or both parents. Drought brought about by low, unevenly distributed, and highly variable rainfall is an inherent feature of the Sahel. It is thought that the frequency and the severity of the drought have increased since the beginning of the twentieth century and may worsen<sup>vii</sup>.

Like in situations of conflict, these stressors do not only take lives but also ruin the fragile economy of households and communities. The first wave of child and youth mobility is induced by fear for life. In post-event period, when humanitarian support has reached its nadir, households are faced with the challenge of rebuilding their lives. During this period, a second, albeit smaller wave of child and youth mobility occurs either at the instigation of parents or by choice. The purpose of this second wave is to seek economic opportunities to help in rebuilding the household economy. This wave is largely undetected unless they run into difficulties in their mobility.

#### 5. Harmful and Dangerous practices

##### a. Child Marriage

The prevalence of child marriage in ECOWAS is **42% among girls and 3% among boys**. In Niger 3 girls out of four get married before 18. The prevalence of child marriage before 15 years of age is on average 15% within the ECOWAS region with a peak of 28% (more than a girl out of four) in Niger. The prevalence of child marriage among boys is **14**

**times lower than among girls**; however, in some countries like Mali, child marriage among boys reaches 10%<sup>viii</sup>.

According to the African Union Campaign on ending child marriage<sup>ix</sup>:

- Each year, 15 million girls are married before the age of 18. That is 28 girls every minute and 1 in every 2 seconds
- Child marriage happens across countries, cultures and religions
- Child marriage is the result of a broad combination of structural and socio-cultural drivers. These include: poverty; lack of educational and economic opportunities; social expectations of behaviour; discrimination against girls and women and restrictive gender roles; beliefs about protection of girls; and low awareness of and access to alternatives<sup>x</sup>.

##### b. Children accused of Witchcraft

Children accused of witchcraft are subject to psychological and physical violence, first by family members and their circle of friends, then by church pastors or traditional healers. Once accused of witchcraft, children are stigmatized and discriminated for life. Increasingly vulnerable and caught in a cycle of accusation, they risk yet further accusations of

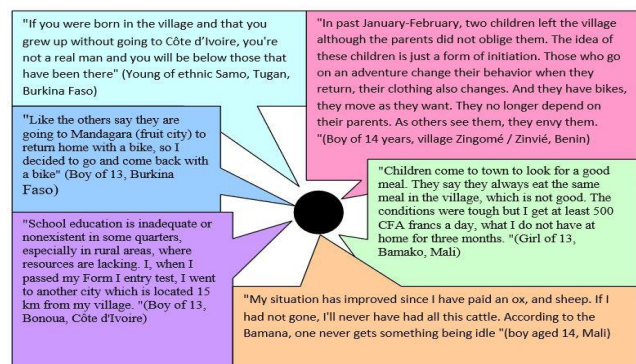
In Angola, Cameroon, Congo or Nigeria, the "child witches" are most often orphans, disabled or albino. Children with unusual behavior (stubborn, aggressive, thoughtful, lonely ...) are also the target of families in African cities. (Liberation)

witchcraft. Children accused of witchcraft may be killed, although more often they are abandoned by their parents and live on the street. A large number of street children have been accused of witchcraft within the family circle. These children are more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and to abuse by the authorities (Unicef 2010)

##### Pull Factors

There are two major categories of children influenced by pull factors (ECOWAS 2017):

- children and youth who live in areas heavily influenced by migration of children in general and whose



existence, even sedentary, is imbued by a culture of migration.

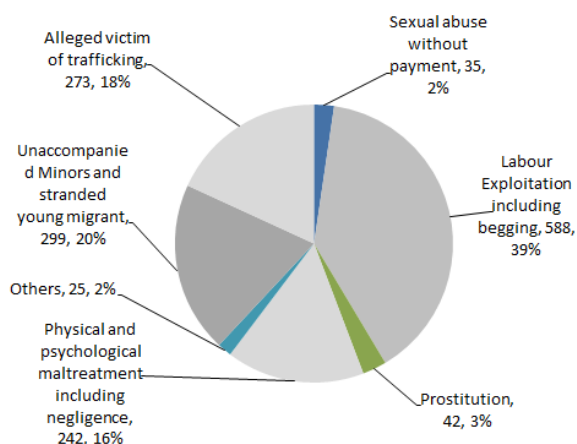
- Children whose relatives (parents, siblings, caregivers), have gone into mobility and who are themselves either influenced by the success of the moving relatives or affected by their departure/absence.

## II. Risk factors of Mobility and Vulnerabilities

Children and youths on the move are exposed to all types of risks. Risk factors are individual or environmental hazards that increase children's vulnerability to negative outcomes. These risk factors come into play when "the interaction between the child and the environment produces stresses which result in new limitations or difficulties<sup>xi</sup>. In other words, both the **person of the child** on the move and the **environment** matter.

The risks in the West African environment to children and particularly those on the move that are outside the immediate coverage of any formal or informal protection are enormous. However, some are able to convert risky opportunities into assets. For some children on the move, their mobility often allows them to access education, learn new skills, contribute to their family's income and become responsible and self-providing citizens<sup>xii</sup>. However, evidence about the immediate and long-term impacts of migration on children in Africa is extremely limited and the effects are mixed, largely dependent on family circumstances and the reasons behind a family's or child's decision to move, but also on the migration legislation, policies and practices in place in countries of origin, transit and destination .

The risk factors in the West African environment that a child on the move is confronted with include trafficking, physical, psychological and emotional violence, sexual violence, prostitution, labour exploitation and being drafted into armed conflict as a child soldier. The chart<sup>xiii</sup> below shows the nature of situations reported by 1504

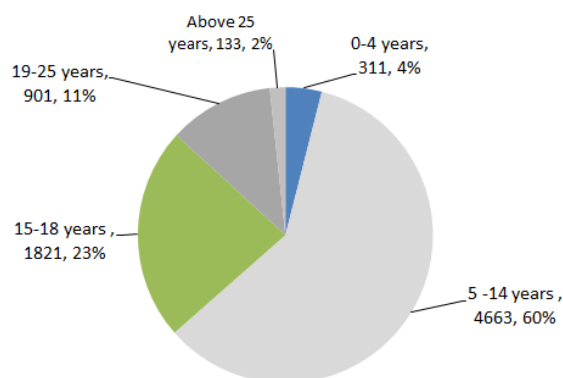


children who were identified and subsequently given protection services by the West African Network (WAN).

### 1. The Person of the Child in Mobility

The following factors determine the outcome of the interplay between the child on the move as an actor and the West African environment: Age, Sex and Past experiences

**Age** is inversely proportional to the capacity of the child to cope with the risks of the environment. Younger children on the move tend to look for help more than their older colleagues. The chart<sup>xiv</sup> below shows the age groups of



children and youths on the move who sought help from the West African Network (WAN) between 2005 and 2017 (7 829 children and youth). There were no age barriers imposed to access protection services offered by WAN.

\*Children between 0-4 years were children of mothers who also sought protection services.

### Gender

Young talibes (koranic pupils) constitute a large proportion (42% of the total number of boys and 27% of the total number of children identified) of children in mobility who sought help from WAN. 1851 talibes from Guinea Bissau were identified in Senegal and 321 talibes from Niger were

	Girls	Boys	Total	% Girls
Sexual Abuse without payment	36	2	38	95%
In conflict with the law	0	21	21	0%
Labour Exploitation including begging	676	1271	1947	35%
Prostitution	43	3	46	93%
Physical and psychological maltreatment	193	209	402	48%
Forced Marriage	25	1	26	96%
Early Marriage	7	1	8	88%
Unaccompanied minors and stranded young migrant	456	1405	1861	25%
Alleged victim of trafficking	29	251	280	10%
Other vulnerabilities	101	90	191	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1566</b>	<b>3254</b>	<b>4820</b>	



identified in Northern Nigeria. If this group of children were to be subtracted from the total number, then girls are generally as likely as boys to be victims of any of the vulnerabilities experienced by the children who benefitted from WAN protection services (table above), however, girls are almost exclusively victims of sexual abuse without payment, prostitution, forced marriage and early marriage.

## 2. The Environment of Mobility

### Legal and Policy Framework

The West African environment is generally hostile to children and youth on the move. It is characterized by conflicts (North-East Nigeria and North of Mali), in-existent protection service structure in all the countries of West Africa, gross mismatch between number of available professional service providers and need for services, as well as lack of specific national or regional policies to protect these children and youth who engage in the centuries-old practice of mobility within the West African geographical space.

All the ECOWAS member states are signatories to most legal documents on child protection. These legal instruments include The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography of 25 May 2002, Convention No. 182 of the ILO on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), Convention No. 138 of the ILO on the minimum age for admission to employment and work (1973), The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) of 15 November 2000 and its supplementary and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (also called the ACRWC or Children's Charter) adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990. In addition to these, there are other legal, policy and strategy documents that are directly and indirectly relevant to child protection in the region. These include:

#### **Protocols:**

- A. Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security, 1999
- B. ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance.
- C. ECOWAS Protocol A/P.3/5/82 relating to the definition of Community Citizen, 1982
- D. ECOWAS Protocol A/P.1/5/79 relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, 1979
- E. The ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security, 2012
- F. ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration, 2008

G. ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Legal Matters, 1992

H. ECOWAS Convention on Extradition, 1994 ;

I. ECOWAS/ECCAS Convention to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2006

Other legal document, protocols, strategies, policies are in Annex 1.

However, despite these instruments, policies and agreements, many challenges and constraints to realising effective protection for children in sub-Saharan Africa have been identified (ECOWAS 2017). These challenges include:

- a. Inadequate political commitment of Member States to implementing international and regional legal frameworks e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- b. Weak adaptation of international legal instruments into national legal systems, budget allocation and enforcement.
- c. Weak cooperation and coordination at local, national, and cross border level, between institutional and community child protection systems for quality case management of vulnerable children,
- d. Limited access to adequate Child Protection services at all levels, including social protection systems to support the most deprived families and community based solutions for alternative care,
- e. Limited qualified personnel in the social services workforce, as well as unclear roles and responsibilities in some countries,
- f. Weak prevention, response and learning mechanisms in development and emergency settings;
- g. Insufficient data collection and information sharing, including lack of child protection Information Management Systems.
- h. Resilience, strengths-based approaches and child participation, which will further support and empower children, families and communities, are not sufficiently addressed.
- i. Inappropriate interventions addressing harmful attitudes and norms, including impunity in countries where these practices are prohibited by law, that perpetuate the cycle of abuse, exploitation and violence against children
- j. Insufficient validation of community-based child protection solutions and the need to create linkages between community systems of protection and institutional national and sub-national actors. This gap can be especially problematic when state laws and policies (and international treaties) promote the rights of the individual child, while community-based child protection mechanisms may have a tendency to resolve cases in the interest of communal harmony<sup>xv</sup>.



### **III. Issues and Good Practices**

Topical issues on the protection of children on the move that contribute to the strengthening of protection system can be grouped into the following five broad categories:

Legislation, policy, strategy and planning  
Transnational service delivery  
Community approach  
Social Workforce  
Collaboration

Component issues under each of the categories have been discussed above. This chapter presents the issue and describes good practices that have sought to address the problem.

#### **Legislation, policy, strategy and planning**

**ISSUE 1:** Inadequate political commitment of Member States to implementing international and regional legal frameworks e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

#### **Good Practice**

At the national level, legal and regulatory reforms are positive steps forward towards providing good practice for children. In 2008, Ecuador reformed its constitution to include several paragraphs on rights and protections against discrimination for foreigners regardless of age, sex and immigration status—*Article 40* recognises all persons' right to migrate and rejects the term 'illegal' regarding migration status<sup>xvi</sup>.

The African Union recommends States implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (Shullman et al. 2005) of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The Declaration calls for States to protect the rights of migrants, to eliminate policies and practices that discriminate based on migratory status and are inconsistent with international human rights instruments and to review or revise those fostering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance<sup>xvii</sup>.

**ISSUE 2:** Weak adaptation of international legal instruments into national legal systems, budget allocation and enforcement.

#### **Good Practices**

##### **a. Integrating system strengthening objectives into National development plans**

Malawi integrated child protection system strengthening objectives into the Growth and Development Strategy

(2011-2016) Poverty Reduction Strategy, the UN Development Assistance Framework, and the UNICEF Country Programme Document. This strategic move consequently triggered significant national resources. The Malawian government recently received a \$9.2 million grant from DFID specifically to strengthen the child protection system, which is the largest grant to date on child protection systems development in the region.

##### **b. Inclusion of mobility in Child Code**

The Code of The Child of the Republic of Benin (*Loi n° 2015-08 portant code de l'enfant en République du Bénin*) adopted by the National Assembly in January 2015 dedicates its Section IV (Article 159 – 167) to the mobility of children. It clearly states the conditions under which Beninese children can move within and outside the country as well as conditions for unaccompanied foreign children to enter the country. In Article 167 of the Code, the law states that any child identified outside the purview of the conditions of the laws

guiding the movement of children should be returned by authorities to his or her parents or handed over



to a child protection agency. The strength of the Code of the Child of the Republic of Benin is its dynamic and adaptive nature to new realities of child protection - this 2015 Code is a revision of the first code adopted by the National Assembly in 2007 and takes into account the question of mobility which presents as a new child protection concern.

##### **c. Senegal – Program to protect talibés in the streets**

Known for its large population of *talibés* who beg in the streets, the Government of Senegal designed a “program to address the social welfare aspects of the problem at various levels, including removing the children physically from the streets, reuniting them with their families, educating parents or guardians on the laws banning child begging, and providing social support to families and guardians to ensure the children would not be returned to the streets. The program, known in Senegal as the “retrait des enfants de la rue,” or the “withdrawal of street children,” began in June 2016.

Three government structures managed the “retrait”: the Ministry of Family’s Child Rights Directorate (*Direction des Droits, de la Protection de l’Enfance et des Groupes Vulnérables*, DDPEGV), at the head; Ginddi Center, the state-run children’s shelter in Dakar, responsible for

processing and returning the children to their families and guardians; and the Juvenile Justice Unit (*Brigade des Mineurs*) of the National Police, in charge of leading the street operations and interviewing the children’s parents or guardians.”

**d. Advocacy**

As part of the 29th Senegal National Children's Week in 2017, Save the Children "organized a panel on child mobility in Senegal and the subregion. The general objective was to promote strong advocacy for a better consideration of the issue of the mobility of children in the interventions of the actors of the national integrated system of protection of the child<sup>xviii</sup>.

**ISSUE 3:** Limited access to adequate Child Protection services at all levels, including social protection systems to support the most deprived families and community-based solutions for alternative care,

**Good Practices**

**1. Mapping and Assessment**

In Côte d'Ivoire, the government used the publication of the national mapping and analysis of child protection as a way to engage the health, education, and labour sectors in discussions of the findings and ways in which collective and systematic action could be carried out. Sierra Leone has initiated similar processes of cross-sector discussions<sup>xix</sup>

**2. Creating Political space**

In Senegal, a National Child Protection Strategy that reflects a focus on systems strengthening was developed in 2011 with key contributions from civil society organizations and children themselves. Extended national consultations with local public servants, religious leaders, child protection coordination groups, civil society organizations and children were organized to collect initial child protection priority topics to be inserted within the national strategy, and then to review the initial draft of the proposed National child protection Strategy. Stimulated by evidence-based advocacy, the result has been strong political commitment and leadership by national actors leading to the development and validation of the Strategy<sup>xx</sup>

**3. Strategy Development and Management**

In Kenya, Following the completion of the mapping and assessment of the child protection system in Kenya, key country-level stakeholders drafted a costed strategy under the auspices of the Department for Children’s Services. Initiated through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development’s sub-sector submission to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (2011-2014, MTEF), the strategy process included costing, securing donor

contributions to the child protection program, and drafting proposed activities on the mapping and assessment<sup>xxi</sup>.

**Transnational service delivery and Collaboration**

**ISSUE 4;** Weak cooperation and coordination at local, national, and cross border level, between institutional and community child protection systems for quality case management of vulnerable children.

**Good Practices**

**1. The West African Network for the Protection of Children**

As a response to this issue and to specifically address the lack of cooperation between the child protection stakeholders in and between the countries of West Africa, the International Social Services (ISS) initiated the West African Network through the development of common working procedures in Case Management for the referral, care, reintegration and protection of children on the move by civil society and government actors. WAN is a transnational coordination and collaboration mechanism between different actors (Government and Civil Society) in all the ECOWAS Member States countries for the referral, care and protection of vulnerable children on the move in West Africa.

**West African Network 2018**

Social Welfare Services	Civil Society Organizations	Community-based associations	Security Services (police, immigration etc.)	International Organizations / <small>Embassies</small>	National WAN coordinating NGOs	Total
177	144	44	47	46	16	474

The capacities of these different actors were upgraded to meet the challenges of this new service delivery in West Africa. The Steering Committee which is composed of the ECOWAS Commission, National Directors of Child Protection/Welfare of the fifteen ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania is the highest decision making body of the Network and it meets once a year to make strategic decisions.

A Manual of Standard Operating Procedures for case management called Support Procedures and West African Regional Standards for the Protection and Reintegration Vulnerable Children (including Children on the Move and Young Migrants) comprising of eight standard operating procedural steps was used for this purpose. These steps are:

1. Identification of the child
2. Emergency support for the child
3. Study of the personal situation of the child
4. Assessment of the family and environmental situation of the child
5. Alternatives for placement of the child outside their families
6. Social, educational or professional reintegration of the child
7. Monitoring of the child after his return in his family and/or community
8. Family and Community support

ISS used the evidence generated from this service delivery to advocate for policy commitment by ECOWAS and its Member States to children on the move. In 2015, the ECOWAS commission, on the strength of evidence,

**What does the West African Network (WAN) do?**

WAN links up child protection systems in West Africa for a better transnational care of children in need. WAN protects and supports children who are away from home and who are in vulnerable situation. WAN assists and assures their safe return to their families and supports their reintegration.

**What services does WAN deliver to children and families?**

Each child in need can benefit:

- of a shelter offering basic services and occupation, solutions in familial placement
- of an individual psycho social hearing
- of tracing of their families
- of reintegration services locally or in a foreign country in West Africa
- of individual support for the social, educational or vocational re/integration
- of a support for their families of monitoring services

**Where does WAN operate?**

WAN is able to trace families and ensure a follow-up of children who have been reintegrated in the following 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

adopted the West African Network as its regional mechanism countries for the referral, care and protection of vulnerable children on the move in West Africa as well as the Manual of Standard Procedures.

**Social Workforce and Community-based protection**

**ISSUE 5:** Limited qualified personnel in the social services workforce, as well as unclear roles and responsibilities in some countries

**ISSUE 6:** Insufficient validation of community-based child protection solutions and the need to create linkages between community systems of protection and institutional national and sub-national actors.

**Good Practices**

**1. Social workforce and community-based solutions**

Both China and South Africa have led workforce development with strong national policies and implementation structures. China's policy is heavily centralized and top-down (Gao & Yan, 2015) while South Africa has embraced the bottom-up developmental approach (Patel, 2005). China is focused on producing a large cadre of degree-level professional social workers who will carry out the government's social service agenda, while South Africa's primary drive has been focused on partnering with community-level organizations as outlined in the Children's Act, to identify and serve vulnerable populations through local channels and by local people. This bottom-up approach in South Africa has fueled the development of community-based cadres, most prominently the child and youth care workers. The government's role has been to provide support to local efforts through establishing a comprehensive national strategy for workforce planning, setting targets, establishing work parameters and professional legitimacy, maintaining national data systems and providing overall guidance for development (National Department of Social Development, "the DSD," 2012). The participatory process where community members are involved in all the major decisions with regards to service delivery has increased ownership at the local level and with the workers (AIDSTAR Two, 2013). With this framework, the national DSD was mandated to ensure sufficient social welfare service coverage to meet the needs of children in every province. Priorities were also placed with communities where the greatest number of families lacked the means of providing adequate shelter, food and other necessities for their children. The development of child and youth care workers (CYCWs) accelerated under a plan to increase the cadre from 800 to 10,000 by 2018. As of May 2016, 5,540 CYCWs had been trained.

**2. In Angola,** child protection committees consisting of community members including parents, teachers, local government workers and children are beginning to appear to make a difference. Considered one of the most effective child protection network models in Angola, Save the Children's approach combines training and empowerment of communities, awareness raising, child participation and strong partnership with government. Angola's Zaire province, which borders DRC to the north, is primarily made up of people from the Bakongo ethnic group. It is composed of six municipalities, with community child protection committees present in M'Banza Congo (the provincial capital), Cuimba and Noqui. Each committee is composed of 20 to 30 people and made up of sobas, teachers, parents, traditional healers and sometimes children. Members meet on a schedule from every few weeks to every few months and when there is an urgent situation. They are tasked with developing partnerships

between the government and community for child protection, training communities, and engaging children in their own protection and data collection and research.

**3. In Uganda,** Child Protection Committees (CPCs) have been established in at least 20 districts. The members of the CPC have been trained in basic child protection and community dialogues are organized around child protection issues and on how communities could protect their children. CPC members identify cases of child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation and refer them to the local authorities such as police or local councilors who are mandated to take action.<sup>xxii</sup>

**4. In the Sourou province of Burkina Faso,** with the support of Terre des Hommes, provincial-level and multiple community-level child protection networks have been instituted to address child exploitation trafficking, and abuse. The provincial network includes representatives from health, justice, social action, social services, education and civil society, while the community networks include village development counsellors, chiefs, religious leaders, and children. The networks provide an opportunity to validate positive endogenous practices.<sup>xxiii</sup>

**ISSUE 7:** Insufficient data collection and information sharing, including lack of child protection Information Management Systems.

**CaseData** is a common and collaborative dynamic monitoring and analytical tool developed by International Social Services for gathering and analysing data on mobility of children and youth in West Africa. It is used in all the ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania by the West African Network (WAN). CaseData analyzes parameters like age, sex, vulnerability, outcome of case management as well as migration flows<sup>xxiv</sup>.

## **IV. Recommendations**

The recommendations deducible from the issues at stake and the good practices mentioned in this document have dual purposes: **Field operations** and **Advocacy**. Both are linked as evidence from field operations will support advocacy effort. With the current situation of scarcity of evidence on outcomes of many field-based child protection activities, laying emphasis on outcome indicators will be useful.

### **Field Operations**

**1. Transnational protection service delivery** as offered by the West African Network is the only of one its type in West Africa. Besides transnational case management, which is its primary focus, the strength of this network resides in the following:

- a. It is a forum for transnational cooperation between civil society organizations and governments across borders.
- b. It embodies an essential element of protection system which is collaboration between different actors of protection – both formal and informal.
- c. It is an evidence source for child protection actors.
- d. It is a strong advocacy tool.

*Specific Recommendations:*

**Strengthening** of the Network through:

- Technical support: Value can be added at many points of the service delivery chain particularly in countries where SC operates.
- Use as a reference mechanism for management of vulnerability in children and youth on the move.
- Joint ISS/SC capitalization of the mechanism

**Data Collection and analysis-** Case Data presents a unique opportunity to study the movement of children between countries in the region. In its present form, it collects information on children on the move who run into difficulties and seek for help (Case management); it can also be adapted to collect information on the general movement of children and youth in-between countries.

### **2. Social Workforce**

Social workforce deficit is a major challenge to service delivery in West Africa. The table<sup>xxv</sup> below shows the number of government social workers to the population by country.” While government workers play a key role in sustaining social service systems, they are vastly outnumbered by the nongovernment workforce who often act as frontline service providers and invaluable community support to vulnerable children and families. These workers are distributed across many different entities, such as non-profit NGOs, civil society and community-based organizations (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs). Most of the services provided by

Country	Total population, 2012 (Source: World Bank)	Number of government social workers, 2011 (Source: Child Frontiers and fieldwork for this study)	Ratio of government social workers to population
Benin	10.05 million	722 social workers and auxiliaries (incomplete qualifications but in service)	1 : 13,919 (rank: 2/9)
Burkina Faso	16.46 million	2,469 social affairs officers (including pre-school educators); ~ 1,650 excluding pre-school educators	1 : 9,976 (rank: 1/9)
Cameroon	21.7 million	1,307 social affairs officers	1 : 16,602 (rank: 4/9)
Côte d'Ivoire	19.84 million	629 social workers; over 1,300 whose recruitment into the civil service is being negotiated	1 : 31,542 (rank: 5/9)
Ghana	25.37 million	750 social welfare officers; hiring freeze has kept this number stable	1 : 33,826 (rank: 6/9)
Niger	17.16 million	91 social affairs officers	1 : 188,571 (rank: 9/9)
Nigeria	168.8 million	~12,000 social workers (estimated)	1 : 14,067 (rank: 3/9)
Senegal	13.73 million	352 social affairs officers	1 : 39,005 (rank: 7/9)
Sierra Leone	5.979 million	~80 social welfare officers	1 : 74,138 (rank: 8/9)

these staff are not standardized or regulated, and there is rarely a specific mapping of these providers. There is little available data related to the number of nongovernment-sector workers. This is in part due to a lack of central coordination in a sector that tends to have diffuse and weak governance and funding structures to support it.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

It is unlikely that the governments of West Africa can meet the required social workforce needs in the next few years due to a myriad of challenges, particularly budgetary constraints. Thus emphasis should be placed on organized task-shifting as a sustainable and realistic measure to meet the workforce deficit. Interventions to improve the quantity and quality of workforce will contribute to the efforts of building strong child protection systems in the region. These interventions include:

- Mapping of non-government social workforce
- Standardizing training of non-government social workforce in child protection. This will be a basic training required of all non-government social welfare workers. This training will include modules for emergency, transition and development periods. Other specific trainings can be added to meet the needs of institutions in which these workers are employed.
- Studying the South African Model of Child and Youth Workforce and replication in some pilot countries.

Any of the aforementioned interventions can be operationalized directly through a multi-stakeholder approach or employed for advocacy at the national or regional level.

### 3. Continuum of Community-based protection service and individual outcomes

There is little evidence to show the impact of community based actions. Most measurements put in place by different institutions focus on outputs because focus on child protection is limited in most instances to the zone of intervention and to protecting the target children within this zone. Children on the move need a continuum of protection services along their route from their place of origin, through transit to their destination. This can only be achieved by a network of communicating community social workers (like the Child and Youth workers mentioned above) or groups as in village or community committees for child protection who monitor the progress of the child. This community workforce will on the one hand provide direct protection service to the child, when his/her individual self-care mechanisms are exhausted or overwhelmed and on the other hand act as an interface between the child and formal services like protection, administration, health and education. Individual outcomes can be measured and the effectiveness of such a protection chain can be assessed.

### 4. Child Protection Signage in West Africa

The Steering Committee of WAN and ECOWAS have approved an ISS-WA innovation of installing child protection sign as is shown below along known routes of mobility to designate points of refuge for children on the move in difficulties. These points of refuge include health posts, border points, palaces of traditional rulers, offices of NGOs and associations. Children who seek help at these points will be referred to specialized agencies for case management.



### Conclusion

There are many push and pull factors that induce children and youth into mobility in West Africa. The ultimate goal of this mobility is self-emancipation. However, there are many risks associated with opportunities that mobility may offer.



The protection of children on the move from risks is a big challenge that demands fundamental changes in national and regional laws, legislations and policies as well as a review of community-based protection system with a view to create appropriate interfaces between the state and non-state services. The ultimate goal of this protection system is to minimize the risks associated with mobility on the one hand and on the other hand improve opportunities.

However, there are many deficits in the legal and policy framework of many ECOWAS member states as regards children on the move; community protection system is not coordinated and not surprisingly, evidence on the protection of children on the move is largely lacking.

Of many gaps, four have been highlighted for possible intervention.

---

i <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/regioninfo.html>

ii <https://issuu.com/world.bank.publications/docs/9781464800108>

iii <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/23717/politique/le-chomage-des-jeunes-une-menace-pour-la-stabilite-de-lafrique/>

iv All in School. The Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. West and Central Africa. (<http://allinschool.org/location/west-and-central-africa/>)

v All in School. The Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. West and Central Africa. (<http://allinschool.org/location/west-and-central-africa/>)

vi UNICEF (2016) *Uprooted*.

vii Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL Climate Modeling Research Highlights. - Princeton, NJ (vol. 1, no. 2) v070124 Jan 2007

viii Strategic Response and Mobilization Framework for Child Protection system in the ECOWAS region 2017

ix <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>

x Strategic Response and Mobilization Framework for Child Protection system in the ECOWAS region 2017

xi SEMANTIC SCHOLAR. Child Development: Vulnerability and Resilience

Patrice L. Engle I, Sarah Castle and Purnima Menon (<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4dc7/a9e9a269ebc3c4ad89adba397c4cd257c15b.pdf>)

xii ECOWAS 2017. Strategic Response and Mobilization Framework for Child Protection system in the ECOWAS region

xiii L'Observatoire SSI-AO 2018. Vulnerabilities reported by identified and protected children

xiv L'Observatoire SSI-AO 2018: West African Network Case Management

xv ECOWAS 2017. Strategic Response and Mobilization Framework for Child Protection system in the ECOWAS region

xvi Ecuadorian Constitution cited in UNICEF (2010) 'Examples of Good Practices in the Implementation of the International Framework for the Protection of the Rights of the Child in the Context of Migration', 26 May 2010. [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/MHR/Consultation2010/2.Good\\_practices\\_Migration\\_children\\_UNICEF.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/MHR/Consultation2010/2.Good_practices_Migration_children_UNICEF.pdf).

xvii Shullman, Sandra L., et al. 'Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance', 2005.

xviii Droits de l'enfant : Des acteurs contre une mobilité des enfants <http://lesoleil.sn/2016-03-22-23-29-31/item/66383-droits-de-l-enfant-des-acteurs-contre-une-mobilite-des-enfants.html>

xix Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa (2012). Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Working Paper

[https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_in\\_sub-Saharan\\_Africa\\_-\\_August\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf)

xx Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa (2012). Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Working Paper

[https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_in\\_sub-Saharan\\_Africa\\_-\\_August\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf)

xxi Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa (2012). Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Working Paper

[https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_in\\_sub-Saharan\\_Africa\\_-\\_August\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf)

xxii Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa (2012). Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Working Paper

[https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_in\\_sub-Saharan\\_Africa\\_-\\_August\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf)

---

<sup>xxiii</sup> Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa (2012). Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Working Paper  
[https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_in\\_sub-Saharan\\_Africa\\_-\\_August\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf)

<sup>xxiv</sup> L'Observatoire SSI-AO 2014: West African Network Case Management

<sup>xxv</sup> Unicef/CPC Learning Network. 2014 Social Service Workforce Training in the West and Central Africa Region  
<http://www.cpcnetwork.org/resource/social-service-workforce-training-in-the-west-and-central-africa-region/>

<sup>xxvi</sup> Global Service Workforce Alliance. 2015. THE STATE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE 2015 REPORT  
[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwii362Iz\\_baAhWIWBQKHSLkATOQFjABegQIABAv&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.socialserviceworkforce.org%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fresource%2Ffiles%2FState%2520of%2520the%2520Social%2520Service%2520Workforce%25202015%2520Report%2520-%2520A%2520Multi-Country%2520Review.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0GqLR-WAoOt-nmtTgIOWmb](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwii362Iz_baAhWIWBQKHSLkATOQFjABegQIABAv&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.socialserviceworkforce.org%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fresource%2Ffiles%2FState%2520of%2520the%2520Social%2520Service%2520Workforce%25202015%2520Report%2520-%2520A%2520Multi-Country%2520Review.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0GqLR-WAoOt-nmtTgIOWmb)