GIRLS ON THE STREETS: CHURCH & STATE SUPPORT FOR STREET GIRLS IN GHANA

By: Rose Korang-Okrah

Presented at:
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October, 2013
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Girls On the Streets: Church & State
Support for Street Girls in Ghana

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Sheraton Hotel
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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- **Abstract**
- **Overview**
- **The Independent Migrant Girl**
  - Demographics
  - The Head-load Carrying phenomenon
- **The Push & Pull Theories**
- **Challenges confronting Street Girls**
- **Strategies for Resilience**
- **Theoretical Framework: An Integrated Perspective Approach To SW Practice**
- **Support systems to Get Kayayei out of streets**
  - Contributions by Churches
  - State Contributions
  - NGO Contributions
- **Implications**
This presentation examines the vulnerability and resilience of "internal migrant" girls from the rural areas, especially the Northern regions to the streets of big cities in Ghana, especially Accra and Kumasi. Most of these girls come to the market centers in these big cities to serve as "kayayei," girl-head-load porters who carry goods and loads on their heads for negotiated fees. They live and work under poor conditions and are vulnerable to both physical and reproductive health risks, especially sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. Push & pull factors for their movements, challenges and coping strategies, the role of church and state in their welfare and implications will be discussed.
Migratory movement in Ghana could be viewed and understood from two perspectives, the *historical/colonial* and the *economic distribution* perspectives.

**Historical/Colonial Perspective:** Historically, based on British colonial policy, Northern Ghana (Northern, Upper East & Upper West Regions) was used as a labor reserve for the developing the south (Kwankye, et al, 2009).

**Economic Distribution:** Southern Ghana (other seven regions) is naturally endowed forest (farming many crops, e.g., cocoa, timber, food and economic crops; minerals, e.g., gold diamond; coastal zone)

Industrialization, urbanization and economic development was focused on the southern Ghana area and little was done in the northern savanna zone.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOME

- Know, understand and learn about some of the impacts of colonization, resulting in "internal migration" of the youth from rural and poor areas to the big cities in many developing countries.

- Understand the coping strategies applied by these vulnerable girls, in particular, to help them remain resilient despite the risks and challenges that confront them on the streets.

- Understand how Church and State collaborate to support the street children and create better live opportunities for them in order to curb the influx of the youth to the big cities.
Migration is not a new phenomenon.

Until recently, the pattern of north-south migration—male-dominated for short and long-term with females joining husbands for economic and social reasons.

New phenomenon in migration is the migration of young girls migrating independently from north to south.

Girls migrate independently, as young as 8 years from northern to bigger cities/markets in southern Ghana to engage in various economic activities, especially, head-load porters, *Kayayo (pl. Kayayei)*.
The Head-Load Carrying Phenomenon

Head-load carrying is a common phenomenon in Ghana (The Balancing Act)
COMMERCIAL HEAD-LOAD CARRIERS - KAYAYEIs
THE PUSH & PULL FACTORS

Push Factors:

- Pressures which serve as determining factors for a person to move away from an area, e.g.,
  - Poverty, violence at home, too many children at home, orphans, peer pressure, forced into marriage, hunger, no educational and employment prospects, cultural issues, etc.

Pull Factors:

- Pleasure Those which attract the migrant to a particular destination, e.g.,
  - Better services, more wealth, more fertile land, work for money, more opportunities, etc.
CHALLENGES CONFRONTING STREET GIRLS

Migration involves some risks:

The Working Conditions of Kayayei Girls
- Start work at dawn - when traders opened their stores
- Overcrowding in the market lanes
- carrying loads along road crossings burdensome for the participants
- Owners of the goods would yell at them, using abusive language.

- They sleep on empty tables and bare floors, on sacks or used blankets
- They buy and eat anything they can get at the market (health)
- Sexual abuse, rape and robbery are also serious problems
- Sleeplessness for fear of being raped or robbed
Migration involves some opportunities as well:

The wish of every kayayoo is to work and make money.

**Income and Savings**

- Engage in informal regular savings, called ‘susu’ ("informal banker")
- Sent funds home to support their families
- Save funds to prepare for their future marriage
- Cater for themselves
STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE

- Migration in Ghana is also a strategy for survival.
  - They believe their destiny is in God (the Christians and Muslims alike)
  - The girls work and sleep in groups – support for each other.
  - Some of them call home and friends (and that is where the influence of friends come in).
  - Some of them, at least the grown-ups, engage in and keep boy-friends
  - They talk to their “susu person” – with whom they keep their money (informal banking)
The Integrated Perspective Approach should be used as a tool to examine factors that affect the overall wellbeing of people in society, and to develop appropriate responses to address needs (proposed by Cox and Pawar, 2006).

The Integrated Perspective suggests that presenting problems and response options need to be considered from the point of view of four perspectives:

- The Global perspective
- The Human Rights perspective
- The Ecological perspective, and
- The Social Development perspective.

(Cox and Pawar, 2006)
AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE APPROACH
to Social Work Practice

The Global perspective

- Focuses on the unity of ‘one world,’ or the ‘global village’ within which there is diversity, especially sociocultural, at all levels.

- Emphasizes unity and interconnectedness of all human beings that inhabit the same planet and exhibit the same basic needs.

- Posits that though diversity exists in the human race, humans are all affected by for example, the earth’s ecology, such as global warming.

- Humans as global citizens, living in a global civil society, involved in the global process to protect rights and promote the well being of all people.
The Human Rights perspective

- Basically provides the value and rights basis of international social work practice.

Cox and Pawar (2011), present this perspective in terms of four dimensions:

- **Values and principles** (on which human rights are based)
- set of rights
- universality of both the values and the rights derived from them
- the role of human rights as a guide to behavior and to life.

Do these Kayayei in this current study enjoy their human rights.
AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Ecological perspective

- Focuses on the natural environment in which life depends.
- Importance of identifying specific problems in a specific environment and finding appropriate responses even if they are short-term remedial measures.
- Environmental problems are seen as the result of a social, economic, and the political order, which needs to be changed.
- Ecological problems could be effectively resolved through social, economic and political change, rather than through scientific and technological progress.
The Social Development perspective

- Process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole, in conjunction with economic development.
- It is people-centered, value-based, and draws on proactive intervention, among others.

- The ecocentric view of the world should foster respect for all life, as well as ethical values for the natural world.
Contributions by Churches: Catholic Action for Street Children –CAS.

Founded in 1990 by Rev. John Thebault, with a survey on street children conducted by Nana Araba Apt Vam Ham.

Officially Started in 1993

Build the house of refuge in 1993, another in 1999.

Built many kiosks for daily meetings with children on the streets.

Goals

- To protect and improve rights of children
- To help street children out of street into education
- Train street children in various trades/vocations to build up their future
Catholic Action for Street Children - CAS.

**Additional Programs**

- **1995 - 1999**
  - Established: **Baby-care programs (Kayayie mothers - 2nd generation street children)**
  - Hopeland Training center
  - Sponsored programs

- Daily field work in collaboration with social workers and religious workers.
CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN -CAS.

- Training Programs:
State and NGO’s Contributions: BIBIR-GHANA

Supported by other NGOs and Government organizations, BIBIR-GHANA provides training various vacations, equipment support and seed money to girls and women “prone” to migrating to southern Ghana to become a kayayoo.

This is happening in the “push” areas – reference to Ecological perspective
THANK U