

**Eradicating Violence Against Children: Understanding the Experiences of Community
Activists and Advocates in Addressing Child Labor Practices in Ghana**

By
Joshua Okyere

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Peace and Conflict Studies Program

Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

Copyright © 2025 by Joshua Okyere

Abstract

The persistent global nature of violence against children demands urgent attention. In Ghana, child labor significantly contributes to this violence, exposing children to hazardous conditions that undermine their safety, rights, and development. In response, community advocates play a crucial role in protecting children and challenging harmful practices. This study examined the experiences of these advocates, conceptualizing child labor as a form of violence and situating advocacy within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). The study explored what can be learned from the lived experiences of advocates, how their efforts shape our understanding of child labor eradication, and what their work reveals about grassroots peacebuilding. A qualitative narrative research design was employed. Fieldwork was conducted in Ghana's forest belt regions (Ashanti, Central, Western, and Western North), involving thirty community advocates selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and interpreted using thematic narrative analysis.

The findings revealed that personal histories of suffering, a strong sense of responsibility, passion for social change, and spiritual convictions drive these advocates. Their strategies include awareness-raising, community empowerment, and collaboration with stakeholders. However, they also face persistent challenges, including entrenched poverty, community resistance, lack of funding and support, duplication of efforts, and limited sustainability after NGO withdrawal. The results indicate that child labor advocacy in Ghana begins with the role of community advocates as witnesses to the everyday atrocities faced by children, positioning themselves as ethical agents confronting normalized violence. It further emerges as a form of activism centered on securing children's right to education, where schooling is framed as both a protective right and a pathway to peace. This advocacy also constitutes a direct confrontation

with material constraints and systemic resistance, as advocates navigate poverty, institutional neglect, and entrenched socio-cultural norms. Many advocates approach their work as a spiritual and moral calling, positioning themselves as missionary peacebuilders committed to justice and transformation. At the same time, they act as local implementers of global child protection frameworks, translating international policies into culturally meaningful community action. The study argues that these intersecting roles of the advocates emphasize that grassroots advocacy is not separate from, but embedded within, liberal peacebuilding paradigms, offering a nuanced model of peacebuilding in non-conflict yet structurally violent settings.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty God for His unwavering guidance and blessings throughout the course of my PhD research. His divine presence has provided me with strength, wisdom, and clarity during the challenges and triumphs of this journey. I am humbled by His grace and grateful for His constant support, which has been instrumental in my academic pursuits. In every step I have taken, I acknowledge and appreciate the divine guidance that has led me to this point. To the Almighty God, I offer my sincerest thanks and dedicate this thesis as a testament to His infinite wisdom and benevolence. He is God indeed (NYAME NE HENE AMPA).

I extend my sincere gratitude to the research participants who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights. Their willingness to participate in this study has been indispensable, and I am grateful for their contributions, which have significantly enhanced the quality and depth of this research.

Also, I am immensely grateful to my advisor, Dr. Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, for his unwavering commitment, expertise, and guidance. Dr. Anyaduba's insightful feedback, patience, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this work. I am truly fortunate to have had the privilege of working under his mentorship. I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my committee members, Professor Sean Byrne and Professor Jessica Senehi, for their valuable insights, constructive criticism, and scholarly guidance. Their expertise and feedback have immensely enriched this thesis, and I am grateful for their time and commitment to ensuring its academic rigor. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my external examiner, Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh, for his thoughtful, critical, and constructive feedback on my thesis.

I acknowledge the great financial support provided by the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation that has made my dissertation and academic studies feasible. Other financial support including Berdie and Irvin Cohen Scholarship in Peace and Conflict Studies, Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Completion Scholarship, Louis Riel Graduate Scholarship in Peace and Conflict Studies, Janice Filmon Award in Peace Studies and other bursaries disbursed to me by the government of Canada, the St. Paul's College, the University of Manitoba, and other agencies in support of my studies are duly appreciated.

I am indebted to Professors Elizabeth Wangui, Emmanuel Jean Francois and Ghirmai Negash all of Ohio University who encouraged me in my pursuit of a PhD when all odds were against me. I thank Dr. Anderson Assuah and Dr. Mathias Ateng for being a shoulder I could cry on in times when all hope was lost. Thank you to my dear friend, Obiri Yeboah and Joseph Assuming, for your continuous support, encouragement, and willingness to engage in countless discussions and brainstorming sessions. Their intellectual curiosity and friendship have been a constant source of inspiration and motivation throughout this research endeavor. I am grateful to Dr. Maame Aboagyewaa Peterson and Christina Beyene who always cheered and encouraged me during the process. I am grateful to Nana Obiri Yeboah of CODESULT who housed and directed me to some participants in the western region of Ghana. A heartfelt gratitude also goes to Nana Antwi Boasiako Brempong, the executive secretary of CRADA for issuing letters of approval and supporting me in diverse ways.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies for providing a nurturing academic environment for this research. I am grateful to Susan Ducharme and Jason Brennan for their consistent support and help in managing the daily administrative processes within PACS.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Osofo Obed, Elder Mike, Dr. Kodom, family and friends, too numerous to mention by name, who have supported me in various ways throughout this research process. Their encouragement, assistance, and moral support have been invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions.

Thank you all.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the following people:

1. Cherished memories of my late mother, Comfort Oduro aka Auntie Ama
2. My beloved father Elder Samuel Oduro and siblings Eunice and Emmanuel
3. My wife and son: Roseline and Javien

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	vii
List of Acronyms	xiv
List of Tables	xv
General Introduction: Eradicating Child Labor in Ghana.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Child Labor as Violence Against Children.....	11
Advocacy as Peacebuilding: On the Significance of Focusing on Community Advocates’ Experiences	14
Outline of Chapters	16
Conclusion	20
Chapter One	21
Child Labor and Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana	21
Introduction.....	21
Defining child labor	21
The Historical Context of Child Labor in Ghana.....	25
Prevalence and Causes of Child Labor in Ghana.....	28
Child Labor Legislation in Ghana.....	34
Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana	39
Community Engagement	41
Conclusion	46

Chapter Two.....	48
Violence against Children and Grassroots Peacebuilding: A Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Foundations.....	48
Introduction.....	48
Violence Against Children and Young People	48
Direct Violence Against Children.....	54
Structural Violence	57
Cultural Violence Against Children.....	61
Peacebuilding Approaches: Evolving from the Liberal to the Local.....	65
Understanding Peacebuilding	66
Liberal Peacebuilding	68
Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding.....	73
The Local Turn in Peacebuilding.....	75
Community-Based Approaches to Child Protection.....	80
The Local Turn in Child Labor Eradication Efforts in Ghana.....	85
Chapter Three.....	90
Researching Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana: A Methodological Perspective.....	90
Introduction.....	90
Research Design.....	91
Narrative Inquiry.....	92
Data Generation and Procedures.....	95
Study Location	95

Participants and Recruitment	96
Data Sources and Generation	101
Semi-Structured Interviews	101
Data Analysis Procedures	104
Ethical Considerations	107
Risk and Benefits	109
The Research Validity and Credibility	110
Positionality of the Researcher	110
Challenges Encountered During the Study	112
Methodological Challenges/Limitations and Benefits of Researching Child Labor Advocacy by Focusing on Adult Community Advocates	113
Conclusion	116
Chapter Four	118
Voices of Change: Unveiling the Stories of Community Child Labor Advocates in Ghana	118
Introduction.....	118
Once a Victim, Now a Voice: Akwasi’s Fight Against Child Labor.....	123
From Engineer to Advocate: Kwadwo's Journey for Children's Rights	128
A Heart for Children: Queenster's Advocacy Story.....	133
The Nurturing Advocate: Grace’s Advocacy Story	139
Discussion and Conclusion.....	143
Chapter Five.....	146
Thematic Synthesis of Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy Experiences in Ghana	146

Introduction.....	146
Motivations for Child Labor Advocates in Ghana.....	147
Childhood Experiences and Personal Encounters with Child Labor	147
A Sense of Responsibility to Curb Child Labor Practices	151
Championing Children’s Right as a Divine Calling	156
Passion to Make Impact in the Lives of Child Labor Victims.....	158
Child Labor Advocacy Strategies in Ghana.....	163
Awareness-raising and Education.....	164
Community Empowerment and Capacity Building	173
Collaboration and Partnership.....	176
Barriers to Community Advocacy Against Child Labor in Ghana.....	180
Lack of Funding and Support	180
Community Resistance and Cultural Challenges.....	183
Poverty Within Communities	186
Sustainability of Efforts After NGO Exits.....	188
Duplication of Efforts Between NGOs	190
Conclusion	192
Chapter Six.....	194
Interpretations and Analysis of the Experiences of Child Labor Advocates in Ghana.....	194
Introduction.....	194
Community Advocates as Witnesses to Atrocities against Children.....	195

Grassroots Advocacy Against Child Labor as Activism Towards Children’s Schooling and Right to Education	200
Advocacy Against Child Labor as a Confrontation with Material Constraints and Entrenched Struggles Between Ethical Commitment and Systemic Resistance	205
Community Advocates as Missionary Peacebuilders	207
Advocates as Local Implementers of Global Policies on Child Labor	210
Conclusion	213
Chapter Seven	216
Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy as Community Peacebuilding: Rethinking the Local Turn .	216
Introduction.....	216
Child Labor Advocacy as Peacebuilding Practice	217
Revisiting the Local Turn in Peacebuilding: Agency, Ownership, and Embeddedness.....	220
Conclusion	223
General Conclusion and Recommendations	225
Introduction.....	225
Overall Key Findings	225
Significance of the Findings to Theory, Research, and Practice	228
Recommendations for Practice and Policy	229
Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions	235
Conclusion	237
References.....	239
Appendixes	270

Appendix A: Informed Consent..... 270

Appendix B: Interview Guide..... 278

Appendix C: Invitation Letter..... 281

List of Acronyms

ANPPCAN.....	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse & Neglect
CCPC.....	Community Child Protection Committees
CEP.....	Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding
CHRAJ.....	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
DOVVSU.....	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
FCUBE.....	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGM.....	Female genital mutilation
GCLMS.....	Child Labor Monitoring System
GCLMS.....	Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System
ILO.....	International Labor Organization
MMYE.....	Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment
NCCE.....	National Commission for Civic Education
NGOs.....	Non Governmental Organizations
NPA.....	National Plan of Action
PACS.....	Peace and Conflict Studies
SDGs.....	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC.....	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRC.....	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF.....	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFCL.....	Worst Forms of Child Labor
WHO.....	World Health Organization

List of Tables

Table 1: List of Participants and their Categorization

General Introduction: Eradicating Child Labor in Ghana

Introduction

When I was about 10 years old, I lived in a small farming village in the western region of Ghana. Each day, I woke up at dawn to help my parents on the farm before going to school. Sometimes, I had to skip school to work on the farm. As young as I was, I cleared portions of weeds with a sharp cutlass. I participated in a range of cocoa-related tasks, which included weeding the fields, fetching water for spraying, harvesting cocoa pods, gathering the pods and stacking them in piles, scooping out the cocoa beans, transporting the fermented beans, drying the beans, and delivering the dried beans to sales centers. I was exposed to toxic substances like DDT, a chemical for spraying crops, and cocoa, among many others.

Despite the laws against child labor in Ghana, my family depended on my contribution to make ends meet. My parents, struggling to provide for us, believed that every pair of hands was essential for our survival. One fateful day, while we were working on the farm, a group of people were passing by. They questioned why I was on the farm during school hours. Fearing that I would be punished by my parents, I remained silent. My parents struggled to provide a concrete explanation. The advocates spoke at length with my parents to prioritize my education. Having understood that children's voices were often unheard, those community advocates took it upon themselves to organize a community meeting. They invited parents and village leaders to discuss the impact of child labor on our futures and the importance of education. At the meeting, the advocates spoke passionately about the need to prioritize our education over labor. They shared heartbreaking stories of children who had been injured or exploited while working in hazardous conditions on farms and mines. Also, they shared stories of children who had managed to escape the cycle of work and pursue their dreams. The villagers listened intently, and I could see the

change in their expressions as they began to understand the importance of investing in children's schooling. After that awareness-raising, my parents understood the need for me to go to school instead of working on the farm during the weekdays. I also realized from the stories being told that I was letting my dreams of becoming a teacher slip away with each day spent toiling on the farm and skipping school.

The advocates' efforts ignited a change in our village. Parents started to realize that while laws existed, real change had to come from within our community. With the advocates' guidance, a local committee was formed in my village to promote education and provide resources for families in need, helping us see that supporting our schooling was more important than relying on our labor. My journey, along with the advocates' support, highlights the urgent need for heightened advocacy against child labor in agriculture and other sectors in Ghana. The story is not just a personal account, but a representation of the broader challenges faced by children engaged in child labor in Ghana. It emphasizes the need for continued advocacy and action to combat child labor, ensuring that children are protected from hazardous conditions and exploitation and have the opportunity to pursue their education and dreams.

In Ghana, the widespread occurrence of the most severe forms of child labor presents a significant challenge. Current reports and research affirm that a significant percentage of Ghanaian children experience and are exposed to hazardous work conditions (Abdullah et al., 2022; Badoe, 2017; UNICEF, 2021). About 21 percent of children in Ghana (about 2 million) between the ages of five and 17 are involved in child labor, with 14 percent engaged in hazardous work (Afriyie et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2021). For instance, children as young as ten are frequently discovered working in dangerous conditions in artisanal gold mines, where they are exposed to toxic chemicals and risk injuries from collapsing tunnels. In agriculture, many

children work extended hours in intense heat carrying heavy loads or using sharp tools, putting their health and safety at risk. Additionally, many children go fishing on the sea and in the various lakes such as Volta, which usually leads to health problems or death (Hilson, 2010; Issaka et al., 2021). These alarming situations show that the fight against child labor in Ghana is far from over, highlighting the need for increased and intensified efforts to achieve the goal of eradicating it. As such, a recent enactment by the government of Ghana known as the “Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor” (2023-2027) calls for community engagement in the fight against child labor practices and therefore admonishes all to come on board to help in the fight against the problem. According to Boateng and Dako-Gyeke, “It would be useful, therefore, to create more awareness about the dangers of child labor as some people in Ghana perceive it as essential since it is part of children’s socialization” (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022, p. 278). This implies more advocacy efforts coupled with collaborations to implore society to be attentive to the ramifications of child labor.

In response to this pressing concern, advocates and activists within the local communities in Ghana work tirelessly by organizing awareness campaigns, lobbying for policy changes, and providing direct assistance to address child labor and the associated violence it perpetuates. These community advocates are dedicated individuals or groups committed to the relentless pursuit of social change, addressing urgent community challenges like child labor of all forms and improving the overall well-being of individuals within the local communities in Ghana. In Ghana, some community advocates may not reside in the community they advocate for, but they do reside in the district that encompasses their community. The advocates and activists offer direct assistance to child laborers and their families (Lawrance, 2010). Nevertheless, although

community advocates and activists are essential in tackling child labor, their experiences in fighting against the most severe forms of child labor in Ghana have not received much attention.

Empirical studies focusing on child labor advocacy efforts in Africa, including Ghana, are very rare. Some existing studies include a study by Onyango (2015) who sought to understand the advocacy role that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play in combating child labor in Kenya. He analyzed advocacy strategies used by the “African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN)” including community engagement, collaboration with government entities, and research to inform policy development. He found that effective advocacy led to the formulation of a draft national child labor policy and increased awareness of child labor issues among stakeholder groups. Advocacy efforts facilitated the creation of school child labor committees, which identified vulnerable children and offered essential assistance to prevent them from leaving school prematurely. Advocacy initiatives at the district level led to the creation of child labor committees, which enabled stakeholders to coordinate and share resources. Advocacy initiatives at the national level led to the creation of the “Coalition on Child Rights and Child Protection,” the development of a policy addressing child labor, and the enactment of the Children Act in 2001. These achievements facilitated the establishment of domestic systems and frameworks to protect children's welfare in Kenya. Additionally, the study highlighted the necessity for ongoing efforts to tackle the broader challenges facing children, such as physical and sexual abuse, and emphasized the importance of immediate and long-term planning in advocacy initiatives (Onyango, 2015).

In addition to the aforementioned studies, other research related to Ghana includes Lawrance (2010), who conducted a critical analysis of the relationship between child advocacy initiatives and the enforcement of Ghana's Human Trafficking Act of 2005, stressing both the

historical and current aspects of child labor and trafficking in the country. It concludes that, despite a vigorous history of child advocacy, the disparate and sometimes contradictory stances of several agencies concerning child labor have impeded effective intervention. The author asserts that the anti-trafficking activities of the early 2000s, which characterized the issue as a "crisis," were more targeted and legislative than previous child labor advocacy efforts. Nevertheless, it underscores that Ghanaian legislation is constrained in its efficacy as it neglects to consider local social customs and the intricacies of the economic determinants influencing child labor and trafficking. The findings indicate a necessity for a more sophisticated understanding and strategy for child protection that incorporates empirical research (Lawrance, 2010).

Likewise, Osei Bonsu (2021) examined the methods employed by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Ghana to detect and rescue smuggled children working in the fishing sector. The study focused on the difficulties encountered by these groups and the approaches employed. The key findings highlighted the complexities and limitations in identifying trafficked children, including limited resources, stigma and fear, lack of coordination among NGOs, cultural barriers, and limited access to remote areas, emphasizing the need for holistic solutions that address structural causes and multiple perspectives on the issue. The study recommends that international donors and protocols should not only support but also engage in a more dynamic interaction with local stakeholders in addressing child trafficking in Ghana. It implies that global players should give priority to integrating local ideas and experiences into their strategies and decision-making processes. By involving domestic actors in the design and execution of anti-trafficking initiatives, international donors can somehow guarantee that interventions are

contextually relevant and responsive to the specific needs of the Ghanaian context (Osei Bonsu, 2021).

Again, Danvers (2022) analyses the advocacy endeavors aimed at combating child trafficking in Ghana, with a specific emphasis on the activities of Challenging Heights, a local NGO. The study highlights many fundamental features of their advocacy strategy. Challenging Heights actively participates in personal advocacy, ensuring that the government is responsible for adopting and executing legislation against trafficking. This often leads to criticism from influential authorities. Further, Ghanaian NGOs create collaborations with international organizations to gain access to worldwide resources and help eliminate contemporary forms of slavery. Also, Challenging Heights implements a comprehensive strategy that encompasses not only the rescue of exploited children but it also tackles the root causes of child trafficking and places significant emphasis on education (Danvers, 2022). Moreover, the organization actively engages local communities through initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and aggressively promotes the reporting of trafficking incidents. In addition, James, the founder of Challenging Heights and a survivor of child trafficking, uses his own personal narrative to enhance public consciousness and champion the case of children's rights. Challenging Heights collaborates closely with official services such as law enforcement, social services, and healthcare agencies, to guarantee the efficiency and long-term viability of their efforts in rescuing and assisting trafficked children in Ghana (Danvers, 2022).

Additionally, in a study conducted by Baidoo (2015), he assessed the efficiency of interventions aimed at curbing child labor in cocoa-producing communities in the Wassa Amenfi West District of Ghana. Through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the study showed that farmers were aware of the problem of child labor, but it also showed that there

were ongoing problems, such as socio-economic factors and laws that weren't being enforced properly, that made interventions less effective. The conclusions emphasized the need for more robust and context-specific strategies, including enhanced community engagement and support systems, to effectively eliminate child labor in the cocoa sector and ensure sustainable development in these communities (Baidoo, 2015).

The literature review indicates that there is a scarcity of empirical studies investigating child labor advocacy efforts in Ghana and beyond. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no empirical studies examining the experiences of community activists and advocates engaged in addressing child labor practices in Ghana. Therefore, my concern with this research was to explore the critical role of these community advocates by making an attempt to understand their experiences in combating child labor and its associated violence. Focusing on the experiences of community advocates is crucial because they possess intimate knowledge of local contexts, cultural nuances, and the socio-economic realities of the communities they serve. These advocates are often at the forefront of grassroots efforts, and their firsthand experiences reveal the unique challenges and opportunities within the communities they serve. By understanding their perspectives, we can identify effective strategies and best practices that have emerged from their work, which can inform and enhance broader advocacy efforts. This focus aligns with the local turn in peacebuilding, which emphasizes the importance of grassroots actors in developing sustainable, context-specific solutions to systemic issues (Mac Ginty, 2018). By exploring their experiences, this research examines the pivotal role of community advocates in addressing the structural violence (Galtung, 1990) of child labor, while also contributing to broader discussions about how local advocates adapt and implement liberal frameworks in Ghana to enhance global child protection initiatives.

To investigate community advocacy in relation to child labor in Ghana, I asked the following questions: What can we learn from the experiences of community advocates in Ghana who are combating child labor? In what ways do insights about their experiences enhance our understanding of how to eradicate this practice? What do the efforts of these advocates reveal about grassroots peacebuilding, often described as the local turn in peace and conflict studies. To answer these questions comprehensively, the study delved into specific aspects of the experiences of child labor community advocates in Ghana including their motivations, the strategies they employ, and the challenges they encounter in combating child labor in Ghana. I utilized a narrative method of inquiry that incorporates semi-structured or open-ended interviews, enabling participants to share their stories (refer to Appendix B). This method of narrative inquiry fosters critical reflection and facilitates the exploration of meaning in participants' experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2008).

From a Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) point of view, this study presents a unique perspective by addressing the significant gap in attention to child labor advocacy efforts within peacebuilding research in Africa and beyond. It highlights the interconnectedness of child labor advocacy and peace through the experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana. Community advocacy efforts to combat child labor in Ghana are not merely social or economic initiatives but fundamentally intertwined with the broader goals of peacebuilding. While child labor is a critical issue that intersects with various socio-economic and political factors, it has not been adequately integrated into peacebuilding discussions. Peacebuilding research often focuses on conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the establishment of sustainable peace, yet it frequently overlooks the role of child labor as both a consequence of conflict and a barrier to achieving lasting peace as well as violence against children more broadly. I consider these advocates who

work to eliminate child labor as peacebuilders because they aim to safeguard the rights and well-being of children who are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and violence. They aim to tackle the underlying factors that contribute to child labor, including poverty, inequality, social norms, and insufficient access to education. By doing so, they contribute to creating a more peaceful and just society for children and their families. Additionally, they support the role of young people as agents of peace, helping them to develop essential peacebuilding skills, foster reconciliation, and strengthen relationships across divides (UNICEF, 2021). Their work is very important because it bridges the gap between making policies and putting them into action. They are often the first line of defense for children who are at risk in their communities.

The prevailing context necessitating my focus on community advocates is the discourse on the local turn in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2014; Piccolino, 2019; Wolff, 2022). The local turn aims to incorporate the experiences, perspectives, and practices of peacebuilding from local contexts of conflict and has been proposed as a viable alternative to international/Western liberal models of peacebuilding, especially in Africa (Thiessen, 2011).¹ The “Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (2023-2027)” acknowledges the importance of the local as an ideal approach to tackling child labor practices. The plan outlines the importance of involving local actors such as traditional and religious leaders, child and youth associations, parents, as well as other essential community stakeholders, in efforts aimed at eradicating child labor. By involving local actors in the fight against child labor, the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan recognizes the inherent knowledge and understanding that community members have of their own social structures and dynamics. This approach also helps to ensure that interventions are culturally sensitive and relevant to the specific context in which they are being implemented. However,

¹ The local turn in peacebuilding is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

while the emphasis on local engagement in peacebuilding seeks to enhance the capacity of local actors and acknowledge their agency, it may inadvertently perpetuate simplistic narratives about these individuals. Therefore, the study uses the experiences of local advocates and activists to examine the 'local turn' paradigm and evaluate how effectively it can contribute to addressing child labor practices in Ghana. It engages in critical reflection and develops a nuanced understanding of the local level's strengths, limitations, and contextual factors from the experiences of Ghanaian community advocates. While their efforts to address child labor are commendable, the prevailing notion that grassroots peacebuilding efforts in the form of child labor advocacy in Ghana represent a distinct, indigenous alternative to the liberal peace model is misleading. Instead, my findings reveal that community advocates actually function as implementers and adaptors of the liberal framework, integrating its principles into localized strategies rather than creating a wholly separate or oppositional model. These advocates engage with institutionalized knowledge, international norms (such as International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions and United Nations (UN) frameworks), and formal legal mechanisms, demonstrating that their work is not detached from the global peacebuilding architecture but rather embedded within it. In fact, as my study argues, community child labor advocates can be seen as local agents of the liberal peace model.

While giving attention to the plight of child victims and their agency is equally important, conducting research directly with child victims of child labor presents significant ethical and practical challenges, including concerns about their vulnerability, obtaining informed consent, and minimizing harm during the research process (Harcourt & Sargeant, 2011). Additionally, there is the risk of re-traumatization (Grossman et al., 2021) when discussing their experiences. These challenges necessitated the study's focus on community advocates, who act as

intermediaries and play a pivotal role in advocating for children's rights, shaping interventions, and addressing the systemic issues underpinning child labor (Ardila Sánchez et al., 2020).

Besides, in Ghana due to some factors like, cultural norms that prioritize adult perspectives, the voices of children are often sidelined in discussions and decisions that directly affect their lives, particularly in the context of child labor (Issaka et al., 2021; Quarshie, 2024). As a result, community advocates play a vital role in augmenting the voices of children and seeing to it that their perspectives are considered in discussions about child labor. Advocates serve as intermediaries who translate children's experiences into actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. By engaging with children directly, advocates gather valuable information about the challenges they face, their aspirations, and the support they need. This is crucial for developing policies that are not only effective but also resonate with the lived realities of children in Ghana.

Child Labor as Violence Against Children

Framing child labor as violence against children is essential for understanding its impact, advocating for change, and promoting a rights-based approach to protecting children in Ghana. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989, Article 19), violence against children includes "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (UNICEF, 1989). According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), more than half of the children in the world have at least experienced violence in one form or another (UNICEF, 2021). One manifestation of this violence is the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor. UNICEF (2021) projected that approximately 152 million children worldwide, or one out of every ten, were involved in child labor. Less than half of this population, or 73 million

people, are engaged in dangerous work detriment to their health and well-being (ILO, 2017). Those involved in hazardous labor do their duties in potentially harmful environments with inadequate or no protection (Dowuona-Hammond et al., 2021). In accordance with the ILO Convention (No. 182, Article 3) definition, the worst forms of child labor comprise

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

The violence inflicted by these severe forms of child labor practices manifests in multiple ways, including physical harm from hazardous working conditions. For instance, children engaged in agricultural work may encounter hazardous machinery, toxic pesticides, and extreme weather conditions, which not only threaten their physical safety but also represent a direct infringement of their rights to protection and working in a safe environment (Badoe, 2017; Gamlin & Hesketh, 2007).

Research on children fishing in Ghana's Volta Lake revealed that these young individuals face significant risks, including the potential for death from diseases like bilharzia and guinea worm, as well as the threat of drowning (Clerk, 2011). This danger arises when they dive to untangle fishing nets that have become caught on submerged tree stumps (Clerk, 2011). Also, many children involved in child labor face severe stress, anxiety, and depression stemming from

work-related demands, a lack of educational and recreational opportunities, and the risk of exploitation by employers. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2014), approximately 91 percent of children involved in child labor reported having experienced some type of abuse and mistreatment in their work environments, including sexual assault, verbal harassment from customers, underpayment, non-payment of wages, and ongoing exposure to unsafe working conditions. Child labor frequently involves exploitation, wherein children are compelled to work long hours for minimal or nonexistent remuneration (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The ramifications of such exploitation may culminate in profound feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and despair (Torimiro, 2009). This emotional harm can have lasting effects on their mental well-being and overall development. Additionally, child labor is often embedded in structural violence, where systemic factors such as poverty, lack of access to education, and inadequate legal protections create an environment that forces children into work. These conditions not only violate children's rights but also reflect broader socio-economic inequalities and injustices (Muthukrishna, 2011).

The combined effect of physical harm, psychological distress, and the systemic injustices establishes a cycle of poverty and violence that can profoundly impact a child's entire well-being (Ozoh et al., 2022). According to Wessells and Kostelny, children who have experienced violence are more likely to become perpetrators of violence in the future, making them instruments in perpetuating intergenerational cycles of violence (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). This is because memories of violence are difficult to erase, and as a result, the experience of violence molds and impacts the character and personality of children. Construed as violence against children, child labor should be understood as a form of violent conflict waged against children, even if inadvertently in some cases child labor transcends individual cases of harm to

represent a systemic and pervasive form of violent conflict waged against children. Unlike conventional forms of conflict involving physical battles between identifiable parties, this conflict is structural and systemic, rooted in socio-economic inequalities, cultural norms, and policy failures. As a violent conflict waged against children, child labor demands interventions that go beyond conventional child protection frameworks. While social welfare and development-oriented approaches remain critical, they must be complemented by strategies rooted in conflict resolution and peacebuilding models. As a violent conflict against children, child labor demands urgency and interventions that mobilize conflict resolution and peacebuilding models.

Advocacy as Peacebuilding: On the Significance of Focusing on Community Advocates' Experiences

By examining the experiences of community advocates addressing child labor in Ghana, this research enhances the understanding of child protection efforts. These advocates operate at the grassroots level, where they confront the realities of child labor and the impacts on children and their communities. By examining the experiences of community advocates, this study reveals how these advocates contribute not only to the eradication of child labor but also to the promotion of peace within their communities. This perspective is essential, as it recognizes that addressing child labor is not merely about eliminating a harmful practice; it is also about fostering peaceful societies where children can thrive. Also, by linking the fight against child labor to broader peace initiatives, the study illustrates how the work of these advocates contributes to reducing violence and promoting social cohesion. This connection is often overlooked in extant discussions of child labor. By integrating peacebuilding into the analysis,

this research offers a more holistic understanding of the issue, recognizing that the eradication of child labor is intrinsically tied to the creation of peaceful and stable communities.

Focusing on the experiences of community advocates also offers an ethically responsible and methodologically valuable alternative to the challenges of conducting research with children directly affected by child labor. Due to the vulnerability of child participants, ethical limitations including issues of consent, trauma sensitivity, and protection from further harm often restrict researchers' ability to engage children in direct inquiry. In this context, community advocates serve as important narrative bridges. Positioned at the intersection of affected communities and child protection systems, they bear witness to the conditions and suffering of children while also striving to represent their interests in public discourse and policy advocacy. Through their intimate knowledge of children's realities, advocates attempt to amplify the perspectives of those whose voices are often excluded from formal research and decision-making spaces. Centering advocates' experiences thus allows researchers to access a deeper understanding of the structural and emotional dimensions of child labor, while respecting the ethical imperative to protect children from harm. Their stories do not replace the voices of children but offer a reflective, ethically grounded proxy that keeps the lived realities of victims at the core of the research.

Additionally, the study contributes to the emerging PACS scholarship on emancipatory peacebuilding and preventing violence against children by highlighting the importance of local efforts and their limitations through the experiences of community advocates in Ghana. By examining the efforts and experiences of advocates, the research demonstrates the significance of community advocacy and provides insights into practical strategies for change. Examining their work raises awareness of their efforts and amplifies their voices, leading to more significant support and recognition.

Also, the research brings to light the need for donors, governments, and NGOs to recalibrate how they support community advocates. It reveals the need for greater attention to be given to local realities, flexibility in programming, long-term funding, and the inclusion of advocates in policy design and not merely as implementers but as co-creators. Understanding the experiences of grassroots peacebuilders enables us to devise innovative strategies for concrete implementation, ultimately leading to the eradication of child labor in Ghana.

The study contributes significant practical knowledge and insights into the global struggle against child violence as espoused in Sustainable Development Goal 16.2, which aims to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children" (UN, 2015). The study offers policy directions for governments and non-governmental organizations regarding interventions necessary to deal with violence against children in the form of child labor practices.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis is divided into seven main chapters, with a separate introduction and a conclusion, providing a comprehensive examination of the experiences of community advocates addressing child labor in Ghana. The general introduction provides an overview of the thesis that illustrates the significance of the research. It highlights the prevalence of child labor in Ghana, its detrimental effects on children's rights and well-being, and the socio-economic and cultural factors sustaining it. This section introduces the role of community advocates in combating child labor and emphasizes the importance of grassroots approaches. It concludes by positioning child labor as violence against children and advocacy as community peacebuilding. By so doing, the study approaches child labor advocacy in Ghana as an instance of what has come to be regarded

in PACS as the local turn in peacebuilding, which prioritizes the agency of local actors in addressing systemic issues like child labor.

Chapter One, *Child Labor and Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana*, offers a detailed introduction of child labor in Ghana. It defines child labor and distinguishes acceptable forms of child work from exploitative practices using national and international legal and other frameworks. The chapter provides a historical perspective on child labor, tracing its roots to colonial systems and the legacy of exploitation that persists today. It also examines the prevalence and causes of child labor, focusing on socio-economic factors such as poverty, cultural norms, and systemic inequalities. Furthermore, the chapter reviews existing legislation and policy frameworks aimed at addressing child labor in Ghana and highlights gaps in enforcement and implementation. The chapter further provides a discussion of child labor advocacy in Ghana.

In Chapter Two, *Violence against Children and Grassroots Peacebuilding: A Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Foundations*, I provide a review of PACS and related literature focusing on three main areas including 1) violence against children, 2) liberal peacebuilding, and 3) critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. The chapter explores the multidimensional nature of violence against children by examining direct, structural, and cultural forms of child labor. Drawing on peacebuilding theories, the chapter critically examines the evolution from liberal to locally driven approaches, highlighting community-based child protection as a central framework. The chapter concludes by situating the study within the broader discourse on the “local turn” in advocacy against child labor in Ghana.

Chapter Three, *Researching Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana: A Methodological Perspective*, outlines the research design and methodological approach used in the study. It

describes the narrative inquiry framework, explaining its suitability for exploring the lived experiences of community advocates. The chapter details the data collection process, including the use of semi-structured interviews to capture rich and authentic narratives. It also addresses the sampling criteria, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques employed to ensure the credibility and integrity of the research. Challenges encountered during the research process are discussed, along with strategies to overcome them, providing transparency and rigor in the study.

Chapter Four, *Voices of Change: Unveiling the Stories of Community Child Labor Advocates in Ghana*, provides narrative accounts of four representative advocates out of the 30 interviewed for the study. These narratives give detailed insights into the experiences of the advocates and underline the main themes of the study's analysis in chapters five and six. Their stories collectively illustrate the profound complexities and inspiring dedication involved in grassroots advocacy against child labor in Ghana. These advocates embody the spirit of resilience and hope, drawing upon their own life challenges and triumphs to inspire action and effect change. Their distinct personalities and lived experiences offer insightful reflections on what it means to advocate for the rights of children within the complexities of Ghana's socio-economic landscape. Their stories are a powerful reminder that while the fight against child labor is fraught with obstacles, the voices of dedicated advocates can inspire hope and mobilize communities toward a vision for a future where every child can thrive free from labor and exploitation. The chapter reveals how personal histories, cultural values, and structural constraints shape advocacy efforts on the ground.

Chapter Five, *Thematic Synthesis of Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy Experiences in Ghana*, presents a descriptive thematic synthesis of the findings from interviews with thirty community child labor advocates in Ghana. This chapter identifies and explores three central

themes emerging from the data: (1) Advocates' Motivations, including childhood experiences and personal encounters with child labor, a sense of responsibility to curb child labor practices, championing children's right as a divine calling, passion to make impact in the lives of child labor victims; (2) Strategies for Advocacy, such as awareness-raising and education, community empowerment and capacity building, and partnerships with NGOs and government institutions; and (3) Challenges Faced, which include lack of funding and logistical support, community resistance, entrenched poverty, cultural norms, and the unsustainability of efforts after NGO exit. These themes offer a deeper understanding of the lived realities of grassroots advocates and illuminate how structural and cultural barriers shape their work. The chapter bridges the personal narratives of Chapter Four with the more critical analytical reflections in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six, *Interpretations and Analysis of the Experiences of Child Labor Advocates in Ghana*, provides an in-depth analysis of the experiences and perspectives of child labor advocates, situating their narratives within the broader structural conditions of child labor violence. The chapter is structured around five key analytical themes that I deduced from the advocates' narratives which includes an understanding of: (1) community advocates as witnesses to atrocities against children, (2) grassroots advocacy against child labor as activism towards children's schooling and right to education, (3) advocacy against child labor as a confrontation with material constraints and entrenched struggles between ethical commitment and systemic resistance and (4) Community advocates as missionary peacebuilders (5) advocates as local implementers of global policies against child labor.

Chapter Seven, *Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy as Community Peacebuilding: Rethinking the Local Turn*, explores how community-based child labor advocacy in Ghana intersects with broader frameworks of peacebuilding, particularly through the lens of the "local

turn" in PACS. This chapter shifts the focus from the advocates' lived experiences to a conceptual interrogation of the role their work plays in shaping peace at the community level. It critically examines how grassroots advocacy efforts aimed at eradicating child labor not only confront immediate harm but also contribute to long-term visions of social justice, equity, and structural transformation which are core tenets of peacebuilding.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has laid the groundwork for understanding the study's central focus: exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of community advocates engaged in the fight against child labor in Ghana. By framing child labor as a form of structural violence and situating advocacy within the broader discourse of peacebuilding, the chapter has established the relevance of grassroots actors in confronting deeply embedded social harms. It has presented the conceptual framing, research questions, and methodological orientation that guide the inquiry. The next chapter deepens this foundation by examining the historical evolution, socio-economic drivers, and institutional frameworks surrounding child labor in Ghana, as well as the emergence of child labor advocacy.

Chapter One

Child Labor and Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana

Introduction

Chapter one lays the foundational context for understanding the phenomenon of child labor and the emergence of child labor advocacy in Ghana. It opens with a comprehensive exploration of how child labor is defined in both international and national legal frameworks, with attention to distinctions between acceptable forms of work and exploitative or hazardous labor. The chapter then situates child labor within its historical roots tracing patterns from slavery and colonial capitalist structures to present-day socio-economic realities to show how past systems of exploitation continue to shape contemporary practices. Following this, it presents current data on the pervasiveness of child labor in Ghana and identifies key drivers such as poverty, cultural norms, lack of access to quality education, and household economic pressures. The discussion then turns to the legal and policy frameworks established to address child labor, highlighting both the progress and the persistent gaps in enforcement. Finally, the chapter introduces the growing role of advocacy and community-based engagement in the fight against child labor, linking these efforts to broader peacebuilding frameworks and the scholarly discourse on the local turn. By doing so, the chapter sets the stage for examining the experiences of child labor advocates as crucial actors in efforts to eradicate child labor and promote social justice at the grassroots level in Ghana.

Defining child labor

The Ghanaian constitution (1992) describes a child as anyone under the age of 18 (Judicial Service, 1992). In the context of this study, the term "child" similarly refers to anyone below this age threshold. Child labor is still a highly debatable term with no commonly accepted

definition (Erdem Türkelli, 2020) due to the various socio-cultural factors and contexts informing how various groups understand childhood and labor practices that can be construed as abusive to children. However, the concept of child labor in Ghana is informed by the ILO's Minimum Age Convention No. 138, established in 1973, which provides the international standard for the minimum age for employment or heavy work. The ILO defines child labor as work that "is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work" (ILO, 2017). The ILO states that children can participate in light work as long as it does not interfere with their schooling, starting at the age of 13 (ILO Convention 138). This light work is defined as one that is "not likely to be harmful to children's health or development; and not such as to prejudice children's attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programs approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received" (ILO, 2017). Recognizing the ILO definition of light work, the government of Ghana has opted against imposing blanket bans on child labor. Instead, it aims to regulate or eliminate specific sectors and job types that are harmful to children's well-being, education, development, and moral growth.

The Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE) defines child labor in Ghana as any work that poses harm or hazards to a child's health, safety, and development, taking into account the child's age, the working conditions, and the timing of the work. This definition implies that a child's participation in cocoa-related activities, for instance, does not automatically qualify as child labor. As noted by Baah (2010), the classification of child labor depends on the nature of the task, the child's age, and the conditions and timing of the work

performed (Baah, 2010). The Children's Act of Ghana (1998) explains that work that is exploitative dispossess children of their education, health, and growth. On the other hand, hazardous work is dangerous to perform and poses a threat to the safety, health, and morals of the child. An individual must be at least fifteen years old in order to be employed, according to the Ghana Children Act of 1998 (Act 560). However, children can start working at 13 for light tasks, such as helping with household chores, assisting in family businesses, and earning pocket money after school and during vacations. In contrast, the minimum age for hazardous work such as mining, quarrying, going to sea, lifting heavy loads, and jobs in industries involving chemicals, as well as employment in bars, hotels, and entertainment venues where they might encounter inappropriate behavior is set at 18 years (Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, 1998).

Differentiating between tolerable and intolerable work is challenging. Scholars like Okyere (2017) and Thorsen and Maconachie (2023) have raised questions about whether children's involvement in cocoa farming, domestic work, fishing, and similar activities can be classified as exploitative or harmful without taking into account the specific circumstances of their participation (Okyere, 2017; Thorsen & Maconachie, 2023). While the Government of Ghana and the ILO classify fishing and associated activities, including bait preparation and the maintenance of fishing gear, as the worst forms of child labor, research undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) offers a contrasting perspective. The FAO indicates that when these activities are conducted under safe conditions and do not interfere with educational pursuits, they can yield beneficial outcomes (Zdunnek et al., 2008). This endeavor facilitates the development of essential skills in children while simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging and reinforcing cultural identity (Thorsen & Maconachie, 2023).

A commonality among all definitions is that "child labor" does not encompass every economic activity performed by children. Rather, it specifically refers to work or employment that does not align with national laws, like the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560), or with international agreements, such as the ILO's Conventions 138 and 182 (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022). These legal frameworks clearly outline the kinds of work that children should not be engaged in and that need to be eliminated.

In the context of this work, child labor is defined as the participation of children in any work, whether economic or non-economic, that obstructs their ability to attend school effectively or poses risks to their physical health, safety, or moral development. My definition draws heavily on the Ghanaian and ILO legal frameworks both of which emphasize the detrimental effects of child labor on children's rights, welfare, and future opportunities. This definition is warranted as it acknowledges that child labor impacts not just a child's current capacity to go to school but also has lasting effects on their overall development. By incorporating both educational and developmental dimensions, the definition emphasizes how work can obstruct a child's learning prospects and impede their physical, emotional, and social growth. Grasping these wider implications is vital for tackling the underlying causes of child labor and for creating effective strategies that support children's rights and welfare. By focusing on these detrimental effects, the thesis effectively explores how advocates are motivated to take action, the strategies they employ to combat child labor, and the specific challenges they encounter in their efforts. This connection is essential for a thorough analysis of the advocates' roles and the effectiveness of their initiatives, as it situates their work within the broader framework of children's rights and development in Ghana.

The Historical Context of Child Labor in Ghana

To fully understand the phenomenon of child labor in Ghana, it is essential to explore its historical roots and how these have evolved over time. As Leming et al. suggest, a critical analysis of any social issue requires an understanding of its past to make sense of its present and anticipate its future (Leming et al., 2009). I trace the history through the lens of slavery and colonial capitalist economy in the Gold Coast particularly as it offers an extensive comprehension of the systemic and structural roots of child exploitation in the Gold Coast. This approach highlights how the commodification of human lives during slavery transitioned into exploitative labor practices under colonial rule, creating a legacy of violence against children. The historical practices being examined here are directly connected to child labor practices that remain prevalent in present-day Ghana, particularly those shaped by the colonial capitalist economy.

Historically, the Gold Coast was significantly impacted by the transatlantic slave trade from the 16th to the 19th centuries (Adu-Boahen, 2012). This dark chapter in history saw the forced removal of countless individuals from their homes, with many Ghanaian children among those captured and sold into slavery (Eltis, 2007). Thousands of children were taken from Ghana as enslaved people to work in plantations across different parts of the world. The ramifications of this trade were profound, as it not only disrupted families and communities but also instilled a legacy of exploitation that resonate through generations (Diptee, 2006). The transatlantic slave trade created a system where human lives were commodified, leading to the normalization of exploitative labor practices. Children were vulnerable to being ensnared in this cycle of exploitation, often being forced into labor under harsh conditions. The historical context of slavery laid the groundwork for contemporary issues surrounding child labor in Ghana, as the

societal acceptance of using children for labor became entrenched (Adu-Boahen, 2012). This legacy continues to influence the socio-economic landscape, where poverty and lack of access to education perpetuate the cycle of child labor.

As Atlantic Slavery (that is, kidnapping, transporting, and chattelling of enslaved Africans to the Americas to work) fell out of favor, European colonizers began establishing colonies (more like slave plantations) in Africa. (Van Hear, 1982). For example, cocoa plantations were set up in the colonies. Cocoa was introduced to Ghana (arguably in the early nineteenth century) from the Americas, around the same time as slavery was assumedly being abolished. To grow a cocoa economy, colonizers destroyed indigenous agricultural systems to pave the way for what they called cash crops (e.g., cocoa). African farmers were used to cultivate cocoa in mass quantities that were then taken to Europe through European colonial companies. This period marked a substantial increase in cocoa output, which necessitated a large labor force, primarily sourced from the northern regions of the country. As cocoa production expanded, workers were needed to transport cocoa from the fields to the transport yards, often carrying heavy loads on their heads (Van Hear, 1982). According to Van Hear (1982) initially, young, unmarried men were the primary laborers on cocoa plantations. However, as the industry grew, the employment of women and children became more common, particularly for children who were not only proven to be capable of performing agricultural tasks but also doing so at no significant labor cost. Consequently, the cocoa boom led to a significant rise in child labor practices (Van Hear, 1982, p. 500). It is important to note that cocoa growers indirectly benefited from the labor of these children, as they often worked alongside family members rather than being directly employed by the farmers.

Despite the increasing visibility of child labor abuses, the colonial administration, under Governor Guggisberg, took little action to address the issue. It wasn't until 1930 that reports emerged of farmers actively recruiting children for labor on their farms, a practice that had previously gone unacknowledged (Van Hear, 1982, p. 500). Many of these children came from the northern regions of Ghana, and their movement southward was often facilitated by family members living in larger towns like Kumasi, Salaga, and Tamale. Tragically, many children were transported south under false pretenses, unaware that they would be forced into labor in cocoa fields. Once they arrived, they found themselves trapped in circumstances they could not escape. Van Hear (1982) describes the deplorable conditions faced by minors aged 13 to 14 who were moved south, with some even as young as 10 or 11 resorting to stealing money from their parents to make the journey. The nature of their work left these children vulnerable to exploitation by adults (Hartjen & Priyadarsini, 2012). Additionally, the British colonial authorities obstructed efforts by the ILO to prevent child labor in cocoa processing facilities in the Gold Coast (Hepburn & Jackson, 2022).

The imposition and emergence of colonial capitalist economies on African societies produced the patterns of child abuse that have subsisted to this day. The breakdown of traditional economic systems that relied hugely on agriculture to prioritize European cash crops like cocoa reflected exploitative practices found in other sectors, such as mining (Goulart, 2024). In these extractive industries, young laborers faced risks such as cave-ins, exposure to toxic chemicals, and long working hours, reflecting the colonial economy's broader reliance on vulnerable and expendable labor (Goulart, 2024). These practices were fundamentally linked to the legacy of slavery, which treated human lives, including those of children, as commodities, thus normalizing forced and exploitative labor (van Hear, 1982). The historical entrenchment of child

labor within Ghana's colonial economy laid the groundwork for patterns of exploitation that persist in modern times (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018). The prioritization of cash crop economies, such as cocoa, disrupted traditional subsistence agriculture, exacerbating rural poverty and limiting access to education which are key drivers of child labor. Further, the normalization of child labor during the colonial period established systemic conditions where children's contributions to the economy were undervalued, yet critical for economic survival (Lord, 2011). The impact of these practices still influences current child labor challenges in Ghana. Ongoing rural poverty, restricted access to education, and systemic inequalities have maintained a cycle of exploitation, making children susceptible to dangerous work. Although contemporary laws and international agreements seek to tackle child labor, their implementation is inconsistent, and socio-economic pressures frequently force families to prioritize survival over the rights of their children (Baah, 2010) This legacy continues to influence the socio-economic landscape, where poverty and lack of access to education perpetuate the cycle of child labor.

Prevalence and Causes of Child Labor in Ghana

In Ghana, child labor is an unfortunate fact of life, and the predominance of the worst forms of child labor tends to exacerbate the problems, complicating the process of reconciling with the reality of the situation (Dowuona-Hammond et al., 2021). According to the 2021 UNICEF report, about 21 percent of children (about 2 million) between the ages of 5 and 17 are involved in child labor, with 14 percent involved in dangerous work in Ghana (UNICEF, 2021). A significant number of children in rural regions are involved in economic activities related to agriculture and mining, whereas those in urban areas mainly work in trade, domestic labor, fishing, and construction (ILO, 2021). Notably, children under the age of 14 represent a substantial segment of the workforce in the cocoa and fishing industries. Moreover,

approximately 40 percent of children working in rural areas are aged between 5 and 18 years (UNICEF, 2021). For instance, Northern Ghana is predominantly rural and depends significantly on agriculture, in contrast to the south, which is more urbanized. In the north, the number of children aged 6 to 14 who work is more than four times greater than in the south. Approximately 33 percent of children in Northern Ghana are engaged in work, compared to just 7.8 percent in Southern Ghana (Pugmire, 2022).

In rural areas, children often help their families with farming and other local family businesses. During the planting and harvest seasons, children are busy meeting the labor demands of their households. This practice is generally seen as cutting costs since families do not have to hire extra workers (Krauss, 2016). In urban areas, children frequently work for both commercial and non-commercial reasons. They work as porters, cart drivers, and minibus assistants. Sometimes, children work as helpers to blind and disabled beggars (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019). Daily activities vary by location and can include household duties like cooking, cleaning, looking after siblings, washing dishes, and running errands, as well as outdoor responsibilities such as herding animals, farming, engaging in small-scale trading, and participating in a range of economic and non-economic activities. Work is regarded as a fundamental and desirable aspect of a child's upbringing by many Ghanaians (Yeboah, 2023). This concept is evident in various elements of the public education system, where students must arrive early to clean classrooms, restrooms, and other school amenities (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). This practice, however, reflects a legacy of colonization, where such tasks were historically imposed as part of the colonial education system to instill discipline and prepare children for subordinate roles within the colonial economy (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018; Malisa & Missedja, 2019).

Many children in the country face pressure to contribute to their family's income in Ghana due to various reasons. In different regions, children are anticipated to begin working at a young age to contribute to the subsistence of their families. This involvement in work is often part of a socialization process that prepares them for adult responsibilities and skills. According to Ruf (2011), this informal apprenticeship allows children to learn essential work ethics and skills. For instance, children frequently accompany their parents to farms, where they acquire basic farming techniques. They become familiar with tasks such as weeding, pod plucking, gathering pods, and handling cocoa beans (Ruf, 2011). Additionally, their responsibilities may include carrying water for spraying and transporting dry beans to market hubs. More physically demanding tasks, such as tilling land and harvesting crops, typically commence around the age of 10 (Lowe, 2017). From a socio-cultural perspective on child labor, children's work is not solely a detrimental issue to be eliminated but is frequently integrated into their daily lives and the economic sustenance of their families (Abebe & Bessell, 2011). It acknowledges that work possesses considerable socio-cultural significance and may differ according to variables such as age, gender, and family dynamics. This viewpoint postulates that children's work is essential to their socialization and development. Considering children's work as a vital component of their socialization and development, this perspective challenges the dominant narrative of a work-free childhood, suggesting that efforts to prevent child labor must be sensitive to the local realities and needs of children and their families (Abebe & Bessell, 2011). The implication is most Ghanaians believe that engaging children in work is necessary for developing children's personalities and sense of responsibility, as well as for preparing them to compete for employment in the future. Johansen (2006) reveals that these types of cultural positions play an incredibly significant part in Ghana, particularly in agricultural and fishing productions, where it

is normal for children to work as trainees (Johansen, 2006). From this perspective, preventing poor children from working can often do more harm than good, as it may limit their opportunities for support and development. Some studies have shown that the wages earned by children allow them to purchase a wide range of items, including food and clothing. For example, Hilson (2010) studied what makes children work in artisanal mining communities in the Talensi-Nabdam District of Northern Ghana. He found that children often work in mining not merely because of exploitative tendencies by employers but to pay for their schooling, buy things their families need, and help their families get out of poverty (Hilson, 2010).

Additionally, numerous parents in Ghana believe that engaging in hard work fosters resilience in children as they grow into adulthood. The significance of children's work is also justified by its role in offering apprenticeships, imparting skills, and helping children transition into adult responsibilities. Cultural concepts of responsibility influence how children view the opportunities and limitations they encounter, as well as the choices they make regarding their work and future prospects (Abdullah, Huynh, et al., 2022; Adonteng-Kissi, 2021). From this rationale, child labor is essential to socialization because it teaches children the significance of developing a solid work ethic and other important societal values. One means to think about socialization is to view it as the process through which a child is prepared to mature into a responsible adult (Takyi, 2014). Children are therefore made to engage in practically all occupational and household tasks performed by their parents, as these forms are “part of the process by which children are trained towards adulthood” (Asuming-Brempong et al., 2007, p. 6). Working to provide for one's family and doing activities around the house are examples of the fundamental adult obligations expected of Ghanaian citizens. If a parent can raise children who grow up to have these characteristics, then that parent is considered successful and responsible.

Every parent in Ghana hopes that they will be able to instill in their children (particularly the males) an appreciation for hard work and that they will also be able to give their children experience in the home sphere (especially the females) (Takyi, 2014). In line with this perspective, Adonteng-Kissi (2021) in looking at the cultural and economic necessity of child labor discovered that while external observers may perceive certain forms of child labor in the Talensi community's farms and mines as hazardous, local residents viewed these practices as traditional methods for diversifying their income sources. The Talensi community, located in Ghana's Northern Region, shares a small-scale agricultural lifestyle that is organized within a patrilineal clan and lineage structure (Adonteng-Kissi, 2021). Another example is Ghana's coastal regions, where fishing is the primary occupation; the culture of teaching the child how to fish plays a critical role in sustaining child labor amidst efforts to combat it. Since fishing has become a family business issue, the tradition continues unabated (Kufogbe et al., 2005).

Apart from the above, the predominance of child labor in Ghana is linked to poverty (Asare-Konadu, 2018; Takyi, 2014). Numerous scholars have cited deprivation and poverty-related factors as the causes of child labor (Phillips et al., 2014). As noted by Haile and Haile (2012), families with insufficient income frequently turn to having their children participate in different types of economic activities to support the household (Haile & Haile, 2012).

Additionally, Admassie (2002) contended that the final resort for families struggling with poverty without government assistance or extended family members is to put their children to work to supplement their income. As a result, children are included into economic endeavor as employees due to the impoverishment of the families to which they belong (Admassie, 2002). The impoverishment of families is caused by many trends of social marginalization and discrimination (Asare-Konadu, 2018). The deterioration of the people's financial situation could

lead to child labor. This suggests that the rise in poverty, if it corresponds with a period of severe economic regression, can lead to a decrease in the quality of life, which is coupled with a shortage of scarce resources, so that there is a higher propensity for children to be put to work. Similarly, Djalalova (2015) recognized poverty as the main factor driving child labor in Ghana, highlighting that inadequate access to quality education exacerbates the issue. Additionally, Koomson and Asongu (2016) point out that declining profits in cocoa farming, coupled with rising poverty among farmers, contribute to child labor in the cocoa industry in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire as the sector reaches its productivity limits. As a result of declining income from cocoa farming, children in cocoa-farming households contribute to the family's finances by participating in various other economic activities (Koomson & Asongu, 2016).

Nonetheless, Krauss (2016) posits that the eradication of poverty may not necessarily lead to the dissolution of child labor, given that economically active children can also emerge from affluent households. Through an analysis of a national household survey, Krauss identifies the perceived low returns associated with basic education, especially in rural regions, as a contributing factor to the prevalence of child labor in Ghana. Low educational attainment among both parents and children affects the prevalence of child labor. Akaguri (2014) points out that while public basic education is provided free of charge, families still face significant educational expenses, which pose a barrier to access for children from low-income households in Ghana (Akaguri, 2014). These financial burdens are not solely a reflection of poverty but are also indicative of structural inequalities within the education system, where the cost of school supplies, uniforms, and other fees disproportionately affects marginalized families. The impoverished socio-economic conditions that families face compel them to engage their children in labor (Bonnet, 1993). In view of the prevalence of child labor, some legislative and legal

frameworks have been put in place to deal with the worst forms of child labor in Ghana. I discuss these legislative frameworks in the next section.

Child Labor Legislation in Ghana

Ending Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL) is rapidly becoming a progressively crucial political issue for various countries worldwide (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019). A significant number of efforts and resources are being devoted on a national level to fighting child labor, and there is also widespread agreement among members of the international community regarding the requirement of initiating a multilateral response (Dowuona-Hammond et al., 2021). The Government of Ghana has undertaken significant legislative measures and entered multiple international accords over the last thirty years aimed at regulating, preventing, or eradicating illicit forms of child labor.

First, the current Constitution of Ghana (1992) contains measures that provide children with a broad range of legal protections to advance their well-being and facilitate their growth. This is reflected in the guarantees for fundamental human rights and freedoms established in Chapter five of the Constitution. These provisions apply to all Ghanaians, including children. Section 28 of the chapter is exclusively dedicated to the protection of children's rights. Section 28(2) of Ghana's Constitution also makes it clear that every child has the right to be shielded from participating in work detrimental to their health, education, or overall development. In addition, Section 16 makes it illegal for any person to engage in slavery or forced labor, while Section 24 affirms that all persons have the right to work in conditions that are reasonable, safe, and healthy (Awadey, 2011). Article 28 of the Constitution tasked Parliament with enacting legislations to protect children from abuse.

The introduction of the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560) aimed further to offer comprehensive protection for children's rights. The legislation describes a child as an individual under the age of 18 and articulates a range of entitlements, including the right to safeguard against violence, neglect, and exploitation. The Act expressly states the prohibition of exploitative forms of child labor, with a specific emphasis on those that pose hazards or are detrimental to a child's health, education, or overall development (Okyere et al., 2024). The Children's Act of 1998 functions as a fundamental legislative framework in Ghana's initiatives to safeguard children from exploitative labor practices. It creates a framework that forbids child labor while promoting children's rights to education, health, and general well-being. After the Children's Act (560) was passed in 1998, Ghana strengthened its existing legal framework for protecting children (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). Alongside Act 560, a range of additional legislative measures in Ghana address the issue of prohibited forms of child labor. The legislative framework encompasses the Child Rights Regulations (LI 1705) established in 2002, the Juvenile Justice Act enacted in 2003, the Human Trafficking Act (Act 694) introduced in 2005, the Labor Act (Act 651) of 2003, the Labor Regulations (LI 1833) promulgated in 2007, and the Education Act (Act 778) which came into effect in 2008. Collectively, these regulations aim to protect the rights of children and regulate their working conditions (Okyere et al., 2024).

In addition to these legal frameworks, Ghana ratified various international conventions to champion the rights of children. In 1990, Ghana also ratified the UNCRC, which focused solely on championing the rights and protection of children. Also, the ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) that was ratified mandates that member governments establish a minimum employment age aligned with the completion age of compulsory education, therefore fostering education and mitigating child labor (Mavunga, 2014). Similarly, the Convention No. 182

(Worst Forms of Child Labor) agreement explicitly targets the eradication of the most terrible kinds of child labor, including slavery, trafficking, forced labor, and employment that pose risks to the health, safety, or morality of children (Awadey, 2011). The acceptance of this agreement by Ghana mandates the government to implement prompt and effective actions to ban and eradicate the worst forms of child labor, safeguarding children from exploitation and abuse.

Further, the Ghanaian government has also developed national policies and action plans to help in the fight against child labor practices. The National Child Labor Policy represents an extensive framework established by the Government of Ghana (GoG) with the objective of tackling child labor in its various manifestations. The goal of the policy is to make more people aware of the detrimental impacts of child labor on the developmental trajectory and overall well-being of children. This initiative advocates for the promotion of education and vocational training as effective alternatives to child labor, thereby ensuring that children are afforded access to quality education and opportunities for personal development. Furthermore, the policy highlights the significance of cooperative engagement among diverse stakeholders, including governmental bodies, NGOs, communities, and international collaborators, to proficiently tackle and mitigate the issue of child labor. The National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (NPA1-2009-2015) and NPA 2 (2017-2021) are targeted action plans that implement the National Child Labor Policy (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019; Okyere et al., 2024). It offers a systematic and strategic method for tackling the most atrocious kinds of child labor, as delineated by international treaties. To eliminate the worst manifestations of child labor, it defines targeted measures and strategies for implementation across national, regional, and local levels. The measures comprises the identification and targeting of sectors characterized by a significant prevalence of child labor, including but not limited to agriculture, mining, and

domestic work (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022). The NPA takes into account strategies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children involved in child labor, guaranteeing their access to school and social services. The initiative underscores the need for data gathering and research to guide policy choices and monitor advancements in eradicating child labor. These measures included the Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System (GCLMS), a program meant to monitor businesses regularly to guarantee that they are free of child labor and that young employees receive proper protection; and the Hazardous Activity Framework for the Cocoa Sectors of Ghana, which gives standards for detecting dangers connected with employment and identifies hazardous economic activities minors should not do, was recently implemented in Ghana. In addition, it comprises a list of the forms of employment acceptable for children and those not acceptable for children in each industry affected by child labor (Pugmire, 2022).

Despite the existence of legal frameworks and policies targeted at safeguarding children from dangerous labor and other forms of violence, the enforcement of these laws remains weak and uncoordinated, leaving many children vulnerable to exploitation. This failure of enforcement can be attributed to certain factors, despite the government's significant investments in crafting and signing what appear to be well-intentioned legislations. First, inadequate funding and resources significantly impede enforcement efforts in Ghana. According to Kuyini and Mahama (2009), the agencies tasked with implementing child protection laws frequently function with limited budgets, restricting their capacity to conduct inspections, investigations, and other regulatory activities. This financial limitation is further exacerbated by logistical issues, including insufficient transportation and personnel, which obstruct effective oversight in remote and rural regions where child labor is most common (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019). The 2023 report from the United States (US) Department of Labor on Ghana points out that resource limitations,

such as insufficient funding for agencies, significantly hinder the government's capacity to effectively enforce labor laws and carry out social programs (*Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Ghana*, 2023). Also, cultural and socio-economic factors further weaken enforcement efforts. In various communities, child labor is viewed as a necessary survival tactic, with many parents either unaware of or opposed to the legal restrictions on hazardous work (Abdullah et al., 2022; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). This societal acceptance poses considerable obstacles to enforcement, as residents may refrain from reporting violations or collaborating with authorities. Consequently, the enforcement of child labor laws becomes a secondary concern in the face of immediate economic needs (Abdullah et al., 2022). With the gap in policy and practice, stories from parents who engaged their children in child labor showed that state actors are hesitant to enforce child rights violations and child labor laws as they believe that children's work is a long-standing tradition that benefits children (Abdullah et al., 2022; Ame, 2011). The disconnect between policy and practice is worsened by bureaucratic inefficiencies and inadequate coordination between agencies, leading to disjointed and ineffective enforcement actions (Abdullah et al., 2022; Baidoo, 2015). For instance, the overlapping responsibilities of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection frequently cause confusion and result in duplicated efforts.

In light of these complex challenges, the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (2023-2027) emphasizes the urgent need for robust and sustained child labor advocacy efforts within the communities. Tackling the systemic failures in enforcement necessitates not only legal reforms but also grassroots initiatives to mobilize community involvement, raise awareness, and close the gap between policies and their execution. Advocacy is essential for amplifying the voices of affected communities, ensuring accountability from authorities, and

fostering systemic change at all levels (Onyango, 2015). These efforts are crucial for increasing awareness about child labor, garnering local support, and holding authorities responsible for enforcing existing protections. As such, the next section shifts attention to child labor advocacy in Ghana.

Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana

Colonialism normalized child labor in Ghana especially within agricultural sectors like cocoa production (Gyan & Bajan, 2022). Following the attainment of independence in 1957, Ghana embarked on a transformative journey in its national development, characterized by initiatives aimed at tackling a range of social challenges. The newly established Ghanaian administration, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, placed a high priority on economic advancement and the construction of a cohesive national identity (Fuller, 2010). The focus was placed on industrialization, the advancement of infrastructure, and the enhancement of agricultural productivity. Although social issues were recognized, they frequently remained subordinate to economic objectives. The government's aim was to facilitate the transformation of Ghana into a self-sufficient and economically prosperous nation (Hecht, 2020). This entailed the promotion of cash crops like cocoa, which played a crucial role in the economic framework. The prioritization of economic growth resulted in insufficient attention and regulation concerning labor issues. Notwithstanding the acknowledgment of child labor as a significant societal concern, there existed an absence of thorough legislative frameworks or enforcement strategies aimed at safeguarding children from exploitation (Gyan & Bajan, 2022). As such, many children continued to be engaged in hard labor without adequate protections. Lawrence (2010) noted that while international political developments from the 1970s to the 1990s hindered global efforts to eliminate child labor across Africa, the internal political instability and turmoil within Ghana

further complicated or hindered the implementation of effective policies aimed at addressing child labor.

Although child labor was predominantly uncontrolled, the post-independence era saw the onset of heightened awareness of children's rights and wellbeing (Lawrance, 2010). Advocacy for social concerns, such as child labor, commenced, establishing a foundation for subsequent changes. The 1990s signified a pivotal transition as Ghana affirmed its dedication to international treaties, notably the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This era witnessed the birth of several child advocacy organizations and NGOs dedicated to children's rights rallying to address exploitation of children in diverse sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic work (Lawrance, 2010). This period was marked by heightened advocacy initiatives focused on illuminating the adverse impacts of child labor on the health, education, and overall welfare of children. The ratification of the CRC and the ILO's conventions on child labor provided a basis for advocacy initiatives as it clearly outlined guidelines to ensure the safety of minors (Lawrance, 2010).

During this time, advocacy initiatives underscored the need for education as a fundamental remedy for child labor. Some groups advocated for efforts designed to provide educational access for child laborers and rehabilitation programs for those rescued from exploitative circumstances. The concept was that education would empower children and disrupt the cycle of poverty that frequently sustained child labor (Ray, 2002). Advocacy organizations initiated collaborative efforts with international entities, including the ILO and UNICEF, to link their activities with global benchmarks and secure backing for their initiatives (Bachman, 2000). This partnership facilitated the enhancement of their advocacy efforts and enabled the acquisition of financial support and resources for initiatives designed to address the issue of child labor in

Ghana. The 1990s witnessed a surge in study and data gathering about child labor, elucidating the extent and characteristics of the issue (Fyfe et al., 2003). This data was essential for advocacy initiatives since it informed legislators and the public about the realities of child labor and the pressing need for intervention.

With the increasing momentum of advocacy initiatives, there emerged a concerted effort to implement legislative reforms aimed at tackling the issue of child labor. Advocates engaged in efforts to shape governmental frameworks and advance the enactment of legislation aimed at safeguarding minors from exploitation while guaranteeing their entitlement to education (Lawrance, 2010). This era established a foundational framework for ensuing legal transformations across various nations, including Ghana. The heightened advocacy on child labor made it clear that the local community's involvement was essential for sustainable change, as it emphasized raising awareness by engaging the very core of society that engages in these practices.

Community Engagement

The significance of community involvement and ownership in effectively addressing complex social issues such as child labor is well recognized by the government of Ghana. As such, some steps or efforts are being made in some communities. First, the government has organized sensitization seminars on child labor, forced labor, child trafficking, and domestic slavery in certain communities. According to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection organized awareness-raising through training sessions and workshops at the Adansi South District in 2019. The objective was to engage a substantial number of communities and individuals to inform them about the risks and consequences of child labor. This approach includes a series of strategies aimed at fostering

positive changes in attitudes and behaviors. Peacebuilding practices included storytelling, role-playing, discussions, engaging educational games, flashcards, and interactive activities that encouraged participants to reflect on their beliefs and practices regarding child labor and to consider alternative, more protective behaviors (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2022).

Similarly, a project dubbed “My Right, My Future” which aimed to increase school attendance in Senya in Ghana made use of community games as way to contest child labor and trafficking. Agyemang et al. (2023) reported that Senya held two community games every June 12 to commemorate the World Day Against Child Labor. Popular activities such as “soccer, sack races, lime and spoon races, and musical chairs were organized for all schools and community members” (p. 6) These grand events attracted more than 2,000 participants, providing a platform to promote awareness about child rights and the significance of education (Agyemang et al., 2023). Before the events, more than 200 students from various schools marched through the main streets of the Senya community, holding placards and handing out flyers to local residents. (p.6). The initiative sought to elevate awareness of child labor and its detrimental effects on children, families, and communities by involving these individuals and organizations. Involving local leaders and organizations cultivates a sense of ownership and accountability within the community. Community involvement in the formulation and execution of child protection projects may enhance the commitment and sustainability of these efforts over time (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019).

Another community effort has been the establishment of Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), which coordinate efforts to protect children and promote their rights. These committees consist of community members dedicated to eradicating child labor at the local level. The government of Ghana supports the utilization of these groups and is

collaborating with organizations like UNICEF and the ILO to facilitate the establishment and oversight of CCPCs (Pugmire, 2022). Other NGOs in Ghana are employing the use of these CCPCs to oversee, enhance, and eradicate child labor in various communities. For instance, CRADA, a local-based NGO in Ghana through its project known as “SMILE” is touching lives in the communities. The SMILE Ghana Project establishes CCPCs comprising individuals from local communities in Ghana. The CCPCs are dedicated to the systematic observation of regions where child labor is prevalent. Their activities involve making visits to households, engaging with caregivers to raise awareness, checking whether children are attending school, and identifying the challenges that prevent children from accessing education. CCPCs operate at the grassroots level, encouraging cooperation among community members including neighbors, relatives, and friends to collectively respond to and resolve local social problems (Pugmire, 2022).

Alongside the initiatives carried out, the Ghana Education Service launched an awareness campaign named 'Back to School' in the Adansi South District in February 2021. This initiative aimed to encourage children to return to school following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. The Department of Social Welfare created guidelines for community involvement and ownership to facilitate the 'Back to School' initiative. Utilizing these guidelines, the Ghana Education Service collaborated with community leaders, including members of the CCPCs, to engage in discussions with parent groups and raise awareness about the significance of their children returning to school. Additionally, they organized focus groups with children to inform them about the safety protocols established in schools, such as the availability of hand sanitizers, tissues, and face masks (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2022). In addition, efforts have been made by the government to raise public awareness in various communities, including

the use of radio communication. The Department of Social Welfare, in partnership with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), has conducted a number of outreach initiatives. These often involve mobile vans fitted with loudspeakers that move through towns and rural areas to share key messages on child labour. Community-based radio stations have also been utilized to host programs with experts including representatives from cocoa-producing companies to foster dialogue and inform the public on the realities and risks of child labour. These live radio discussions were interactive, inviting audience participation by allowing listeners to phone in and ask questions directly to the panel of professionals. (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2022).

Also, as part of the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (2023–2027), there is the formulation of a comprehensive parenting program aimed at preventing child labor. This toolkit is designed to provide parents with the essential information and skills required to safeguard their children from involvement in labor. The package functions as a comprehensive educational resource designed to equip parents with essential information regarding children's rights, the detrimental effects of child labor, and the critical significance of education and adequate care. The inclusion of resources such as brochures, guides, and interactive materials makes the understanding easier and more straightforward. The provision of essential tools to parents facilitates their capacity to safeguard their children, thereby enabling them to engage in informed decision-making processes. Parents possessing a comprehensive understanding of the ramifications associated with child labor are more persuaded to champion the educational pursuits and overall welfare of their wards, as opposed to permitting their involvement in potentially detrimental work activities. As an increasing number of parents embrace the ideals of the positive parenting package, the collective community perspective on child labor may

transform. A shared recognition of the significance of safeguarding children can result in a decrease in child labor practices and an enhancement in support for educational programs in Ghana.

The Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (2023-2027), has established an initiative known as Child Labor Free Zones. These are defined zones established to eradicate child labor by implementing all requisite standards. This includes the establishment of functional structures, support mechanisms, and child development facilities that enhance the welfare of children. The objective is to provide surroundings where child labor is prohibited, allowing children to flourish in secure and nurturing conditions. These community action plans have systems for the monitoring and reporting of child labor incidents. Communities are urged to record instances of child labor and undertake suitable measures, including reporting cases to pertinent authorities or service providers. This proactive strategy ensures the timely and successful resolution of child labor situations in the communities.

In addition to all that the government has instituted, many NGOs are also working in various capacities in the communities to help eradicate child labor in Ghana. For instance, Danvers (2022) analyzed the advocacy endeavors aimed at combating child trafficking in Ghana, with a specific emphasis on the activities of Challenging Heights, a local NGO. The study highlights many fundamental features of their advocacy strategy. Challenging Heights actively participates in personal advocacy, ensuring that the government is responsible for adopting and executing legislation against trafficking. This often leads to criticism from influential authorities. Furthermore, they form partnerships with international organizations to gain access to worldwide resources and help eliminate contemporary forms of slavery. Also, Challenging Heights implements a comprehensive strategy that encompasses not only the rescue of exploited children

but it also tackles the root causes of child trafficking and places significant emphasis on education (Danvers, 2022). Moreover, the organization actively engages local communities through initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and aggressively promotes the reporting of trafficking incidents. In addition, James, the founder of Challenging Heights and a survivor of child trafficking, uses his own personal narrative to enhance public consciousness and champion the case of children's rights. Challenging Heights actively partners with statutory services, including the police, social services, and health agencies, to guarantee the efficiency and long-term viability of their efforts in rescuing and assisting trafficked children in Ghana (Danvers, 2022).

Although these community engagement initiatives show that efforts are being made by government and some NGOs, the essential role of community advocates, whose involvement is vital for the sustainability and success of these efforts are frequently neglected. Community advocates work at the grassroots level, directly interacting with families, children, and local leaders to tackle the structural and cultural issues that sustain child labor. Unfortunately, their experiences are often inadequately represented in conversations surrounding the elimination of child labor. This study focuses on community advocates, exploring their lived experiences to reveal the motivations behind their work, the strategies they use to combat child labor, and the challenges they face. By emphasizing the perspectives of advocates, this research highlights their role as essential agents of change and provides actionable insights to strengthen and sustain efforts to eradicate child labor in Ghana.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the child labor landscape in Ghana, including its definitions, historical evolution, prevalence, root causes, and the legal mechanisms

established to confront it. Despite significant efforts to regulate and eliminate child labor through both national policies and international conventions, the practice remains widespread, driven by entrenched poverty, cultural beliefs, and weak enforcement. The chapter also illuminated how colonial histories and structural inequalities continue to shape modern labor practices, reinforcing cycles of exploitation. Importantly, the chapter introduced child labor advocacy not just as a policy or development tool, but as a community-based response with peacebuilding potential. These advocacy efforts are increasingly recognized within the literature as part of a broader shift from top-down liberal peace models to locally embedded, grassroots approaches. The next chapter builds on this foundation by reviewing the relevant literature on violence against children and evolving peacebuilding frameworks, further contextualizing the study's focus on community advocacy as a form of peacebuilding in Ghana.

Chapter Two

Violence against Children and Grassroots Peacebuilding: A Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Foundations

Introduction

Chapter two presents a review of literature relevant to understanding violence against children and the peacebuilding approaches that inform grassroots advocacy against child labor in Ghana. It begins by presenting the context of violence against children, including direct, structural, and cultural, to highlight the layered and systemic character of harm experienced by children. The second section reviews relevant and representative literatures on the main peacebuilding frameworks that underpin this study. It begins by defining peacebuilding broadly, followed by an exploration of liberal peacebuilding, critical and emancipatory approaches, and community-based child protection strategies. The final part of the section focuses on the local turn in child labor eradication efforts in Ghana. Together, these strands of literature provide the conceptual and analytical foundation for this study's focus on the lived experiences of community advocates working to address child labor as a form of violence.

Violence Against Children and Young People

Violence against children and youth is a significant public health crisis, as highlighted by Butchart et al. in 2016 and the World Health Organization in 2020 (Butchart & Hillis, 2016). It is also, widely recognized as a global crisis and a critical peace and justice issue. It extends beyond visible acts of abuse to encompass systemic, normalized forms of harm embedded in everyday social structures (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). Recent concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the growing risk of violence, mainly in households. Nyaaba et al. (2022) noted that lockdowns and economic pressure intensified abuse risks for women and children, exposing gaps

in response systems and the need for strengthened community-based interventions (Nyaaba et al., 2022). While it is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the risk of violence, it is important to recognize that domestic violence existed long before the pandemic and cannot be solely attributed to lockdowns and economic pressures. Addressing systemic issues of power dynamics and gender inequality is crucial in effectively combating domestic violence.

The World Health Organization defines violence against children as encompassing maltreatment, which includes “physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect” (WHO, 2022, section 2, para 1). It also covers various forms of peer and interpersonal harm, such as bullying and cyberbullying, physical aggression among youth with or without the use of weapons as well as intimate partner violence, which includes witnessing domestic abuse or being directly involved in adolescent dating abuse. Additionally, it includes sexual violence, ranging from non-consensual touching to acts of rape (World Health Organization, 2022). Acts of violence against children can be perpetrated by adults, such as caregivers and school personnel, as well as by other children. These incidents, closely associated with the broader concept of childhood victimization, are recognized as types of bad childhood experiences (Butchart & Hillis, 2016; Letourneau et al., 2017). This broad definition has contributed to a more consistent understanding across multiple fields, but it also prompts inquiries into how prevalence is assessed and understood in diverse cultural and methodological settings.

Studies on the prevalence of violence against children rely on large-scale retrospective surveys. For example, Hillis et al. (2016) found that at least one billion children aged 2–17 years had been subjected to physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect within the past year. Although this figure is striking, it primarily relies on self-reported household surveys and administrative data, which may exclude marginalized groups such as street children or those

living in conflict-affected areas. Similarly, a large-scale study conducted in two South African provinces using self-reported data from randomly selected children revealed high lifetime and past-year prevalence rates of abuse. Specifically, 56 percent of respondents reported having experienced physical abuse at some point in their lives, with 18 percent reporting such abuse within the previous year. Emotional abuse was reported by 36 percent (12 percent in the past year), while 9 percent indicated they had been sexually abused, including 5 percent who experienced it in the past. Additionally, 69 percent of the children reported some form of victimization at least once in their lifetime (Meinck et al., 2016). Meinck et al. (2015) estimated that approximately 78 percent of African children have experienced some form of sexual abuse; however, this estimate is based largely on convenience samples and meta-analyses of varying quality and breadth. A significant limitation throughout this body of research is the absence of standardized indicators and culturally validated measurement tools. This estimate is grounded in the combination of various prevalence studies, a number of which depend on self-reported data from specific groups. This presents challenges for generalizability, as cultural stigma, underreporting, and differing definitions of “sexual abuse” can greatly influence both the reporting and interpretation of findings. Additionally, extensive regional estimates such as these tend to overlook important contextual details, obscuring the variety of socio-cultural, legal, and economic circumstances present in various African nations. Thus, although the figure highlights the pressing need to tackle child sexual abuse, it should be seen as an indicative estimate rather than a conclusive measure of its prevalence.

Some studies have shifted focus from merely quantifying abuse to examining the systemic and structural forces that create and normalize violence against children (Galtung, 1990). Wessells and Kostelny (2021) contend that violence is embedded in social institutions and

perpetuated by structural inequalities, including poverty, gender hierarchies, and fragile legal systems. This important shift views violence not just as a singular event but as an ongoing issue influenced by political and social structures (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). This framework pushes back against simplistic views that place blame on individuals and instead supports the need for broader systemic changes. While violence against children is a global concern, its manifestations and drivers vary significantly across contexts. For example, while corporal punishment and child marriage persist in some African communities, these practices also appear in varied forms globally including parts of Asia, Latin America, and even within marginalized populations in high-income countries (Glover et al., 2018). What is distinctive in many African contexts is not merely the prevalence of these practices, but the ways in which they are sustained through historical legacies of colonialism, postcolonial state fragility, and global inequalities in development (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018; Goulart, 2024).

In parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, the risks children face are often shaped by intersecting structural factors such as socio-economic inequality, gender hierarchies, and limited access to justice or social services (Lawson et al., 2020). In Ghana, studies consistently reveal the entrenched and multifaceted nature of violence against children across both domestic and public spaces. Oduro et al. (2012), for example, illuminate the harsh realities faced by street-connected youth, who navigate environments rife with sexual exploitation, insecurity, and societal stigma (Oduro et al., 2012). While the study captures the urgency of these conditions, it raises broader questions about how formal protection systems consistently fail to engage these children, reinforcing their marginalization. Similarly, Addae and Tang (2021) reveal that many adolescents encounter physical, psychological, and sexual abuse within their homes, often normalized through deeply rooted patriarchal ideologies and cultural superstitions. Yet, there

remains insufficient interrogation of how such normalized violence is perpetuated through familial silence, religious justifications, and institutional complacency (Addae & Tang, 2021).

Additionally, the statistics on domestic violence in Ghana show alarming figures. The gravity of this crisis is also reflected in national statistics. Additionally, the statistics on domestic violence in Ghana show alarming figures. From 1999 to 2010, more than 100,000 incidents of violence against women and children were documented, leading to the creation of Ghana's Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) (Antwi & Dapaah, 2010). However, the existence of legal frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act (Act 732) has not translated into substantive protection, due largely to systemic enforcement gaps, limited public trust in legal institutions, and the prioritization of informal reconciliation processes over justice. This disconnect between policy and lived experience suggests a troubling pattern: legal reforms often serve as symbolic gestures, lacking the infrastructural support and cultural shift necessary to produce meaningful change.

Contrary to the dominant perspective that sees children as victims of violence, some study emphasizes children's agency and resilience in the face of adversity. For example, Edmonds et al. (2022) critiques the framing of African children as passive victims and instead highlights how children actively navigate, resist, and even reinterpret the very conditions deemed harmful suggesting a level of agency that is frequently overlooked in mainstream discussions of VAC (Edmonds et al., 2022). Studies focusing on children in conflict-affected regions show their capacity to gather resources and navigate difficult situations. This underscores the importance of programs that are both community-oriented and centered on children, promoting their sense of agency (Cavazzoni et al., 2022). While it is important to acknowledge children's agency in navigating challenging circumstances, it is equally crucial to recognize the structural barriers and

power dynamics that limit their options and opportunities for autonomy. Simply emphasizing individual agency without addressing systemic issues may overlook the broader context of vulnerability and inequality that children face. For example, a child living in poverty may have limited access to resources and support systems, regardless of their individual agency. Additionally, societal systems such as racism and discrimination can further restrict a child's ability to exercise autonomy and navigate difficult situations.

While the literature on violence against children has expanded to include structural, cultural, and institutional dimensions, there remains a notable conceptual blind spot regarding the issue of child labor. Despite ample evidence showing that child labor exposes children to hazardous environments, physical harm, emotional trauma, and deprivation of education, it is rarely framed within mainstream scholarship as a form of violence. When child labor is framed mainly as a socio-economic or developmental concern, rather than recognizing it as a form of normalized violence, prevailing narratives may overlook the daily suffering that children experience. This conceptual oversight limits both the theoretical understanding of violence and the strategic framing of advocacy efforts. My study addresses this gap by explicitly positioning child labor within the broader discourse on violence against children. In doing so, it reorients the discussion toward a more comprehensive understanding of violence, one that includes exploitative labor practices and foregrounds the agency of local actors who resist and reframe these practices as injustices demanding collective action.

To enhance a comprehension of the nature and consequences of VAC, it is necessary to examine the specific manifestations of violence experienced by children. To explore this crisis more closely, the next section examines direct violence against children which is the most immediate and observable form of harm children experience.

Direct Violence Against Children

Direct violence encompasses physical, emotional, and sexual harm deliberately inflicted by individuals or institutions, with destructive effects on children's development, health, and welfare (Hillis et al., 2017; Lenzer, 2015). While such violence is often associated with extreme situations like war or displacement, it is equally pervasive in everyday environments like homes, schools, and communities (Arora, 2017). Children, especially those in vulnerable social positions, are frequently the targets of aggression, abuse, and exploitation at the hands of those expected to protect them. The scope of this problem reflects systemic failures in societies to safeguard children from harm and requires a comprehensive understanding of how such violence operates across different social contexts (Hillis et al., 2016).

Direct violence against children is complex and varied. Physical violence encompasses actions such as hitting, slapping, kicking, or burning, and can be perpetrated by parents, teachers, or law enforcement officials (UNICEF, 2021). Sexual violence covers various abusive actions, ranging from molestation to rape. Studies consistently indicate that girls are more heavily impacted by sexual violence (Ligiero et al., 2019a) although boys can also be victims. In situations of conflict and humanitarian crises, girls as young as eight have resorted to transactional sex to obtain essential items such as food and sanitary products, frequently under pressure from older men in positions of authority (Kostelny, et al., 2014). Emotional abuse, while not always apparent, can be just as harmful. It may involve verbal aggression, threats, and exposure to distressing situations, all of which undermine a child's sense of safety and self-worth (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021).

In nations disturbed by conflict, the intentional targeting of children is alarmingly prevalent. According to UNICEF (2021), in these areas, children face deadly threats such as

being killed, maimed, abducted, sexually abused, or conscripted as soldiers. Even locations typically regarded as safe, such as schools, hospitals, and homes, often become scenes of violence, either directly attacked by armed groups or caught in crossfire (Kumari, 2021). Additionally, in urban settings characterized by poverty, marginalization, and systemic neglect, children encounter persistent danger. Research conducted by Garbarino and colleagues (1992) refers to these urban environments as “domestic war zones,” where children frequently witness or endure gang violence, police brutality, and community unrest. The daily threats and exposure to violence in these neighborhoods can have consequences akin to those experienced by children in traditional war settings (Garbarino et al., 1992). This chronic exposure to violence can lead to severe psychological trauma, manifesting in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Children living in these "domestic war zones" may struggle with feelings of fear, helplessness, and hopelessness, impacting their overall well-being and ability to function.

Although public discussions frequently highlight the threats from strangers, it's important to recognize that the individuals who commit acts of direct violence against children are not always unfamiliar faces or easily recognizable offenders. Typically, these individuals are those who are closest to the child like parents, family members, caregivers, friends, or educators. DeVries et al. (2018) highlight that family members often serve as the most frequent source of emotional violence, whereas intimate partners are a key source of sexual violence for adolescent girls (Devries et al., 2018). In school settings, boys tend to report greater instances of physical violence inflicted by peers, whereas both boys and girls indicate comparable experiences of emotional abuse. Violence in these safe spaces, where children are meant to feel protected, introduces a sense of betrayal that deepens the psychological harm. In situations of crisis or

displacement, the dangers increase significantly (Stark & Ager, 2011). The lack of stability and security in these situations can exacerbate the trauma they have already endured, making it even more difficult for them to recover and heal.

The effects of direct violence on children are extensive and frequently tragic. Violence can lead to physical harm, resulting in injuries, disabilities, or even loss of life. The World Health Organization (2019) indicated that homicide ranks among the top three causes of death for adolescents globally, with a young person falling victim to violence roughly every seven seconds. Violent injuries, particularly those that lead to traumatic brain injuries or long-term physical damage, can significantly impact a child's future, hindering their educational success and job prospects. The psychological impacts of violence extend far beyond the immediate physical threats. Experiencing violence is closely linked to various mental health issues, including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Charlson et al., 2019). These challenges are frequently intensified by stigma and limited access to suitable care, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Violence causes harm that reaches beyond physical injuries, impacting cognitive growth and educational success. Experiencing chronic stress and trauma in childhood can negatively affect brain development, especially in areas associated with memory, attention, and emotional regulation (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). These effects not only hinder individual development but contribute to cycles of violence and instability, undermining peace at both interpersonal and societal levels (McEvoy-Levy, 2006).

The impacts of violence across generations are also thoroughly recorded. Children who face violence are more prone to becoming either executors or victims of violence when they grow up. Research indicates a significant link between childhood trauma and the occurrence of intimate partner violence in adulthood, especially in men (Fulu et al., 2017). These patterns are

strengthened by societal norms that support male dominance and the oppression of women and children, highlighting the connection between violence against children and wider issues like gender-based violence. Moreover, children raised in violent environments frequently come to see violence is not only normalized but also socially sanctioned as an appropriate means of resolving disputes, passing down detrimental behaviors through generations (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). Overall, the evidence demonstrates that direct violence against children is both a symptom and driver of broader societal dysfunction. The realities of direct violence outlined above have deep implications for child labor eradication efforts in Ghana. Many children involved in labor are not only exposed to physically demanding and hazardous tasks but also face forms of abuse including physical beatings, verbal assaults, and sexual exploitation particularly in informal and unregulated sectors (Zainab & Kadir, 2016). These children are often trapped in a cycle of poverty and exploitation, making it even harder for them to escape their circumstances. Without proper intervention and protection, they are at risk of continuing to suffer and endure further harm. While direct violence represents the most visible form of harm to children, it is deeply intertwined with structural violence, which silently perpetuates inequality and enables such abuse to persist across generations.

Structural Violence

The influence of structural violence must not be excluded from the discourse on violence, exploitation, and children's rights (Todres, 2018). Structural violence against children refers to the harm caused by deeply embedded social systems that maintain inequality, marginalization, and injustice. According to Barbara Rylko-Bauer and Paul Farmer,

Structural violence is the violence of injustice and inequity... These [structures] include broad- scale cultural and political-economic structures such as caste, patriarchy,

slavery, apartheid, colonialism, neoliberalism, as well as poverty and discrimination by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and migrant/refugee status. These structures are violent because they result in avoidable deaths, illness, and injury, and they reproduce violence by marginalizing people and communities, constraining their capabilities and agency, assaulting their dignity, and sustaining inequalities (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016, p. 47).

This definition highlights the pervasive nature of structural violence and its far-reaching impact on individuals and societies. By understanding structural violence as encompassing various forms of systemic injustice, we can better address the underlying issues that perpetuate inequality and harm within communities. Acknowledging these structures is crucial for developing effective interventions aimed at creating a more equitable society. Structural violence, while not as apparent as physical harm, significantly influences children's lives in deep and frequently lethal ways. This type of violence, grounded in unequal social systems and sustained by enduring institutional practices, strips children of their fundamental rights and constrains their opportunities in life (Todres, 2018). In 1969, Johan Galtung coined a term to illustrate the systemic forms of harm that are ingrained in the structures of society. This type of harm isn't necessarily perpetrated by a specific individual; rather, it is "built into" the institutions and social arrangements themselves. Structural violence isn't just about single events; it's about persistent inequalities in power, access, and opportunities that lead to ongoing disadvantages, especially for side-lined groups like children, women, ethnic minorities, and the impoverished (Galtung, 1969).

This ongoing harm is evident throughout political, economic, religious, and cultural systems, and its normalization makes it even more deceptive. Blumberg et al., (2006) along with other peace scholars such as (Christie, 1997), (Mazurana & McKay, 2001) and (Pilisuk, 1998,

2001) have described this form of violence as one of the most pervasive and damaging, especially for children who lack the agency or power to change their conditions. According to them the threat of structural violence is significant not just because of its magnitude, but also due to its hidden nature. It lies right before us in schools that struggle, in homes that fall apart, in clinics that refuse treatment, and in laws that marginalize. The effects are extensive and enduring but challenging to tackle since they aren't always recognized as violence in the traditional way.

At the heart of structural violence against children is poverty, which remains one of the most entrenched global problems (Todres, 2018). Even after many years of global initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals, extreme poverty continues to impact hundreds of millions, with children suffering the most (UNICEF, 2021). In 2015, around 736 million individuals were surviving on less than \$1.90 a day, with nearly half of them being children under 14 years old (*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*). The figures are astonishing, particularly in a world where wealth is growing at an extraordinary pace. Although poverty has decreased on a global scale, the disparities within countries are becoming more pronounced (World Inequality Lab, 2019). Children in low-income households face daily challenges such as hunger, unsafe water, exposure to diseases, and inadequate education, very possible to die before reaching the age of five compared to those in high-income countries (*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*). The majority of these fatalities stem not from uncommon illnesses or calamities, but from avoidable factors such as malnutrition, insufficient healthcare, and unsatisfactory sanitation. These outcomes are not arbitrary; they stem directly from global systems that place profit, power, and resource extraction above human life. Children from families with low socio-economic standing, regardless of location, face a higher burden of health problems, including chronic illnesses and psychological health disorders (Bartlett, 2017).

Structural violence impacts not only health and the environment but also reaches into education and lifelong development. Kids raised in poverty frequently start school lacking proper nutrition and readiness, and they often have to leave early to help their families (Boyden et al., 2019). In sub-Saharan Africa, over fifty percent of schools lack access to water that is safe and essential sanitation facilities (United Nations, 2019). Consequently, millions of children do not reach the basic levels of proficiency in reading and mathematics. The disparity in education deepens inequality, creating greater challenges for children trying to break free from poverty. Lacking education, their opportunities for securing good jobs shrink, perpetuating cycles of exclusion, discontent, and potentially drawing them into criminal organizations or armed groups (Wessells, 2006).

The relationship between structural and direct forms of violence is mutually influential and strengthens each other. The circumstances of poverty and systemic neglect frequently foster an environment where abuse and exploitation can occur intermittently. In urban Kenya, economic hardship has driven children to engage in harmful undertakings such as brewing and selling palm wine. Girls, especially, are often employed to attract male customers, which can lead to instances of sexual exploitation (Kostelny, et al., 2014). This goes beyond just survival instincts; it reflects a system that provides no safety net, no protection, and no other options. The abuse that ensues strengthens societal norms that undermine girls and make their exploitation seem acceptable. Also, Ghana serves as a clear illustration of the impact of structural violence on children, highlighting issues of economic, educational, and social exclusion. While access to education has seen enhancements through Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), inequalities still persist. Children in rural and underprivileged areas frequently encounter poor learning conditions, untrained educators, and long distance walk to reach school

(Akyeampong, 2009). Structural violence is evident in child labor, as economic necessity, inadequate labor enforcement, and a lack of alternatives drive children particularly in the cocoa and mining industries into exploitative jobs that jeopardize their health and development. These children find themselves trapped in cycles of poverty, facing limited institutional support to safeguard or elevate their circumstances.

In sum, structural violence against children is a silent crisis that underlies many of the visible harms children face globally. It deprives children of their right to survival, development, protection, and participation, not through dramatic events, but through persistent neglect, inequality, and exclusion. While it often lacks the immediacy of direct violence, its effects are no less damaging. Understanding structural violence is crucial to dealing with the foundations of child vulnerability and to building more just, equitable societies where all children can thrive.

Cultural Violence Against Children

The dominating tendencies of power created from certain cultural practices foster a kind of dominance that propels violence against young people and other minorities with socially constructed identities. This focuses on how cultural practices function to legitimize violence either directly or indirectly through society's institutionalized, systemic structure (Galtung, 1990). According to Galtung (1990), cultural violence is defined as “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art . . . that can be used to justify or legitimate direct or structural violence” (p. 291). This means that cultural violence operates within the symbolic realm of human life, serving to justify other types of violence. While it may not cause harm directly, it supports systems that enable violence to thrive unchallenged. All around the world, strong cultural norms, values, and social expectations influence how children are viewed, frequently leading to situations where their rights are

overlooked or compromised. Thus, cultural violence against children is a subtle but deeply influential force that legitimizes both structural and direct violence. These cultural narratives, often embedded in social norms, media, and institutional ideologies, form a psychological infrastructure that sustains systems of oppression (Abdullah, et al., 2022). Cultural violence doesn't just allow violence to happen, but it also makes violence appear acceptable, justified, and at times even righteous (Wessells & Kostelny, 2021).

Globally, beliefs grounded in nationalism, racism, patriarchy, or religion have historically been employed to rationalize violence against children. Throughout history, prevailing political and religious narratives have often accepted the marginalization of specific groups of children, depriving them of essential protections and rights (Leavitt, 2018). For example, the coerced assimilation of Indigenous children into boarding schools in North America and Australia was presented as a civilizing effort, even though it caused significant psychological and physical harm to those children. In a similar vein, colonial ideologies categorized whole populations as inferior or uncivilized, which facilitated not just exploitation but also the establishment of practices that compromised the well-being of native children for generations (Leavitt, 2018). Contemporary expressions of cultural violence have evolved alongside advancements in technology and various platforms. The internet has emerged as a significant platform where children face exploitation and abuse. The normalization of online child sexual exploitation, which includes pornography, sextortion, and livestreamed abuse, is becoming more prevalent in specific online communities (Wahl, 2023). These online communities employ coded language and seek social approval to rationalize their behaviors, shaping a new digital landscape where the harm of children is not only accepted but celebrated. The issue is exacerbated by cultural

narratives that objectify and sexualize children, which are perpetuated through entertainment media, social media, and pornography (Ligiero et al., 2019).

Also, social norms, especially those related to gender roles, represent some of the most widespread forms of cultural violence. In numerous regions globally, patriarchal structures place men at the forefront of families and as moral leaders, which strengthens the notion that using violence is an acceptable means of maintaining control (Lomazzi, 2023). These norms are absorbed from a young age, shaping family dynamics, educational methods, and societal expectations for children. In many countries, the acceptance of corporal punishment continues to be significant, even as more evidence emerges highlighting its detrimental effects. Many parents and educators hold the view that physical discipline plays a crucial role in a child's moral development, a perspective that is often supported by longstanding traditions and societal expectations (Bicchieri & Mercier, 2014). Also, societal expectations surrounding girls' behavior and sexuality are commonly embraced and frequently influence choices made by families and communities. Child marriage is a practice that persists, often masked as a means of protection and social stability. There are some families that opt to wed their girls off at an early age in order to uphold family honor or alleviate financial pressures, despite the risks of domestic abuse, early childbirth, and interrupted education that girls may face as a result (Psaki et al., 2021).

Cultural violence also manifests in beliefs about childhood productivity, especially in the context of child labor. In many African communities, work is viewed as a core part of socialization. Children are expected to contribute to household survival and family economies from a young age. This norm is particularly prevalent in agrarian and fishing communities where child labor is normalized under the logic of apprenticeship or responsibility (Adonteng-Kissi, 2021). However, what is framed as traditional training often leads to exploitation, especially

when children are removed from school, subjected to dangerous environments, or denied leisure and rest. Cultural acceptance of child labor masks the harm and rights violations involved, particularly when formal education is devalued or inaccessible. In Ghana's fishing and mining sectors, children are often engaged in hazardous labor under conditions justified by cultural understandings of work and responsibility (Abdullah, et al., 2022; Johansen, 2006). Along Lake Volta, children are used for tasks such as paddling boats, diving to untangle nets, or carrying heavy loads, all considered appropriate because they are seen as part of learning a trade or contributing to the family. However, many of these children suffer injuries, chronic fatigue, and long-term developmental harm (Clerk, 2011). The normalization of their labor within community expectations obscures the exploitative nature of these tasks and reinforces a broader cultural violence that denies children their right to safety and education.

In education and public discourse, colonial legacies continue to influence cultural attitudes (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018). School curricula often prioritize European histories and languages, while Ghanaian languages, oral traditions, and local histories are marginalized. This not only devalues children's cultural identity but contributes to an internalized sense of inferiority. Children who speak indigenous languages may be mocked or punished in school, and English fluency is often seen as a marker of intelligence. These messages subtly convey that local culture is backward or secondary, further perpetuating the psychological dimensions of cultural violence (Bonney, 2021).

In sum, cultural violence against children in Ghana, as in many other parts of Africa and the world, manifests through deeply rooted beliefs, norms, and traditions that normalize harm. These cultural narratives sustain practices that deny children their rights and well-being while making reform difficult by covering violence in the language of morality, tradition, or survival.

These cultural narratives render certain forms of child suffering as normal or inevitable, thereby blunting social and political urgency for intervention. Violence shapes children's worldviews, reinforcing cycles of conflict and exclusion across generations. This intergenerational transmission underscores the importance of framing violence against children not only as a social or public health issue but as a central concern of peace and conflict studies (McEvoy-Levy, 2006; M. G. Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). Having explored the different forms of violence that affect children particularly as they relate to child labor, it becomes necessary to consider the frameworks through which responses to such violence are conceived and implemented. The next section provides a review of peacebuilding approaches, tracing the evolution from liberal paradigms to more localized, community-based strategies. This provides the theoretical grounding for understanding child labor advocacy as a form of grassroots peacebuilding in Ghana.

Peacebuilding Approaches: Evolving from the Liberal to the Local

Peacebuilding has emerged as a central framework in both academic and policy discourses aimed at addressing the root causes of violence and promoting sustainable societal transformation. Traditionally shaped by liberal paradigms, peacebuilding efforts have emphasized state-building, democratic governance, and market-oriented reforms. However, critiques of the liberal peace have led to calls in favor of approaches that are responsive to specific local contexts and place emphasis on community-driven priorities participation, social justice, and community agency. Understanding the efforts of community-based actors in addressing child labor and violence requires a broader analytical framework, one that moves beyond technocratic or purely developmental interpretations. Peace and Conflict Studies offers such a lens, particularly through its evolving theories of peacebuilding. While earlier paradigms

have focused on liberal peacebuilding frameworks driven by international actors, emerging scholarship emphasizes critical and emancipatory approaches rooted in local agency (Byrne, 2023). In this section, I examine five key areas: understanding peacebuilding, liberal peacebuilding, critical and emancipatory peacebuilding, community-based approaches to child protection, and the local turn in child labor eradication efforts in Ghana.

Understanding Peacebuilding

The notion of building peace evolved after the Second World War, when external assistance was directed toward war-torn Europe. However, according to Ryan (2013), it became more popularized in the 1990s with Boutros-Ghali's "*An Agenda for Peace*" during his tenure as the UN Secretary-General. He saw peacebuilding as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse into conflict" (Ryan, 2013, p. 27). Building peace entails a wide variety of efforts, steps, and actions aimed at avoiding, minimizing, and reforming conflicts and creating institutions, attitudes, and connections that support long-term peace and development. Murithi (2006) explains peacebuilding is a strategy designed to enhance the capacity of communities to work towards achieving lasting harmony and stability. It involves tackling the root causes of conflict, curbing various forms of violence, and encouraging reconciliation and peaceful coexistence grounded in respect for human rights and the pursuit of social, economic, and political justice (Murithi, 2006). From this perspective, peacebuilding embodies a broad range of actions and initiatives designed to eliminate both overt physical violence and the more hidden forms of structural or systemic harm (Aubyn, 2020). Essentially, addressing human rights violations is a critical aspect of the peacebuilding process. Ignoring human rights violations can lead to the perpetuation of conflict and undermine efforts to attain sustainable peace. Therefore, it is essential for peacebuilding efforts to prioritize

addressing human rights violations (Bell, 2013, p. 249). To attain lasting peace, it is essential to tackle these human rights violations and establish mechanisms to regulate them and prevent future occurrences.

In this context, child labor eradication efforts or advocacy emerges as a critical component of peacebuilding. Child labor is not merely an economic issue; it is deeply interwoven with the social, political, and economic fabric of communities. The advocacy for child labor eradication is intrinsically linked to the foundational tenets of peacebuilding, as it endeavors to establish conditions in which children can flourish, devoid of exploitation and harm. This advocacy encompasses the promotion of educational access, the prevention of child labor driven by economic imperatives, and the cultivation of resilience within communities. Advocacy efforts that support children and their families are vital in shaping social norms that uphold the value of children's rights and promote their overall well-being, ultimately strengthening the structures of peace (Moshe, 2001). The connection of child labor advocacy and peacebuilding is evident in the acknowledgment that child labor frequently reflects underlying societal problems, such as poverty, inequality, and inadequate access to education (Issaka et al., 2021).

Research show that poverty is a primary catalyst for child labor, forcing families to depend on their children's earnings for survival (Takyi, 2014). By tackling these economic inequalities through advocacy and policy reform, child labor advocates play a crucial role in the overarching peacebuilding framework, as the alleviation of poverty has the potential to diminish the circumstances that give rise to conflict (UNICEF, 2021). In this vein, advocates who work to eliminate child labor are peacebuilders because they aim to protect the rights and well-being of children vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and violence. Child labor advocacy acts as a vital

mechanism for peacebuilding, tackling human rights violations that, if left unchallenged, can lead to the perpetuation of conflict. By prioritizing the protection and empowerment of children, advocates play a vital role in fostering sustainable peace and promoting social justice within their communities (UNICEF, 2021).

Liberal Peacebuilding

The concept of liberal peacebuilding posits that enduring peace can be attained through the application of liberal democratic governance, the promotion of market economies, and the upholding of human rights (Adhikari, 2018; Tanabe, 2017). This assertion contends that these liberal democratic structures are fundamental for the establishment of stable and peaceful societies. According to Selby (2013), a top-down approach is a key feature of this model, where external entities such as international organizations (e.g., the UN), NGOs, and donor countries play a major role in shaping the implementation of peacebuilding projects. This frequently involves the introduction of Western governance and economic frameworks into post-conflict nations (Visoka & Richmond, 2016). The top-down nature stems from the external imposition of liberal democratic values, market-based economic policies, and institutional structures, often without significant input or ownership from the affected communities. This can result in a disconnect between international peacebuilding objectives and the lived realities of local populations (Paffenholz, 2021; Selby, 2013). The framework of liberal peacebuilding is predicated on the notion that the principles and practices of liberal democracy are universally relevant and can be effectively applied across many cultural and political contexts (Juichiro Tanabe, 2017; Selby, 2013). This belief suggests that Western models can be effectively implemented in any context, regardless of the specific historical, cultural, economic, political, or social circumstances of the society in question.

Liberalism's commitment to liberty and equal representation (Doyle, 2008) is not fully realized in liberal peacebuilding, which tends to prioritize civil and political rights while neglecting crucial cultural and socio-economic rights (Cahill-Ripley, 2016; Caspersen, 2019). Liberal peacebuilding emphasizes a state-focused approach, prioritizing the consolidation and reinforcement of governmental institutions. Since the 1990s, this approach has been adopted by international organizations and driven by peace and conflict experts (Goetschel & Hagmann, 2009). It is mirrored in UN interventions, donor state funding, and the participation of external actors (Muvingi, 2016). Although these entities provide essential support to post-conflict and transitional countries through funding, election monitoring, and policy influence (Paris, 1997) they often undermine community-based strategies. Critics argue that this state-centric model overlooks human security frameworks that emphasize local knowledge, empower communities, and address their specific concerns (Cahill-Ripley, 2016).

The liberal peacebuilding model operates at a broad, structural level, focusing on top-down strategies that tends to marginalize grassroots populations. In post-conflict and transitional countries, it employs a top-down methodology (Gready & Robins, 2017) that promotes neoliberal reforms under the assumption that free markets will reduce violence and foster democracy (Muvingi, 2016). For instance, some researchers contend that numerous transitional justice efforts are influenced by the priorities of donors, often without input from local communities (Muvingi, 2016). As a result, the actual needs of victims are frequently overlooked or idealized during the execution of these initiatives (Robins, 2011).

Critics of liberal peacebuilding often dismiss its claims of universality and standardization (Richmond, 2011; Thiessen, 2011). The critique highlights that liberal peacebuilding frequently entails the imposition of Western governance frameworks and

economic models onto varied societies without sufficiently taking into account the compatibility of these reforms with local values and traditions (Newman et al., 2009; Selby, 2013). The failure of this standardization to acknowledge the distinct dynamics and complexities inherent in each post-conflict society results in outcomes that are not only ineffective but may also prove detrimental. For example, the efficacy of certain approaches may vary significantly across different nations, influenced by distinct cultural norms, historical contexts, and social frameworks (Heathershaw, 2008). The emphasis on a standard approach within liberal peacebuilding frequently overlooks the intricate local dynamics that influence both conflict and peace processes (Paffenholz, 2021). Every society is characterized by distinct relationships, power dynamics, and cultural practices that shape the pathways to achieving peace. Neglecting these factors may lead to interventions that fail to connect with local communities, thereby jeopardizing the credibility and long-term viability of peace initiatives (Newman et al., 2009). The ramifications of this universalist viewpoint can be substantial. This situation may result in opposition from local communities that perceive their voices and needs as being disregarded. Further, neglecting to interact with local and indigenous ways of resolving conflicts and building peace may also make existing differences and hostilities worse instead of promoting real peace and reconciliation (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2011).

In the context of eradicating child labor in Ghana, this critique is particularly relevant. Frameworks such as the ILO Minimum Age Convention (C138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) provide critical foundations for global standards, but their implementation in Ghana reveals some limitations like failure to fully address the socio-economic and cultural drivers of child labor. These frameworks, while important for addressing child labor on an international scale, are often developed with minimal input from local

communities and are imposed as top-down solutions. As a result, they may overlook the nuanced realities of rural and impoverished communities in Ghana, where child labor persists due to socio-economic pressures, cultural norms, and systemic poverty. For instance, international organizations like UNICEF and the ILO have played a crucial role in promoting policies aimed at combating child labor in Ghana. However, their strategies frequently focus on enforcing international mandates without sufficiently addressing local issues. This is particularly evident in the implementation of laws based on C138 and C182, which criminalize specific forms of child labor but do not offer adequate support for families that depend on their children's labor for survival.

As a result, these policies have a limited effect in areas where poverty, lack of access to education, and traditional practices continue to be major contributors to child labor. The top-down strategy often favors the viewpoints and interests of external stakeholders above those of local communities (Paffenholz, 2021; Porter, 2003). Consequently, these initiatives inadvertently marginalize the lived experiences, values, and priorities of affected communities, leading to resistance or limited adoption at the grassroots level. This may lead to peacebuilding programs that lack a foundation in the lived experiences, values, and priorities of the people impacted by conflict. Consequently, local voices are frequently sidelined or omitted from the decision-making processes that influence their futures (Newman et al., 2009). Thus the prevailing narrative of liberal peacebuilding has functioned as a hegemonic power, marginalizing local and indigenous knowledge and rejecting local demands, eventually leading to what is characterized as superficial liminal peace (Mac Ginty, 2018).

Also, the fundamental beliefs regarding the definition of liberal peace have come under scrutiny. For instance, the notion of democracy commonly used in peacebuilding discourse is

vague, as achieving democracy at the highest levels does not ensure equality for individuals lower down the social hierarchy (Sorensen, 2018). In essence, even if democracy is established at the top, it may not reach those at the bottom due to socio-economic barriers and structural inequalities that impede egalitarian advancements (Sorensen, 2018). Additionally, some researchers argue that there is insufficient evidence to support the assertion that democracy effectively reduces violence (Spiro, 1994). Other scholars in PACS have contended that merely having common interests is insufficient to ensure that democracies do not engage in warfare. For instance, Rosato (2003) challenged the rationale of democratic peace theory by asserting that liberal principles are frequently violated by democracies. He pointed to historical instances of U.S. intervention in various democratic nations as evidence against the validity of this theory, noting that “all the regimes that the United States sought to undermine were democratic. In the cases of Guatemala, British Guiana, Brazil, and Chile, democratic processes were relatively well established” (Rosato, 2003, p. 591). This suggests that while democratic states may maintain peace with one another, it is not necessarily due to their democratic nature. Instead, the cooperation among these democracies could stem from their shared capitalist objectives; affluent countries with aligned economic interests might refrain from conflict, not because of their democratic systems, but due to their financial interdependencies (Gartzke, 2007).

Liberal peacebuilding has remained broadly useful, even in non-war contexts, to address poverty and promote governance reforms (Mac Ginty, 2010). However, it has faced significant criticism for its inconsistencies and failure to tackle structural inequalities (Belloni, 2012; Sorensen, 2018). In fragile states with existing social tensions, neoliberal strategies may deepen disparities (Richmond, 2014). Moreover, the top-down nature of liberal peacebuilding often overlooks local cultures, practices, and capacities for change (Lederach, 1995). As a result,

scholars have advocated for more inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2018; Paffenholz, 2021; Richmond, 2014; Visoka & Richmond, 2016).

In eradicating child labor in Ghana, it becomes essential to recognize how liberal peacebuilding ideals shape the strategies and frameworks employed by community advocates. While many advocacy initiatives are grounded in international human rights standards and legal reforms promoted by the liberal peace model, the effectiveness of these interventions often hinges on how well they are adapted to the local socio-economic and cultural contexts. The next section critically explores how these tensions between global norms and local realities have given rise to a body of scholarship emphasizing critical and emancipatory peacebuilding approaches, particularly the "local turn" in peacebuilding conversation.

Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding

The advent of Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding (CEP) signifies a notable transformation in the field of PACS, offering a lens that rigorously scrutinizes the liberal and neoliberal paradigms that have conventionally prevailed in peacebuilding discussions. CEP offers a critical examination of these approaches, asserting that they exhibit discriminatory and biased tendencies predominantly catering for Western interests, exhibit elitism, obstruct social justice, and frequently overlook local settings in peacebuilding initiatives (Thiessen, 2011). Critical and emancipatory peacebuilding stresses grassroots peace efforts rooted in the daily routines, cultural norms, and practices of local communities. Rather than relying on externally imposed norms and frameworks, this approach centers on Indigenous and restorative processes led by local actors who foster peace from within their own contexts (Lee & Özerdem, 2015; Thiessen, 2011).

A fundamental tenet of CEP is the emphasis on grassroots approaches that empower local voices in the peacemaking process. Thiessen (2011) emphasizes the significance of liberating and promoting the pursuit of justice for all parties including both state and non-state actors (p. 118). This approach is deeply rooted in the social structure, addressing the specific necessities and desires of local populations, and stands in opposition to the centralized nature of neoliberal peacebuilding, which often treats individuals merely as objects or subjects of peace (Thiessen, 2011). By considering local needs, goals, and solutions, peace processes are more likely to achieve long-term viability and responsiveness (Lee & Özerdem, 2015). Therefore, creating space for local participation is essential as cultural knowledge and locally grounded understanding play a vital role in fostering mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and tolerance across different cultural and religious groups (Byrne, 2023).

In discussions about peacebuilding, the term "local" usually points to approaches that arise from within communities and highlight grassroots involvement, standing in stark contrast to the externally imposed, top-down strategies commonly linked to liberal peacebuilding models (Boege & Rinck, 2019). This conceptual framing has been examined through various avenues within peacebuilding scholarship. Several researchers have explored the intrinsic limitations and challenges of depending on local mechanisms (De Coning, 2016), while others have concentrated on the dynamics of governmental reform processes in specific contexts (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2018a). Richmond (2014) challenges prevailing peacebuilding paradigms for their tendency to weaken the social and political structures already present in communities. He contends that these externally imposed strategies interfere with indigenous methods of managing authority, identity, resources, and legitimacy, and do not promote contextually suitable, locally driven processes. In light of these critiques, scholars like Cahill-Ripley (2016)

emphasize the need for peacebuilding approaches that are better aligned with local contexts and that focus on the well-being and empowerment of the communities they aim to assist.

The Local Turn in Peacebuilding

Emerging as an alternative to the challenges posed by externally led peacebuilding efforts, international actors have increasingly involved local participants to enhance legitimacy and present a localized image (Mac Ginty, 2018). However, this engagement is often symbolic, as real control typically remains with external agencies. Local actors are frequently romanticized or assigned marginal roles, limiting their influence. Additionally, when service delivery is outsourced to civil society and local governments, it can create divisions among communities while the central government remains disengaged. Despite these challenges, Mac Ginty emphasizes that local communities possess the capacity to negotiate, innovate, and resist through their adaptive networks and practices, viewing the local not as a fixed space but as a dynamic process (Mac Ginty, 2018).

The field of peacebuilding possesses a unique historical trajectory concerning the conceptualization of the “local,” which can be categorized into two separate phases or “local turns in peacebuilding” (Paffenholz 2015a, p. 858). The early stages of 1990, marked the beginning of the first local focus on peacebuilding. The end of the Cold War ushered in a period marked by heightened optimism concerning the end of armed conflicts, especially in light of the 1992 United Nations Agenda for Peace, which conceptualized peacebuilding as an external intervention aimed at aiding nations in their post-conflict reconstruction efforts (Paffenholz, 2015b). Nonetheless, the subsequent disillusionment, especially evident in instances such as Rwanda and Somalia, demonstrated the shortcomings of international peacebuilding initiatives. The failures were attributed to the excessive centralization of peace efforts or the disregard of the

local context (Paffenholz, 2015b). This prompted a shift in the discourse surrounding research and practice, taking two distinct directions. Firstly, conflict management scholars started to investigate more effective approaches to peacebuilding and state building (de Soto & Del Castillo, 1994). Secondly, the newly founded conflict transformation school at the time, prominently represented by John Paul Lederach, proposed an alternative conceptual framework for peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997). This approach stressed the essence of enabling local populations as the principal designers of peacebuilding rather than relying on externally formulated and implemented peace initiatives. Consequently, a fresh wave of global peace missions began to arise in the early 2000s, adopting a strategy that placed greater emphasis on the significance of developing local capabilities and ownership (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2018; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). The primary premise underlying this transition was that eventually sustainable peace could only be achieved by local stakeholders operating within the conflict-affected context of their own societies (Paffenholz et al., 2023).

The subsequent local shift in peacebuilding emerged as a critique of the liberal peacebuilding framework, catalyzed by the shortcomings of international liberal peacebuilding, particularly evident in the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Paffenholz, 2015b). During the second local shift, researchers pointed out that local actors resisted the extremes of the liberal peacebuilding initiative (Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). Initial works during this time encountered criticism for depicting an overly simple dichotomy between local and international players, frequently idealizing the notion of the "local" (Paffenholz 2015a).

Some scholars have noted that international organizations often promote the notion of local ownership by incorporating local actors into their peacebuilding efforts, operating under the assumption that such collaborations would enhance legitimacy and ensure long-term impact

(Chandler, 2017). However, the practical application of this local ownership ideal has proven problematic. Critics, including Paffenholz (2015), have pointed out that these initiatives are frequently constrained by structural limitations. Although they may appear to empower local participation, many such projects remain heavily influenced or outright directed by international donors and institutions, primarily from the Global North, thereby undermining the authenticity of the local involvement they claim to support (Mac Ginty, 2015).

The local turn has now become a prominent theme in the mainstream discussions of international organizations and NGOs. The notion that expanding conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts beyond a narrow agreement among elites while considering the local context and concerns of the broader public has gained widespread acceptance (Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). According to Mac Ginty (2014), daily peace is influenced by different viewpoints and is defined by the actions and standards followed by common individuals in divided societies (Mac Ginty, 2014). Local peacebuilding is seen as emancipatory because of its defiance of Western-centric methodologies, empowerment of local actors, prioritization of local necessities, facilitation of local identity expression, and inclusion of marginalized voices. It fosters an understanding of the specific circumstances, ability to take action, long-term viability, inclusiveness, and fairness while acknowledging the expertise and goals of local communities (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This method offers the potential for liberation by recognizing and appreciating unique local characteristics and empowering local individuals or groups (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2018; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Nevertheless, the idea of "the local" has been employed in a vague manner and lacks precision in terms of its definition, extent, and the individuals or groups involved (Piccolino, 2019). It is commonly used to distinguish between foreign interventionists and local players

inside the intervening nation. The emphasis on prioritizing the local level has been criticized for its lack of clarity in theory and concept, as well as the unrealistic expectations placed on the capabilities of local actors. It is possible to lose sight of the larger structural, political, and economic forces that determine peacebuilding and development if one places an inordinate amount of emphasis on the local level. In order to achieve sustainable outcomes, it is crucial to acknowledge the interconnectedness of local, national, and global factors, notwithstanding the significant role played by local communities (Piccolino, 2019).

Scholars such as Mac Ginty (2010) and Björkdahl and Gusic (2015) have emphasized the significance of hybridity, advocating for a reconceptualization of the local not as a fixed actor or position, but as a dynamic and layered intersection of social relations (Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). Further evidence has been gathered through case study research, elucidating the nuanced characteristics of "the local" and complicating the simplistic dichotomy of the "good local" versus the "bad international" (Paffenholz et al., 2023, p. 355). Nevertheless, research has also illuminated specific instances that exemplify the mechanisms of international dominance within the context of peacebuilding. Autesserre (2010) argues that peacebuilding practitioners displayed excessive confidence in the notion that peace will naturally diffuse from the national level to effectively settle local disputes around property and citizenship in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which accounted for the failure of the international peace intervention. The local disputes, which were especially widespread in the Eastern Congo, were actively contributing to the escalation of severe violence (Autesserre, 2010). Although there were signs of improvement in the peace process at the national level, such as the successful election of a president in Kinshasa, violence at the local level continued unabated. Scholars such as Autesserre aimed to improve the efficiency of intervention without questioning its legitimacy.

Conversely, other scholars argue in favor of the local turn as a more profound criticism of foreign peacebuilding operations (Paffenholz, 2015b). In the realm of international cooperation, there exists a significant agreement regarding the efficacy and normative desirability of localization (Paffenholz et al., 2023). However, this is accompanied by substantial ambiguity concerning the criteria for determining who is considered local and the implications of the localization process (Piccolino, 2019). The term “local” is often used to refer to grassroots actors or community-based organizations, encompassing individuals and groups operating at the community level, while at other times it refers to actors at the national level. The concept of the "local" also includes mid-tier organizations, such as community-based groups and NGOs operating in major cities across the Global South. Recently, there has been a growing distinction between country-wide and more localized, regional spaces to better reflect the diversity and complexity of local contexts beyond central urban areas. These areas are not exclusively grassroots communities; they also encompass regional administrative and power centers. For the purpose of this study, the local represents grassroots individuals who live in a common District discharging their advocacy at the community level.

This overview may not encompass all the varied interpretations of the term “local” in peacebuilding discussions, but it adds to the larger dialogue by emphasizing the importance of being sensitive to context and the challenges faced when trying to implement peace initiatives in different environments. Importantly, the local viewpoint highlights the significance of culture, geography, indigenous conflict resolution techniques, and acknowledges community members as capable individuals who can spearhead peacebuilding initiatives in their own settings (Lederach, 1995).

Community-Based Approaches to Child Protection

Community-based approaches to child protection have emerged as essential alternatives and complements to state-led systems, particularly in settings where formal mechanisms are limited, inaccessible, or culturally misaligned. These approaches position the community not only as a site of risk but as a critical resource in efforts to stop and deal with child-related violence (Wessells, 2015). Grounded in local norms, relationships, and institutions, they reflect a shift from top-down, expert-driven interventions to participatory, bottom-up models that emphasize ownership, inclusivity, and sustainability. They recognize that children's safety is not solely a legal or institutional responsibility but a relational and social endeavor, embedded within familial, cultural, and communal ties. A key criticism of traditional child protection systems is their dependence on formal, institutional responses that frequently miss the mark in terms of cultural relevance and community involvement. Wessells (2015) argues that these systems often function through externally imposed structures, like Child Welfare Committees, which can result in low community ownership and limited effectiveness. Community-driven, bottom-up approaches enhance collaboration with formal systems, strengthen internal capacity, and align more effectively with local values and realities (Wessells, 2015). This community-driven approach provides more sustainable avenues by fostering social change from within, rather than relying on solutions imposed from the outside.

These models have gained popularity worldwide because of their success in preventing and addressing child maltreatment, especially in areas with limited resources or in post-conflict situations. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of these approaches in diverse contexts. For instance, the "Strong Communities for Children" initiative in South Carolina demonstrated how neighborhood-based outreach can shift community norms and reduce child maltreatment by

mobilizing residents to take collective responsibility for child well-being (Melton, 2022). In a similar vein, Kostelny et al. (2019) documented a bottom-up, participatory model where community members took leading roles in identifying risks, setting priorities, and designing interventions which resulted in high levels of local ownership and contextual relevance in Kenya (Kostelny et al., 2019). Also, a compelling example is the Girl Power Programme in Chibombo District, Zambia, which applied ubuntu-inspired mechanisms to address school-related gender-based violence. Chilwalo found that community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) were not only widely trusted by local populations but were also deeply rooted in cultural norms and thus more sustainable. These local structures were instrumental in preventing violence and ensuring community accountability, particularly because they resonated with indigenous values and social cohesion (Chilwalo, 2020).

In addition, findings from Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya, show that CBCPMs are effectively addressing various types of abuse such as child labor, substance abuse, early marriage, and FGM. Kivuva et al. (2021) highlighted that more than 80 percent of community members recognized child maltreatment and pointed out that local structures, despite being hindered by weak policy enforcement and fragmentation within justice and social systems, were crucial for safeguarding children. It is suggested to enhance enforcement mechanisms and increase community involvement to achieve improved results (Kivuva et al., 2021). In Tanzania, a study of four World Vision projects showed that both formal and informal CBCPMs were active but lacked effectiveness due to limited coordination, training, and oversight. Gwanyemba et al. (2016) suggest that empowering community duty-bearers, like social workers and local leaders, could dramatically improve the protective environment for children in rural areas (Gwanyemba et al., 2016).

Models for child protection that are rooted in community engagement provide significant structural advantages through the utilization of local social networks and resources. Jack (2004) emphasizes the critical role of social support systems and community cohesion in effectively reducing risk and enhancing outcomes for children in environments characterized by structural inequality (Jack, 2004). A systematic review conducted by Lo and Cho (2021) identified four essential components common to successful community interventions: the engagement of community members, collaboration with local institutions, multidisciplinary teamwork, and a responsiveness to the specific needs of the community (Lo & Cho, 2021).

Significantly, approaches rooted in the community not only address current issues but also engage in proactive measures. DiLorenzo et al. (2013) assert that these models are congruent with a public health framework, as they provide support to families and individuals prior to the need for formal interventions, ultimately leading to a decrease in the occurrence of maltreatment (DiLorenzo et al., 2013). This aspect holds particular significance in rural and under-resourced environments, where timely intervention can avert escalation and diminish dependence on strained formal systems. At a broader theoretical level, Wessells (2016) emphasizes that community-driven child protection efforts should be strengths-based, building on local resilience, traditions, and social cohesion rather than viewing communities through a deficit lens. Such an approach not only empowers communities but also respects their agency in determining what child well-being means in their specific context (Wessells, 2016).

In Ghana, the importance of community-based models stands out clearly. Clan and family heads often take the lead in using informal methods to tackle child maltreatment, help with kinship placements, and promote community education on child safety. National frameworks like the Child and Family Welfare Policy give legitimacy to these traditional roles. However,

studies reveal gaps in the monitoring and outcome measurement of these community interventions by formal actors. According to Abdullah (2024), despite professional training efforts, many community leaders operate without structured oversight or evidence-based evaluation, which weakens overall system accountability (Abdullah, 2024).

Religious institutions play a significant role in the child protection landscape in Ghana. For instance, the Church of Pentecost has made strides in child welfare within the Winneba Municipality, a community grappling with issues like child labor, prostitution, and neglect. Kpalam (2023) critiques the Church's existing framework, arguing that its focus on spiritual salvation rather than structured safeguarding falls short in tackling the complete range of child abuse issues (Kpalam, 2023). In the Volta Region, religious leaders in Dzemeni are engaged in community awareness and offering psychosocial support to children; however, the lack of collaboration among different faiths hinders their overall effectiveness (Kpalam et al., 2024).

Culture also plays a dual role in facilitating and constraining child protection. The Ghanaian concept of Abiriwatia, grounded in collective caregiving and extended family obligations, significantly lowers the incidence of child neglect when paired with informal social controls. Abdullah et al. (2022) demonstrated how community endorsement of these collective norms strengthens social sanctions against neglectful behavior, creating a protective environment for children (Abdullah et al., 2022). However, cultural norms can also conflict with formal interventions. For example, many families in Ashanti Region prefer resolving child maltreatment cases internally, focusing on compensation and reconciliation rather than legal action, which diminishes the role of statutory agencies (Manful et al., 2024). To address the tensions between tradition and modern protection standards, initiatives such as the Nurturing Care Group (NCG) have been tested in Ghana, showing encouraging outcomes. The NCG approach was

implemented in 41 communities, utilizing behavior change techniques to educate caregivers about nonviolent discipline, stress management, and positive parenting. Forbes and colleagues (2023) discovered notable decreases in both physical and psychological punishment, illustrating the model's adaptability and relevance across various ecological settings (Forbes et al., 2023).

Despite these successes, obstacles remain in the realm of CBCPM in Ghana. Informal systems usually don't have the legal power, specialized training, or logistical resources required to handle serious abuse cases. Additionally, the integration with formal welfare services is inconsistent, leading to duplication, inefficiencies, or even conflicting results. Social workers frequently encounter challenges when conventional justice prioritizes reconciliation instead of prosecution, which can result in children remaining in unsafe situations (Manful et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, the current evidence indicates that with proper support, community-based child protection systems in Ghana and throughout Africa provide culturally relevant, cost-efficient, and inclusive methods for protecting children. Their integration into local norms and relationships boosts trust, facilitates early detection, and improves responsiveness. For optimal effectiveness, it is crucial to strategically invest in training, supervision, data systems, and legal recognition. Additionally, building partnerships between communities and national agencies can establish a hybrid model that respects both local knowledge and institutional requirements.

In a nutshell while community-based approaches may not solve every issue, they are essential in places like Ghana, where structural violence, poverty, and fragile formal systems frequently jeopardize the safety of children. When these mechanisms are combined with wider frameworks and guided by culturally responsive strategies, they can significantly aid in the elimination of violence against children, including detrimental practices such as child labor.

The Local Turn in Child Labor Eradication Efforts in Ghana

While the origins of local peacebuilding lie in post-war contexts, its principles are increasingly being applied to broader societal challenges, including issues like child labor eradication in Ghana. As a response to the perceived shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding models discussed above, child labor eradication efforts in Ghana has increasingly shifted toward community-driven approaches, emphasizing grassroots involvement, local knowledge, and cultural sensitivity (Agyemang et al., 2023; *Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour (National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour) 2023 - 2027 | ICI Cocoa Initiative*, n.d.). While international organizations and government agencies have traditionally dominated advocacy efforts, there is growing recognition that sustainable solutions require the active participation of local actors including community leaders, parents, teachers, and grassroots organizations (UNICEF, 2021). This shift aligns with what scholars refer to as the local turn in PACS (Mac Ginty, 2014, 2018; Paffenholz, 2015). Similar to how peacebuilding scholars stress the necessity of going beyond agreements among elites to include local contexts and public interests, child labor advocacy has increasingly acknowledged the importance of prioritizing grassroots voices and culturally appropriate solutions. The idea that effective advocacy should be rooted in communities instead of being dictated by external actors has gained wide acceptance among policymakers and organizations dedicated to combating child labor.

The notion of the 'local' in Ghana pertains to grassroots initiatives spearheaded by community advocates, traditional systems, and cultural practices focused on tackling structural violence, including child labor. The local turn in child labor advocacy or eradication efforts in Ghana draws on similar principles to post-war local peacebuilding by emphasizing community ownership, cultural relevance, and grassroots leadership (Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against

Child Labour - National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour 2023 - 2027 | ICI Cocoa Initiative, n.d.). The local turn to child labor advocacy in Ghana represents a vital response to the persistent challenges of child exploitation in the nation. This approach emphasizes the pivotal role that local communities and grassroots organizations play in addressing child labor, showing the importance of localized knowledge, cultural contexts, and community-driven initiatives (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2018b; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Historically, child labor has been intertwined with poverty and socio-economic hardships (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019; Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022; Issaka et al., 2021), making it a complex issue that requires more than just top-down interventions from international bodies.

Local advocacy groups have emerged as key stakeholders in the fight against child labor, as they possess an understanding of the cultural and economic dynamics that drive children into the workforce, along with the ability to engage often or interact effectively with parents and communities. According to Mac Ginty (2014), peace is shaped by everyday interactions and practices of ordinary people in divided societies, rather than solely by formal agreements between elites. This perspective is highly relevant in the Ghanaian child labor context, where grassroots advocacy efforts are redefining the standards and norms that govern child labor practices. Organizations working at the local level, such as Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), play a crucial role in shaping community attitudes toward child labor by engaging parents, religious leaders, and traditional authorities in discussions about children's rights. These committees exemplify how daily community interactions contribute to reshaping harmful practices, fostering new social norms that prioritize education and child welfare over exploitative labor. Additionally, the principle of "daily peace" in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2014) aligns with how grassroots child labor advocacy operates in Ghana. Change does not occur

solely through national policies or international legal frameworks but through the everyday actions of parents, educators, and local leaders who enforce and reinforce child protection norms. Initiatives such as the "My Right, My Future" campaign reflect this approach by integrating child labor advocacy into daily community activities such as storytelling, drama performances, and participatory discussions. These culturally resonant strategies ensure that awareness about child labor is not perceived as an external imposition but rather as an organic, community-driven movement (Agyemang et al., 2023).

To crown it all, while local peacebuilding has significantly enriched PACS by challenging the top-down impositions of liberal models, its application remains largely focused on post-war contexts. The discourse has not sufficiently addressed how the principles of local peacebuilding can be adapted to contexts like child labor eradication efforts (advocacy) in Ghana, where structural or hidden institutional and systemic violence (Galtung, 1990) rather than overt conflict is the primary challenge. This gap in the literature also informs the central focus of this study: understanding the experiences of community advocates as key actors in locally driven efforts to combat child labor. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the voices and experiences of community advocates in Ghana, who are essential in connecting international frameworks with local situations. A gap exists in how little is understood about how local peacebuilding frameworks operate in non-conflict environments, where ongoing issues like poverty, inequality, and harmful cultural practices continue to cause structural and direct violence. While local peacebuilding efforts after war typically focus on rebuilding societal structures and addressing the immediate consequences of conflict, child labor advocacy in Ghana faces a different yet equally complicated situation. In this context, community advocates aim to change, rather than simply rebuild, the existing systems and practices that allow child labor to

persist. This raises important questions about how grassroots efforts can overcome deep-rooted obstacles, utilize community resources, and encourage cultural change in settings influenced not by post-war recovery, but by long-standing socio-economic problems. Finally, this study draws on the principles of local peacebuilding to argue that community advocacy, as a form of locally driven activism, represents a vital dimension of peacebuilding. While local peacebuilding emphasizes the importance of local agency and participation, it often does so at the level of communities or institutions without adequately examining the individuals who lead these efforts. By focusing on the experiences of community advocates, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of grassroots child labor advocacy in Ghana. As such, the study further scrutinizes the assumptions made on behalf of grassroots peacebuilding in the discourse on local turn, particularly in the ways that grassroots peacebuilding has come to be offered as an alternative to the liberal model.

Conclusion

This literature review chapter has critically engaged with key bodies of scholarship on violence against children, liberal peacebuilding, and the local turn in peacebuilding. It has shown that violence against children is not simply an individual or episodic issue but is deeply rooted in structural and cultural conditions. Liberal peace frameworks have contributed valuable norms and legal tools but often fall short in addressing these deeper dynamics. The local turn offers a corrective, emphasizing context, agency, and complexity, but must itself be applied critically. The present study builds on these debates by investigating how community child labor advocates in Ghana navigate these intersecting frameworks. It seeks to understand not only what they do but how they make sense of their roles, adapt global norms, and enact change within the constraints and possibilities of their sociopolitical environment. In doing so, it intend to add to

ongoing conversations in PACS about the realities, challenges, and transformative potential of locally grounded peacebuilding. Building on these insights, the next chapter outlines the methodological approach employed in this study, detailing how the lived experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana were explored and interpreted to contribute to the broader understanding of local peacebuilding practice.

Chapter Three

Researching Child Labor Advocacy in Ghana: A Methodological Perspective

Introduction

This chapter provides insights into the research methodology and the research design implemented in the study, which aimed to explore the experiences of community activists and advocates, referred to as peacebuilders, in their efforts to combat child labor practices in Ghana. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the research design, outlining the framework of narrative inquiry that guided the study. This framework was chosen for its potential to capture the rich, personal stories and experiences of the participants, allowing for a deeper understanding of their roles and challenges in addressing child labor. Next, the chapter delves into the data collection procedures, highlighting the specific study location, the characteristics of the participants, and the recruitment process. It describes how participants were selected to ensure a diverse representation of voices, as well as the various data sources utilized to generate comprehensive information. The chapter also outlines the data analysis procedures employed to interpret the collected information, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences. Ethical considerations are addressed, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the confidentiality and well-being of the participants throughout the research process. Further, the chapter discusses the validity and credibility of the study, detailing the measures taken to ensure that the findings are trustworthy and reliable. It also reflects on the challenges encountered during the research, including methodological difficulties and the limitations and benefits inherent in studying child labor advocacy through the lens of adult community advocates.

Research Design

The primary questions guiding this study include: What are the experiences of community peacebuilders advocating against child labor practices in Ghana? What can we learn from their experiences about child labor in Ghana and ways to eradicate the practice? What do the efforts of these advocates reveal about grassroots peacebuilding, often described as the local turn in peacebuilding? To address these questions requires an appropriate methodology to generate reliable and valid data. In this study, I employed a qualitative narrative research design to explore the experiences of community advocates working to combat child labor practices in Ghana. The choice of a qualitative approach was driven by the need to gain a deep understanding of the complex social phenomena surrounding child labor and the multifaceted roles that these advocates play in addressing this critical issue. A qualitative narrative research design was helpful in this study because it enabled the participants to share their views, opinions, and experiences regarding their efforts in eradicating Ghana's child labor (Saldana, 2014). Child labor advocates in various communities were able to share their experiences, eliciting the motivations, strategies, and challenges they encountered in their quest to champion the welfare of children in their communities. Qualitative research is particularly effective in capturing the richness of human experiences, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the motivations, challenges, and contextual factors that influence the work of these individuals. This approach is valuable because it allows participants' voices to be heard (Wilson, 2020).

The qualitative design was implemented through a series of semi-structured interviews (explained in detail shortly) with community advocates. This method was chosen for its flexibility, enabling participants to share their narratives in their own words while also allowing me to probe deeper into specific areas of interest. Through the utilization of open-ended

questions, I sought to foster a conversational environment that prompted participants to articulate their thoughts and emotions about their experiences addressing child labor. This method not only enabled the acquisition of comprehensive and detailed information yet also permitted advocates to express their viewpoints, therefore emphasizing their agency in the advocacy process. Also, the qualitative research design enabled a comprehensive thematic analysis of the data, which facilitated the identification of significant themes and patterns that emerged from the narratives provided by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This methodical examination allowed for the distillation of intricate information into organized categories, thereby illuminating the similarities and distinctions in the experiences of the advocates.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodological framework that highlights the stories individuals recount about their lives and experiences (Clandinin, 2022). As a method of inquiry, I employed a narrative research approach to explore the experiences of community activists and advocates in Ghana. This method is especially effective at explaining the complexities of human experiences since it facilitates the examination of personal narratives within their social, cultural, and historical contexts. Through the application of narrative inquiry, the objective was to shed light on the complex and varied experiences of community advocates, thereby offering a deeper understanding of their motivations, the challenges they encounter, and the impact of their efforts on the communities they serve. This approach acknowledges that individuals create meaning through storytelling, facilitating greater understanding of how activists interpret their roles and the importance of their contributions to social transformation.

According to Clandinin and Caine (2008), it is “then, both a view of the phenomena of people's experiences and a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience and thus allows

for the intimate study of individuals' experiences over time and in context" (p. 542). When investigating and comprehending experiences through narratives or storytelling, researchers acknowledge the importance of connections. These ties include those between participants and researchers, as well as the connections between the experiences being researched and the evolution of time, specific locations, and complex settings. Within these relationships, participants engage in storytelling that reflects their lived experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Stories have the power to transport individuals to the experiences and perspectives of the narrators (Katz & Csordas, 2003).

Storytelling, a technique of social interaction, helped to highlight the importance of local and traditional knowledge and the role of local advocates and activists in child labor advocacy practices because storytelling is direct and straightforward (Senehi, 2020). With this type of method, there is a significant emphasis on writing with rather than about people (Senehi, 2002). This method makes study participants' views and knowledge more widely heard and rather than being passive objects of discourse, research participants are active participants in knowledge formation (Senehi, 2020). Lederach (1997) discusses the significance of subjective experience in fostering peace among cultures facing difficulties. He suggests that individuals should actively seek out and establish avenues where they may share their own narratives, thus alleviating the emotional burden of trauma, loss, and the injustices they may have encountered in times of war. The narrative inquiry approach can serve as a platform for populations affected by conflict or in the process of recovery to engage in the act of sharing and recognizing one another's narratives that might contribute to the re-establishment of a communal feeling of unity and connection. In this vein, utilizing a narrative inquiry approach offered child labor advocates in Ghana an opportunity to effectively communicate their stories and experiences.

Narrative inquiry is used for researching the experiences of people (Saldana, 2014) making it particularly suited for investigating the experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana. This methodology empowers researchers to explore the personal narratives and real-life encounters of these individuals, offering an in-depth understanding of their motivations, strategies, successes, and challenges in combating child labor. By taking a narrative perspective on experience as the subject of investigation, researchers can effectively capture the intricate details and nuances of activists' efforts (Caine et al., 2018). Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences. Sharing stories of successful interventions and the positive impact that community activists and advocates have had on children's lives in their communities can inspire hope and motivate others to take action. This can also be used to demonstrate the efficacy of specific strategies and approaches to addressing child labor in Ghana. By showing how important community involvement is in stopping child labor, it can get different groups to work together toward a common goal.

Although narrative research may appear to be a genuine and harmless activity, it is important to recognize that individuals' stories may not always provide an accurate or genuine portrayal of facts (Moen, 2006). According to Bar-On (2006), this position poses a possible challenge for academics who focus on narratives. It is essential to admit that the perspectives and stories shared by research communities are influenced by personal experiences, which may contain biased or unsupported information. In order to tackle the problem of personal predisposition in narrative research, Bar-On (2006) emphasizes the importance of giving individuals the liberty to freely express themselves without imposing complex theoretical concepts or theories upon them. Furthermore, the author proposes delving deeper into the underlying messages within narratives to enhance broad understanding of the situation and the

individuals involved (Bar-On, 2006). When evaluating the accuracy of narratives, researchers must consider more than just the content itself. Fujii (2010) stresses the significance of examining the accompanying meta-data like unexpressed thoughts and emotions, as well as the silences and fabricated stories that individuals may share. The author argues that “neglecting meta-data can result in misinterpreting ambiguities, overlooking crucial details, drawing inaccurate conclusions, and exposing respondents to potential reprisals for engaging with the researcher” (Fujii, 2010, p. 232).

Recognizing that individuals' narratives may not always provide an accurate or genuine portrayal of facts, I approached the data collection process with a commitment to creating a supportive environment where community advocates could freely express their experiences without the constraints of theoretical frameworks or preconceived notions. By employing open-ended, semi-structured interviews, I encouraged participants to share their stories in their own words, allowing their unique perspectives to emerge organically. This approach minimized the risk of imposing my perspective on their narratives and also acknowledged the complexity of their lived experiences.

Data Generation and Procedures

Study Location

The study was conducted in Ghana, specifically within the middle or forest belt regions (Ashanti, Central, Western, and Western North), which encompass a diverse array of towns and villages. The selected sites for this research include Kumasi, Asankrangua, Bibiani, Nkateso, Wassa Damang, and Winneba. As one of the main cities in Ghana, Kumasi functions as a primary center for trade and commerce, which in turn has an impact on the economic activities that take place in the areas that are around it. Asankrangua, Bibiani, Nkateso, and Wassa

Damang are all known for their mining and farming activities, which often involve children in labor-intensive roles. Winneba, a coastal town, presents a different context where fishing activities also contribute to the prevalence of child labor and trafficking. These sites are particularly justified for understanding the experiences of community advocates (peacebuilders) in addressing child labor practices in Ghana due to the prevalence of child labor in these regions and their diverse economic contexts. The combination of urban and rural settings provides valuable insights into how community advocates navigate different environments and engage with local populations. Additionally, these sites have established networks of community advocates and organizations actively working to combat child labor, facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing. By focusing on these critical areas, the research aims to illuminate the experiences and roles of community advocates in addressing child labor practices, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of their impact on social justice and peace in Ghana.

Participants and Recruitment

The central participants of the research were individual child labor advocates recruited from various organizations and groups such as Child Research for Action and Development Agency (CRADA), Challenging Heights, Codesult Network, Millennium Child Support Group, Community Child Protection Committees, and traditional rulers who are actively addressing the issue of child labor practices in Ghana. This selection is valuable for the study due to their direct involvement in child labor advocacy and their deep understanding of the local context. For instance, CRADA is dedicated to conducting research and engaging in advocacy efforts aimed at influencing policies and programs designed to safeguard children from child labor exploitation. Their endeavors encompass the systematic collection of data pertaining to trends in child labor, alongside collaborative efforts with local communities to execute effective interventions. Also,

Challenging Heights has the major task of dealing with child trafficking and labor, especially around the coastal areas. They work directly with affected children and their families, providing educational support, rehabilitation services, and advocacy to raise awareness about child rights. Their grassroots approach makes them a critical player in the fight against child labor, as they engage with communities to promote sustainable alternatives.

Similarly, Codesult and Millennium Child Support Group are dedicated to improving the welfare of children through community-based initiatives. They provide support services, including education and health care, to vulnerable children and advocate for policies that protect children's rights. Their local engagement ensures that the needs of children are prioritized in community development efforts. They also aim at advocacy against child labor by collaborating with the local communities to fight the practices. Community Child Protection Committees consists of community members dedicated to safeguarding children's rights. These committees play a crucial role in identifying and addressing child labor issues at the community level, making them invaluable sources of local knowledge and insight. Also, traditional rulers are the custodians of the land in their communities and have the power to change the status quo. Their insights and experiences are critical for developing effective interventions and policies that address the root causes of child labor, making them integral to my research process.

To recruit the participants, it was essential to deliberately identify participants who are actively engaged in addressing the issue of child labor practices in the selected area of study in Ghana. I used a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing techniques to recruit 30 participants. Purposive sampling is when a researcher chooses people, places, or organizations on purpose in order to learn about or comprehend a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). The standard criterion for selecting or choosing participants is whether they have enough information

about the situation being studied. Therefore, the participants are intentionally selected because they have in-depth knowledge about the situation and can provide in-depth information on the dynamics within the sociocultural context (Creswell, 2015). Apart from purposive sampling, I used snowballing (Bonevski et al., 2014) to identify other local child labor advocates to be participants in the study. Through snowballing, some participants provided me with the details (name) of potential participants, who in turn provided the details of other potential participants. For example, to expand the number of Community Child Protection Committee members I could reach, the first participant I interviewed provided me with the contact details of others who worked in a nearby villages. By doing this, I was able to reach a participant who would have otherwise been difficult to contact. This sampling technique created the space for more credible and potential respondents who have experience advocating for and addressing child labor issues in Ghana to be reached for the study (Bryman, 2016).

Participants recruited for the study were adults who were 18 years or older. This was to meet the ethical concerns of participants who are of age and can legally give consent to participate in the study. I did not place restrictions on gender as far as those available to participate were advocates against child labor in the communities. However, to maintain the grassroots element of my study, all participants were workers of local NGOs established in Ghana and community members who were not government appointees. The choice arose from the intention to get grassroots opinions and experiences of child labor advocates that may be inadequately reflected in mainstream discourse. Local NGOs and community members (CCPCs) and traditional rulers possess distinct insights into child labor issues, as they are actively involved with impacted communities and understand the dynamics involved. It is essential to acknowledge that the efforts of local NGOs frequently operate alongside, or at times

independently from, the initiatives undertaken by governmental and international entities. Although the former may enact more comprehensive policies and initiatives, localized organizations often tackle specific community needs and obstacles that larger institutions may overlook or inadequately address. This fosters a more nuanced comprehension of child labor advocacy since local groups are typically more sensitive to the cultural, social, and economic elements that perpetuate child labor in their areas. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were a total of 30 made up of 7 females and 23 males. Below is a tabular representation of the participants using pseudonyms.

Table 1: Participant Categorization

Name	Biological Sex	Category	Region
Akwasi	Male	CRADA	Ashanti
Agyaba	Male	Millenium Child Support	Ashanti
Kwabena	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Ashanti
Kwaku	Male	Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC)	Central
Kwadwo	Male	CRADA	Ashanti
Kofisco	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Central
Kwame	Male	Codesult Network	Western-North
Ama	Female	Challenging heights	Central
Akosua	Female	Community Child Protection Committee	Central

Olasty	Male	Codesult Network	Western North
Clergy	Male	Challenging heights	Central
Queenster	Female	Community Child Protection Committee	Western
Neal	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Oduro	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Tracy	Female		
Nigel	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Diana	Female	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Lemuel	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western
Grace	Female	Challenging heights	Western
Bengazy	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Obaa	Female	CRADA	Ashanti
Barima	Male	Codesult Network	
Takyi	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Nkateso

Agyemang	male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western
Asiamah	Male	Traditional ruler	Central
Nti	Male	Traditional ruler	Western
Atinga	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Western North
Adongo	Male	Traditional ruler	Western North
Adjei	Male	Community Child Protection Committee	Ashanti
Yaw	Male	Traditional ruler	Western North

Data Sources and Generation

The research included both primary and secondary sources of information. The primary data included semi-structured individual interviews. To complement the primary data and the secondary sources, the study relied on published books, journal articles, and documents such as reports and policy papers on child labor and violence by UNICEF, ILO, NGOs, and child rights organizations.

Semi-Structured Interviews

This study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which holds that reality is socially constructed and subjective, and that individuals experience and understand the world in context-specific ways (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Rather than seeking objective truths or general laws, interpretivism allows the researcher to explore the meanings individuals assign to their lived experiences. Applying this paradigm, I engaged in qualitative interviewing to allow the

advocates to share their stories in their own words. The empirical literature on the use of interviews as a method of data collection in peace research suggests that the method allows for the generation of large quantities of qualitative data on the phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Rashid & Niang, 2020). The qualitative research interview is a discussion between the individuals involved in an inquiry or study (the researcher and the researched) on topics that are ostensibly of mutual interest (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). It is a type of professional dialogue where the researcher learns about other people's lives, including their experiences, feelings, and perspectives on the world. The goal of the research interview data is to assist the researcher in developing relevant analysis (researcher's narrative) about a research topic based on their comprehension and analysis of participants' narratives (Rashid & Niang, 2020). Close (2018) argues that the adoption of interviews allows the researcher to elicit honest data from the respondents, as the approach allows free expression of opinion from the participants themselves. In both cases, the method empowers the respondents to actively engage in the process within their own time and space, which allows them to freely express their perspectives on the phenomenon (Close, 2018). Interviews, therefore, created the space for a broader comprehension and deeper appreciation of the issue from the perspectives of the different actors responsible for the welfare of children in Ghana.

To generate primary data, I conducted interviews with community advocates involved in child labor advocacy. I developed a semi-structured interview guide that included open-ended and probing questions designed to elicit detailed responses about their experiences, challenges, and strategies in combating child labor (see appendix A). These interviews were conducted in person, allowing for a more personal connection and the opportunity to explore topics in depth. From the beginning of July to the end of August 2023, I conducted 30 in-person face-to-face

individual interviews with the research participants in Ghana. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 55 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable setting chosen by the participants, ensuring they felt at ease sharing their experiences. On the day of each interview, I made sure I was there on time, though I had to reschedule about three I missed due to transportation challenges. Before the start of each interview, I familiarized myself with the environment and introduced myself to the research participants, and explained the purpose of my study. I also made sure I explained thoroughly the consent forms and gave them the opportunity to ask questions if they had any before appending their signature to participate in the study.

I ensured that participants felt comfortable sharing their insights by creating a supportive environment by emphasizing the confidentiality of their responses. Prior to each interview session, participants were asked to only discuss the experiences they felt comfortable sharing. As a cultural practice in Ghana, I had to give wine to the traditional rulers upon visiting them in their palace for the interviews. I used probing techniques during the interview sessions to clarify participant remarks and draw out further details on the topics discussed. The interviews were conducted in English, and in some cases when participants lacked better words to express their thoughts, they filled in with Twi language. Twenty-five of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed manually by the researcher. Five participants did not consent to be recorded and agreed to share their perspectives while I took notes. Participants refusal to be recorded stemmed from the fact that they were uncomfortable, fearing that it could expose them to unwanted attention or scrutiny, especially if the topics discussed were sensitive or related to personal experiences. Others simply preferred the more informal nature of a note-taking approach, feeling that it allowed for a more open and candid discussion without the pressure of being recorded.

Besides, I also took field notes during the interviews and discussions to document non-verbal cues and contextual information that could provide additional insights into the participants' experiences. After each session, I briefly reviewed the participants' responses and offered to provide them with their transcripts and any emerging themes once they were transcribed facting checking their responses. The interview allowed greater flexibility and increased the chances of generating insight into the situation's obscured angles, all of which helped enrich the research data. After each interview, I thanked the participants for their time and the knowledge they shared. When I reached data saturation, I made the decision to stop interviewing more participants. Data saturation in qualitative research is the stage where no further data gathering, or interviews yield any new information or topics (Fofana et al., 2020). This idea is crucial in assessing the sufficiency of the sample size in qualitative investigations. Researchers often conclude interviews with participants once they have achieved data saturation, which signifies that they have collected sufficient material to adequately address the study objectives (Fofana et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Analysis Procedures

This study employed thematic narrative analysis as the primary method of data analysis, situated within an interpretivist paradigm (Polkinghorne, 1995). The goal of this research was to understand the lived experiences of community advocates engaged in the eradication of child labor in Ghana. Thematic narrative analysis was chosen for its ability to capture both the content and structure of the stories shared by participants, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how they make meaning of their roles, challenges, and strategies within their unique socio-cultural and institutional contexts. The interview was examined through an inductive thematic analysis. This method employs a systematic procedure to examine interview data. This process entails an

initial examination of the textual material to become acquainted with it, recognizing repetitive patterns or themes within the data, and subsequently analyzing the structure and content of these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach facilitates a methodical examination of the data, empowering researchers to reveal underlying significances and understandings gained directly from the participants' narratives and debates. Thus, it identifies, evaluates, and reports recurring patterns in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Employing a thematic approach allowed the study to identify the participants' different perspectives on each issue (Cooper & Rice, 2014).

Researchers employing inductive thematic analysis strive to examine data in a manner that is not influenced by their preconceived notions, guaranteeing that identified themes accurately reflect the participants' responses rather than being influenced by the researchers' assumptions (Novak et al., 2022). This approach allows for the detection, examination, and documentation of patterns within the data, which in turn permits a comprehensive and complete description of the acquired information (Souza et al., 2021). Using inductive thematic analysis also helps find important meanings in the data by finding themes that accurately describe the phenomena being studied (Nowell et al., 2017)

Using the thematic analysis, I identified patterns of meaning among participants' experiences of combating Ghana's child labor practices by going through the following stages: First, the audio interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Utilizing audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions preserves the authenticity of the original data, facilitating a thorough analysis of the participants' narratives. The field notes I took during the interviews enhanced the procedure. I meticulously reviewed the transcripts many times to ensure their accuracy. This technique also facilitated my acquaintance with and deepened my engagement with the data (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). In addition, the transcripts were distributed to the

participants for their input and examination. Among the 30 participants who received the transcripts, 5 provided feedback on spelling errors in certain terms and requested further changes. However, 10 individuals replied stating that they did not have any problems with the transcripts. Ten research participants did not offer any input. The participants' replies were then included in the ultimate transcript. In order to derive significance from my data, I documented my ideas and reflections as I evaluated and interpreted them.

Second, I proceeded to manually generate the initial codes. The procedure involved thoroughly examining the text, segmenting it, and assigning labels or codes to each segment. Using an inductive approach, the codes were derived from participants' narratives. The next step entailed categorizing the generated codes and organizing them according to themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding procedure included both inductive and deductive approaches, since it involved developing codes from participants' responses while being affected by my own conceptual perspective. The codes were used to determine the connotations and subjects relevant to the research emphasis. I categorized comparable concepts and organized them into themes, which were then adjusted when further ideas arose from my review of the texts and pre-existing literature. The categories served as the primary focal points for presenting the results. In this study, the viewpoints of the participants were analyzed in relation to the selected codes within the categories (themes) and subcategories (sub-themes). In order to increase the credibility of the study, participant quotations were utilized to represent their viewpoints, and the final themes were validated among them. The codes were described using the participants' voices, particularly their narratives. These narratives were employed to get insight into participants' experiences (Senehi, 2020) of combating Ghana's child labor practices.

Both the core research question(s) and the primary focus of the study served as sources of guidance for the organization of the results chapters, which were structured according to the emergent themes. When crafting the findings chapters, I engaged with the materials in an inductive manner. Upon examining various themes, I identified that the participants' experiences as community activists and advocates were rooted in four primary themes including: community advocates as witnesses to atrocities of children, grassroots advocacy against child labor as activism towards children's schooling and right to education, advocacy against child labor as a confrontation with material constraints and entrenched struggles between ethical commitment and systemic resistance, advocates as local implementers of global policies on child labor. When themes started to emerge, I brought different analytical lenses to the process. The final stage involved the interpretation of data that explored the deeper meanings of the responses and the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2015). The findings and conclusions were further analyzed and placed within the existing body of literature. This study was conducted to enhance the current understanding, theories, and practices regarding local peacebuilding. The inductive thematic analysis method, in general, offered a methodical strategy for uncovering patterns, themes, and insights that were contained within the interviews. It did this by providing a rigorous framework for investigating and understanding the qualitative data of my study.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting qualitative research requires that the researcher uphold and project ethical conduct to eliminate or minimize the risk that research participants, the researcher, and the research processes and findings could be exposed to behaviour that could harm the research participants (Guest et al., 2013). The researcher must bear in mind that the objective of

generating qualitative data should be consistent with the well-being of the respondents (Vagle, 2018). As such, the following ethical issues were taken seriously to protect the participants, the researcher, and the University of Manitoba.

First, the study received full approval from the University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board 2, which reviewed the potential ethical issues and the measures to address them both in the field and beyond. This approval ensured compliance with the University of Manitoba's ethical standards and those of the broader research community, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the research. The research commenced only after obtaining this necessary approval.

Second, I ensured that informed consent was obtained from the participants. I made sure that informed consent was acquired throughout the entire research process. It was important for participants to fully grasp their role in the study in order to make an informed and voluntary decision about their participation. Three key aspects were considered in order to ensure informed consent. The study focused on ensuring that accurate information was given to participants, their understanding of the material, and their voluntary participation (Guest et al., 2013). I provided participants with the necessary information on the research in order to obtain informed consent. This included a detailed description of the study, its aims, and how the information would be used. Additionally, I discussed the potential risks and advantages associated with participating in the study, as well as the need to maintain confidentiality. Additional components of informed consent included details on remuneration, contacts, voluntary involvement, and counseling procedures. The forms were both written and orally presented to the participants. Prior to the interviews, the participants were given the consent forms to peruse. In addition, I provided the

participants with a detailed explanation of the different components of the form. They signed, and I also signed.

Further, ensuring the privacy of the data shared by the participants, as well as safeguarding their identities, was a significant ethical concern throughout the study. To ensure confidentiality, I employed pseudonyms to identify the participants. During the interviews, I urged the participants to only disclose information that they felt comfortable discussing. In addition, the data, which consisted of both recorded audio and transcripts, was promptly uploaded to my password protected computer. To ensure security, the data was encrypted, preventing unauthorized access by any external entity. The audio recordings were permanently erased upon completion of the data transcription process. To maintain the secrecy and identity of the participants, the transcripts were encoded. I conducted and transcribed the interviews myself. The transcripts are located in the University of Manitoba's secure OneDrive server.

Risk and Benefits

This research posed minimal risk to participants. However, given the sensitive nature of child labor and community advocacy, there was a possibility of emotional discomfort or distress when participants recounted difficult personal experiences, including childhood hardships or community resistance. To mitigate this, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering, and access support resources if needed.

While there were no direct benefits to participants, some expressed a sense of empowerment and validation from sharing their stories. The opportunity to reflect on their experiences and have their voices documented in an academic study provided emotional and psychosocial value for several advocates. This form of narrative participation was experienced

by some as personally meaningful and affirming of their role in the fight against child labor in Ghana.

The Research Validity and Credibility

I implemented the following strategies to bolster the credibility of the research and its conclusions. First, I generated data from various sources using semi-structured interviews, as previously mentioned. Moreover, the data produced was validated by most of the respondents. Transcripts were forwarded to individual respondents to read through, provide input, check, and confirm. I tape-recorded all the interviews (with the exception of five), audited the study, and explained each stage of the process, clarifying and justifying what was done. I included reflexivity at each level and phase of the project, verifying sense-making, and member checking (Van Damme, 2013). I took a neutral stance by bracketing my experiences and views regarding the phenomena under study to limit bias (Vagle, 2018).

Additionally, in the process of presenting and analyzing the study findings, I utilized the experiences and narratives shared by the participants to reinforce their stated concerns. This was done by using direct quotations and exact quotes. These quotes helped establish a connection between the discussions and the stories shared by the participants (Senehi, 2020). Ultimately, I had the opportunity to clarify the responses provided by participants while utilizing an open-ended, semi-structured interview guide. When participants struggled to understand a question, I rephrased it to reduce their confusion. The interview instrument's inductive approach and the data generation methods allowed me to obtain credible responses to the questions I asked.

Positionality of the Researcher

Positionality refers to the perspective and posture of a person with reference to a study assignment and the social and political context in which it is situated (Lin, 2015). The researcher

must consistently acknowledge their power, privileges, and personal blind spots regarding conscious and unconscious potential bias (Millar, 2020). As demonstrated in the introduction of the thesis, I consciously integrated my positionality as a former victim of child labor into the research process to enhance the credibility and depth of my findings. Acknowledging my background was crucial, as it provided a unique lens through which I approached the study of advocates working to prevent child labor. My lived experiences allowed me to empathize with the challenges faced by these advocates and understand the complexities of their work in a way that might not be accessible to researchers without similar backgrounds. This insight informed the questions I posed and the contexts I explored, ensuring that the research was grounded in the realities of those dedicated to combating child labor.

To mitigate potential bias stemming from my personal history, I employed a reflexive research approach throughout the study (Vagle, 2018). This involved a continuous process of self-reflection, where I actively considered how my experiences could influence my interpretations and analyses. By bracketing my emotions and refraining from overgeneralizing the experiences of child labor victims, I aimed to maintain critical rigour. This commitment to critical rigour was essential in allowing the data collected from advocates to guide my arguments while ensuring a more objective and nuanced analysis that upheld the integrity of my research.

Additionally, I implemented member checking as a strategy to further address bias and enhance the credibility of the data (Birt et al., 2016). After collecting information from the advocates, I returned the findings to them for their review, allowing them to verify the accuracy and consistency of the data with their experiences. This process not only validated the data but also empowered the advocates by involving them in the research process, ensuring that their perspectives were accurately represented. By incorporating member checking, I reinforced the

trustworthiness of my findings and acknowledged the importance of participant agency in the research. Ultimately, my positionality enriched the study by providing a distinct perspective that highlighted the realities faced by advocates working to prevent child labor. By transparently addressing my background and employing reflexive practices, I aimed to produce a thesis that not only contributed to the academic discourse but also honored the voices and experiences of those dedicated to this critical cause.

Challenges Encountered During the Study

There were some challenges involved in conducting qualitative research in different dispersed communities. First, the data generation process involved extensive long-distance travel, which somewhat hindered the researchers' ability to reach some participants. In some instances, I had to reschedule interviews, as I missed them after traveling long hours to the destination. In some communities, there were no guest houses available, so I had to travel back to the nearest community approximately two hours by motorcycle to lodge and return the next day. This took a huge financial toll on me as I had to travel to and from the same community.

Also, I realized that, being a Ghanaian, who understands and knows about the context, some participants assumed I knew whatever they were sharing with me and therefore provided me with fewer details about their experiences (Berger, 2015). During the interviews, it was not surprising when some participants kept telling me that, being a Ghanaian, they know I am aware of all these predicaments of the children and the work they (advocates) are doing to salvage them from those acts. I, however, urged participants to offer further context to their statements in order to prevent me from making quick assumptions or generalizations.

Finally, many of the research participants, upon realizing that I was studying in Canada, viewed me as a significant figure who could assist in bringing their challenges to the attention of

Canadian authorities. They anticipated that I would assume the role of an advocate, utilizing their narratives to record the challenges they endure while also seeking to rally international support for their cause. Part of this expectation stems from the belief that researchers, particularly those from Western countries, have a unique ability to empower and give voice to the marginalized, the oppressed, and those who feel unheard (Milne, 2010, p. 81). Milne (2010) notes that researchers were often viewed as social agents or activists, a perception shaped by the historical context in which early ethnographers, typically elite colonizers, operated from positions of global authority and power (Milne, 2010). In my situation, the community viewed my status as an international student as a potential means to advocate for their struggles in eradicating child labor. They believed that I could leverage this perceived advantage to persuade foreign governments to come to their aid by offering more resources for the discharge of their work. I, however, disagreed with the underlying belief that foreigners possess the solutions to the overwhelming challenges faced by local advocates in Ghana. Rather than maintaining this perspective, I highlighted the importance of the people's own efforts in developing context-specific strategies for eradicating child labor practices. Although I listened to them without making any commitment to assume a role of an advocate or activist I couldn't help but question whether I had an obligation to address the concerns expressed by the participants, given my own history and connections to the research setting.

Methodological Challenges/Limitations and Benefits of Researching Child Labor Advocacy by Focusing on Adult Community Advocates

There is an increasing acknowledgment that research should involve children as active participants as subjects, highlighting the significance of child-led approaches to empower children and yield reliable data (Balen et al., 2000). The UN Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC, 1989) has played a crucial role in promoting children's involvement in research as a way to exercise their rights to participate (Cuevas-Parra, 2020). This convention comprises a set of universal standards aimed at empowering children and adolescents. One of its fundamental principles is child participation, which supports the rights of children and young people to express their opinions freely and engage in decision-making processes regarding issues that affect them. Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC illustrate these rights: “Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child: the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989, p. 4). However, the same convention stipulates in Article 5 the rights of adults to offer appropriate guidance and support to children in line with their developing abilities.

As children grow, the authority of adults over them is anticipated to diminish and ultimately cease. The UNCRC recognizes children's legal status as minors while allowing adults to serve as advocates, mediators, representatives, and interpreters when necessary (Ford et al., 2018). Consequently, the individuals with whom children form strong bonds are crucial in shaping their lives, as they provide structure, meaning, and guidance to their experiences. In view of this, doing research on child labor advocacy in Ghana with adult community advocates offers advantages as well as methodological difficulties. The issue of voice and representation is one of the main challenges, especially in situations when adult stories usually eclipse children's viewpoints. The domination of the adult voices leads to the marginalization of children's experiences and insights in research environments. According to James (2007), the dominant voices in early discussions about child labor and child slavery in the cocoa production sector of West Africa did not represent the children involved or their communities. While the welfare of

children was often portrayed as the primary concern behind numerous reports of abuse in the cocoa industry, this perspective was compromised by a failure to view child rights in a comprehensive manner, a lack of thorough and sensitive research involving detailed field studies, and a reliance on preconceived moral judgments. Any assertions of acting in the best interests of children should be approached with skepticism, especially when the children themselves are not consulted or their circumstances are not fully understood (James, 2007).

While it is imperative to amplify the voices of children within research frameworks, this endeavor concurrently introduces substantial conceptual and epistemological challenges that necessitate rigorous examination to guarantee that children's viewpoints are genuinely represented and comprehended. Other researchers argue that there is no authentic voice of a child because, in any situation, such as participatory action research or child interviews, an adult is always available to guide their stories and perspectives, thereby reinforcing the power dynamics between adults and children (James, 2007). Speaking from experience and as an indigene of the research context, the concept of giving a voice to children is only in theory. Children do not have a voice to challenge or defend themselves. When they have the opportunity to express their opinions, adults make the final decisions. This is the very reason that they need advocates who are adults.

In Ghana, particularly in the context of child labor, discussions and decisions often marginalize the voices of children, as I already indicated in the introductory section. This marginalization can be attributed to several factors, including cultural norms that prioritize adult perspectives, a lack of platforms for children to express their views, and systemic barriers that prevent their participation in policy-making processes. As a result, children's experiences, needs, and aspirations are frequently overlooked, leading to policies and interventions that may not

adequately address their realities (Issaka et al., 2021). Again, cultural perspectives in Ghana frequently perceive children as passive beneficiaries of care instead of active participants in their own lives (Quarshie, 2024). This viewpoint undermines the acknowledgment of children's autonomy and their capacity to express their needs and wishes. As a result, when policies are developed to address child labor, the perspectives of children are rarely included in the conversation (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). This exclusion not only undermines the effectiveness of interventions but also perpetuates a cycle of disempowerment, where children feel that their opinions and experiences are deemed unimportant. In this context, community advocates play a vital role in amplifying the voices of children and ensuring that their perspectives are considered in discussions about child labor. Advocates serve as third party intermediaries who can translate children's experiences into actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. By engaging with children directly, advocates can gather valuable information about the challenges they face, their aspirations, and the support they need. This is crucial for developing policies that are not only effective but also resonate with the lived realities of children in Ghana. In as much as I acknowledge the agency of children, adult community advocates have the higher propensity to make positive change in the situation of the children in Ghana because adults are given a listening ear and are believed to be an embodiment of wisdom than children.

Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology and design, situating it within the qualitative research tradition. This was accomplished in two parts. The first part highlighted the essential components of the research process, which adhered to a narrative methodological framework. The second part elaborated on the particular design choices made during the research implementation. . In the next chapter, I present the main findings of this study through a

combination of narrative cases and a descriptive thematic analysis. Guided by a narrative inquiry approach, the chapter begins with four selected participant stories that illustrate the lived realities of child labor advocates in Ghana. These narratives are followed by a descriptive thematic synthesis drawn from the full dataset, highlighting common patterns across all thirty participants. Together, these two sections offer a rich and layered understanding of how community advocates make sense of their work, navigate systemic barriers, and contribute to grassroots peacebuilding.

Chapter Four

Voices of Change: Unveiling the Stories of Community Child Labor Advocates in Ghana

Introduction

In the ongoing struggle against child labor in Ghana, community advocates serve as keystone figures whose dedication and perseverance illuminate the path toward a more equitable future for children. In this research, I conducted interviews with a total of 30 participants who were involved in advocacy against child labor in Ghana. As already indicated in Chapter three, the participants hailed from diverse regions throughout Ghana, specifically the Ashanti, Central, Western, and Western North Regions. These regions face considerable child labor challenges, particularly in sectors such as fishing, agriculture, and illegal mining. Many child advocates worked with community-based organizations like CRADA, Millennium Child Support, Challenging Heights, and Codesult Network, while others were part of Community Child Protection Committees as well as traditional leaders. Although the participants had diverse affiliations, they shared common advocacy efforts. Some concentrated on direct interventions, rescuing children from hazardous working environments in agriculture, fishing, and informal street businesses. Others emphasized prevention by educating parents about the long-term impacts of child labor and promoting alternative income sources to lessen reliance on their children's earnings. Additionally, some focused on policy advocacy, striving for stricter enforcement of child labor laws and advocating for systemic changes that would benefit future generations. While their methods varied, all participants operated within the intricate realities of their communities, contending with cultural expectations, economic constraints, and shortcomings in legal enforcement.

The central goal of my interviews was to understand the experiences of these community advocates in the eradication of child labor practices in Ghana. Through these conversations, I sought to explore the advocates' motivations, the nature of their work, the challenges they face, and the impact they have made in the communities. All participants responded to the questions I posed. All advocates in my study perceived child labor as an act of violence against children, specifically revealing a shared perspective that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the issue, particularly its impact on education, health, and the overall well-being of children. Their understanding of child labor aligns closely with the broad definition provided by the ILO, which characterizes child labor "as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development" (ILO, 2017). This definition encompasses various forms of work that are detrimental to children, particularly those that interfere with their education, health, and overall well-being.

Also, the responses revealed a diverse array of motivational factors, including childhood experiences, passion, sense of divine calling, empathy, a sense of responsibility, and a vision for change. Many participants shared personal stories of their own childhoods, citing personal experiences with child labor either as former child laborers themselves or as observers to its impact on their communities. Most of the participants became advocates informally, often driven by a sense of urgency to address the immediate needs of children in their communities. Some began their advocacy work in response to specific incidents of child labor they encountered, while others were inspired by community leaders or organizations that highlighted the issue. The circumstances surrounding their advocacy varied, with many participants indicating that they were motivated by a combination of personal experiences, community needs, and a desire to create lasting change. The strategies advocates used to address the child labor situation in Ghana

revealed three main themes: raising awareness and education, community empowerment and capacity building, and collaboration and partnerships. Also, the participants revealed an array of challenges that serve as an impediment to their advocacy including lack of funding and support, poverty within communities, community resistance and cultural challenges, duplication of efforts between NGOs, friction between government and NGOs, sustainability of efforts after NGO exits.

Although they operated at a local level, their work was not isolated from broader international efforts and frameworks. While their activities were focused on local contexts, the participants' work was interconnected with wider international initiatives. Many of their interventions were influenced by global frameworks like ILO conventions and UN guidelines, demonstrating that grassroots advocacy does not operate in opposition to global approaches; instead, grassroots advocacy models its practices after international frameworks and expectations. The advocates' stories, struggles, and triumphs illustrate the complexities of grassroots peacebuilding and the role that local actors play in bridging the gap between international policies and community-driven solutions.

This thesis, therefore, challenges the prevailing notion that grassroots peacebuilding in the form of child labor advocacy in Ghana constitutes a distinct, indigenous alternative to the liberal peace model. Instead, the findings reveal that community advocates function as implementers and adaptors of the liberal framework, integrating its principles into localized strategies rather than creating a wholly separate or oppositional model. These advocates engage with institutionalized knowledge, international norms (such as ILO conventions and UN frameworks), and formal legal mechanisms, demonstrating that their work is not detached from the global peacebuilding architecture but rather is embedded within it. In fact, community child

labor advocates can be seen as local agents of the liberal peace model. This argument positions my work as a critical re-examination of how the local turn in peacebuilding actually operates in practice, particularly in child labor advocacy efforts in Ghana.

Subsequent sections of this chapter provide narrative accounts of four representative advocates out of the 30 interviewed for the study. These narratives give detailed insights into the experiences of the advocates and underline the main themes of the study's analysis. The narratives are informed by the narrative inquiry methodological framework and guided by Polkinghorne's (1995) approach to data analysis. By using narrative analysis (constructing a coherent story from lived experiences) and the analysis of narratives (identifying themes across different narratives), this chapter focuses on the stories of representative local peacebuilders to fully grasp the nature of the work these advocates engage in, and to recognize them as individuals influenced by diverse worldviews, influences, and perspectives that inform their advocacy. The narratives I provide subsequently focus on four individuals pen named Akwasi, Kwadwo, Queenster, and Grace. These individuals' narratives provide compelling and insightful character perspectives that together with thematic synthesis in chapter five shape my further analysis of grassroots peacebuilding in Chapters six and seven.

By employing this narrative approach, I illustrate the diverse experiences and viewpoints of community peacebuilders, making the analysis more engaging and meaningful as their stories help to illustrate my argument that grassroots child labor advocacy in Ghana is not as fundamentally distinct from the liberal model as claimed in existing scholarship. Through understanding the narrative character of these individuals, we can discern that their efforts do not represent a departure from the liberal peacebuilding model; rather, they reflect a local adaptation and integration of liberal principles. This insight underscores the importance of examining the

work being done at the community level and reveals how the liberal peacebuilding model is being effectively localized in Ghana. Focusing in-depth on the stories of four representative individuals enriches the narrative. Each profile serves not only as a testament to their personal journeys but also as a lens through which we can examine broader socio-cultural dynamics, local challenges, and the triumphs of community advocacy.

Below is a descriptive narrative of selected representative stories of the four child advocates. To honor the richness of participants' lived experiences and align with the narrative inquiry methodology underpinning this study, this chapter begins with a series of carefully selected narrative cases. These cases are not intended to generalize the entire participant pool, but rather to offer representative, in-depth illustrations of the broader patterns evident across the data. Narrative inquiry, as articulated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Polkinghorne (1995), values stories as both data and analysis, emphasizing the significance of context, subjectivity, and meaning-making. In this study, narrative cases serve as analytic anchors that illuminate how individual advocates navigate personal histories, ethical commitments, structural constraints, and peacebuilding efforts within their communities. Presenting these stories allows for a more textured and humanized understanding of the research themes, while also foregrounding participant voice which remains a core concern in both peace and conflict studies and research centered on social justice (Wilson, 2020). Furthermore, this approach is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm that guides the study, recognizing that knowledge is constructed through the perspectives and experiences of those directly engaged in the phenomenon under investigation.

Once a Victim, Now a Voice: Akwasi's Fight Against Child Labor

Akwasi's earliest memories of childhood revolved around long, sunlit days filled with the labor of cocoa farming, his hands marked by cocoa pod husks, and a heavy sense of responsibility that arrived far too early. Raised in a large family in rural Ghana, access to education was never assured as it was a privilege, and not a right. With a father who was burdened by the responsibilities of numerous children and scant resources, Akwasi's early life was shaped by the harsh realities of poverty which left him with no choice than to work on his father's cocoa farm to support his family. After finishing Senior High School (SHS), Akwasi had a strong desire to pursue further studies, but financial limitations made that aspiration feel out of reach. Rather than furthering his education, he found himself laboring in the cocoa fields, wielding a machete and breaking cocoa pods, following in the footsteps of those who came before him. The work was grueling, and his dreams were dimmed by the unending cycle of poverty. However, unlike many of his peers who resigned themselves to their circumstances, Akwasi experienced a different feeling, a quiet yet resolute defiance and resistance. Resolute in his desire to forge a different future, Akwasi made a pivotal choice that shaped his life. He decided to pursue higher studies while toiling on the cocoa farms at the same time. Akwasi recounted the following as his drive to champion the rights of children; "I was once in a child labor situation. My father was not that much ready and willing to support our education, because he gave birth to so many children and the resources, we depended on were very meagre. So, we were not able to, though the interest is there, but the capacity was not that enough... I did farm alongside schooling. But looking at the situation I find myself, I said, no, I don't want this situation to happen to anybody whom I will come across..."

It was during his time at university that Akwasi's advocacy journey truly began. Pursuing a degree in education was a significant milestone for Akwasi. During his university days, he came into contact with the founder of a local NGO committed to combating child labor. Inspired by this connection, Akwasi began volunteering with the organization while still completing his studies. Even as a student, he traveled to rural communities, speaking to families, engaging with children, and trying to convince parents that education was worth more than a day's wages. This condition, where education was often a distant dream overshadowed by the urgent need for child labor on cocoa farms, became the catalyst for his passionate and empathetic resolve to make a difference. Having experienced the weight of child labor firsthand, he was determined to ensure that no other child would have to sacrifice their education for basic survival.

For more than seven years, Akwasi has led the charge in advocating against child labor, especially in cocoa-producing areas where children often found themselves in dangerous working conditions. His approach is comprehensive, incorporating research, community education, and direct interventions aimed at liberating children from exploitative labor environments. His team visited cocoa-producing communities to generate data firsthand on the reasons families turn to child labor. His initial approach was to conduct community research, gathering local people's insights on why child labor was so prevalent in the region, especially in cocoa-growing areas. He discovered that, while parents often understood the value of education, economic pressures frequently forced them to prioritize immediate labor over long-term educational benefits. Armed with this knowledge, Akwasi engaged with community leaders, creating dialogues that raised awareness about the long-term consequences of child labor. He emphasized the connection between child welfare and the community's future prosperity.

One of the most significant outcomes of Akwasi's advocacy was his collaboration with local education authorities, which led to a remarkable increase in school enrollment. Before their advocacy, a community school which had the capacity to accommodate about 270 students only had 46. However, due to their advocacy enrollment surged to approximately 180, as families began to prioritize the education of their children. As Akwasi said, "I can even boast of an increase in school attendance. We had an engagement with the community people, advocating about the menace of child labor. As of the time we were leaving the community, school enrollment had reached about 180 something." Akwasi's efforts did not stop at enrollment; he rallied support from local government and NGOs for school infrastructure improvements and educational resources. He often mobilized community resources, providing logistics and even startup capital for vulnerable families to sustain their children's education. His dedication transformed not just the statistics but also the lives and futures of many children in his community. Akwasi initiated training programs tailored for community leaders and parents, helping them comprehend the long-term benefits of schooling over immediate financial gains from child labor.

Amidst his advocacy, Akwasi had many memorable encounters that left a lasting impact on him. One notable experience involved a young boy from a nearby school who had decided to drop out because he was convinced that education was pointless. Akwasi was informed about the boy's situation by the community chief and he decided to intervene. "He told me, 'some of them have gone through secondary school, some have completed JHS, but I have not seen anybody who has reached the apex level of education and succeeded. Those who stopped at an earlier stage and engaged in small labor jobs are making it.'" After speaking with the boy, Akwasi was

able to encourage him to reconsider his decision, ultimately helping him to return to school and he is currently attending university.

Another encounter carved in Akwasi's memory was when he witnessed a young child on the streets, hustling to make ends meet. Concerned about the dangers they faced; he interacted with the child and later visited their home to discuss their circumstances with the parents. Hearing the child's testimony about nearly being hit by a car while chasing money was a reminder of the risks that children face daily in labor situations. "It hurt me a lot to have such an encounter," Akwasi noted, emphasizing the urgency of his mission.

However, the road was not without challenges. Akwasi noted how sustainability of their efforts was a hindrance. Akwasi noted in the following in his story:

One thing I realized about this is that we are NGOs, and we operate on donor funding. So, as soon as we are with them, maybe at least every month we meet with them, we visit the communities, and you see that it is working. But our absence makes things fall apart, although we established community protection committee and trained them, lack of motivation and resources make them unable to perform. Even though we visit multiple times a month, but as soon as we stop going to certain communities, we see things start to decline.

Akwasi's statement shows that Communities regress to prior patterns upon the withdrawal of NGOs, whether due to project completion or insufficient funds, highlighting the importance of establishing self-sustaining models of transformation.

Apart from that, Akwasi frequently confronted with resource restraints coupled with the harsh realities of entrenched societal norms and misconceptions about child labor. Many parents believed that involving their children in work was a necessary part of survival, and these beliefs

were deeply rooted not only in the economic realities of the families but also in the cultural fabric of the community. Akwasi made a remark that, “Here in Ghana, the resources are restrained, so the social welfare offices and the labor offices at a different level will tell you, we are willing to go there, but there are no resources” to how they incapacitated by lack of resources to salvage children from hazardous labor.

Akwasi recognized the need for ongoing education and has adapted his strategies over time. He organized workshops and community meetings, training local champions to advocate for children’s rights, thereby creating a ripple effect of awareness and change. His narrative extended beyond mere statistics; through storytelling, he humanized the issue, sharing heart-wrenching accounts of children like himself, torn between the need for education and the demands of labor. As Akwasi continued his advocacy, he realized the interconnectedness of various factors such as poverty, lack of educational facilities, and inadequate governmental support that perpetuated the cycle of child labor. He endeavored not only to advocate for immediate educational needs but also to work on long-term solutions. He and his team began to establish Community Accommodation Committees comprised of local leaders who could provide ongoing support and guidance for parents and children alike. These committees served as a backbone for the community, addressing pressing issues related to education and child welfare. Throughout his journey, Akwasi remained steadfast in his belief that a supportive community environment was essential for protecting children's rights. His vision was clear: a society free from the chains of child labor, where every child would have the opportunity to learn and thrive. His passion and determination set him apart, as he worked tirelessly to build a brighter future for the next generation.

Through his advocacy, Akwasi continues to build a narrative of possibility. He champions the philosophy that every child deserves a chance at an education, which he believes is the cornerstone of a brighter future. His own struggles have turned into a powerful tool for change; he channels his experiences to raise awareness and inspire others in the community to protect children's rights. Akwasi's story illustrates how personal experiences can fuel an advocate's mission, emphasizing that the fight for children's rights is not just about policy but is also deeply personal, human, and transformative.

In summary, Akwasi's story is representative of several other community advocates that one might call the visionary advocate/peacebuilder. The visionary community peacebuilder is generally an advocate of progressive principles, possesses strong liberal views about community building and development, and is notoriously conscientious. Such advocates are often well educated and subscribe to schooling as a liberationist praxis not only for children but also for cultivating peaceful communities. The visionary community advocate draws huge inspiration from personal experience as a survivor of child labor and from the fulfilment of successful intervention. The ideological impetus of this advocate is more often than not grounded in liberal models of community peacebuilding.

From Engineer to Advocate: Kwadwo's Journey for Children's Rights

Kwadwo, a renewable energy engineer turned advocate who worked with a local NGO, shared his transformative journey in the fight for children's rights. He described his shift from engineering to advocacy as a response to the systemic challenges in Ghana. In contrast with Akwasi, whose entry into advocacy is rooted in his personal history as a survivor of child labor, Kwadwo's pathway diverges significantly. He did not experience child labor firsthand but was instead drawn into advocacy from a professional background in engineering. This difference is

critical in understanding how diverse personal trajectories inform the motivations of community advocates. While Akwasi's motivations are fueled by a deep emotional and experiential connection to the issue. Having once been a child laborer himself, Kwadwo's commitment emerges from what he describes as a divine calling and a professional redirection driven by his encounters with vulnerable children in the course of his work. After completing his education, the challenging job market in Ghana led him to advocacy work, where he quickly found his purpose and passion in protecting children's rights. Embracing his new role wholeheartedly, Kwadwo now proudly identifies himself as a "social engineer," leveraging his technical training to creatively address child labour issues. His engineering background provides a unique perspective as he tackles pressing children's rights issues, particularly child labor. In his role as a field consultant with an NGO, Kwadwo engages directly with communities to implement policies designed to protect children. He actively interacts with communities, transforming donor-driven policies into practical interventions that resonate with local needs.

His responsibilities encompass conducting field assessments, raising awareness about child labor, distributing vital resources such as uniforms and school supplies, and leading workshops. His encounters with children subjected to labor practices fueled his commitment to create change. One encounter stood out vividly: while conducting field surveys, he met a young boy who had taken on responsibilities far beyond his age. This child, an orphan living with his blind brother, embodied the struggles Kwadwo sought to address. "What have they done to deserve this treatment?" Kwadwo often pondered, reflecting on the injustice faced by vulnerable children. Writing also became a cornerstone of his advocacy as he found solace and power in putting pen to paper. He reflected on his observations from the field and penned articles aimed at raising awareness about child labor challenges.

He is the religious type who saw his mission as a divine calling from God: “I feel like I am doing what Jesus wants me to really do.” This spiritual connection motivates him to champion the voices of children who cannot advocate for themselves. In his advocacy, Kwadwo perceives his role as deeply spiritual and morally fulfilling, reflecting on biblical teachings to underscore his commitment. Inspired by the biblical passage where Jesus emphasized the importance of children, he believed himself to be fulfilling a divine mission by giving voice to children, whom he saw as crucial stakeholders frequently overlooked in societal decisions. His advocacy involved dealing with issues that children themselves lack the strength to confront, thereby amplifying their voices and securing their futures. Additionally, Kwadwo was motivated by a sense of urgency, as he was very aware of the target year of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set for the eradication of child labor—2030. Feeling the weight of this timeline, he often mused about individual and collective actions required to champion this cause further. He regularly sought platforms, such as discussions in his church community, to raise awareness about child labor.

One of Kwadwo’s most touching experiences happened during a visit to Assin South in the Central region of Ghana, where he witnessed the transformational power of advocacy firsthand. The joy in families receiving essential supplies like uniforms, books, and shoes was immeasurable. In those remote communities, these supplies felt like precious gifts, a reminder of the disparities that fueled Kwadwo’s passion for change. To effectively advocate for child laborers, Kwadwo utilizes strategic methods like the “Training of Trainers (ToT) approach” which involves engaging influential community leaders, including religious figures, traditional authorities, educators, and local influencers, to spread crucial information about child labor practices. He enhanced this strategy with visual aids, such as simplified flip charts that illustrate

the daily activities children engage in, thereby promoting relatable and impactful discussions within the community. Kwadwo was an active participant in the Sustainable Cocoa Program, focusing on the assessment of child labor conditions in multiple communities where he and his team had successfully established Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs).

Yet, the journey was not always smooth. Kwadwo encountered resistance, lack of logistics, financial, and sometimes indifference from various stakeholders, including local authorities and community leaders. One striking moment occurred during a meeting with government officials when a prominent minister questioned the relevance of child labor advocacy in the contemporary context. "This your child labour child labour [business], it is a white man's child labour or what are you talking about?" Kwadwo remarked being asked by a government officer. He understood then that the work of advocacy also involved educating those in power about the damaging effects of child labor on communities and future generations.

Kwadwo recognized the cultural challenges, noting "Culture... that is making our battle so difficult, the child labor has become so intrinsic in our culture, so people don't see the need to even talk against it" especially the belief that child labor practice is normal or essential for a child's socialization. He clearly distinguished between child labor and child work, highlighting that child work should be beneficial, limited, and not detrimental to children's health, education, or development. For instance, helping in a shop for a few hours after school or performing simple household chores are acceptable forms of child work, whereas engaging in heavy agricultural tasks or being burdened with excessive household duties qualifies as harmful child labor. Kwadwo also revealed that lack of unity and a harmonized method in their fight against child labor by saying. "It appears that the NGOs prioritize pleasing their donors over the safety of the children. we don't have one language, we don't have one expression for child labor. One

organization will come, do something in favor of what the donor wants and one also do something a bit different” to describe the hurdles in their advocacy efforts.

Kwadwo envisions a multifaceted approach to combating child labor that encompasses well-defined, nationally recognized strategies, robust educational campaigns, and ongoing community involvement.

Overall, Kwadwo’s story as an advocate is one of resilience, compassion, and a relentless pursuit of justice for the vulnerable. His challenges are immense, but for him, the reward lies in every child freed from the chains of exploitation and empowered to embrace opportunities for a brighter future. Kwadwo’s journey exemplifies the transformative power of advocacy. From a seemingly unrelated technical background, he emerged as an impassioned defender of children’s rights, using his expertise and connections to bridge communities and drive change. His ongoing commitment highlights the critical need for robust advocacy, community engagement, and systemic awareness to combat child labor effectively. Through his efforts, Kwadwo not only championed children’s rights currently but also lays a foundation for a more equitable future for these children. His story underscores the impact each person can make when they choose to stand up for what is right, using their strengths to fight for justice in the lives of those who cannot fight for themselves.

Kwadwo, like Akwasi, can also be categorized as a visionary community peacebuilder. His motivations and experiences overlap with the experiences and motivations of all the other advocates interviewed for the study. What sets him apart from some of the other advocates is his conviction in child labor advocacy as a divine calling. Although he draws his inspiration from similar liberal models as most other advocates like Akwasi, he is additionally influenced by his Christian religious beliefs. He sees himself to be on a divine mission, a reason I classify him as

the missionary peacebuilder. The missionary peacebuilder approaches child labor advocacy as an evangelical mission with the aim of winning converts and saving communities. There is a sense in which most of the advocates can be understood as missionaries or proselytizers, even those who do not overtly espouse religious sentiments. Yet the active missionary peacebuilder like Kwadwo often combines child labor advocacy with religious advocacy.

A Heart for Children: Queenster's Advocacy Story

Queenster's journey as an advocate originated from the heart of her community, where farming and fishing served as the main sources of livelihood. As she grew up, she observed the stark realities that children faced. Contributing to their families' work on farms or going fishing was seen as a natural part of life as she recounted "Growing up in a community primarily dependent on farming and fishing, I saw first-hand how life revolved around these trades. To us, involving children in farm work was normal, part of our daily routines and culture. We never paused to think about whether these practices harmed the children. After all, it was the only life we knew." Like Akwasi, Queenster experienced child labor herself but was not critical of it growing up. Like many in her community, she initially accepted child labor as part of everyday life—children helping on farms or in family trades was perceived as normal and even necessary. The struggles these children endured often went unrecognized, viewed merely as an accepted norm woven into the fabric of tradition, culture, and necessity. It was through her engagement with external organizations like the European Union (EU) and the ILO that she and her fellow community members started to understand the severity of the situation. Also, her critical consciousness began to shift when broader conversations about child labor emerged in her community, not necessarily out of concern for children's rights, but due to economic anxiety when the global cocoa industry turned its spotlight onto Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, identifying

both nations as leading cocoa producers, yet alarmingly reliant on child labor practices. Her community's awakening to the issue was catalyzed by fears that international buyers of the cocoa sector would reject Ghanaian produce due to non-compliance with ethical labor standards. She recalled, "If we don't tackle this child labor issue, there will come a time when they won't purchase our cocoa." In this sense, the initial impulse was externally driven, rooted in market pressures rather than child protection. This contrasts with someone like Akwasi, whose motivation is deeply rooted in personal trauma and survival. Queenster's trajectory shows that advocacy can also be driven by structural awareness, emerging through education and institutional engagement. Over time, as she reflected on her childhood and began working directly with affected children, her sense of purpose shifted. What began as a response to external pressures evolved into a deeply personal and justice-oriented mission. Although the community's concern was pragmatic, it opened up space for dialogue and reflection. She began to see how child labor, once normalized, was actually a barrier to long-term community development and children's futures.

This awakening led to prompt action from national leaders, including President Kuffour's administration in the early 2000s, along with other influential figures. Queenster participated in a baseline survey carried out in partnership with NGOs and government ministries to gain a comprehensive understanding of the scope and nature of child labor in Ghana. As the surveys commenced, Queenster learned how the international community evaluated child labor by observing the tasks children undertook, such as climbing coconut trees, carrying heavy loads, and rising before dawn to transport food from far-off farms. In her community, these activities were considered normal, even playful. She recounted how children took pride in climbing trees, eager to showcase their abilities. However, through the international perspective, these tasks

were unequivocally classified as child labor (hazardous activities that compromised education, health, and the overall development of childhood).

Initially, Queenster, along with other community members, felt defensive and uneasy about the idea that their cultural practices could be harming their children. However, she soon came to grasp a more profound reality. Reflecting on her own childhood, Queenster recalled waking up early well before dawn to trek five or six kilometers through difficult terrain and cross rivers just to bring food home before school. She remembered classmates who were too exhausted to concentrate in class, their morning chores having drained their energy. “I too used to wake up around 4:00 am, walking five to six kilometers, crossing streams and rough terrains, just to fetch food from the farm before school. By the time classes started at 7:30 am, many of us were already exhausted and sleepy. Our education suffered immensely, but we didn't see the link back then.” Revisiting these memories, she began to view child labor not just as a cultural norm, but as a significant barrier to children's well-being and potential. Over time, she became profoundly engaged in educating her community. Her advocacy was characterized by patience, respect, and a strong foundation in cultural understanding. She started raising awareness among families about the often-overlooked dangers: the hours children spent working instead of resting or studying, the physical hazards lurking in seemingly innocent chores, and the negative impact these experiences had on their education and future opportunities.

Queenster has actively engaged in child labor monitoring initiatives within her community, playing a pivotal role by coordinating information gathered from multiple local institutions, including health, agriculture, community development, and immigration departments. She explained that the monitoring system allowed for timely intervention. Although she acknowledged logistical and financial constraints sometimes limited effective monitoring,

she firmly believed the collaborative, community-based strategy remained impactful, as it ensured accurate, firsthand information, empowering communities to take ownership in combating child labor.

Despite her enthusiasm and commitment, Queenster encountered considerable resistance at first when she began her community advocacy against child labor. Many community members found it difficult to accept that using children in the farm or fishing could potentially harm their own children. Some community leaders would often respond by highlighting successful adults, including politicians and Members of Parliament, Managers asserting that these public office holders had performed similar tasks in their childhood without any apparent negative effects. In response, she consistently posed the question of how many children had been left behind or permanently disadvantaged due to the hardships they faced, drawing attention to the unseen victims who never realized their full potential. Also, Queenster encountered logistical and financial obstacles that limited her ability to conduct extensive outreach. She stated that,

Sometimes there are communities we want to visit, that without a proper vehicle, you can't even go there. And some of the communities, without a canoe, you can't cross to that side to be able to be able to engage the people. The radio that could be used also charge high prices and sometimes we don't have the means to be able to pay. Once in a while, they do well. They give us some free airtime to come and talk. But especially on some occasions, where they are against child labor, they find it challenging to allow to come and educate the public.

The difficulties she faced in arranging transportation to remote communities, the prohibitive costs of radio airtime for educational campaigns, and the challenges of securing sufficient resources for a comprehensive approach to child welfare was eminent as she indicated, “there are

communities we want to visit, that without a proper vehicle, you can't even go there. And some of the communities, without a canoe, you can't cross to that side to be able to engage the people.”

Queenster recounted a distressing experience that lingered in her memory, a story that was both heartbreaking and powerful. In a small village, she encountered a woman overwhelmed by the weight of her circumstances, a mother of ten children, each one placed in the hands of different individuals to be used for labor. The children toiled under grueling conditions, earning little more than a few pennies, if they received anything at all. Queenster and her team held a community conversation in the village to address this issue. As the residents came together, an air of sorrow enveloped them, and many could not hold back their tears as they learned just how deeply these children had been exploited. Queenster believed that the sight of the children’s and their parents’ pains struck a chord in everyone present, igniting a spark of awareness in the village.

Similarly, Queenster recalled another significant moment in her advocacy visits to Amanfi East, a community that her office regularly served. She shared how, whenever her team approached specific areas, the children would quickly run away and hide in the bushes, a situation that she believed reflected the community's heightened awareness and concern about child labor monitoring. As she explained, “When these children saw us, they ran into the bush. So, it created an awareness that whenever we were coming, they would hide, signaling clearly that child labour was indeed happening there.”

Looking back on her experiences, Queenster frequently felt irritated and frustrated when she witnessed children being abused. It made her think of her relatives and acquaintances who never realized their full potential because of unrecognized childhood struggles. Despite these obstacles, she was proud of the little victories and heightened awareness she had contributed to

in local communities. She was convinced that there has been discernible changes as parents were increasingly more watchful and knowledgeable about the dangers of child labor. Looking ahead, Queenster envisioned a future where the government and district assemblies would create shelters or facilities to support vulnerable children rescued from child labor. She feared that without such facilities, it would be difficult to safeguard these children, as returning them to the same detrimental conditions would only perpetuate the issue.

In contrast with her male counterparts like Akwasi and Kwadwo, Queenster's advocacy work is shaped by her gender in significant ways. As a woman, she is often able to access domestic and caregiving spaces more easily, connecting with mothers and young girls in ways that male advocates might not. This relational positioning allows her to approach families as a "mother" or "sister" figure, fostering trust and empathy, especially in sensitive cases involving girls. However, her work is not without resistance; in community meetings and interactions with male-dominated leadership structures, she sometimes encounters skepticism or is subtly dismissed, highlighting the persistent influence of patriarchal norms in rural Ghanaian communities. While male advocates often draw legitimacy from culturally sanctioned leadership roles, Queenster navigates advocacy through emotional labor, care, and mentorship demonstrating that child labor advocacy is not gender-neutral, but deeply shaped by how advocates are received and the tools they are able to use.

In summary, Queenster's story is representative of several other advocates I interviewed, most especially women. While her advocacy draws largely from the same ideological pool as the visionary and missionary advocates, the praxis of Queenster's work is rooted in a form of empathy that is not generally common among the advocates. Hers' is quintessentially maternal. She has a deep sense of appreciation of children's experience and generally appears to approach

abused children as though they were her own kids. Her maternal gestures bring an affective touch and quality to community peacebuilding that is unique. She, therefore, represents a group of community peacebuilders that one might regard as the empathetic advocate. The empathetic advocate is not significantly different from the visionary and the missionary advocates. Her distinctive quality is that she approaches community advocacy as practice in empathetic practice, seeking to not merely to educate people about the horrors of child labor but more importantly to get people to be emotionally involved in recognizing the violent nature of the practice.

The Nurturing Advocate: Grace's Advocacy Story

Unlike Akwasi and Queenster, Grace's journey into child labor advocacy was not a result of personal childhood experience or a long-standing ambition but rather emerged through the unanticipated rhythms of work. A Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at a child rights-focused NGO in Ghana's coastal region, Grace's introduction to advocacy was circumstantial. Like Kwadwo, she initially accepted a job opportunity out of necessity. But what began as a practical decision evolved into a profound personal mission. As she recalled, "I would not say it was a choice... but as I was working, getting familiar with the environment, getting to know the children and working with them, it built that kind of love for children for me." Over time, witnessing the harsh realities many children endured transformed her professional responsibilities into a deeply emotional commitment to social justice.

Grace's advocacy operated across multiple fronts, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of child labor in Ghana. Her organization's core mission was to combat child trafficking and labor, particularly in coastal communities where economic precarity often pushed children into exploitative work. Grounded in the experience of the NGO's founder who is a survivor of child trafficking himself, the organization's approach spanned prevention,

protection, rescue, recovery, and reintegration. Grace was not on the frontlines of child rescues, but as the M&E Manager, she played a vital role in documenting, analyzing, and reporting on the children's journeys from vulnerability to recovery. Through community-based research, data generation, and impact assessment, she provided critical insights that shaped both policy and programming.

Grace's work is marked by close collaboration with a web of stakeholders including parents, caregivers, teachers, local leaders, CCPCs, the police, and sometimes even the military. Community sensitization forms a significant part of her organization's advocacy, ranging from radio broadcasts to door-to-door engagement. She coordinated with CCPCs, and grassroots volunteers trained and empowered by the organization to act as child rights champions in their communities. "They are 24/7 people on guard," she explained. "Most children are very familiar with them and are able to open up about some of these issues." These embedded actors serve as the organization's eyes and ears on the ground, often forming trusting bonds with children and alerting Grace and her team to abuse, trafficking, or neglect. Some memorable encounters were recollected by Grace. One such moment involved interviewing a young girl, barely ten years old, covered in visible scars. When Grace asked what the child hoped could change about her situation, the girl quietly said, "Tell my mum to stop abusing me." The raw simplicity of that plea, shook Grace deeply. Another time, she recounted a teenage girl already raising a nine-month-old baby after sexual abuse. Despite her age and trauma, the girl opted to learn a trade instead of returning to school, highlighting the many diverging paths children are forced to navigate in the aftermath of exploitation. "These are things we keep seeing," Grace said. "Sometimes, it gets you so emotional."

Despite these hardships, the impact of her organization's work is significant. Grace proudly spoke of the thousands of children rescued and the long-term support they received. From basic education to tertiary scholarships, from psychological counseling to caregiver training, the scope of the organization's interventions has expanded, offering vulnerable children a real chance at rebuilding their lives. "If nothing at all," she said, "we can boast of rescuing almost two thousand children from the lake, and all of them have received almost all the support." The advocacy also included empowering rescued children as agents of change. "We believe that any child who is rescued by us is, by default, an advocate and an ambassador," Grace noted. Their transformation which is visible in their confidence, demeanor, and articulation often becomes a model for others in the community. Some children, after being supported to go back to school, express aspirations of becoming like Grace herself, seeing in her a tangible example of what education and care can do to empower exploited children.

Still, the work was not without challenges. Chief among them is financial constraint. As a donor-dependent NGO, there are limits to what can be achieved. "Sometimes you wish you could support as many children as you can, but we depend on funds to even undertake specific projects," she explained. Another major obstacle is the social and cultural conditioning that fosters silence and resignation among children. "There's so much timidity put in them... they know their responsibilities but don't know their rights," she lamented. For Grace, this cultural dynamic not only inhibits reporting of abuse but reinforces cycles of exploitation and subjugation. Parenting practices also present persistent difficulties. Grace expressed frustration with families, particularly absentee or negligent parents who offload caregiving responsibilities onto relatives or strangers without adequate support, exposing children to exploitation. She recounted a woman who admitted she "sold" her older children to support the younger ones,

revealing a troubling commodification of childhood. In other instances, parents justified child labor by appealing to the family's survival, such as using eight-year-olds to fry sweet potatoes over open flames or deploying them for overnight fish smoking.

Again Grace recounted the challenge in getting the needed resources to help facilitate the smooth operation of their daily activities as advocates by espousing that,

...Roads are bad in such areas. So, it's difficult to reach certain communities. So sometimes you're supposed to go there. But due to some circumstances surrounding you, you may think, let's use other communities because reaching those communities is very difficult. This hinders us from getting there, let alone performing monitoring

To illustrate the deficiencies in the transportation system hindering their operations in communities that need them most.

Grace's experiences offer a vivid portrait of community advocacy as both emotionally laborious and structurally embedded. Her work exemplifies the tension between local action and broader institutional frameworks. On one hand, she coordinates grassroots initiatives that respond to community needs in real time. On the other, she engages with government agencies and aligns her work with global child rights conventions, demonstrating how community advocacy in Ghana functions not outside but within the broader liberal peacebuilding architecture. Her reflections show how personal experience, emotional labor, and strategic collaboration converge in the struggle against child labor, positioning her not only as a protector of children but also as a critical actor in the global effort to promote justice, dignity, and peace.

In summary, Grace's story can be classified as part of a unique group of community peacebuilders that I refer to as institutional nurturers. Unlike visionary or missionary advocates who are primarily motivated by their personal experiences with child labor or who have strong

religious beliefs, Grace's advocacy is deeply rooted in her position within a formal child rights NGO. She did not begin her journey with a clear activist identity but instead cultivated one over time through her ongoing engagement with vulnerable children and the institutional frameworks surrounding them. Her work exemplifies how emotional care, and systemic coordination can work hand in hand as mutually supportive foundations of advocacy. Grace adeptly navigates complex processes such as coordinating rescues with government agencies, managing monitoring and evaluation data, and aiding children in their educational reintegration while also providing emotional support, mentorship, and maternal guidance to those in recovery. This dual role of merging bureaucratic duties with profound emotional investment renders Grace a distinctive peacebuilding figure. Her impact arises not from public advocacy but from fostering change within established systems. As an institutional nurturer, she illustrates that grassroots peacebuilding can thrive not only in opposition to formal structures but also through them, paving the way for care-driven and sustainable advocacy within the very institutions responsible for child protection and community welfare.

Discussion and Conclusion

The stories shared by child labor advocates highlight that grassroots advocacy in Ghana is not only profoundly personal but also firmly rooted in the structure of society. Numerous advocates, such as Akwasi, utilize their own childhood experiences of labor and poverty, turning personal challenges into meaningful action. Individuals like Grace and Kwadwo engage in advocacy driven by their professional or spiritual paths, but they all share a unifying bond: a deep emotional and ethical dedication to safeguarding children. Their narratives highlight how advocacy arises not just from official requirements, but from a deep moral urgency influenced by personal experiences, empathy, and a strong connection to the community. These advocates are

not just passive followers of outside programs; they are proactive agents who interpret and adapt, global frameworks to better fit the needs and values of their communities.

Additionally, the narratives emphasize how child labor advocacy serves as a means of fostering peace, an aspect frequently neglected in conventional literature. By implementing education campaigns, mobilizing communities, rescuing children, and establishing grassroots committees, these advocates tackle the immediate dangers of child labor as well as the underlying issues such as poverty, neglect, and cultural acceptance that perpetuate it. They act as connections between global standards and local situations, skillfully maneuvering through logistical, cultural, and political challenges. Their work shows that peacebuilding in this context is not just a theoretical concept or something for the elite, but rather practical, emotional, and rooted in genuine care. This understanding broadens the scope of peace and conflict studies by demonstrating how community-driven advocacy can serve as a powerful catalyst for change in environments characterized by systemic violence against children.

The stories of Akwasi, Kwadwo, Queenster, and Grace collectively illustrate the profound complexities and inspiring dedication involved in grassroots advocacy against child labor in Ghana. These advocates embody the spirit of resilience and hope, drawing upon their own life challenges and triumphs to inspire action and effect change. Their distinct personalities and lived experiences offer insightful reflections on what it means to advocate for the rights of children within the complexities of Ghana's socio-economic landscape. Their stories are a powerful reminder that while the fight against child labor is fraught with obstacles, the voices of dedicated advocates can inspire hope and mobilize communities toward a vision for a future where every child can thrive free from labor and exploitation.

In the next chapter, a thematic synthesis of the full data set is presented to highlight common patterns in motivations, strategies, and challenges that characterize the broader landscape of community child labor advocacy in Ghana. This shift builds upon the four narrative profiles explored in the current chapter, which offered in-depth, contextualized insights into the lived realities, moral commitments, and strategic approaches of individual advocates. While each story is unique, they collectively reflect shared experiences across the full set of thirty participants in this study. Rather than merging individual narratives with emerging patterns in this already detailed chapter, the next chapter isolates those shared experiences for clearer presentation. It is important to note that a more critical analysis and interpretive engagement with both the stories (Chapter four) and the thematic findings (Chapter five) was undertaken in Chapters six and seven, where the broader connections are made to the literature situating their narratives within the broader structural conditions of child labor violence and their implications for peacebuilding. By weaving together both narrative and thematic elements, the chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of how grassroots actors in Ghana engage with the complex task of eradicating child labor and situating their efforts within both local contexts and global peacebuilding frameworks.

Chapter Five

Thematic Synthesis of Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy Experiences in Ghana

Introduction

Chapter five presents a descriptive thematic synthesis of the findings from the broader dataset collected from thirty community child labor advocates in Ghana. The purpose of this chapter is to lay a clear empirical foundation by outlining the dominant thematic currents observed across the interviews. By distilling these themes, the chapter offers a comprehensive view of how community advocates in Ghana experience, navigate, and sustain their work, and how their efforts contribute to broader peacebuilding goals. Drawing on the participants' collective experiences, this section presents three overarching themes that emerged, each with subthemes including; motivations for child labor advocates (childhood experiences and personal encounters with child labor, a sense of responsibility to curb child labor practices, championing children's right as a divine calling and passion to make impact in the lives of child labor victims), child labor advocacy strategies (raising awareness and education, community empowerment and capacity building, and collaboration and partnerships), and barriers to community advocacy against child labor (such as lack of funding and support, community resistance and cultural challenges, poverty within communities, sustainability efforts after NGOs exit, duplication of efforts among NGOs. The thematic insights presented here serve as a bridge between the rich individual stories explored in Chapter 4 and the more critical, interpretive analyses that follow in Chapters 6 and 7. Through this structure, the thesis provides a layered understanding of grassroots child labor advocacy first through representative individual stories, then through shared patterns, and ultimately through deeper theoretical engagement.

Motivations for Child Labor Advocates in Ghana

This theme explores the personal and social forces that compel individuals to engage in child labor advocacy. The interviews revealed four main motivational factors, including childhood experiences and personal encounters with child labor, sense of responsibility to curb child labor practices, championing children's right as a divine calling and the passion to make impact in the lives of child labor victims. Many participants shared personal stories of their own childhoods, citing personal experiences with child labor either as former child laborers themselves or as witnesses to its impact on their communities. From the participants' responses, it can be inferred that their motivations are deeply rooted in both personal and broader vision for societal change. The emotional weight of their experiences, coupled with a strong sense of responsibility toward the younger generation, fuels their commitment to advocacy. This suggests that effective advocacy against child labor in Ghana is not only about addressing the issue at a systemic level but also about harnessing the power of personal narratives and community solidarity to inspire action and change. Below is the presentation of the unique paths that led them to become advocates and activists.

Childhood Experiences and Personal Encounters with Child Labor

The study identified childhood and personal experiences as a major factor that propels people to engage in child labor advocacy in Ghana. Many individuals involved in grassroots efforts to combat child labor in Ghana have personal experiences that fuel their dedication to this cause. Personal experiences in this context refer to the individual events, situations, or interactions that a person has encountered in their life. Some advocates have witnessed the adverse effects of child labor firsthand or have been victims themselves.

Firstly, just as Akwasi's advocacy is rooted in his own childhood experiences of labor and deprivation, other participants similarly drew on personal histories as a powerful source of motivation. Kofisco, for instance, described a difficult upbringing marked by early separation from his parents and economic hardship, which compelled him to work to survive. These formative experiences, like Akwasi's, have shaped a deep commitment to protecting children from similar fates. Reflecting on his journey, Kofisco shared the following story with me:

Yes, I chose to become an advocate because when I was younger, 3 years, my father sent me to Dormaa Ahenkro to stay with people so me I did not have the opportunity to stay with my parents to go to school. When I am going to school, they don't give me money and I had to go to school with empty stomach so if God did not permit probably, I would have been an armed robber or whatsoever...I passed through a lot that is why I have chosen to champion children's welfare. I am advocating so that people will not send their kids into hard labor. Even if you are eating a cassava, just enjoy the cassava with your child instead of sending your child to some places or whatsoever to go to school and be engaged in all sorts of hazardous activities.

Kofisco's account highlights how personal suffering can be turned into a powerful form of advocacy. Similar to Akwasi, he views his role not just as a means of correction but as a proactive mission, working to ensure that the cycle of hardship does not recur in the lives of others. These stories show how personal experiences of exclusion and struggle frequently form the emotional and moral foundation of community-driven advocacy.

Similarly to Akwasi and Kofisco, who rooted their advocacy in their personal narratives of struggle, Lemuel also draws heavily from his experiences as a former child laborer. Drawing from his past as a former child laborer, Lemuel is driven by a desire to ensure that no child has to

endure the same struggles he faced. This commitment has inspired Lemuel to utilize his knowledge and skills to educate and train farmers, empowering them to seek alternative solutions and reduce the prevalence of child labor in their community. Lemuel reported on this issue in the following manner:

Drawing from my own personal experience as a former child laborer, where I would help my parents on the farm for hours and carry firewood, I understand the hardships and unpleasantness associated with such work. I don't want anyone else to go through the same situation. That's why I made the decision to utilize my knowledge and skills to educate and train farmers, empowering them to find alternative solutions and mitigate the occurrence of child labor in my community.

Lemuel's story demonstrates a significant trend among many advocates in this study: the ability to transform pain into purpose. For advocates like him, their advocacy serves as both a means of personal healing and a proactive effort to prevent future harm.

Moreover, the theme of personal experience as a driving force for advocacy is further echoed in the story of Takyi, whose inspiration centers on lost educational opportunities and the long-term consequences of child labor. Takyi reflected on his own lack of support and opportunities in his education and how this has impacted his life. He expressed a strong desire to ensure that the children in his community have the opportunities that he did not have and that they are protected from engaging in harmful and exploitative labor practices. For example, he shared how he was forced to work in hazardous conditions as a child and how this affected his physical and mental well-being. He believed that every child deserves a chance to grow and thrive, and he is motivated to fight for their rights. He outlined the following in his narrative:

Me for instance, I was very clever at school, but I had no support to continue schooling but was rather forced into farming and working in galamsey sites. If I had gotten someone to assist me, I would have gotten to where I wanted to get to in life. Those that I was clever than who had support, some have finished university and are in the cities working.

So, at times I use mine as an example that if had someone to cater for my schooling I could have been a prominent person but since I didn't get anyone that is why we are educating and encouraging ourselves that as I was unable to do, I want others to be able to do it. So, I have devoted myself to help my community to desist from using children in hard labor so that they do not end up like me.

Takyi's story expresses a profound awareness of what could have been, had he received the support and protection that was denied to him as a child. Instead of leading to resignation, this feeling of loss has ignited his resolve to forge better outcomes for the children in his community.

In summary, the theme of personal histories and childhood experiences as a driving force behind child labor advocacy strongly supports this study's overarching argument that community advocates in Ghana do not serve merely as isolated, indigenous alternatives to liberal peacebuilding; instead, they act as localized implementers of its fundamental principles.

Participants like Akwasi, Kofisco, Lemuel, and Takyi exemplify how personal trauma whether stemming from direct involvement in child labor or witnessing its impact can serve as a powerful basis for rights-based advocacy. Their stories resonate with liberal peacebuilding's focus on human dignity, protection of the vulnerable, and transformative justice; however, these ideals are not merely abstract concepts but are deeply rooted in their lived experiences and moral urgency.

While childhood experiences and personal encounters with hardship are often cited as motivations for advocacy, the narratives of Akwasi, Kofisco, Lemuel, and Takyi reveal a more complex dynamic: these early life experiences do not merely explain why advocates become involved but fundamentally shape how they experience, practice, and sustain their advocacy. These advocates approach child labor not as a policy problem alone, but as a deeply personal and moral injustice they have lived through. Their work becomes a continuation of their own interrupted childhoods, an emotionally charged process that blends activism, healing, and resistance. Their embodied knowledge grants them legitimacy within their communities and equips them with the empathy and insight needed to reach vulnerable children and families. Yet, this proximity to the issue also exposes them to emotional exhaustion, moral conflict, and the burden of reliving past trauma. Their lived experiences anchor a form of grassroots peacebuilding that is not separate from global child protection norms but is rooted in memory, community accountability, and the moral urgency to prevent others from enduring what they once did.

A Sense of Responsibility to Curb Child Labor Practices

A deep sense of moral and civic responsibility surfaced in numerous narratives as a key motivation for involvement in child labor advocacy. For these participants, advocacy transcended a mere professional role; it was seen as an ethical obligation rooted in the understanding that children represent some of the most vulnerable and least empowered members of society. Akosua articulated this sentiment beautifully when she said that,

Children are our major stakeholders, but I also believe that they are the least being involved... I feel like I am fighting for the vulnerable in society... Well, it's part of my responsibility as a committee member. Per our mandate we are supposed to protect the

rights of these children so it's part of my functions, so as an obligation I am supposed to do it but like I said initially, I have the passion to see children who are vulnerable being out of that situation and have their rights.

Akosua's portrayal of children as essential to society yet systematically excluded highlights a broader trend in which advocates view themselves as moral intermediaries, bridging the divide between vulnerable children and the systems that inadequately safeguard them. This ingrained sense of responsibility is not only emotional but also rooted in institutional and constitutional contexts, as numerous advocates pointed to Ghana's legal and civic obligations to protect children's rights.

Kwabena, another participant, highlighted the structural voicelessness of children within Ghanaian society. He viewed advocacy as a duty to elevate these silenced voices and ensure that children's needs are not overlooked. He expressed this idea in the following way:

It's a responsibility for all of us. I always want to make impact and I myself from my early age up to my adulthood up to this time, I have seen that children are mostly not given attention when they speak...they don't have a voice, that is a fact. If I am hungry, I can say I am hungry, I want food but for a child he will need somebody to understand him that, this child is hungry let's get him something to eat. So, it is a form of motivation for me. I am motivated to offer my service to bring out something that is inside of them that they cannot bring it out.

Kwabena's statement reveals that responsibility extends beyond formal roles; it embodies a shared social obligation. His advocacy stems from an awareness of children's marginalization and the necessity to act as intermediaries who can voice what children themselves often cannot articulate. For Kwabena, advocacy involves representation, empathy, and accountability.

Likewise, Barima showcased advocacy as a way to amplify children's voices and restore their dignity in environments where they are frequently silenced. He noted the following in his story:

Advocating for children's rights allows me to amplify their voices and ensure they are heard. Often, children lack the agency and platform to express their needs and concerns in Ghana. By advocating on their behalf, I aim to bridge this gap and empower them to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. I believe that involving children in decision-making processes cultivates a sense of dignity, fosters their self-esteem, and contributes to their overall development.

Barima's perspective reshapes advocacy to be seen not just as a means of protection, but also as a source of empowerment. His aim goes beyond merely voicing the concerns of children; he seeks to foster an environment where they can ultimately express themselves and feel included. His perspective demonstrates a nuanced grasp of child protection, encompassing both intervention and the development of capabilities. The advocate serves as a temporary voice and a connection to lasting agency, illustrating that responsibility encompasses not just the defense of children's rights but also the restoration of their role in the public sphere.

Apart from the above, Neal also framed his motivation a sense of responsibility which . Drawing from his own upbringing and broader reflections on community well-being, Neal linked child protection directly to the long-term health of society. He explained this sentiment as follows:

I think, this is something that should be everybody's concern and it should be a priority for all adults. Personally, I strongly believe that my upbringing played a crucial role in my current stage of life. As I mentioned earlier, the future of every society, globally,

relies on the well-being of children. If we neglect their development and fail to protect them, how can we expect them to become responsible adults? Communities that do not prioritize the protection of children face dire consequences.

They may struggle to sustain themselves or witness the negative outcomes of young individuals growing up without proper care, possibly leading to social issues. This raises questions about peace, development, and the overall human resource of such a community. Essentially, child protection has implications at the social, economic, and crime levels. It is crucial that we continue our unwavering efforts to ensure the protection of children.

Neal's insights expand the concept of responsibility from individual or role-specific obligations to a collective and systemic perspective, highlighting that the protection of children is essential for peace and sustainable development. He relates advocacy to both community survival and national advancement, framing child protection as not just a social good but as a vital component of peacebuilding. His sense of responsibility is guided by foresight; he perceives the neglect of children as a significant threat to the social fabric and future stability of society.

Again, Oduro anchored his motivation to advocate for children's rights in a defined constitutional and professional obligation. Oduro portrayed his advocacy as a legal duty rooted in the national framework and his official responsibilities. He had the following to say on the issue:

I became an advocate for children's rights because both the constitution and my official position require me to address issues related to child labor. The constitution explicitly states that our responsibility is to protect children. Therefore, it is our duty to ensure that children can fully enjoy their basic rights. This means advocating for their rights and

working towards creating an environment where children's rights are respected and upheld.

Oduro's account shows how state mandates and civic accountability inform advocacy. For some local actors, child labor advocacy transcends personal choice, serving as a formal expression of citizenship and professional ethics. By referencing the Ghanaian Constitution, he frames his responsibility within a legal context, illustrating how global child protection values integrate into local governance. His narrative demonstrates the intersection of national law and grassroots peacebuilding, where advocacy fulfills constitutional promises in communities.

Atinga brings together many of the earlier insights by expressing his motivation as a profound sense of personal and civic responsibility. His perspective is rooted not in just one emotional experience or formal directive, but in a wide-ranging, values-based dedication to the well-being of children and the growth of the community. He mentioned that every child has the right to be free and to flourish:

My dedication to this cause stems from a deep-rooted belief that every child deserves to live a safe, healthy, and fulfilling life and that it is my duty to make that happen.

Throughout my journey as a child rights activist, I have worked closely with various organizations, to promote and protect the rights of children.

I have actively participated in campaigns and initiatives aimed at ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, and adequate nutrition for children in our community. Additionally, I have also been engaged in raising awareness about child labor, exploitation, and abuse. I firmly believe that by empowering children and supporting their rights, we can build a better future for our community.

Atinga's reflection highlights the journey of responsibility as a motivating force, moving from individual conviction to collaborative action. He conveys moral urgency alongside a strategic vision for systemic change, viewing advocacy as a long-term public commitment intertwined with education, healthcare, and social development. Atinga's belief in duty is demonstrated through action and partnership, embodying a grassroots actor who advances global peacebuilding goals with ethically driven advocacy.

In a nut shell, the theme of responsibility illustrates how community child labor advocates in Ghana view their work as a deeply internalized obligation rather than just a role. This commitment is grounded in constitutional mandates, communal values, ethical beliefs, and a collective dedication to social justice. Voices from participants like Akosua, Kwabena, Neal, Oduro, Agyemang, Diana, Barima, and Atinga reveal that advocacy is proactive, driven by the desire to protect, represent, and empower often voiceless children. Their sense of responsibility grants advocates moral clarity and social legitimacy, positioning them as key actors in justice and community care. This understanding shows that their advocacy is influenced by duty and foresight, rather than solely emotional or historical triggers. Their steadfast commitment to protecting vulnerable children, promoting dignity, and preventing societal harm exemplifies grassroots peacebuilding a community-centric approach aimed at dismantling structural violence and fostering long-term social stability. Thus, advocacy emerges as both a moral response to local suffering and a strategic contribution to national and global peace.

Championing Children's Right as a Divine Calling

For some advocates, the motivation to combat child labor transcends personal experience or professional obligation. It is grounded in a deep spiritual or religious conviction. These individuals view their advocacy work not just as social responsibility but as a divine assignment.

Their efforts are often sustained by a sense of calling from God, which imbues their work with a moral and spiritual imperative. This belief frames their intervention in child labor as not merely a developmental or humanitarian activity, but as a sacred duty to protect and uplift vulnerable children. They are inspired by their faith, believing that they are called to protect vulnerable children and promote social justice. This sense of divine purpose drives them to take action, as they feel a moral obligation to advocate for the rights and well-being of children who are often marginalized and exploited in their communities. For instance, Kwadwo noted that it was his duty as an advocate to struggle for the rights of children in Ghana:

So being an advocate for children I feel like I am doing what...let me be a bit spiritual here, not really spiritual but I just want to quote something from the Bible. You see when the disciples were stopping the children, Jesus said let the children come to me. Alright so I feel like I am doing what Jesus wants me to really do.

So, children are our major stakeholders, but I also believe that they are the least being involved so being an and advocate for them, I am making their voices heard. I am fighting the battle they can't fight with their strength; I am going to places they can't go so by making their voices heard, I feel like I am also championing their course that will also help to improve their lives. I feel like I am fighting for the vulnerable in society.

Kwadwo's statement reflects a sense of spiritual alignment and obedience to a higher calling and reveals how divine calling serves as both a source of strength and a compass for action. It enables advocates like Kwadwo to persevere through adversity, interpreting their role as standing in the gap for children who cannot yet advocate for themselves. The moral and spiritual language used reinforces their sense of purpose and illustrates how faith-based motivations intersect with rights-based activism in Ghana's child labor advocacy landscape.

Additionally, Nigel echoed this sentiment, grounding his motivation in a divinely ordained sense of purpose:

Children are dear to God, and I believe he has entrusted them into our care. Sometimes, it's difficult and so if the Lord has not really given you such an assignment, you will easily give up especially when things seem not to change. But for me, I am motivated to carry on because I see that I have been called to champion the welfare of people including children.

Nigel's affirmation underscores how spiritual conviction sustains long-term commitment to advocacy, even when outcomes are slow or resistance is high.

In summary, the framing of advocacy as a divine calling not only drives long-term commitment but also shapes how advocates interpret challenges. Setbacks and opposition are viewed as spiritual trials rather than professional obstacles, which strengthens their resolve. Their faith becomes both a source of motivation and a lens through which they interpret their impact grounding their work in hope, compassion, and perseverance.

Passion to Make Impact in the Lives of Child Labor Victims

For many of the advocates, their involvement in child labor advocacy stems not from formal duty or previous experiences, but from a profound desire to create significant change. This passion serves as a deep motivation, a driving force that goes beyond obligation or money and is most strongly experienced in direct engagement with the children and families impacted. In contrast to role-based duties or childhood experiences, passion arises as a genuine commitment, frequently fueled by the tangible and emotional satisfaction that comes from positively impacting the lives of others.

Ama, for instance, explained that her advocacy transcended the boundaries of a mere profession; it is a profound passion fueled by her experiences on the ground and the trust-filled relationships she cultivated with families. She conveyed that advocating for children's rights is her passion and it brings her great joy:

You know, it is a passion in as much as we do it as a work, for me it is a passion for me.

like I told you, I said it is a passion when you are on the field and other stuff because my experiences are that if you go to the community and a parent has a challenge, they can approach you and seek technical advice from you.

Ama's statement shows the emotional and relational aspects of her passion for advocacy. In her view, the essence of advocacy truly unfolds in the field, where she can witness the tangible impact of her work, forge meaningful relationships, and share her expertise with parents seeking assistance. This perspective underscores that passion is not merely an internal sentiment; it is also a reciprocal bond with the community that affirms and nourishes the advocate's commitment. Unlike responsibility, which can feel like an obligation imposed from the outside, passion is an intrinsic motivation that is willingly embraced and continually bolstered by the trust and gratitude expressed by those she aims to support. This dynamic interaction between Ama and the families she serves illustrates the powerful role of community engagement in sustaining her advocacy efforts.

Further, Barima, like Ama, stated that his passion drives his involvement in child labor advocacy. However, while Ama focuses on emotional fulfillment and community trust, Barima's passion is centered on visionary thinking and achieving systemic transformation. He explained that it is critical to support children who are the bedrock of Ghanaian society:

Firstly, I am passionate about children... I firmly believe that children are the foundation of our society. By actively advocating for their rights, we are investing in a brighter future for all. Through my work, I strive to ensure that children have access to quality education, proper healthcare, and the opportunity to develop their full potential.

I am driven by the belief that empowering children at a young age will enable them to become responsible and successful individuals, thereby enhancing the overall well-being of our society. Secondly, working as an advocate for children grants me the privilege of giving a voice to those who are often silenced or marginalized.

Barima's passion is grounded in a broader social philosophy; he views advocacy as a means of nation-building through child empowerment. His commitment is fueled by emotional empathy and a long-term investment in societal well-being. What sets him apart is his connection of personal passion with structural thinking: advocating for education, health, and dignity as pathways to equity and transformation. Unlike those who see advocacy as a duty, Barima illustrates how passion can be a powerful ideological force, driving sustained involvement through a belief in justice, voice, and human development.

Also, Clergy affirmed the importance of passion in maintaining a long-term commitment to advocacy. His experience highlights that, in an environment where child labor advocacy is frequently under-resourced and emotionally challenging, passion is essential for preventing burnout and encouraging perseverance. He remarked that, "...Yes, you know, this work is, if you don't have the passion..., it's out of passion that some of us have been able to stay into this for so many years..."

Clergy's reflection demonstrates that passion transcends mere emotional response; it serves as a lasting source of motivation. His decision to persist in advocacy throughout the years,

indicates that for certain advocates, passion compensates for the absence of structural support and professional incentives. This adds a significant dimension to our comprehension of advocates' experiences: while some are motivated by vision (such as Barima) or relational impact (such as Ama), others persist in their efforts because passion is the sole factor that renders ongoing sacrifice feasible. In this context, passion functions as both resilience and identity, serving as a sustaining force that underpins long-term dedication to child labor eradication in Ghana.

Finally, Nigel emphasized the importance of passion by connecting it to emotional empathy and social awareness. His advocacy stems from the deep pain of seeing children suffer firsthand and from a keen awareness of how child labor connects with larger societal challenges such as school dropout, crime, and teenage pregnancy. He mentioned that child labour disadvantages Ghanaian children who are left behind:

I have a deep passion for helping children, and it saddens me to witness their suffering.

When I look around my community, I notice that many children lack access to education or are left to fend for themselves by their parents. This unfortunate situation often leads them down a troubled path, resulting in activities like robbery and teenage pregnancy. I believe that these issues arise due to the prevalence of child labor. In response, I am committed to assisting those children whom I can reach, aiming to contribute to their progress and well-being.

Nigel's narrative uncovers a facet of passion that is both emotional and strategic. His drive extends beyond individual impact; it focuses on tackling the structural causes of community instability. In his case, passion is ignited through compassionate witnessing but evolves into practical action. His insight into the connection between child labor and social decay frames his

work as a means of community safeguarding. This sets him apart from Ama, who prioritizes trust and the closeness of fieldwork, as well as from Barima, whose passion revolves around long-term national investment. Nigel exemplifies a protective and interventionist passion that transforms grief into action.

In summary, theme of passion to make an impact shows that for many community advocates, child labor activism is more than just a role or responsibility; it is a profound calling rooted in emotional commitment and a genuine desire to change the lives of children. Participants such as Ama expressed that passion emerges most vividly during community engagement, where advocates are sought for and relied upon for direction, showing how passion fosters relational trust and strengthens community bonds. Some, like Barima, connected passion to a wider social vision, viewing the protection of children as a lasting investment in the nation's well-being, social justice, and equity. For Clergy, passion acts as the emotional drive that keeps advocacy alive over time, particularly when there are no financial rewards or career options available. His story emphasizes that passion is not only what attracts advocates, but also what sustains their commitment in the face of challenges. Nigel brought in a new perspective, his passion stemmed from observing suffering and understanding the connections between child labor and the disintegration of communities. His account highlights that passion can serve as both a diagnostic tool and a catalyst for intervention, prompting immediate action in response to systemic neglect. Collectively, these stories illustrate that passion is a vibrant and enduring force, influencing how advocates face challenges, engage with communities, and present their work as significant and essential. This theme reinforces the dissertation's main argument by showing how local actors embody and promote global child protection ideals, not just through formal mandates, but through a genuine commitment that adapts international norms into practices that

resonate locally. Simultaneously, it strengthens the notion that advocating against child labor serves as a means of fostering peace, as advocacy fueled by passion directly addresses structural violence and aids in promoting community stability, empowering children, and ensuring the long-term well-being of society.

These motivations are not just personal drivers; they shape how advocates interpret their roles, engage communities, and sustain their work in the face of systemic challenges. This helps us understand that their work is not just technical or professional but it is deeply relational, value-driven, and emotionally invested. At the same time, these motivations reveal how grassroots advocates draw meaning and legitimacy from both local cultural narratives and global child rights principles. Their motivations fuel a form of localized implementation that blends personal conviction with international ideals, demonstrating that advocacy itself becomes a pathway for enacting justice and fostering community peace.

Child Labor Advocacy Strategies in Ghana

The second major theme identified from the interviews was the strategies advocates used to address the child labor situation in Ghana. In tackling child labor in various Ghanaian communities, advocates utilize a diverse array of strategies that are influenced by local circumstances as well as global child protection frameworks. These strategies not only showcase their dedication to protecting children but also highlight their flexible approaches to community involvement and systemic transformation. Through public education, grassroots mobilization, and institutional collaboration, the strategies discussed by participants illustrate the ongoing efforts to convert awareness into action. This section focuses on three primary advocacy approaches: raising awareness and education, community empowerment and capacity building, and collaboration and partnerships, each enriched with insights from the participants.

Awareness-raising and Education

In Ghana, a key approach used by advocates for child labor is to raise awareness and educate the public. This effort focuses on changing mindsets, informing practices, and fostering lasting attitudinal shifts within communities. Various participants underscored that a significant obstacle in the fight against child labor is the widespread ignorance regarding its detrimental effects, especially in rural and agricultural regions like fishing and cocoa-growing communities. In response, advocates focus on public education initiatives that highlight the dangers of child labor for children's physical health, mental development, and educational success. These initiatives typically aim to engage not only parents but also community leaders, educators, and policymakers. Participants shared their experiences of employing research-driven community outreach, personal stories, and follow-up visits to foster open conversations within communities. These interactions go beyond being just one-time events; they are designed as continuous campaigns aimed at fostering a sense of urgency, responsibility, and alternative perspectives on childhood that prioritize education and well-being. One participant, Kwaku, explained that it is critical for child advocates to engage with and educate the wider Ghanaian society about the exploitation of children:

...We do awareness. The awareness is let say a person who hasn't really heard anything about child labor, so you are now indulging the person, engaging the person. So, you need to create the person's awareness, you need to draw their attention to child labor. After the person's awareness has been created, then you sensitize him or her. It is here that you can take the person into details and as he or she keeps on understanding and starts asking questions, coming across with issues and sharing those issues with you then

you are using that one as a form of education then you use those issues to educate him or her.

Kwaku's description shows a cyclical and participatory learning model. It underscores the notion that successful advocacy goes beyond merely offering solutions; it involves establishing an environment where community members can raise their own questions and insights, which can then serve as gateways for further education. This approach cultivates a sense of community ownership over knowledge, transforming learning into a process that is not only top-down but collaboratively created.

Also, alongside direct education and engaging conversations, advocates utilize innovative and community-focused approaches to raise awareness and inform different groups about the risks associated with child labor. These consist of community gatherings, school visits, focus group discussions, and outreach efforts aimed at specific demographics like youth, women, and adult men. The aim of these efforts goes beyond education; they seek to inspire shared reflection and action among different generations and social roles. Kofisco provided a clear illustration of how these strategies come to life through events that are culturally meaningful and inclusive. He explained how they organize durbars, role plays, and football galas, providing community members with opportunities to connect with anti-child labor messages in engaging and relatable manners:

We create awareness... We do that by organizing community wide meeting, sometimes we also do focus group discussion, where we engage the youth, the women group and the adult male group and sometimes we go to the school, the children themselves, we teach them, we educate them on child work and what they are supposed to do...

We also organize durbars, then we also organize role play, we let them do role play to demonstrate parents who engage their children in child labor and then parents who do not and then at the end of it all what comes out. Sometimes we organize football gala, we give jerseys and other things, have our writings in it. At the event we use the opportunity to do the sensitization.

Kofisco's words demonstrates how social learning and awareness are embedded in local cultural practices leveraging familiar community events to normalize new ideas. By embedding educational content in role plays or football jerseys, these efforts not only attract attention but make abstract rights-based messages visible and memorable. His example also reflects an important theme in child labor advocacy: sensitization must be sustained, contextually grounded, and community-led to be effective.

Adding further depth to awareness and education strategies, advocates like Olasty emphasized the use of visual tools, particularly flashcards, as a key element in community sensitization. These cards depict vivid and often unsettling scenes of children enduring physical abuse, engaging in nighttime hawking, carrying heavy loads, or suffering exploitation by adults. The goal is not only to inform but to confront communities with lived realities that might otherwise be overlooked or normalized. Olasty narrated that the use of visual aids to inform public opinion is critical in changing society's views of child labour practices:

... We have flash cards, we have some materials we normally use in the community during sensitization. We have flash cards when [we] go to the community. After the community entry then we meet the opinion leaders and then we show them the flash cards.

We have a parent who is beating a child with a stick and then we also have some pictures of a child with heavy loads, we have some of the flashes you will see a child working at night, selling at night, we have a child being abused by an elderly person. And also, we have so many flash cards and we will show it to the opinion leaders and find out if such things are going on in the community and after that and we will know what to educate them on.

Olasty takes a strategy that is both informative and exploratory. The flashcards act as a means to encourage genuine reflection within the community regarding the issues of child labor and abuse, all the while assisting the advocate in customizing future educational materials. This approach demonstrates that raising awareness goes beyond simply sharing messages; it involves drawing out local knowledge, acknowledging community experiences, and fostering a collective sense of responsibility.

Similarly, some advocates make use of flyers and posters with vivid imagery to convey anti-child labor messages in a simple and accessible format. These materials often feature children engaged in hazardous or emotionally distressing labor thereby serving as visual reinforcements of the messages delivered during outreach events. Kwame disclosed that having a viable education strategy informs local people about child labour issues:

When we go to the communities, we have flyers, we have flyers all around, pictures showing what we describe as child labor, you see a child carrying a heavy load and all those things. In the communities we do show the people in a picture form what we have been saying about child labor. They are there, if you go to some of the communities, we do the work.

Kwame's statement indicates the strategic repetition and visibility that posters and flyers offer: they remain in the community long after the advocate has left, acting as constant reminders of the message. Unlike spoken messages, these visuals are passively absorbed over time, expanding the reach of advocacy work to broader audiences, including those who may not attend durbars or focus groups.

In addition to visual materials and engaging community events, mass communication channels and personal outreach are essential for broadening the impact of awareness-raising efforts. Advocates such as Bengazy emphasized the use of community durbars, radio programs, and parental visits to inform both the general public and specific households about the harsh realities of child labor and trafficking. These channels are especially useful for closing knowledge gaps, reducing misinformation, and stressing the importance of education. For example, Bengazy recounted that community durbar sensitization highlights ongoing violence against children in the community to bring about changing people's attitudes toward the problem:

One of my core responsibilities is to use community sensitization durbar as a means of talking to the general public about child trafficking, child labor and other issues affecting children in general. So, we use community durbar sensitization for creating awareness about these issues. Another one we also have is radio program we do every two weeks, we have Nice FM that we use every two weeks to talk about child right issues.

We talk about how to empower children by way of getting them access to education through the media update that we have. We also have what we call parental visit. So, during the parental visit we use the opportunity to educate families about child trafficking and labor. We know that ignorance is one of the major causes of child

trafficking but when you empower them, when you give them the knowledge, they will be able to combat it themselves, so family visit is one means of getting our message carried out.

Bengazy's account presents the diverse strategy essential for successful awareness campaigns: educating the public using durbars, reaching out broadly through radio, and engaging in personal conversations through family visits. His comments points out that awareness is not just a single moment, but an ongoing journey of community involvement across various platforms and social spaces. Their efforts highlight the wider peacebuilding impact of grassroots advocacy: equipping families with knowledge transforms them into proactive defenders of children's rights and catalysts for local change. Bengazy's approach of utilizing parental visits as a platform for conversation highlights that raising awareness involves tackling ingrained beliefs and fears within the home, a vital setting where numerous decisions about child labor are often made.

Another strategy mentioned by participants is the utilization of community documentary screenings as a means of raising awareness and education. These visual narratives, including documentaries produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO), present authentic stories of children laboring in exploitative conditions, especially on Lake Volta, a well-known hotspot for child trafficking and hazardous work in Ghana. By showing these children's personal experiences, advocates seek to transcend mere statistics and provide emotionally compelling, fact-based portrayals that resonate deeply with the lived realities of community members. Atinga illustrated the transformative power of such screenings as follows:

We have documentary on child trafficking and labor on Lake Volta. That documentary was put together by International Labor Organization. You see the children themselves

sharing their experiences on the lake. That documentary was done while the children were working so it brings the idea of child trafficking, child labor issues to perspective.

So, when the community members see the documentaries of children telling their stories and seeing what the children go through while on the lake, serves as an education to inspire them to desist and report such cases. So, after the durbar, you will see parents will come and say okay I have a child here, can you help rescue the child for us

The documentary screening used by advocates like Atinga offers a better understanding of the realities surrounding child trafficking and child labor. This heightened consciousness frequently motivates parents to step forward and seek aid in liberating their own offspring from similar circumstances. Thus, the presence of visual storytelling deepens communal understanding of the trauma and exploitation these children have endured and helps to foster a protective and rehabilitative environment.

In addition to community-based activities like durbars, radio programs, documentary screenings, and household visits, advocates are increasingly turning to multichannel advocacy strategies to widen the scope of their awareness campaigns. These include the use of social media, local newspapers, community forums, workshops, and seminars to reach broader and more diverse audiences including parents, teachers, and policy influencers. Barima was of the opinion that organizing educational outreach activities is crucial in changing people's attitudes and behaviour toward violence against children:

We conduct awareness campaigns through various mediums such as social media, local newspapers, and community forums. We organize workshops and seminars to educate parents, teachers, and community members about the harmful effects of child labor and

the importance of education. In so doing we distribute informative brochures and pamphlets in public places to disseminate information about child labor laws and rights. Barima's assertion showcases a thoughtful approach to communication, moving seamlessly from personal interactions to broader institutional contexts, and extending from local engagement to wider public awareness. Through the use of both digital and print media, advocates are influencing local behaviors and contributing to the shaping of public narratives and institutional awareness regarding child labor in Ghana. Workshops and printed materials indicate a well-organized, knowledge-driven strategy aimed at engaging essential stakeholders who can strengthen child protection, such as teachers, parents, and community leaders.

Lastly, A notably distinct and culturally rooted approach that arose from participants' stories is the implementation of role modeling as a method for sensitization. This approach differs from traditional awareness methods that depend on straightforward information exchange; instead, it taps into social learning and the power of aspirational thinking. By pointing out members of the same community who have achieved success through education, advocates encourage parents to envision new future possibilities for their own children. In the words of Ama, role models are critical in bringing the message squarely home to parents that child labour practices harm their children in the long run

We use the concept of role modelling to sensitize the community... at times a parent doesn't see the need for education but if you are able to single out a role model in the community who has been successful by going through school, the person can dwell on that and cope with the directive you are giving so that they can also follow those steps to ensure that their children will become great and responsible just as that individual.

Kwabena echoed this strategy, adding that advocates sometimes position themselves as examples for local people to emulate:

At times we serve as role models, we give them examples of some prominent individuals in the society who were educated then they will see the importance of education and they will know and come to the realization that they must allow their children to go to school and not farm so that in the future they will be like this person. At times we use ourselves to serve as examples and at times too if there is the need we offer remediation to those that after assessment we see that in fact they need assistance, then we offer them those assistance.

This method is especially powerful in reshaping education, viewing it not as a distant concept, but as a tangible route to dignity, success, and respect. In environments where parents frequently face short-term economic challenges that push them to focus on immediate work rather than long-term education, role modeling offers a compelling change in perspective, grounded in real results and community connections.

In a nutshell, the theme of awareness-raising and education aligns closely with the argument of my thesis that community child labor advocacy in Ghana is not a separate alternative to liberal peacebuilding, but instead a localized adaptation of global frameworks. The approaches used by advocates, be it through radio shows, school outreach, visual aids, or community gatherings often embody global standards like the rights to education and safeguarding against harmful labor (for instance, the ILO and UNCRC frameworks). These global ideals are expressed through practices that resonate with local cultures and foster community engagement. By adapting these messages through relatable forms of communication and interaction, advocates serve as intermediaries who apply global norms in ways that resonate

with the context and are socially convincing. This shows how grassroots actors embrace and modify liberal peacebuilding values instead of dismissing or substituting them.

Simultaneously, the theme enriches our comprehension of the real-life experiences of advocates. Their work goes beyond just technical advocacy; it involves building relationships, fostering creativity, and requires a significant emotional investment. They need to take on the roles of educators, mediators, storytellers, and even role models. Their stories highlight the difficulties of confronting deep-rooted cultural norms and the time and patience required to change community perspectives gradually. Storytelling, visuals, and public engagement highlight how their advocacy is intricately woven into social and moral connections. These experiences highlight grassroots peacebuilding as a gradual, conversational, and profoundly human endeavor, characterized by continuous negotiation between universal ideals and local circumstances.

Community Empowerment and Capacity Building

A key advocacy strategy I identified in this study is community empowerment and capacity building, aimed at creating sustainable, grassroots-driven solutions to the structural drivers of child labor. Unlike awareness-raising, which focuses on informing communities, this strategy emphasizes equipping local actors with tools, knowledge, and confidence to lead change from within. Empowerment here means shifting responsibility from external actors to community members, enabling them to recognize their roles as protectors and advocates of children's rights.

In practice, this strategy involves not only educating community members but also addressing the economic precarity that fuels child labor. To address this, some advocates support parents by offering training in small-scale enterprises, such as bread baking, vegetable farming, snail rearing, and beekeeping. These are paired with start-up capital and participation in Village

Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), ensuring that families not only increase their income but also learn to save and plan financially. Kofisco articulated that VSLA encourages parents to be entrepreneurial and to save money that provides additional resources for the household so the children do not have to work:

You know if you ask parents why they engage their children into child labor they will tell you it is hardship in life or poverty so in most of our intervention, what do we do? We engage parents in alternative livelihood. So we let them do extra work aside what they are doing so that they will get money to increase their household income. We also encourage them to do savings so we introduced what we call VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Association) for that purpose so that at the end of the year they will get something to provide for the basic need of their children...

We've trained some women in bread baking and then we've given them the start-up capital to start business. We also engage them in vegetable farming. We sometimes teach them how to rear most animals like snail and then bee-keeping and other things, something that will give them money, something that will increase their household income and the proceeds from this is what we encourage them to do savings with it.

With this approach, advocates go beyond just providing assistance but they are fostering lasting economic empowerment and promoting financial literacy in the community. Empowering communities to address their own socio-economic challenges promotes self-reliance and social unity, enhancing the protection of children and building the foundation for lasting peace within the community.

In addition to promoting alternative livelihoods, some advocates support parents through agricultural training and resource provision, particularly in rice cultivation. Agyaba noted that

this includes offering technical expertise, machinery, and farming skills to reduce families' reliance on child labor:

We also provide training for the parents such that in some cases, we give them training and give them support in farming. In farming, we help them in rice farming, we provide them with machines, we give them the technical-know-how, we train them in many other things.

Agyaba's remark reflects how community empowerment is not just informational but also materially grounded, helping address the economic roots of child labor. The objective of providing such technical training to parents is to empower them by assisting them with the essential abilities and resources to participate in sustainable agricultural methods, which might potentially result in higher revenue and enhanced livelihoods.

Also, an innovative strategy discussed by advocates is communal farming, designed to foster self-sufficiency and sustainability at the grassroots level. By encouraging communities to collectively cultivate crops like pepper and tomatoes, this approach reduces dependency on external aid and strengthens local food security. Asiamah explained, the goal is to ensure that even after NGO withdrawal, communities can meet their basic needs and keep children in school:

...So now what we are trying to do now is that, we let them do community farming like how they do communal labor. So, they get a land, farm and all those things. So the basic things like pepper, tomatoes and all those things they can get that from the farm so that the money we provide will no longer be spent on those things. They already have the ones from their farm so when we even move out of the community, they already have a farm that can take care of it.

Asiama's articulation indicates a conscious effort to establish resilient systems that will persist even after NGOs are no longer involved. It signifies a transition from reliance on aid to community-driven problem-solving, ensuring that families are prepared to address their children's needs on their own.

To wrap up, the insights presented reveal that community advocates do more than raise awareness. They actively equip local stakeholders with practical tools, economic alternatives, and social capital to challenge the structural drivers of child labor. Through initiatives like livelihood training, communal farming, savings schemes, and community-led education, advocates help reframe the community from being passive recipients of aid to active agents of change.

Collaboration and Partnership

In the fight against child labor, community advocates have continually highlighted the significance of working together and forming partnerships as a core approach. Understanding that the intricate and systemic issue of child labor cannot be tackled by one entity alone, advocates collaborate with a diverse array of institutions and stakeholders such as government agencies, non-profits, community leaders, and development partners to foster a more comprehensive and unified approach. Neal, a participant offered a straightforward illustration of this collaboration among multiple agencies. He explained how his department collaborates with organizations like the Labor Office, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, the police, and Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to conduct community engagements, provide public education, and implement response protocols for child protection:

We collaborate with agencies, child protection interventions. So, our department or my department collaborates with the labor office, the municipality labor office, collaborates with Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, the police, CRAJ and other

relevant agencies. we also go out to do community engagements on child protection to educate the public on the need to protect our children and the need to care for our children. Then we also educate them on what to do if there is a case, what to do.

Neal's account brings to light how partnerships allow advocates to bridge gaps in knowledge, enforcement, and service delivery. It reflects a practical understanding that protecting children's rights requires not only grassroots energy but also institutional coordination across health, education, law enforcement, and justice systems.

Similarly, Barima stressed the importance of strategic alliances in creating lasting effects. He believed that working together with various stakeholders like government officials, NGOs, and community leaders strengthens the sustainability of efforts to combat child labor:

I strive to collaborate with various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community leaders, to foster a collective approach towards protecting children's rights. I believe that by working together, we can achieve far greater results and create sustainable change.

These reflections of Barima show that advocates operate not in isolation or opposition to formal systems; rather, they purposefully integrate their efforts within institutional frameworks, enhancing the scope and credibility of their work.

Through the collaborative efforts of advocates and stakeholders, enrolment within schools increased, signifying a major milestone in combating child labor. Kwame provided a detailed account of this achievement explaining it in the following manner:

There is some sort of positive achievement like school attendance. That is one of the major achievements. Before we started the advocacy, absenteeism was very high, school

attendance was very low but as a result of this, if you go to the community now you will hardly find some school children loitering around during school hours...

He attributed this progress to the establishment of the Community Child Protection Committee, which includes two specialized subcommittees; the workplace monitoring team and the school monitoring team. Kwame went on to note that multitrack approaches to providing information to networks in the community are crucial:

For the workplace team, during school hours, you will see them going around to see if there is a child there who should be in school... For the school team, they go to the school, talk to the headmaster's and they look at the register, the regularity, absenteeism... they look at the school dropout or a child who has not been to school for some number of days... then they go to the parents and see why...

This structured collaboration with local institutions and families enabled more effective monitoring, intervention, and ultimately, a cultural shift in attitudes towards child labor and education. Barima also highlighted the positive outcomes of such partnerships:

Through effective outreach and collaboration with local schools and community centers, we successfully increased participation in our educational programs by 30 percent compared to the previous year. This growth not only highlights the effectiveness of our outreach strategies but also demonstrates a positive impact on children's access to quality education.

Together, these accounts underscore how collaboration between community advocates, schools, and other stakeholders not only strengthens monitoring mechanisms but also leads to tangible improvements in school attendance and child welfare which is a central goal in the broader peacebuilding mission of child labor eradication. The narratives demonstrate that collaboration

and partnership are integral to child labor advocacy rather than supplementary elements. Through inter-agency cooperation, engagement with development partners, and the establishment of grassroots initiatives like Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), these collaborations enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of advocacy efforts. Importantly, such partnerships produce measurable results, including higher school attendance rates, greater educational participation, and the development of community-level monitoring systems.

Summatively, the strategies employed by community child labor advocates in Ghana including awareness-raising, community empowerment, and multi-sector collaboration provide important insights into their experiences and roles. Their advocacy efforts demonstrate that the work goes beyond merely responding to instances of child labor; it involves intentional, continuous, and structured initiatives aimed at shifting mindsets, influencing systems, and safeguarding vulnerable children. Notably, these strategies illustrate how advocates navigate the intersection of global and local contexts. They adopt and promote international child protection norms such as the rights to education, safety, and development, while implementing these principles through culturally relevant practices like storytelling, community gatherings, role modeling, and engaging with traditional leaders. This thoughtful integration of global standards with local customs supports the dissertation's primary argument: grassroots advocacy in Ghana should not be viewed as a separate or opposing force to liberal frameworks, but rather as a localized implementation and adaptation of it. Instead of resisting external frameworks, these advocates adeptly translate them into accessible, community-driven interventions. By doing so, their work embodies a significant form of peacebuilding, one that fosters long-term protection, inclusion, and stability by embedding child rights into the fabric of everyday community life.

Barriers to Community Advocacy Against Child Labor in Ghana

Advocates revealed a number of impediments hindering their work. Despite the determination and innovative strategies employed by child labor advocates in Ghana, their efforts are often hampered by systemic and structural obstacles that limit both their reach and sustainability. The interviews revealed five interconnected challenges that stand out as the most significant: insufficient funding and institutional support, resistance and deeply ingrained cultural norms, pervasive poverty within communities, redundancy in initiatives among NGOs, concerns about sustainability after donor partners withdraw. These barriers not only complicate the operational effectiveness of advocates but also influence the daily challenges and adaptive strategies that characterize grassroots advocacy in practice. Examining these challenges provides critical insight into how local advocates maneuver through the complex landscape of child protection, highlighting both the vulnerabilities and strengths of grassroots peacebuilding in environments marked by economic instability and institutional neglect.

Lack of Funding and Support

A significant and ongoing challenge faced by child labor advocates in Ghana is the insufficient funding and institutional backing, especially from government entities. This financial limitation affects almost every facet of advocacy, impacting everything from essential logistical operations to the ability to maintain long-term interventions. Although NGOs and international donors contribute, many participants voiced their frustration regarding the government's minimal financial commitment. This not only hinders immediate action but also jeopardizes the sustainability of efforts once external partners step back. According to Onyango (2015), when the state fails to invest, it undermines the legitimacy of interventions from the perspective of the community, which may see them as fleeting or imposed from outside.

Agyaba vividly captured this dilemma, linking the lack of funding with insufficient governmental collaboration and follow-through:

The challenge has been funding. Funding has been a challenge and then... they are also intertwined with logistics because the thing is in doing this, you need to collaborate with local government especially social welfare, you can't go the communities without them because that is their mandate so mostly, we go to the communities with them and when we move out, they don't have the means to supervise and monitor what we have done so it is a challenge. The government side is not providing the necessary support to complement our effort.

Kofisco echoed this sentiment, highlighting how limited funding diminishes community participation and stifles important grassroots initiatives meant to protect children:

One challenge is funding. You know when you are doing this project in a community, especially the livelihood and whatsoever, everybody wants to engage themselves, but we have limited funding, so it has been a key challenge to our advocating.”

These words of Agyaba and Kofisco above reveal the double burden on advocates: not only must they mobilize resources for implementation, but they must also compensate for the state's inability to maintain continuity or institutionalize change. The lack of funding thus becomes a structural bottleneck, revealing the fragility of grassroots peacebuilding efforts when not embedded in a robust system of shared responsibility.

Again, the financial constraint was substantiated by Barima, who posited that, “Raising adequate funds to support our advocacy campaigns and initiatives have been an ongoing challenge. Effective advocacy requires financial resources to carry out awareness campaigns, conduct research, and implement programs aimed at eradicating child labor. Attracting donors

and securing long-term funding commitments remains a constant struggle, hindering the scale and impact of our efforts.”

Barima’s expression captures a fundamental frustration shared by community advocates: despite being at the forefront of protecting children's rights, their efforts suffer from chronic underfunding. His insight underscores that advocacy is not merely a moral endeavor; it is a resource-intensive pursuit that necessitates ongoing financial commitment to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. The lack of such support not only curtails the impact of their interventions but also hinders their capacity to expand successful initiatives. His remarks illustrate the vulnerability of grassroots advocacy, which often relies on unpredictable donor interest and governmental apathy.

Again, Adongo expressed a similar concern noting that it vital for communities to monitor and evaluate child development in local areas:

Sometimes, personally I become very sad and again we also lack the will from above. When I say lack of a will, we have seen resources been channeled into somethings that are not having direct positive impact on children’s development which otherwise could have been channeled to seeing to it that some of these practices of child labor are stopped but we don’t get those support from above.

So, in terms of logistics support, we lack them, we lack them because even as at now, we should have been in the communities to monitor and evaluate how we have performed and how these things are having impacts on the communities but we rarely go to the communities, unless there are resources but when they are not forthcoming, we also sit back and just watch.

Adongo's assertion deepens the discourse on funding by drawing attention to the absence of political will and misplaced national priorities, which he believed directly obstruct effective child protection. His frustration reveals a more systemic problem and not just scarcity, but misallocation. While advocates are eager to engage in community follow-ups, monitor progress, and assess the real-time impact of their interventions, the lack of logistical support and funding renders these goals unattainable.

In sum, the theme of insufficient funding and support stands out as a deeply entrenched and ongoing obstacle to child labor eradication in Ghana. The statements of the participants illustrate how financial limitations hinder outreach, program execution, follow-up, and long-term viability. Their reflections highlight a broader concern of political neglect, misdirected national priorities, and a lack of logistical resources, all of which collectively erode community initiatives. Advocates are expected to achieve considerable impact with minimal structural support, underscoring the conflict between global child rights standards and local resource realities. Consequently, the funding dilemma not only obstructs operational effectiveness but also emphasizes the vulnerability and reliance of grassroots peacebuilding efforts, positioning the struggle for child rights as an act of both advocacy and resilience.

Community Resistance and Cultural Challenges

One significant challenge that community child labor advocates in Ghana face is the pushback they receive from the communities they aim to support. Long-standing cultural beliefs, reliance on child labor for economic stability, and insufficient awareness of the damaging impacts of child exploitation frequently result in resistance, doubt, and a complete dismissal of advocacy initiatives. Even with the best intentions, advocates often face communities where child labor is seen not as a violation, but as a standard practice or essential for family survival.

This resistance highlights not just gaps in information, but also a clash of morals and cultures between global child rights frameworks and local perspectives. Bengazy recalls that their early advocacy efforts faced significant hostility reporting on the issue in the following way:

Oh, initially we were nearly beaten when we started the advocacy. They just didn't understand why we shouldn't let them send their children to farms and engaging them in work. Some of the community members don't understand issues of child labor, child trafficking issues so they think it's okay. If I have a child and the child is helping me by way fishing or farming, it doesn't destroy anything.

They think it is normal and stuff so when you start to educate them, the challenge is that they will not listen to you. Some will attack you and say, you have attended school and gone to learn things in the book. Are you the one to tell me how to treat my child? And at times, we go there, and they say you have come to spoil our children. When we ask them to accompany us to the farm, they refuse, and some will insult and drive us away.

Bengazy's reflection reveals the emotional toll and personal risks inherent in grassroots advocacy, especially when it challenges culturally accepted practices. It reveals a pervasive resistance to change, rooted in cultural norms that normalize children's participation in labor, such as fishing and farming, as a means of contributing to family livelihoods. The emotional reactions, including threats and insults, show the deep-seated fears of losing cultural identity and economic stability, suggesting that advocacy efforts must navigate complex power dynamics and engage with community members in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Nti further illuminated the cultural dimension of community resistance by pointing out how deeply embedded child labor is in Ghanaian traditions. He observed that, "Another

challenge also has to do with culture. I think culturally, some don't see anything wrong using children to work. It is what our ancestors left behind and so tradition continues.”

Nti's statement speaks to the conflict between traditional practices and modern child rights standards. In many communities in Ghana, child labor is viewed not as exploitation but rather as a normal aspect of growing up. Thus an essential step into adulthood and responsibility. These views strengthen opposition to change and make it more difficult for advocates, who need to educate while also gently questioning the cultural values that support child labor.

Apart from the above, committed individuals who strive to educate the community about child labor concerns do encounter insults and opposition from certain community members. Upon identifying and addressing cases of child labor, certain community members respond with anger and challenge the committee members' power or legitimacy to intervene. Olasty elaborated that the community members may argue that the child in question was their personal responsibility and that advocates should refrain from intervening:

Sometimes they insult the committee members who go to educate the community about child labor issues. If they see something wrong and they say the person becomes angry and will lament ‘you people are disturbing too much, why is the child your child? It is not your child, it is my own child, how does it concern you’ and when it happens like that the committee members are not delighted to continue the voluntary work.

Olasty's statement implies that cultural resistance not only weakens the impact of advocacy but also jeopardizes its long-term viability by discouraging local actors from staying involved.

Also, Kofisco, highlighted the economic dimension of resistance in the following story:

Some may also fight against you especially those that are using the children for business, the chop bar operators, you will not find it easy with you. They fight with us. We have to

engage the police; we have to engage the police because they resist us thinking we are destroying their businesses by letting the children go to school instead of working for them.

This serves as a stark reminder that, for some, child labor is a means of survival. Advocacy that confronts it jeopardizes their means of living, heightening opposition and necessitating legal action.

In sum, many communities have long-standing traditions that normalize child labor, viewing children's participation in work, especially farming, fishing, or trading not as exploitation, but as a rite of passage or contribution to family survival. This normalization presents a major obstacle to intervention efforts, as advocates must contend not only with ignorance of child rights laws but also with deeply embedded values and resistance to change. As reflected in the data, this challenge requires more than awareness campaigns; it demands patient, context-sensitive engagement that respects local dynamics while challenging harmful norms. In doing so, advocates often navigate moral tensions, risking backlash or rejection. This theme reflects the broader structural and cultural complexity of grassroots peacebuilding, emphasizing that advocacy is not only a legal or policy endeavor but also a cultural negotiation process.

Poverty Within Communities

The emphasis on poverty captures how economic hardship serves as a persistent driver of child labor and a significant barrier to its eradication. Participants in the study revealed that poverty within communities is one of the foremost challenges, making the work of child labor advocates in Ghana difficult. Poverty creates a compelling economic necessity that drives families to rely on their children for income (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022; Johansen, 2006). In many impoverished areas, families struggle to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and

healthcare, leading them to view child labor as a survival strategy rather than a violation of children's rights.

This dire financial situation often results in children being pulled out of school to work, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limiting their future opportunities. Advocates encounter significant resistance when attempting to change these entrenched practices, as community members may prioritize immediate economic relief over long-term educational benefits. Furthermore, the stigma associated with child labor can be overshadowed by the pressing need for survival, making it difficult for advocates to shift perceptions and promote alternative solutions. Akosua drives this point home reporting on the issue as follows:

Another challenge is the fact that our communities are abruptly poor communities so no matter what you will see one or two engaging in child labor because of the hardships that they are encountering financially, and they will say “if we don’t go, what will we eat?” if we don’t go, what are we going to feed on? So, they have nothing to do or anything to do than to go and it has become a must! If they don’t go, they don’t feed! So that is one of the biggest challenges...poverty.

Akosua’s concern shows the urgent and immediate nature of economic deprivation in many communities in Ghana, revealing how poverty transforms child labor into a perceived necessity rather than a choice. For advocates, this economic desperation undermines educational interventions and makes long-term behavioral change much harder to achieve. It also reinforces the argument that without addressing systemic poverty, efforts to eliminate child labor will continue to encounter deeply entrenched resistance.

Also, Asiamah further emphasized the deep-rooted link between poverty and the persistence of child labor in Ghanaian communities:

The communities are so poor that they have to involve every member of the family in their agricultural practices to make ends meet. How can we stop them if the people are suffering from poverty without any other means. It is a big headache for us.

This statement highlights the challenge faced by advocates: they must safeguard children's rights in contexts where economic survival often depends on child labor. The absence of practical alternatives for earning income leaves even the most well-meaning families feeling trapped with no other choices. For community advocates, poverty stands as a significant, persistent challenge that constrains the effectiveness and influence of their efforts.

In summary, this theme points out how economic deprivation serves as a persistent and deeply entrenched barrier to the eradication of child labor in Ghana. As participants like Akosua and Asiamah explained, poverty compels families to depend on their children for survival, making child labor a perceived necessity rather than a choice. In such contexts, advocates face significant emotional and practical challenges, as their interventions must compete with the daily realities of hunger and hardship. This theme reveals that advocacy cannot be detached from the socioeconomic conditions it seeks to transform.

Sustainability of Efforts After NGO Exits

A key concern indicated by advocates is the long-term sustainability of child labor interventions after NGOs leave the communities. Although the early awareness campaigns and the formation of Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) can show encouraging outcomes, these benefits often do not last long. Advocates expressed concern that without continuous support and oversight, communities often revert to previous harmful practices:

...It can be said that the falling apart of the established Community Child Protection Committees implies that without the presence of a third force in the communities, they

are not capable of sustaining the ability to effectively advocate against child labor themselves. The education and sanitization offered did not result in a lasting change. Asiamah's statement portrays the lack of institutional support frequently results in the disintegration of local structures, which, in turn, undermines the advancements achieved in fighting child labor. Additionally, it illustrates a broader tension within grassroots peacebuilding; although communities are viewed as agents of change, there remains a reliance on external actors that raises doubts about the sustainability of localized interventions.

Also, in reinforcing the challenge of sustaining progress, Kwabena pointed to a more human dimension; the tendency to revert to old habits once external pressure is removed:

Yes, since we are dealing with humans, you will go to a community you do all your education, sensitization and advocacy, you teach them or you advise them on the way to go and sometime past, you go there again, not all of them but you will see that most people are engaged in the activities you have educated them.

His comment emphasizes the delicate nature of behavioral change in environments where child labor is normalized and intertwined with socioeconomic survival. This indicates that without ongoing support and strong local leadership, the achievements of advocacy efforts may be fleeting. Therefore, the challenge of sustainability involves not just structural aspects but also psychological and cultural dimensions, stressing the shortcomings of short-term interventions in fostering enduring community transformation. Kwabena's statement means that although the community has been educated, made aware of, and encouraged about the negative consequences of child labor and the advantages of other methods, not all individuals completely accept or comply with the new practices. The abhorrence to change is a prevalent human characteristic that arises from the intricacy of modifying deeply ingrained behaviors and customs.

In sum, the theme “Sustainability of Efforts after NGO Exits” reveals a critical weakness in the long-term fight against child labor: the inability of communities to maintain progress once external actors withdraw. Despite initial successes in education and sensitization, participants observed that many communities regress to harmful child labor practices in the absence of continuous support and monitoring. This relapse underscores the fragility of externally driven interventions and highlights the need for locally embedded systems, such as strong Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), to ensure continuity. The challenge is not just institutional but also cultural and behavioral, reflecting the difficulty of transforming deeply rooted norms without sustained engagement and capacity building.

Duplication of Efforts Between NGOs

NGOs play a vital role in the collective effort to deal with the eradication of violence against children. Despite their efforts, which go a long way toward contributing to systemic changes and also bringing relief to children in labor practices, a challenge that hinders their effectiveness has been effort duplication. This redundancy arises from a lack of communication and coordination among NGOs, resulting in overlapping programs that address the same issues. (Marini, 2020). The implications of such duplication can be significant. First, it can lead to the misallocation of funding and human resources, as multiple organizations may compete for the same grants or donations instead of collaborating to maximize impact. Second, beneficiaries may experience confusion or frustration when faced with multiple organizations offering similar services, which can dilute the effectiveness of interventions and hinder community trust in NGOs (Makinde et al., 2018). Additionally, duplication can stifle innovation, as organizations may be less likely to explore new approaches or solutions when they are focused on replicating existing programs.

Participants in this study highlighted the inefficiency of resource allocation and unequal community support resulting from the duplication of efforts by NGOs in addressing child labor concerns in Ghana as a significant hurdle. One advocate, Kwaku, put the issue of overlap and lack of coordination among them into context:

One of the issues is effort duplication. Sometimes when you go to the field, everyone has their own mission and vision and project modalities. At times you will realize that some of the missions and visions conflict and that is also one of the major challenges. Sometimes you will go and distribute school uniform, another organization coming too will come and distribute school uniform.

But if there was a consultation and we follow one criterion the organization will know that if school uniform has been distributed already, they will not need another school uniform so maybe let's distribute books or bags but for all you know, they will also come and distribute the school uniform, but the child will be lacking other things. You realize we are all in the same community and we duplicate efforts. Whilst others are also in need of such interventions.

Kwaku's observations indicate that NGOs are operating independently rather than working together, leading to inefficiencies and confusion in their service delivery. This lack of collaboration also suggests that the diverse needs of children are not being properly evaluated and met. Kwadwo, another advocate, argued that these NGOs lack unity and a harmonized method in their fight against child labor. Kwadwo said that it appears that the NGOs prioritize pleasing their donors over the safety of the children:

So, it's about we don't have one language, we don't have one expression for child labor.

One organization will come, do something in favor of what the donor wants and one also do something a bit different.

His reflection reveals a core problem in the advocacy landscape rather than building on each other's work, some organizations act in silos, guided more by donor mandates than by a coherent, community-based strategy. This lack of alignment dilutes impact, confuses local stakeholders, and ultimately hinders sustained progress in addressing child labor.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a thorough thematic examination of the experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana, outlining their motivations, the strategies they use, and the various challenges they face in their fight against child labor. The motivations of advocates are varied, drawing from personal, emotional, spiritual, and social influences, all anchored in a profound sense of moral duty and dedication to the well-being of children. A lot of them see their work as more than just a job; it feels like a personal mission or calling, influenced by their past experiences, empathy, and a strong wish to create positive change in their communities.

The strategies they employ showcase a blend of creativity and adaptability to the situation at hand. These encompass raising awareness through visual aids, radio, and role modeling; empowering the community and exploring alternative livelihoods; enhancing capacity through training and local leadership structures; and fostering partnerships with government institutions and development agencies. These interventions aim to educate and protect children while also empowering and reinforcing community structures to take responsibility for the issue.

Nevertheless, in spite of their commitment, advocates encounter considerable obstacles. Challenges included restricted funding and logistical assistance, ongoing poverty in the

communities they aim to help, entrenched cultural beliefs that accept child labor, overlapping initiatives among NGOs, and the struggle to maintain progress once external support concludes. These challenges highlight the frequently overlooked struggles and vulnerabilities faced by grassroots advocates as they deal with opposition, limited resources, and entrenched systems in their child labor eradication efforts in Ghana.

The findings in this chapter shed light on the intricate, emotionally charged, and context-dependent aspects of grassroots child labor advocacy in Ghana. They highlight the significance of grasping both the human and structural aspects of advocacy efforts, stressing the necessity for ongoing support, strategic coordination, and enhanced community involvement to achieve enduring advancements in the struggle against child labor.

Drawing from both the narratives in chapter four and the thematic insights presented in chapter five, the next chapter (Six) advances the analysis by interpreting the experiences and perspectives of child labor advocates through a deeper structural lens. It situates the advocates' narratives within the broader political, economic, and sociocultural conditions that perpetuate child labor as a form of structural violence.

Chapter Six

Interpretations and Analysis of the Experiences of Child Labor Advocates in Ghana

Introduction

Child labor in Ghana is deeply rooted in structural violence, shaped by economic hardships, cultural norms, and weak law enforcement. As the literature demonstrated, despite international frameworks and national policies aimed at eradicating child labor, enforcement remains weak, and many families depend on children's labor for survival. In this context, community advocates play a critical role in bridging the gap between legal frameworks and the lived realities of affected children. However, their efforts are shaped by systemic challenges, moral dilemmas, and emotional burdens that complicate their advocacy. Beyond the explicit narratives in chapter four and thematic synthesis presented in chapter five, deeper underlying meanings that help us understand and learn from their experiences emerge revealing the psychological, moral, and structural complexities of community advocacy against child labor in Ghana. These themes go beyond what is directly stated in the interviews and uncover broader existential, ethical, and systemic realities that shape the experiences of these advocates.

Therefore, Chapter six provides an analysis of the experiences and perspectives of child labor advocates, situating their narratives within the broader structural conditions of child labor violence. The chapter is structured around five key analytical themes that I deduced from the advocates' narratives and the thematic synthesis which includes an understanding of: (1) community advocates as witnesses to atrocities against children, (2) grassroots advocacy against child labor as activism towards children's schooling and right to education, (3) advocacy against child labor as a confrontation with material constraints and entrenched struggles between ethical commitment and systemic resistance, (4) community advocates as missionary peacebuilders and

(5) advocates as local implementers of global policies against child labor. By grounding these themes in the structural realities discussed in Chapters one and two, this chapter moves beyond individual narratives to illustrate how advocacy against child labor in Ghana is a struggle against entrenched structural violence. The findings demonstrate that grassroots advocates do not exist outside the global child protection architecture but rather work within and adapt its frameworks. Their advocacy aligns with international efforts yet remains deeply embedded in local socio-political realities, reinforcing this thesis's argument that grassroots or community child labor advocacy in Ghana was not proceeded as an alternative to the liberal peace model, but an extension and adaptation of it.

Community Advocates as Witnesses to Atrocities against Children

In an effort to understand the experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana, the first theme I deduce from their experiences is to understand them as witnesses to the atrocities of children. Viewing them from the lens of witnesses frames their advocacy as a crucial form of testimonial work that seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized children in Ghana (Quarshie, 2024). The narratives indicate that community advocacy against child labor in Ghana serve as both direct observers and proactive responders to the violence and exploitation that children face. Their efforts are rooted in their lived experiences rather than abstract concepts. They directly witness children involved in dangerous work, stripped of educational opportunities, subjected to physical and emotional harm, and placed in situations that infringe upon their basic rights. In contrast to policymakers, who approach child labor through data and reports, these advocates confront the harsh local everyday realities firsthand, often enduring significant emotional and psychological strain in the process. Thus, their witnessing goes beyond mere observation; it represents an active challenge to systemic injustice.

Their role as witnesses is shaped by the structural conditions that allow child labor to persist. Historically, child labor in Ghana has been tied to economic survival, particularly in agricultural sectors like cocoa farming, where families rely on children's labor to sustain household incomes (Abdullah, et al., 2022). The legacy of colonial-era economic structures, which prioritized cash crops for export, disrupted indigenous agricultural systems and entrenched a dependence on child labor (Goulart, 2024; van Hear, 1982). Even today, children are often engaged in labor-intensive tasks, carrying heavy loads on farms, working in fishing industries, and engaging in hazardous mining activities, exposing them to significant risks (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022; ILO, 2021). Despite Ghana's legal frameworks, such as the *Children's Act of 1998* and the ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182, enforcement remains weak, allowing child labor to continue largely unchecked (Adonteng-Kissi, 2019; Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022; Dowuona-Hammond et al., 2021; Kuyini & Mahama, 2009). This lack of enforcement, coupled with economic hardship and the normalization of children's work within communities, creates a system where witnessing child labor is not an anomaly but a daily reality for advocates. Advocates who operate in these spaces bear direct witness to these systemic failures.

According to Goodman (2012), witnessing serves as a vital mechanism through which deeply traumatic experiences can be recognized and shared. As such one critical dimension of witnessing is that it is inherently relational. Witnesses do not observe in isolation but bear witness to an audience. The question then arises: for whom are these advocates bearing witness? Their testimonies serve multiple functions and are directed at different audiences. At one level, they document child labor atrocities for international organizations, governments, and NGOs, feeding into global surveillance mechanisms such as the ILO and the UN's SDGs. Their

documentation informs international human rights reports and policy discussions, reinforcing Ghana's position within a global governance structure that monitors child labor compliance. This process underscores that local advocacy is not an indigenous alternative to the liberal peace model but rather an extension of it. Advocates mobilize international conventions, labor laws, and human rights instruments to push for interventions that transcend local capacities.

At another level, their witnessing is directed at the very communities in which child labor is normalized. In many parts of Ghana, child labor is not necessarily perceived as violence but as an economic necessity or a form of socialization (Adonteng-Kissi, 2021; Asuming-Brempong et al., 2007; Takyi, 2014). Structural conditions such as poverty, inadequate schooling infrastructure, and socio-cultural expectations shape the local understanding of children's work (Abdullah et al., 2022). This normalization of child labor obscures its exploitative and violent dimensions, making advocacy a formidable challenge. Community advocates, by acting as witnesses, strive to challenge this normalization by revealing the hidden dangers: children working long hours in cocoa farms, inhaling toxic fumes in mines, or suffering physical abuse from exploitative employers. Their work forces communities to confront the violence they often fail to recognize. As Barima, one of the advocates, explained, "It is painful to see a child being denied their future. Witnessing these injustices and realizing the immense impact they have on children's lives has been a catalyst for me to take action." His statement reveals how witnessing compels advocates to engage in moral persuasion, shifting perceptions of child labor from being an economic necessity to a form of structural violence. This function of witnessing also aligns with broader peacebuilding efforts in that their advocacy is not only about child protection but also about dismantling structures that perpetuate violence, inequality, and economic exploitation. The idea that child labor advocacy constitutes a form of peacebuilding emerges from this

intersection as advocates are not merely responding to individual cases of suffering but are actively working to transform systemic conditions that endanger children's well-being.

As a result of being witnesses to child labor practices in Ghana, community advocates demonstrate empathy towards children affected by child labor practices. Therefore, they become empathetic agents of peacebuilding, highlighting the essential role of emotional engagement in their social justice and peacebuilding efforts in Ghana. According to Bono et al. (2018), empathy plays a vital role in driving involvement in advocacy campaigns. Witnessing the difficulties experienced by children in exploitative labor situations can inspire compassion, motivating people to take a stand against these injustices (Bono et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Hosseinverdi et al. (2021), the importance of empathy in promoting connection and understanding is emphasized as essential for advocating against child labor (Hosseinverdi et al., 2021). In the present study, the advocates' deep compassion for children experiencing exploitation is often rooted in their own past hardships, creating a powerful empathetic connection that drives their commitment to action. This emotional resonance fosters a sense of urgency and responsibility, compelling advocates to confront the injustices faced by vulnerable children in their communities. According to Cameron (2016), restoring a society fractured by conflict necessitates rekindling empathy, which is essential for rehumanizing individuals and fostering a sense of solidarity among one another.

Child labor advocates who are driven by empathy know that fixing a society that is broken by child labor is deeply connected to re-humanizing people and building a sense of community. Advocates who witness the plight of children subjected to labor in Ghana often find themselves compelled to connect with these young individuals on a personal level, striving to understand their feelings, thoughts, and lived experiences. This empathetic engagement allows

advocates to bridge the gaps between themselves and the children they seek to help, transforming abstract statistics into real human stories. By recognizing the humanity of these children, advocates not only challenge the normalization of child labor but also cultivate a renewed sense of solidarity and peace within their communities. This emotional connection is essential for mobilizing collective action and fostering a culture of care and responsibility, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of social justice and peacebuilding in societies plagued by child labor practices in Ghana.

Yet, this process of bearing witness is not without flaws. While witnessing is often heralded as a crucial component of local peacebuilding practices, I believe it also has downsides that may hinder the effectiveness of peace initiatives. One significant downside is the potential for emotional overload or compassion fatigue among peacebuilders and advocates (Ledoux, 2015). Constant exposure to the suffering and trauma of others can lead to burnout, reducing the capacity of individuals and organizations to engage effectively in peacebuilding efforts (Baugerud et al., 2018). This emotional strain can result in a diminished ability to empathize over time, ultimately impacting the sustainability of peace initiatives in Ghana.

Despite these flaws, the act of witnessing remains a powerful tool for child labor advocacy in Ghana. By making child labor visible both to external institutions and to local communities, advocates disrupt the structures of silence that sustain exploitation. Their testimonies serve as both an indictment of government inaction and a call for institutional accountability. As Queenster, another advocate, recounted, “Sometimes, you report cases, and nothing happens. You go back to the same community, and the child is still working. It makes you question whether your work matters. But then you meet one child you helped, and you remember why you keep fighting.” Her statement captures the emotional burden of advocacy,

highlighting that witnessing child labor may not lead to immediate change but is crucial for fostering long-term systemic transformation. Community advocates in Ghana play a vital role beyond simply documenting child labor; they engage in active intervention to combat its ongoing presence. Their acts of witnessing are characterized as intentional resistance against structural violence, rendering the concealed horrors of child labor visible and urging responses from governments, international organizations, and local communities. This involvement positions them not as mere outsiders to the liberal peace model but as essential participants and local implementers of global initiatives who leverage their witnessing as a tool for peacebuilding. Their efforts are deeply rooted in local realities, yet they remain intertwined with the larger international frameworks that inform current efforts to eliminate child labor.

Grassroots Advocacy Against Child Labor as Activism Towards Children's Schooling and Right to Education

From the interviews, I observed that local advocates and activists are making significant efforts to educate families, communities, and politicians about the adverse consequences of child labor on children's physical and mental health, education, and future opportunities. Their dedication to spreading awareness is truly inspiring, as they strive to communicate the long-term impacts that child labor can have on the lives of children and, by extension, on society as a whole. The advocates' goal is to place children's well-being and education above their involvement in labor activities. This approach recognizes the gradual nature of change but highlights the significance of consistently increasing awareness regarding the detrimental effects of child labor and advocating for children's rights to education. As Akwasi outlined, "So, through your awareness raising, they will get to know that they are not helping the kids by using them for labor." To raise awareness about child labor, many approaches are used, including community

gatherings, focus group talks targeting various demographic groups, and instructional sessions in schools. The primary objective is to educate children about child labor and support their parents, while also emphasizing that they should not be involved in any work that hinders their ability to attend school.

Community advocates in my study often framed education as a direct countermeasure to labor, positioning the school as a site of refuge where children can escape the physical and psychological burdens of hazardous work. This positioning aligns with global advocacy narratives, particularly those advanced by international organizations like the ILO and UNICEF, which promote education as the primary alternative to child labor (Balagopalan, 2008; UNICEF, 2021). The literature further supports this link, emphasizing that child labor thrives where access to education is weak and where poverty makes immediate economic survival more pressing than long-term educational investment (Adonteng-Kissi, 2021; Akaguri, 2014; Pugmire, 2022). In this sense, child labor advocacy through education is not just about ensuring children's right to learn but also about interrupting generational cycles of exploitation and structural violence (Boateng & Dako-Gyeke, 2022; M. G. Wessells & Kostelny, 2021). The advocates emphasized the importance of formal education and the long-term consequences of child labor on individual and community development. Their belief in formal education as an equipping tool to bring about positive change in their lives and that of the community aligns with the principles of peace education in PACS, which seeks to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster social justice and promote nonviolent conflict resolution (Harris & Morrison, 2012). In essence, education serves as both a catalyst for personal development and a foundational element in the broader movement toward peace and justice, enabling advocates to envision and work toward a future free from child labor exploitation.

However, the assumption that schooling is inherently liberatory requires deeper scrutiny. Many community advocates view education as a pathway to economic mobility, reinforcing the widely accepted liberal framework that sees formal schooling as a developmental good (Balagopalan, 2008). Yet, as critiques of the liberal peace framework suggest, the school system itself is not free from structural violence. Historically, colonial education systems in Africa were designed to produce a compliant workforce rather than to empower communities (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018; Wiafe, 2021). The echoes of this history persist today, as schools often reinforce existing inequalities rather than dismantle them. In Ghana, public school students are sometimes required to engage in labor-like activities, such as cutting grass, farming for teachers, or cleaning school compounds, tasks that are framed as part of the education process or even training but resemble the same unpaid, exploitative labor advocates seek to eradicate (Canagarajah & Coulombe, 1997; Krauss, 2016; Lawrance, 2010). This raises a critical question: Are community advocates, in their efforts to eliminate child labor through education, inadvertently reinforcing aspects of the same colonial model they seek to challenge? The narratives of child labor advocates in my study provide insight into these tensions. Barima, for example, passionately defends education as a necessary intervention, stating, “If we can get a child off the farm and into a school, we know we are changing their future. In school, they have hope” (Barima, participant). His assertion echoes a widely accepted assumption that education inherently leads to liberation and opportunity. Yet, other advocates acknowledge the limitations of this approach. Kwadwo, for instance, noted, “We have sent children back to school, but sometimes they still struggle. If the school doesn’t have teachers, if the classrooms are overcrowded, then what is the difference? Some of them drop out again, and we have to start all over.” His frustration highlights a reality often overlooked in mainstream advocacy that school-

based interventions alone do not guarantee improved futures for children if the system itself remains under-resourced and exclusionary.

This tension between schooling as a site of liberation and schooling as a potential site of exploitation reflects broader debates in the literature on peacebuilding and education reflecting, the complex interactions between education and conflict (Pherali, 2016). The local turn in peacebuilding argues for more contextually grounded, community-led interventions rather than externally imposed liberal solutions (Mac Ginty, 2014; Paffenholz, 2010; Wolff, 2022).

However, in child labor advocacy in Ghana, the emphasis on education as a solution often aligns local efforts with international liberal norms, reinforcing a hierarchical relationship where grassroots initiatives become extensions of global governance structures rather than independent alternatives. The Ghanaian government, through initiatives like the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (2023-2027), has largely adopted the same education-centered approach, further embedding schooling as the dominant paradigm for child protection (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2022). This reinforces the thesis's broader argument that grassroots child labor advocacy in Ghana is not a separate, indigenous alternative to the liberal peace model but rather a localized adaptation of it. Yet, despite these critiques, it is important to recognize why education remains such a powerful mobilizing force in advocacy efforts. For many children, particularly those in rural or economically disadvantaged communities, schooling represents the only viable alternative to labor. Advocates like Queenster acknowledges the flaws in the system but still see education as the best available option: "We know the schools are not perfect, but what else can we offer them? At least in school, they are not carrying loads on their heads all day or inhaling chemicals in the mines." This perspective aligns with the argument in the literature that, while flawed, formal education still offers a more

structured and potentially transformative alternative to child labor (Balagopalan, 2008; Mansur et al., 2016). The challenge, then, is not simply about replacing labor with education but about reimagining education in ways that genuinely serve the interests of children rather than reproducing existing inequalities.

Further, some community advocates in my study are addressing these tensions by promoting alternative education models by engaging in programs that integrate vocational training, apprenticeship systems, and community-based learning aim to provide children with practical skills that balance immediate economic needs with long-term aspirations. Techniques such as community meetings, role-playing, and visual aids like flashcards have somehow been effective in encouraging dialogue and changing perceptions about child labor. These strategies stress the importance of ongoing community involvement and culturally appropriate methods. These methods and practices challenge the rigid dichotomy between schooling and labor, suggesting that child protection efforts must move beyond a singular focus on formal education to include broader structural reforms. This resonates with the local turn in peacebuilding, which calls for more adaptable and contextually sensitive interventions rather than one-size-fits-all solutions imposed from above (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2018b; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Consequently, educational initiatives within child labor advocacy in Ghana embody both the potential and challenges of grassroots peacebuilding efforts. While education is undeniably a vital intervention in the fight against child labor, it is not immune to the very structural issues that contribute to the persistence of such practices. Although framing education as a sanctuary for children is a compelling narrative, it can inadvertently mask the reality that schools may also reinforce conditions akin to labor, perpetuate exclusion, and sustain systemic inequalities.

Advocacy Against Child Labor as a Confrontation with Material Constraints and Entrenched Struggles Between Ethical Commitment and Systemic Resistance

Community child labor advocates in this study navigate a delicate landscape shaped not only by material constraints but also by the profound struggles between ethical commitment and entrenched systemic resistance. While their narratives demonstrate passion, sacrifice, and grassroots engagement, a closer reading reveals an even more complex reality. These individuals are often situated precariously between what they are morally compelled to do and what the structural conditions permit them to achieve. This theme is not just about their external struggles; it speaks to their existential position as agents of transformation caught within systems that are only partially responsive to their efforts. At the core of their work lies a deep moral compulsion not simply to help, but to protect. The narratives suggest that advocates act not only out of professional responsibility but out of a felt ethical obligation, often rooted in personal histories and collective trauma. Yet herein lies the dilemma: what happens when the moral urgency to act outpaces the political and structural capacity to intervene? What is the emotional and psychological toll of believing that every child matters, while being constantly confronted with the fact that you cannot save them all?

This issue goes beyond just resource limitations as it involves the fundamental struggle of maintaining hope in environments where systems are set up to gradually fail. Advocates like Akwasi and Queenster articulate glimpses of this tension; children being reabsorbed into labor after short-lived interventions, protection committees collapsing without funding, and community behavior reverting once attention wanes or NGOs exit. These are not failures of strategy but are signs of operating within a fragile and fragmented moral economy, where sustained care is structurally unsustainable. The literature on peacebuilding often over-celebrates

the role of local actors as inherently resilient and resourceful (Paffenholz, 2010; Richmond, 2011a). Yet what these narratives show is that resilience has a cost especially when imposed by systems that externalize risk and responsibility onto the very communities they claim to empower. Local advocates are positioned not only as first responders but as buffers between global peacebuilding ideals and the intransigence of local realities. This buffering role subjects them to a kind of slow-burning structural violence, wherein they absorb the frustrations of both their communities (who expect results) and international donors (who expect metrics).

Also, at the edge of their commitment, there is also a temporal violence at play. Child labor is an urgent, daily reality, yet institutional responses from government and NGOs alike operate on delayed timelines. Funding cycles, bureaucratic obstruction, and inconsistent policy enforcement all conspire to ensure that by the time help arrives, the crisis has often morphed into something else. Advocates are forced to stretch their moral bandwidth to act as if they are empowered, while constantly being reminded of their limitations. Importantly, this structural entrapment in Ghana shapes how advocates perceive their own agency. In the narratives, there are subtle shifts between confidence and exhaustion, between testimonies of success and quiet admissions of regression. These aren't contradictions but they are signs of liminal identity (being change agents who are simultaneously shaped by and shackled to the systems they seek to transform) (Beech, 2011). This echoes what Didier Fassin (2011, p.1) calls the "moral economy of humanitarianism," where actors must continually justify their own relevance while working within ethical frameworks that often exceed practical realities (Fassin, 2011). Furthermore, the moral labor of being "the one who cares" in a community that may not yet fully understand or accept the importance of children's rights places advocates in an emotionally isolated position. Their narratives suggest moments of alienation as they navigate resistance from parents,

skepticism from local leaders, or indifference from authorities. But what remains unstated and yet profound is the psychological solitude of conviction: what it means to believe in justice more deeply than the institutions around you are willing to invest in it.

This tension between knowing what is right and being structurally unable to actualize it is central to the theme. These advocates are not simply engaged in hard work; they occupy a space where every success is fragile, and every failure is deeply personal. Their advocacy is not only against child labor but also against the slow erosion of hope in systems that claim to protect children but consistently fall short. Their stories reveal the limitations of both liberal peace narratives and grassroots romanticism. They do not fit neatly into either category as they are neither just heroes of the local nor victims of the global. Instead, they are witnesses to the in-between, standing at the edge of commitment and constraint.

Community Advocates as Missionary Peacebuilders

An engaging analytical theme that weaves through the stories of child labor advocates in Ghana is the portrayal of their advocacy as a moral and spiritual vocation. This orientation which is clear in some instances and subtle in others shows how grassroots peacebuilding related to child labor eradication frequently goes beyond legal, political, or developmental boundaries. Instead, it delves into the realm of conviction, purpose, and moral responsibility. In Ghana, most community advocates are influenced by their Christian religious beliefs. They see themselves to be on a divine mission to salvage children from violence, a reason I classify them as missionary peacebuilders.

The missionary framing is vividly expressed in the stories of advocates such as Kwadwo and Nigel, whose personal testimonies resonate with deep theological conviction. Kwadwo, for example, points to Jesus's invitation to "let the children come to me" as a foundational principle

for his efforts. He sees his role not just as a defender of rights, but as a channel for the expression of divine purpose. In a similar vein, dedication to safeguarding children arises from his conviction that God has placed children in the hands of adults, and that letting them down is a spiritual failing. These advocates employ religious language not just as a form of rhetoric, but as a lens through which to comprehend the essence and significance of their efforts. Their advocacy serves as a daily ministry: speaking up for those without a voice, restoring dignity to the oppressed, and fulfilling what they perceive as a divine calling.

The missionary drive extends beyond individuals who publicly invoke religion. Even advocates in my study who did not explicitly identify as spiritual often exhibited a comparable sense of calling. Their storylines are imbued with themes of sacrifice, obligation, transformation and moral struggle. They perceive themselves as combating entrenched practices, occasionally at significant personal expense with steadfast dedication. This corresponds with the comprehensive conception of missionary peacebuilding, which is not necessarily confined to theological frameworks. It comprises any peace-oriented movement driven by firmly held convictions regarding justice, human dignity, and moral obligation.

Historically, missionaries who came to Africa and to Ghana in particular viewed their work as a spiritual mandate to evangelize, often by reshaping local customs and worldviews in alignment with Christian doctrines. While these earlier missionary efforts were not without critique particularly for their role in cultural imposition and colonial enterprise, they introduced a model of moral conviction fused with social engagement that resonates with the kind of grassroots advocacy observed in this study. Community child labor advocates today, though not engaged in religious conversion, exemplify a parallel prototype: they are missionaries of child protection and social justice, aiming to transform behavior, consciousness, and structures within

communities. Their mission is not to impose an external faith, but to cultivate a moral awakening that aligns with global child rights frameworks, often delivered through culturally and spiritually resonant narratives.

Their approach to community engagement is one of the defining features of these missionary peacebuilders. In contrast to approaches that depend only on legal measures or outside motivations, missionary peacebuilders aim to transform hearts and minds. They believe that true transformation starts from the inside: within families, cultural stories, and the shared sense of morality. The "mission field" includes cocoa-growing regions, fishing zones, informal mining communities, and domestic labor households. In these places, missionary peacebuilders engage not only children and families, but also chiefs, religious leaders, school authorities, and business owners, acting as catalysts for moral reflection and behavioral change within the fabric of everyday life. The mission is continuous and frequently extends over a long period. They engage during community durbars, church gatherings, school visits, radio broadcasts, and personal conversations with families, seizing everyday moments to raise awareness and advocate for change. Their understanding of time carries a spiritual dimension: they hold the belief that change can occur, although slowly, and that perseverance is a testament to their faith.

Resilience is another essential aspect of the missionary peacebuilder. Working in advocacy for child labor issues can be both emotionally and materially challenging. Many advocates shared experiences of encountering resistance from the community, feeling burnt out, facing threats, and grappling with disappointments, particularly when visible results take time to emerge. For missionary peacebuilders, these challenges are seen as opportunities to strengthen their faith or reaffirm their purpose. Their determination often stems from the conviction that their efforts contribute to a greater moral journey, one that might not show immediate outcomes

but remains valuable to pursue. This inner strength serves as a shield against exhaustion, irritation, and setbacks, helping them stay focused on their purpose.

However, this missionary perspective does come with its own set of challenges. The missionary peacebuilder might occasionally encounter a conflict between their ethical ideals and the varied, secular, and culturally rich environments of the communities they serve. An excessively theological approach to advocacy might distance those who don't share the same religious views or who see child labor from a more practical perspective. Additionally, the passionate drive to change perspectives can occasionally conflict with the necessity for inclusive and participatory approaches that respect diverse viewpoints.

The missionary orientation of many community child labor advocates in Ghana reflects a deeper moral and spiritual commitment that transcends institutional mandates. Much like the early Christian missionaries who saw Africa as a field for moral reform and salvation, often with colonial overtones, these modern advocates position themselves as redemptive agents within their own communities. However, unlike their historical predecessors, they do not impose foreign ideologies but instead internalize global child protection norms and adapt them through localized, culturally resonant frameworks. Their work is not just activism but a vocation. This fusion of advocacy with a sense of divine or moral calling exemplifies a unique form of grassroots peacebuilding, where protecting children becomes a sacred duty and a pathway to community renewal. As such, the missionary peacebuilder emerges as a potent symbol of the hybrid nature of local-global peacebuilding efforts in Ghana.

Advocates as Local Implementers of Global Policies on Child Labor

The community advocates in this study can be understood as local implementers of global frameworks. The narratives of Ghanaian community child labor advocates present a

compelling portrait of commitment, compassion, and local engagement. However, a critical analysis of their strategies and practices reveals that their role is not that of independent designers of advocacy interventions but rather that of local implementers of globally constructed frameworks. Their day-to-day activities, advocacy techniques, and strategic decisions are shaped less by endogenous knowledge systems and more by the institutional norms and programmatic expectations of international organizations, particularly the ILO, UN bodies, and donor-funded NGOs. Their strategies and methods are not homegrown but are predefined, standardized templates derived from internationally sanctioned policy frameworks. The advocates localize these strategies, adapt, translate, and implement them within the realities of their communities, often with minimal room for innovation or deviation.

The data from the narratives reveals a consistent pattern: all the major strategic tools used by the advocates originate from global child labor eradication models. For example, the Training of Trainers (ToT) approach frequently cited by Kwadwo and Akwasi is not a local innovation; it is a method promoted and funded by international NGOs and development agencies, particularly under ILO's technical cooperation projects. As Kwadwo explained, "When we go to the community, we try to engage members who play strategic roles... These are the ones we educate on what child labour is. Usually, we also involve the information center reps so after we are done, they can play it continuously on their sound system." This strategy is a clear example of knowledge transmission framed by donor logic disseminating key messages via pre-approved messengers and channels. Even the very idea of "creating awareness" through simplified information tools like flipcharts or jingles also mentioned by Kwadwo is a reflection of the communication-for-development model developed by international agencies. Also, the Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) mentioned across multiple narratives is

another example. These committees are not organically developed community initiatives but are structured interventions pushed through child protection programs funded by organizations such as the ILO, UNICEF, and Plan International.

As Queenster and Akwasi both noted, these committees are formed, trained, and monitored through predefined modules, often in partnership with District Assemblies or Department of Social Welfare offices. They follow protocols and indicators set by external project frameworks, and their sustainability is often challenged once donor funding phases out. Akwasi admits this when he stated: “Although we established community protection committees and trained them, the lack of motivation and resources makes them unable to perform.” This comment reveals more than logistical difficulty, it reflects a structural dependency on external support. The moment the international presence recedes, the structures collapse, demonstrating that what appears to be local strategy is in fact externally driven and temporarily maintained. These advocates operate under the mandates and logics of global child rights governance. They receive training, funding, and programming direction from international and national intermediaries. As such, their function is to act as on-the-ground extensions of institutionalized international norms, ensuring that what the ILO, the UN, or global NGOs envision as child protection materialized at the local level.

Moreover, the language used by the advocates further reinforces their embeddedness within global frameworks. References to terms such as “hazardous child labor,” “light work,” “worst forms of child labor,” and “vulnerable households” reflect not local vernaculars, but legal and policy language codified in international treaties, particularly ILO Conventions 138 and 182. For example, Akwasi explains: “Our context is that we define child labour as a situation whereby the child shouldn't be engaging in any activity that will prevent the child from schooling... and it

shouldn't have any negative impact on their health and development." This is a near-verbatim reiteration of the ILO's definition. What we see here is not just the borrowing of terms but the internalization of global definitions and indicators further cementing the idea that local advocates operate within the discursive and operational frameworks of global governance systems. While these advocates are deeply embedded in their communities and possess vital cultural knowledge, their strategies are filtered through the expectations and norms of international actors. Even their modes of engagement consultation with district officials, collaboration with social welfare departments, reporting through monitoring tools are determined by globally oriented donor logics.

This theme, therefore, brings into sharp focus the liberal peacebuilding assumptions underpinning child labor advocacy in Ghana. The advocates function as translators and transmitters of international norms embedding liberal ideals such as children's rights, legal protection, and education as a peacebuilding tool into local contexts. They are not constructing alternatives to the liberal peace; they are implementing its agenda albeit within the specific constraints and realities of their communities. Their strategies, while contextually responsive, are prefigured by global frameworks. They are not inventors of new models; they are implementers of existing ones rendering them key agents in the localization of the liberal peace model. Their experiences and strategies thus reflect the entanglement of local action with global governance, demonstrating that even the most community-embedded forms of advocacy are part of a transnational infrastructure of peace and protection.

Conclusion

Chapter six explored the lived experiences and advocacy practices of community child labor advocates in Ghana through five core analytical themes: community advocates as witnesses

to atrocities of children, grassroots advocacy against child labor as activism towards children's schooling and right to education, advocacy against child labor as a confrontation with material constraints and entrenched struggles between ethical commitment and systemic resistance, community advocates as missionary peacebuilders, advocates as local implementers of global policies on child labor. Collectively, these themes provide a layered understanding of how grassroots actors engage in the complex task of confronting child labor and advancing peacebuilding at the community level in Ghana. The first theme emphasized how advocates function as witnesses, not only to the physical and emotional harm children endure but also to the structural violence that sustains child labor. Their testimonies, rooted in personal encounters and ethical commitments, position them as moral agents who are compelled to act despite systemic inertia. The second theme demonstrated that education serves not just as a preventative tool against child labor, but as a transformative instrument of peace.

Through awareness campaigns, school enrollment drives, and direct community engagement, advocates use education to reimagine and rebuild futures for children making it a cornerstone of their intervention strategies. In the third theme, the chapter unpacked the tension between the advocates' deep personal commitment and the structural constraints that hinder their work. Financial limitations, weak enforcement of child protection laws, and cultural resistance continually test their resolve, placing them at the intersection of moral conviction and institutional failure. The fourth unpacked how advocates carried out their work with a spiritual and moral sense. The final theme critically interrogated the assumption that community advocacy represents a wholly indigenous alternative to liberal peacebuilding. Instead, the findings reveal that advocates largely operate as implementers and adaptors of global frameworks, especially those advanced by the ILO and international NGOs. Their strategies,

tools, and reporting mechanisms are often shaped by external mandates, even as they attempt to localize them through culturally grounded practices.

Chapter Seven

Grassroots Child Labor Advocacy as Community Peacebuilding: Rethinking the Local Turn

Introduction

Chapter seven explores how community-based child labor advocacy in Ghana intersects with broader frameworks of peacebuilding, particularly through the lens of the "local turn" in Peace and Conflict Studies. Building on the thematic analyses presented in chapter six, this chapter shifts the focus from the advocates' lived experiences to a conceptual interrogation of the role their work plays in shaping peace at the community level. It critically examines how grassroots advocacy efforts aimed at eradicating child labor not only confront immediate harm but also contribute to long-term visions of social justice, equity, and structural transformation which are core tenets of peacebuilding. The chapter engages directly with the theoretical assumptions underpinning the local turn in peacebuilding. While the local turn seeks to re-center local agency, resist top-down liberal interventions, and honor indigenous knowledge systems, the evidence presented in this study complicates such distinctions. It reveals that while advocates operate at the community level and are often personally and culturally embedded, their work is shaped both strategically and ideologically by global child protection norms, including those of the ILO and the UN'S SDGs. The chapter is structured in two parts. The first section situates grassroots child labor advocacy within existing peacebuilding frameworks and highlights how advocacy activities contribute to both negative peace (the cessation of direct harm) and positive peace (the promotion of structural justice and human development). The second section assesses how these local practices align with, extend, or challenge the assumptions of the local turn, particularly in relation to local agency, ownership, and sustainability. By interrogating the role of

community advocates as peacebuilders, this chapter contributes to an ongoing scholarly conversation about the limits and possibilities of local peacebuilding. It argues that while child labor advocacy in Ghana operates within the liberal peace framework, it also performs meaningful functions in building social cohesion, reducing structural violence, and affirming the dignity and rights of children. In doing so, these advocates both reinforce and rework elements of the liberal peace in ways that are simultaneously constrained and creative.

Child Labor Advocacy as Peacebuilding Practice

Understanding grassroots child labor advocacy as a form of peacebuilding requires broadening the conceptual scope of what peace entails and how it is built. Traditionally, peacebuilding has been framed by some scholars around post-peace accord reconstruction, reconciliation, and the prevention of violent relapse (Aliff, 2014). However, more expansive definitions particularly those developed by scholars like Johan Galtung (1969) differentiate between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the presence of social justice and structural equity) (Galtung, 1969). It is within this framework of positive peace that child labor advocacy must be located. The findings of this study compel a broader and more grounded interpretation of peacebuilding; one that moves beyond the binary opposition between “liberal” and “local,” and instead focuses on how peace is shaped through every day, iterative practices that respond to entrenched structural harm. Community child labor advocacy in Ghana exemplifies this rethinking. The eradication of child labor, as pursued by community advocates in Ghana, is fundamentally a peacebuilding endeavor. It addresses the structural violence inherent in systems that deprive children of education, expose them to hazardous work, and normalize their exploitation. These are not merely social or economic problems; they are deeply embedded injustices that erode human dignity and compromise long-term societal stability. By

seeking to dismantle the conditions that sustain child labor, community advocates contribute to creating environments where children can thrive, families can access opportunity, and communities can begin to rebuild social trust. As such, their work transcends mere service delivery or welfare assistance; it is a deliberate engagement with the foundations of sustainable peace.

The narratives and the thematic synthesis illustrate that the work of these advocates frequently embodies the goals of peacebuilding. For example, Akwasi's commitment to increasing school enrollment in cocoa-growing areas reflects an effort not only to remove children from exploitative labor but also to reintegrate them into systems of learning and development, which are themselves preconditions for peaceful societies. Similarly, Barima's campaign to reform child labor practices in the textile sector represents a challenge to exploitative economic arrangements that entrench poverty and inequality which are core drivers of social instability. These activities correspond with the broader goals of positive peace as articulated by Galtung (1969) and others. Advocacy for children's rights, in this context, becomes a pathway to structural transformation aiming to rectify the institutionalized marginalization of vulnerable populations. In seeking justice for children, advocates are also reconfiguring power relationships between the state, families, industries, and communities. They are working to recalibrate societal priorities, pushing children's welfare from the periphery to the center of public concern (Häkli & Kallio, 2014).

Moreover, the work of child labor advocates aligns with conflict prevention, another critical dimension of peacebuilding. The long-term consequences of unchecked child labor, illiteracy, intergenerational poverty, youth disenfranchisement, and vulnerability to criminal exploitation are well-documented triggers of societal unrest (ILO, 2021). By intervening early in

children's lives and advocating for educational access and legal protection, these advocates help prevent the emergence of future crises rooted in economic despair and social marginalization. As Queenster noted in her narrative, "we never paused to think about whether these practices harmed the children. After all, it was the only life we knew." Her awakening to the hidden violence of normalized labor practices is not just personal, it is political, with direct implications for the future health of the community.

What emerges from this analysis is that grassroots advocacy is not merely a localized form of social work, but it is, in essence, a form of community-centered peacebuilding. Importantly, these interventions are not enacted through formal peace accords or national-level negotiations, but through quiet, sustained efforts to build cultures of care, education, and rights-respectful governance at the grassroots level. However, this peacebuilding process is not without tension. Advocates must navigate community resistance, institutional barriers, and deep cultural beliefs that normalize child labor as necessary for survival or character formation. Yet, even in these constrained conditions, their work reflects what Thiessen refers to as "emancipatory peacebuilding", an approach that seeks to empower marginalized groups and restore agency to those whose voices have historically been excluded from peace processes (Thiessen, 2011). In this light, the work of Ghanaian community advocates challenges narrow definitions of peacebuilding as something that happens only after war or through high-level diplomacy. It invites scholars and practitioners to reimagine peacebuilding as something deeply embedded in everyday struggles for justice, dignity, and well-being. Child labor advocacy, then, becomes not simply a development intervention, but a profound contribution to the architecture of peace, which is locally rooted, morally driven, and globally relevant.

Revisiting the Local Turn in Peacebuilding: Agency, Ownership, and Embeddedness

One of the central debates in PACS is the evolving role of the “local” in shaping sustainable peace. The so-called “local turn” in peacebuilding, advanced by scholars like Mac Ginty (2010, 2018), Mac Ginty & Richmond, (2013), Paffenholz (2015), Richmond (2011), and others, emerged as a corrective to the liberal peacebuilding paradigm’s top-down, externally driven approaches. This paradigm, rooted in Enlightenment liberalism and Kantian democratic peace theory emphasizes democratization, institution-building, and market liberalization as the primary vehicles for peace (Ryan, 2013). However, critiques of the liberal peacebuilding model argue that it frequently marginalizes local agency, ignores cultural context, and imposes neoliberal economic structures that may reproduce inequalities rather than alleviate them (Byrne et al., 2020; Mac Ginty, 2014; Paffenholz, 2021) The findings of this study suggest that the application of the ideals of the local turn in practice is far more complex particularly in contexts such as Ghanaian child labor advocacy.

At first glance, the work of Ghanaian community child labor advocates might appear to embody the principles of the local turn. As shown in Chapter five, these advocates are deeply embedded in their communities, personally connected to the realities of child labor, and motivated by moral, emotional, and often spiritual convictions. Their efforts to promote education, challenge exploitative practices, and engage families on the harms of child labor reflect an intimate understanding of the cultural and socio-economic landscape. On the surface, their advocacy aligns with Richmond’s (2011) call for peacebuilding rooted in local processes of meaning-making and Lederach’s (1995) “elicitive” approach, which privileges local knowledge and relationships. Yet, a closer examination complicates this narrative. As explored under the theme “Advocates as Local Implementers of Global policies on child labor,” the strategies

employed by these advocates such as the establishment of CCPCs, the use of Training of Trainers (ToT) modules, and the dissemination of flip charts and awareness campaigns are all derived from frameworks promoted by international institutions, particularly the ILO and other donor-driven initiatives. These strategies are not designed indigenously, rather, they are introduced through externally funded programs and implemented by local actors who are trained, resourced, and monitored by external agencies.

This reveals a fundamental tension in the local turn: while these advocates may be “local” in origin, their practices are often shaped by external structures of power and funding. As Kendhammer and Chandler (2021) and Paffenholz (2015) caution, many so-called local peacebuilding efforts are in fact managed by international actors under the guise of local ownership. This facade of localization conceals the enduring asymmetry in decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic direction. In the Ghanaian context, community advocates serve as intermediaries between international norms such as ILO Conventions 138 and 182 and local realities. They are tasked with translating global child protection standards into culturally appropriate messages and behaviors, yet they have limited autonomy to redefine the frameworks themselves. In this regard, the work of these advocates aligns with the concept of “vernacularization,” wherein local actors domesticate international norms without fundamentally transforming their logic (Levitt et al., 2013). For instance, in Kwadwo’s account, his advocacy is framed by the urgency to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a timeline set by global institutions. Similarly, Queenster’s concern that the global cocoa industry might stop buying Ghanaian cocoa unless child labor is addressed shows how international economic pressures influence local priorities. These examples reveal how the local is not an autonomous site of resistance or innovation, but rather a negotiated space where external agendas are

implemented under the rubric of community ownership (Kendhammer & Chandler, 2021). This hybridization of peacebuilding practices-what Mac Ginty (2010) calls “hybrid peace” highlights the complex interplay between local agency and liberal peace structures. While local actors do exercise some degree of creativity, such as using storytelling, religious messaging, or direct counseling to contextualize their advocacy, their work remains embedded within donor-driven frameworks. They are required to produce measurable outputs, adhere to donor timelines, and often report in formats dictated by international NGOs or government agencies. This supports Belloni’s assertion that hybridity is not a neutral synthesis of local and international practices but a space of tension, contestation, and often, domination (Belloni, 2012).

Moreover, the instrumentalization of local actors to achieve liberal peace objectives undermines the emancipatory potential of the local turn (Byrne, 2023). As Pugh, (2011) argues, peacebuilding often becomes managerial rather than transformative, reducing local actors to implementers of pre-designed solutions. In the case of Ghanaian child labor advocacy, this dynamic is evident in the reliance on international frameworks to define what counts as “child labor,” which may conflict with local understandings of child work and socialization. Advocates are thus caught in a web, they must convince communities to abandon long-standing practices, while using language and tools that may not fully resonate with local values. Still, it would be simplistic to suggest that these advocates lack agency. Their ability to mediate between donor expectations and community realities demonstrates a form of embedded agency. As Millar (2014) noted in his theory of “disaggregated hybridity,” local actors operate at multiple levels, navigating different power structures to pursue context-specific goals (Millar, 2014). Ghanaian advocates exemplify this when they use their personal stories to connect with families, adapt training materials to local idioms, or challenge government inaction through grassroots

mobilization. Ultimately, the Ghanaian case suggests that the local turn in peacebuilding, despite its good intentions, may overstate the independence and transformative capacity of community actors operating within entrenched institutional frameworks. Instead of representing a clear break from liberal peace, grassroots advocacy against child labor in Ghana serves as a localized extension of this model. The local context is not an alternative paradigm; rather, it is a critical space where global norms are implemented, adapted, and sometimes challenged, but rarely redefined from the grassroots level. This insight supports Richmond's (2011) critique that prevailing peacebuilding models often undermine local systems without facilitating authentic local alternatives, highlighting the necessity for more reflective, context-sensitive, and power-conscious peacebuilding approaches (Richmond, 2011b).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the peacebuilding significance of grassroots child labor advocacy in Ghana, situating the findings of this study within broader theoretical debates on the local turn in peacebuilding. Through a critical analysis of the advocates' practices, strategies, and institutional embeddedness, it becomes evident that their work, while grounded in community realities, is deeply influenced by and in many ways dependent on global peacebuilding norms and structures. Contrary to the romanticized notion of the "local" as a space of resistance or cultural authenticity, the advocates in this study emerge as hybrid actors simultaneously embedded in their communities and operating within the ideological and operational boundaries set by international institutions like the ILO. Their strategies, language, and interventions reflect a vernacularization of liberal peacebuilding rather than an autonomous or indigenous alternative to it. Yet, this embeddedness does not negate the transformative potential of their work. As shown throughout this chapter, community advocates contribute meaningfully to building

positive peace by disrupting cycles of child exploitation, promoting education, and fostering social awareness. Their efforts to reduce harm, protect rights, and shift norms are inherently political and deeply peace-oriented, even when they take place outside formal conflict zones. The chapter has further demonstrated that these grassroots peacebuilding practices are shaped by a complex interplay of moral conviction, personal experience, institutional constraints, and global frameworks. This reality demands a more nuanced understanding of local peacebuilding, one that goes beyond binary distinctions between “local” and “liberal” to recognize the dynamic, negotiated, and interdependent nature of peace work on the ground. The findings complicate the claims of the local turn by showing that local actors are not resisting global structures but are vital to their extension and legitimacy. Consequently, community child labor advocacy in Ghana should be viewed not as an isolated peace initiative but as a vital part of a larger peacebuilding continuum that encompasses both global and local contexts, as well as institutional frameworks and personal experiences.

General Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This final section brings together the core insights of the study, reflecting on the significance of the findings within the broader context of child labor advocacy and peacebuilding in Ghana. It begins by summarizing the key themes that emerged from the narratives and analyses, followed by a discussion of the study's contributions to theory, research, and practice. Drawing on these insights, the chapter offers practical, experience-informed recommendations aimed at enhancing child labor eradication efforts in Ghana. It concludes by acknowledging the study's limitations and proposing directions for future research to deepen understanding and inform more inclusive and sustainable advocacy strategies.

Overall Key Findings

This study examined the experiences of community advocates involved in the eradication of child labor in Ghana. Drawing on the narratives of thirty participants and analyzed through thematic and interpretive frameworks within the context of PACS, the research yielded a series of interrelated findings that illuminate the motivations, strategies, structural constraints, and peacebuilding implications of grassroots advocacy. The findings, which emerged from both descriptive and analytical levels of interpretation, are summarized below.

First and foremost, the study revealed that advocates are driven by a diverse and deeply personal set of motivations. These include childhood and personal experiences with child labor whether as former victims or close observers that influenced their moral values and emotional dedication to safeguarding children. Alongside these significant experiences, participants conveyed a profound sense of moral and constitutional duty, a deep enthusiasm for social change, a feeling of divine purpose, and, in certain instances, an unexpected career journey that

developed into a committed role in advocacy. These motivations are not mutually exclusive but interwoven, sustaining long-term engagement in contexts marked by significant challenges. The findings show that motivation for child labor advocacy in Ghana is multifaceted, rooted in lived realities, moral frameworks, and a sense of mission.

Second, the study identified three core advocacy strategies employed by participants in their efforts to combat child labor. These include: (1) awareness-raising and education, through school-based outreach, community meetings, and media campaigns aimed at shifting norms and informing families; (2) community empowerment and capacity building, often operationalized through the formation of Community Child Protection Committees and local training initiatives; and (3) collaboration and partnerships with traditional leaders, NGOs, schools, government bodies, and religious institutions. These efforts reflect a pragmatic approach to advocacy that emphasizes prevention, behavioral change, and shared responsibility.

Third, the findings reveal a range of barriers that hinder the work of advocates. These include inadequate funding and logistical support, entrenched poverty, community resistance rooted in cultural norms, low literacy levels, weak enforcement of child protection laws, and the unsustainability of interventions following NGO withdrawal. These challenges not only limit the effectiveness of advocacy efforts but also reflect the broader structural violence that sustains child labor in Ghanaian communities.

Fourth, the study found that community advocates operate as witnesses to atrocities against children. They bear direct witness to the physical, emotional, and psychological harm experienced by children in labor settings, and they often carry the emotional weight of these encounters. Witnessing is not merely observational but forms a critical component of their

advocacy, as they seek to expose and respond to normalized forms of harm that are often overlooked within the community.

Fifth, the study found that grassroots advocacy is framed by participants as activism aimed at protecting and promoting children's right to education. Advocates described school access not only as a legal entitlement but as a central component of their advocacy logic. Efforts to remove children from hazardous labor and re-integrate them into schools were viewed as key to disrupting cycles of poverty and exploitation. In this framing, advocacy becomes a vehicle for protecting educational access as a fundamental right and pathway to liberation.

Sixth, the study revealed that community advocates often engage in confrontation with systemic resistance and material constraints. Despite their commitment, advocates must navigate weak institutional support, limited state responsiveness, and entrenched community attitudes. This creates conditions in which they experience ethical dilemmas, especially when they are unable to respond adequately to children's needs due to systemic failures.

Seventh, some advocates perceive their work as a spiritual mission and see themselves as missionary peacebuilders. For these individuals, advocacy is underpinned by a religious or moral obligation to serve and protect children. Their commitment is not only professional or civic but deeply rooted in faith-based values that promote compassion, justice, and care for the vulnerable.

Eighth, the findings demonstrate that community advocates function as local implementers and adaptors of global child protection frameworks. While they operate at the grassroots level, their work is closely aligned with international standards such as the ILO Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Rather than opposing global norms, they translate and apply these frameworks in culturally relevant ways,

demonstrating how local advocacy is embedded within the broader architecture of liberal peacebuilding.

Ninth, the study concludes that child labor advocacy in Ghana constitutes a form of grassroots peacebuilding. Advocacy efforts are not limited to child protection alone but extend into broader processes of community transformation. By challenging structural injustices, promoting education, and fostering local agency, community advocates contribute to long-term visions of peace, social cohesion, and equity. Their work represents a critical, though often underexplored, dimension of peacebuilding practice in contexts of structural violence.

Significance of the Findings to Theory, Research, and Practice

In terms of its conceptual or theoretical significance, this study contributes to peacebuilding literature by reconceptualizing community advocacy particularly in non-conflict zones as a form of grassroots peacebuilding. It challenges the dichotomy between liberal and local peace frameworks and highlights how peace advocates often occupy a hybrid space of negotiated implementation, rather than a purely oppositional or autonomous local position. By so doing, the study opens new avenues for exploring the intersections between development, human rights, social justice, and peacebuilding. It underscores the need for more empirical investigations into the emotional, ethical, and epistemic dimensions of advocacy work, particularly in Africa. Practically, the research highlights the need for donors, governments, and NGOs to recalibrate how they support community advocates. It reveals the need for greater attention to be given to local realities, flexibility in programming, long-term funding, and the inclusion of advocates in policy design and not merely as implementers but as co-creators. The findings also suggest the importance of addressing structural causes of child labor, such as poverty and educational access, as a peacebuilding imperative.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

The following recommendations are derived from patterns and concerns raised by community child labor advocates throughout this study. They reflect both the structural limitations and the practical strategies identified by those working at the grassroots level. Each recommendation aims to strengthen the existing advocacy infrastructure offering practical strategies for strengthening grassroots advocacy and advancing child labor eradication efforts in Ghana..

Leveraging Professional Expertise to Strengthen Child Labor Advocacy

First, the study recommends leveraging professional expertise such as that of child protection officers, legal practitioners, social workers, and education specialists to support and strengthen child labor advocacy efforts in Ghana. These professionals can enhance community sensitization campaigns, provide technical guidance to grassroots advocates, and ensure that advocacy messaging is aligned with legal and policy frameworks. Their involvement can help bridge knowledge gaps, reinforce the credibility of community-based interventions, and promote more coordinated and sustainable approaches to child labor eradication. Such experts are better positioned to explain any misconceptions about child labor. Utilizing expertise to drive advocacy efforts and address community misconceptions will help community members better understand the concept and get answers to their questions. For example, the involvement of child rights organizations and experts in conducting workshops and awareness campaigns to educate communities about the negative impacts of child labor is crucial due to the prevalence of misconceptions at the community level.

Additionally, in the quest of using experts, they can be made to do the radio sensitization and education. Child labor experts must be given airtime on radio and television to educate the Ghanaian community on issues of child labor and its associated effects on the wellbeing of the

child and the development of the nation as a whole. Local radio stations should serve as effective mediums for disseminating expert-led community education on issues of child welfare, particularly child labor.

Recognizing Community Advocates as Co-Creators in Policy and Programming

Second, the study recommends that national and international stakeholders including governments, NGOs, and donor agencies should recognize community child labor advocates not merely as implementers of externally designed interventions, but as co-creators of child protection policy and programming. Too often, local actors are included in peacebuilding and development processes in tokenistic ways, with little influence over decision-making. Yet, as this study has shown, community advocates possess deep contextual knowledge, moral commitment, and lived experience that are essential to designing effective, locally grounded solutions. Meaningful inclusion requires providing space for advocates to contribute at all stages of planning and implementation, ensuring that their voices shape both strategic priorities and the allocation of resources.

Positioning Traditional Rulers as Central Figures in Child Labor Advocacy

Third, the study recommends positioning traditional rulers and community chiefs as central figures in child labor advocacy efforts. Given their moral authority, cultural legitimacy, and deep-rooted influence within local governance structures, traditional leaders are uniquely positioned to champion behavior change, mobilize community support, and enforce norms that protect children. Several advocates in this study emphasized the importance of gaining traditional approval and participation to ensure lasting impact. Actively involving traditional rulers not only enhances the legitimacy of interventions but also fosters broader communal ownership of child protection goals. Their leadership can serve as a bridge between formal legal

frameworks and customary practices, advancing child labor eradication through culturally grounded mechanisms.

Traditional rulers have the ability to use their authority to gather resources and support initiatives aimed at combating child labor in Ghana. They have the ability to motivate community members to participate in the course, either by making financial contributions, offering their time as volunteers, or supplying essential resources. Their participation can contribute to fostering a sense of shared accountability and possession within the community. This approach's efficacy is dependent on the inclination and dedication of these leaders to aggressively tackle child labor concerns. Participating in training programs and capacity-building activities can improve their understanding of child rights, child protection legislation, and successful advocacy techniques.

Supporting Advocate Well-Being Through Capacity Building and Emotional Resilience

Fourth, the study suggests creating specific capacity-building initiatives to tackle the emotional fatigue and psychological stress faced by advocates for children affected by labor in the community. These individuals, as frontline actors, frequently encounter traumatic stories, face systemic resistance, and deal with immense social needs, often lacking formal emotional or institutional support. Constant exposure to these challenges puts them at significant risk of burnout, jeopardizing the continuity and effectiveness of grassroots advocacy. Offering training in emotional resilience, peer support systems, stress management, and regular debriefing sessions can greatly improve their well-being and aid in retaining seasoned advocates within the movement. Enhancing this element of capacity building highlights that the support of advocates is essential for the success of efforts to eliminate child labor.

Addressing Poverty within the Affected Communities

Given the clear and consistent link between poverty and the persistence of child labor, it is essential that child labor eradication efforts in Ghana be coupled with broader poverty alleviation strategies. Governmental and non-governmental organizations must invest in sustainable livelihood programs for families in vulnerable communities. These should include income-generating initiatives that is well supervised, vocational training for adults, and access to microcredit or cooperative savings schemes that reduce household dependence on children's income. Moreover, social protection policies such as cash transfer programs, school feeding schemes, and health subsidies should be expanded and targeted at at-risk families. These interventions will not only reduce the economic burden on households but also create enabling conditions for children to remain in school. Community-based approaches should also integrate economic empowerment for parents as a core component of child protection strategies, ensuring that education is not seen as a luxury but as a viable and supported alternative to labor. Finally, national development plans must prioritize rural economic revitalization, focusing on infrastructure, job creation, and equitable resource allocation. Without addressing the underlying poverty that compels families to engage in child labor, advocacy alone will remain insufficient. Holistic, multi-sectoral approaches that combine education, economic empowerment, and community sensitization are therefore crucial for long-term success in combating child labor in Ghana.

Integrating Child Labor Education into School Curricula

Fifth, the study recommends the integration of child labor education into Ghana's basic and secondary school curricula. Embedding this content within civic education, social studies, or life skills subjects can foster early awareness among students about the dangers and

consequences of child labor. This curricular approach would also support teachers in becoming advocates themselves, equipping them to identify, report, and discuss child labor-related issues in age-appropriate ways. Such integration reinforces the long-term prevention of child labor by shaping informed, rights-conscious citizens from an early age. Through the integration of a child labor curriculum into the educational framework, children can acquire knowledge regarding their rights, the significance of education, the perils and manipulation linked to child labor, and the possible enduring consequences for their welfare. The acquisition of this knowledge has the potential to empower children, enabling them to make well-informed decisions and refrain from participating in detrimental labor practices.

Studies suggest that offering free and quality education through the public sector can successfully intervene in tackling the ongoing issue of child labor. Research has demonstrated that integrating peace education into higher education curricula helps foster the cultivation of peaceful behaviors and enhance young adults' comprehension of the importance of peacebuilding (Millican et al., 2021). Peace education encompasses the imparting of information on how to attain and sustain peace, as well as the cultivation of abilities and capabilities to successfully utilize this knowledge (Sagkal et al., 2016). Enacting peace education initiatives can have beneficial effects on participants' comprehension, consciousness, and dispositions towards the promotion of peace (Edwards Jr et al., 2020). The absence of education and opportunities can exacerbate a recurring pattern of violence and conflict. By placing children's education as a top priority, society may disrupt this recurring pattern by presenting an alternate route for children, equipping them with the essential information and abilities to lead peaceful and fruitful lives.

Enhancing Motivation and Support for Community-Based Volunteers

Sixth, the study recommends developing clear strategies to recognize, motivate, and support volunteers engaged in child labor advocacy at the community level. Many grassroots advocates operate with little to no compensation, often using their own resources and time despite facing economic hardships themselves. This lack of institutional support risks volunteer burnout, disengagement, and the eventual collapse of local advocacy networks. Providing stipends, public recognition, training opportunities, and psychosocial support can go a long way in sustaining their commitment. Institutionalizing volunteer support mechanisms within child protection programs would not only boost morale but also ensure the continuity and effectiveness of local advocacy efforts in Ghana and beyond.

Integrating Child Labor Advocacy into Peacebuilding and Development Agendas

Seventh, the study recommends that child labor advocacy be fully integrated into national and international peacebuilding and development strategies. Many atimes, child labor is addressed as a standalone social issue, rather than as a symptom of deeper structural problems such as poverty, under-resourced education systems, and the cultural normalization of exploitation. However, as this research demonstrates, child labor is not only a developmental concern but a form of structural violence that undermines long-term peace and human security. Recognizing child labor as a peace and security issue would promote greater policy alignment and resource allocation, ensuring that advocacy efforts are embedded within broader strategies aimed at building equitable, resilient, and just societies.

Expanding Access to Guidance and Counseling for Affected Children and Families

Eighth, the study recommends expanding guidance and counseling services as a core component of child labor intervention strategies. Many children involved in labor face emotional

trauma, neglect, and psychological distress that require professional support for healing and reintegration. Similarly, families may benefit from counseling to address the underlying socio-economic or relational dynamics that contribute to child labor. By embedding counseling services within schools, community centers, and child protection initiatives, stakeholders can provide holistic care that supports the mental and emotional well-being of both victims and their caregivers in order to strengthen the sustainability of rescue and rehabilitation efforts.

Establishing Sustainable and Flexible Funding Mechanisms

Lastly, the study recommends that funding mechanisms for child labor advocacy prioritize long-term, adaptable support over short-term, donor-driven interventions. Many grassroots initiatives suffer from project-based funding cycles that impose rigid timelines, narrow indicators, and externally defined goals. This limits advocates' ability to respond to evolving local needs, innovate context-specific solutions, or maintain continuity once external support ends. Sustainable funding should allow for flexibility in implementation, foster local ownership, and invest in institutional capacity that endures beyond donor timelines. Shifting toward such models would strengthen the resilience, effectiveness, and sustainability of grassroots advocacy in Ghana's child labor eradication efforts.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

One limitation of this study is that it draws primarily on the perspectives of advocates rather than those of children who have experienced child labor or the beneficiaries of advocacy interventions. While the insights of community advocates provide valuable information about the strategies, motivations, and challenges of grassroots advocacy, they do not fully capture the experiences or evaluations of those receiving support. Including the voices of former child laborers and their families would offer a more holistic understanding of advocacy effectiveness

and contribute to the development of a model for best practices. Nonetheless, this study serves as a foundational step in a broader inquiry aimed at uncovering the 'what' and 'how' of community-based child labor advocacy in Ghana.

It is also important for me to point out that the research specifically examined the experiences of community activists and advocates in dealing with child labor practices in Ghana. Hence, the results and conclusions of the research may not be easily applicable to different situations or places. In addition, the study employed qualitative research methodologies and included a very small sample size (30 individuals from Ghana), which might restrict the applicability of the results to a broader population. However, the findings still have the potential to be generalized, as data saturation within the limited scope of the study was reached during the data collection process. Data saturation in qualitative research is the stage where no further data gathering or interviews yield any new information or topics. This idea is crucial in assessing the sufficiency of the sample size in qualitative investigations. Researchers often conclude interviews with participants once they have achieved data saturation, which signifies that they have collected sufficient material to adequately address the study objectives (Fofana et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2018).

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, future research should incorporate the perspectives of children and families who have directly experienced child labor and received advocacy support. Understanding their lived experiences, perceptions of advocacy efforts, and post-intervention outcomes will provide critical insight into the effectiveness, gaps, and unintended consequences of current strategies. Additionally, future studies could explore longitudinal impacts of advocacy tracking how interventions evolve over time and what structural changes they produce. Comparative research across regions or countries could also

help identify context-specific and transferable lessons. Ultimately, expanding the scope to include multiple voices and stakeholders will deepen our understanding of child labor advocacy and strengthen the development of inclusive, sustainable, and rights-based approaches to eradication.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand the lived experiences of community child labor advocates in Ghana, with a particular focus on how their work intersects with broader frameworks of peacebuilding. Through a qualitative study approach grounded in thematic analysis, this study has sought to uncover the deeper meanings behind the everyday practices of advocates who work at the frontline of one of Ghana's most persistent social challenges, child labor.

From the experiences of community advocates in Ghana who are combating child labor, we learn that grassroots advocacy is deeply rooted in personal history, moral conviction, and a commitment to community transformation. Many advocates are themselves survivors or witnesses of child labor and draw on these lived experiences to inform their activism. Their insights reveal that child labor is not just a legal or economic issue but a complex, socially embedded phenomenon influenced by poverty, cultural norms, weak institutional support, and limited educational opportunities. Through their strategies such as public education, community sensitization, collaboration with stakeholders, and local capacity building, community advocates demonstrate that sustainable change depends on trust, cultural relevance, and local ownership. Their challenges, including financial constraints, community resistance, and the unsustainability of interventions after NGO exit, expose structural weaknesses in the broader child protection system. Yet, their resilience and adaptive strategies also illustrate the power of localized

peacebuilding. Overall, their experiences teach us that effective child labor eradication must prioritize local agency, integrate global norms with community realities, and recognize advocacy as both a technical and relational endeavor grounded in empathy, accountability, and social justice.

From the the experiences of the advocates we learn that grassroots peacebuilding efforts in the form of child labor advocacy does not constitute a distinct, indigenous alternative to the liberal peace model. Instead, community advocates in Ghana function as local implementers and adaptors of liberal peacebuilding frameworks. Their work is shaped by, and often dependent on, international norms, institutionalized knowledge, and formal legal mechanisms, particularly those advanced by global bodies such as the ILO. Far from operating outside the liberal peace architecture, these advocates are embedded within it, translating global child protection agendas into local action.

Also based on their experiences, this study dvances the claim that child labor advocacy, while often categorized as a social or development initiative, must be recognized as a vital dimension of peacebuilding. The work of these advocates is not limited to rescuing children or raising awareness; it is deeply intertwined with efforts to combat structural violence, reduce social exclusion, and promote access to education and dignity which are core principles of positive peace. By advocating for children's rights, promoting educational initiatives, and challenging normalized practices of exploitation, these individuals are actively engaged in building the conditions necessary for sustainable peace at the community level in Ghana.

References

- Abdullah, A. (2024). Supervision and Monitoring in Informal Child Protection in Rural Context. *Child & Family Social Work*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.13239>
- Abdullah, A., Cudjoe, E., Jordan, L. P., & Emery, C. R. (2021). Child polyvictimization in Zongo communities in Ghana: Young people's reflections on systemic resilience enablers. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *119*, 105075. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105075>
- Abdullah, A., Huynh, I., Emery, C. R., & Jordan, L. P. (2022). Social norms and family child labor: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(7), 4082.
- Abdullah, A., Jordan, L., Lu, S., & Emery, C. R. (2022). Collective value of Abiriwatia and protective informal social control of child neglect: Findings from a Nationally Representative Survey in Ghana. *Health & Social Care in the Community*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.14005>
- Abebe, T., & Bessell, S. (2011). Dominant discourses, debates and silences on child labour in Africa and Asia. *Third World Quarterly*, *32*(4), 765–786.
- Addae, E. A., & Tang, L. (2021). How Can I Feel Safe at Home? Adolescents' Experiences of Family Violence in Ghana. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *9*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.672061>
- Adhikari, M. (2018). India in South Asia: Interaction with Liberal Peacebuilding Projects. *India Quarterly*, *74*(2), 160–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928418766731>
- Admassie, A. (2002). Explaining the high incidence of child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Development Review*, *14*(2), 251–275.

- Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2019). Parental evidence of impact of policy on worst forms of child labour in rural and urban Ghana. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 35(3), 239–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21699763.2018.1535996>
- Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2021). Parental perceptions of the nature of child labour in rural and urban Ghana: Cultural versus economic necessity. *Child Care in Practice*, 29(2), 118–138.
- Adu-Boahen, K. (2012). The Impact of European Presence on Slavery in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 14, 165–199.
- Adzahlie-Mensah, V., & Dunne, M. (2018). Continuing in the shadows of colonialism: The educational experiences of the African Child in Ghana. *Perspectives in Education*, 36(2), 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v36i2.5>
- Afriyie, L. T., Saeed, B. I., & Alhassan, A. (2019). Determinants of child labour practices in Ghana. *Journal of Public Health*, 27, 211–217.
- Agyemang, E. O., Haggerty, K. P., Guttmanova, K., Spencer, M. S., & Spearmon, M. L. (2023). Community-Based Child Labor Trafficking Prevention in Ghana: A Rights-Based Approach. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2023.2259785>
- Akaguri, L. (2014). Fee-free public or low-fee private basic education in rural Ghana: How does the cost influence the choice of the poor? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 44(2), 140–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2013.796816>
- Akyeampong, K. (2009). Revisiting Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in Ghana. *Comparative Education*, 45(2), 175–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060902920534>

- Aliff, S. M. (2014). *Peace building in post: War societies*.
<http://ir.lib.seu.ac.lk/handle/123456789/986>
- Ame, R. K. (2011). The rights of children in conflict with the law in Ghana. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 19(2), 271–293.
- Ardila Sánchez, J. G., Richling, S. M., Benson, M. L., & Rakos, R. F. (2020). Activism, advocacy, and accompaniment. *Behavior Science Perspectives on Culture and Community*, 413–436.
- Arora, A. (2017, November 1). A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents. *UNICEF DATA*. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-familiar-face/>
- Asare-Konadu, C. (2018). *There is no child labour in Ghana: An empirical study of how parents and children experience child labour in Ghana*.
- Asuming-Brempong, S., Sarpong, D., Asenso-Okyere, K., & Amoo, P. (2007). Labour practices in cocoa production in Ghana (Pilot survey): National programme for the elimination of worst forms of child labour in cocoa (NPECLC). *Accra: Ministry of Manpower, Youth & Employment*.
- Aubyn, F. K. (2020). An overview of recent trends in African scholarly writing on peacebuilding. *Researching Peacebuilding in Africa*, 15–37.
- Autesserre, S. (2010). *The trouble with the Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding* (Vol. 115). Cambridge University Press.
- Awadey, C. (2011). *National social mobilization strategy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Ghana: A call to action*. Child Labour Unit of the Labour Department, Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare.

- Baah, F. (2010). Use of children and the issue of child labour in Ghanaian cocoa farm activities. *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development*, 2(9), 198–204.
- Bachman, S. L. (2000). A new economics of child labor: Searching for answers behind the headlines. *Journal of International Affairs*, 545–572.
- Badoe, E. (2017). A critical review of child abuse and its management in Africa. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 7, S32–S35.
- Baidoo, J. R. (2015). *Assessing the effectiveness of Ghana's Efforts at addressing Child Labour in Cocoa growing communities (a case study of Wassa Amenfi West District of the Western Region)*.
- Balagopalan, S. (2008). Memories of tomorrow: Children, labor, and the panacea of formal schooling. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1(2), 267–285.
- Balen, R., Holroyd, C., Mountain, G., & Wood, B. (2000). Giving children a voice: Methodological and practical implications of research involving children. *Paediatric Nursing*, 12(10), 24.
- Bar-On, D. (2006). *Tell your life story: Creating dialogue between Jews and Germans, Israeli and Palestinians*. Central European University Press.
- Bartlett, S. (2017). *Children and the geography of violence: Why space and place matter*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315174723/children-geography-violence-sheridan-bartlett>
- Baugerud, G. A., Vangbæk, S., & Melinder, A. (2018). Secondary traumatic stress, burnout and compassion satisfaction among Norwegian child protection workers: Protective and risk factors. *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(1), 215–235.

- Beech, N. (2011). Liminality and the practices of identity reconstruction. *Human Relations*, 64(2), 285–302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726710371235>
- Bell, C. (2013). Peacebuilding, Law and Human Right. In *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (pp. 249–260). Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203068175-24/peacebuilding-law-human-right-christine-bell>
- Belloni, R. (2012). Hybrid Peace Governance: Its Emergence and Significance. *Global Governance*, 18(1), 21–38.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234.
- Bicchieri, C., & Mercier, H. (2014). Norms and Beliefs: How Change Occurs. In M. Xenitidou & B. Edmonds (Eds.), *The Complexity of Social Norms* (pp. 37–54). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05308-0_3
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811.
- Blumberg, H. H., Hare, A. P., & Costin, A. (2006). *Peace psychology: A comprehensive introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
[https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Cu6DznSgSvUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Blumberg,+H.+H.,+Hare,+P.+A.,+%26+Costin,+A.+\(2006\).+Peace+psychology:+A+comprehensive+introduction.+Cambridge,+UK:+Cambridge+University&ots=KzR-_K_toX&sig=gZDWmCbD7p_BD0Y0ZszyXjyDP50](https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Cu6DznSgSvUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Blumberg,+H.+H.,+Hare,+P.+A.,+%26+Costin,+A.+(2006).+Peace+psychology:+A+comprehensive+introduction.+Cambridge,+UK:+Cambridge+University&ots=KzR-_K_toX&sig=gZDWmCbD7p_BD0Y0ZszyXjyDP50)

- Boateng, A., & Dako-Gyeke, M. (2022). Child Labor in Ghana: Current Policy, Research, and Practice Efforts. *Child Behavioral Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards Evidence Generation and Policy Development*, 265–281.
- Boege, V., & Rinck, P. (2019). The Local/International Interface in Peacebuilding: Experiences from Bougainville and Sierra Leone. *International Peacekeeping*, 26(2), 216–239.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1561185>
- Bonevski, B., Randell, M., Paul, C., Chapman, K., Twyman, L., Bryant, J., Brozek, I., & Hughes, C. (2014). Reaching the hard-to-reach: A systematic review of strategies for improving health and medical research with socially disadvantaged groups. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 14, 1–29.
- Bonnet, M. (1993). Child labour in Africa. *Int'l Lab. Rev.*, 132, 371.
- Bonney, E. N. (2021). *Deconstructing dominant English language discourses in the Ghanaian curriculum: Reimagining a curriculum centered in Ghanaian languages and literacies* [PhD Thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia].
<https://search.proquest.com/openview/5e00efea3c577099829ba5366bc8d9f2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Bono, L. K., Rogo, E. J., Hodges, K., & Frantz, A. C. (2018). Post-graduation effects of an advocacy engagement project on alumni of a dental hygiene program. *Journal of Dental Education*, 82(2), 118–129.
- Boyden, J., Dawes, A., Dornan, P., & Tredoux, C. (2019). *Tracing the consequences of child poverty*. Policy Press. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25761>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.
- Butchart, A., & Hillis, S. (2016). *INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children*. World Health Organisation.
<https://anrows.intersearch.com.au/anrowsjspui/handle/1/20255>
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003387190/civil-society-peacebuilding-economic-assistance-northern-ireland-sean-byrne>
- Byrne, S., Matyók, T., Scott, I. M., & Senehi, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
<https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315182070&type=googlepdf>
- Cahill-Ripley, A. (2016). Reclaiming the peacebuilding agenda: Economic and social rights as a legal framework for building positive peace-a human security plus approach to peacebuilding. *Human Rights Law Review*, 16(2), 223–246.
- Caine, V., Steeves, P., Clandinin, D. J., Estefan, A., Huber, J., & Murphy, M. S. (2018). Social justice practice: A narrative inquiry perspective. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 13(2), 133–143.
- Cameron, L. (2016). Using metaphor for peace-building, empathy, and reconciliation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language*. Routledge.
- Canagarajah, S., & Coulombe, H. (1997). *Child Labor and Schooling in Ghana* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 620598). Social Science Research Network.
<https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=620598>
- Carlson, C., Namy, S., Norcini Pala, A., Wainberg, M. L., Michau, L., Nakuti, J., Knight, L., Allen, E., Ikenberg, C., Naker, D., & Devries, K. (2020). Violence against children and

- intimate partner violence against women: Overlap and common contributing factors among caregiver-adolescent dyads. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 124.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-8115-0>
- Caspersen, N. (2019). Human rights in territorial peace agreements. *Review of International Studies*, 45(4), 527–549. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210519000056>
- Cavazzoni, F., Fiorini, A., & Veronese, G. (2022). Alternative Ways of Capturing the Legacies of Traumatic Events: A Literature Review of Agency of Children Living in Countries Affected by Political Violence and Armed Conflicts. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(2), 555–566. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838020961878>
- Charlson, F., van Ommeren, M., Flaxman, A., Cornett, J., Whiteford, H., & Saxena, S. (2019). New WHO prevalence estimates of mental disorders in conflict settings: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet*, 394(10194), 240–248.
- Chilwalo, M. (2020). Community-based, endogenous and Ubuntu inspired child protection mechanisms: Case of the girl power program in addressing school-related gender-based violence in Chibombo District of Zambia. *African Journal of Social Work*, 10(1), 10–15.
- Christie, D. J. (1997). Reducing direct and structural violence: The human needs theory. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 3(4), 315–332.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac0304_1
- Clandinin, D., & Caine, V. (2008). Narrative Inquiry. In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 542–545). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2022). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Routledge.
<https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781003240143&type=googlepdf>

- Clerk, G. (2011). *Child labor in Ghana: Global concern and local reality*. In Ame, R.K., Agbenyiga, D.L., & Apt, N.A.. *Children's rights in Ghana: Reality or rhetoric?*. Lexington Books.
- Close, S. (2018). Researching peace peacefully: Using ethnographic approaches in Timor-Leste. *Ethnographic Peace Research: Approaches and Tensions*, 181–205.
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. (2022). *Children, not workers: Community-based Responses to Child Labour in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Spotlight on Ghana, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago*.
<https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/download/1671536153CHRI%20Child%20Labour.pdf>
- Cooper, R., & Rice, C. M. (2014). Preparing to Study Conflict and Peace. *Peace and Conflict Studies Research: A Qualitative Perspective*, 23.
- Creary, P., & Byrne, S. (2014). Peace with strings attached: Exploring reflections of structure and agency in Northern Ireland peacebuilding funding. *Peacebuilding*, 2(1), 64–82.
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. pearson.
- Cuevas-Parra, P. (2020). Co-Researching With Children in the Time of COVID-19: Shifting the Narrative on Methodologies to Generate Knowledge. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1609406920982135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920982135>
- Danvers, K. (2022). Collaborating with social justice activists in Ghana's fight against modern slavery: A case study of challenging heights. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Innovative Community and Clinical Psychologies* (pp. 473–495). Springer.

- De Coning, C. (2016). From peacebuilding to sustaining peace: Implications of complexity for resilience and sustainability. *Resilience*, 4(3), 166–181.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2016.1153773>
- de Soto, A., & Del Castillo, G. (1994). Obstacles to Peacebuilding. *FOREIGN POLICY*, 94, 69–83.
- Devries, K., Knight, L., Petzold, M., Merrill, K. G., Maxwell, L., Williams, A., Cappa, C., Chan, K. L., Garcia-Moreno, C., & Hollis, N. (2018). Who perpetrates violence against children? A systematic analysis of age-specific and sex-specific data. *BMJ Paediatrics Open*, 2(1), e000180.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314–321.
- DiLorenzo, P., White, C., Morales, A., Paul, A., & Shaw, S. (2013). Innovative cross-system and community approaches for the prevention of child maltreatment. *Child Welfare*, 92 2, 161–178.
- Diptee, A. A. (2006). African children in the British slave trade during the late eighteenth century. *Slavery & Abolition*, 27(2), 183–196.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01440390600765458>
- Djalalova, M. (2015). *Child labour prevalence in Ghana*. KDI School of Public Policy and Management.
- Doucet, A., & Mauthner, N. S. (2008). What can be known and how? Narrated subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), 399–409.

- Dowuona-Hammond, C., Atuguba, R. A., & Tuokuu, F. X. D. (2021). The child labour quagmire in Ghana: Root causes and ephemeral solutions. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 6(1), 163–169.
- Doyle, M. W. (2008). Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs*. In *Immanuel Kant*. Routledge.
- Edmonds, R., Ochaya, A., & Sansom, N. (2022). The role of resilience processes in education and well-being outcomes for separated children in Uganda: Exploring street-connected children's pathways through a resilience-based programme and beyond. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 12(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106221082677>
- Eltis, D. (2007). *A brief overview of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Voyages: The trans-atlantic slave trade database*. 1700–1810.
- Erdem Türkelli, G. (2020). Eradicating child labor: Ending economic exploitation of children as an objective of sustainable development. In *Decent Work and Economic Growth* (pp. 390–402). Springer.
- Fassin, D. (2011). *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. University of California Press.
- Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor—Ghana*. (2023). DOL. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/ghana>
- Fofana, F., Bazeley, P., & Regnault, A. (2020). Applying a mixed methods design to test saturation for qualitative data in health outcomes research. *PloS One*, 15(6), e0234898.
- Forbes, B., Fosuah, C., Tidwell, B., Nitkin, T., & Davis, T. (2023). Effects of a nurturing care group behavior change program on child protection outcomes in Ghana: A controlled before and after trial. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 139, 106067.

- Ford, K., Dickinson, A., Water, T., Campbell, S., Bray, L., & Carter, B. (2018). Child Centred Care: Challenging Assumptions and Repositioning Children and Young People. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing: Nursing Care of Children and Families*, 43, e39–e43.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2018.08.012>
- Fujii, L. A. (2010). Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(2), 231–241.
- Fuller, H. (2010). *Building a nation: Symbolic nationalism during the Kwame Nkrumah era in the Gold Coast/Ghana*. London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom).
- Fulu, E., Miedema, S., Roselli, T., McCook, S., Chan, K. L., Haardörfer, R., Jewkes, R., Fulu, E., Jewkes, R., Warner, X., Miedema, S., Roselli, T., Lang, J., Naved, R. T., Huque, H., Farah, S., Shuvra, M. M. R., Erken, A., Xiangxian, W., ... Johnson, S. (2017). Pathways between childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, and harsh parenting: Findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific. *The Lancet Global Health*, 5(5), e512–e522. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(17\)30103-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(17)30103-1)
- Fyfe, A., Roselaers, F., Tzannatos, Z., & Rosati, F. (2003). Understanding children's work: An interagency data and research cooperation project. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 17(2), 311–314.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291–305.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005>

- Gamlin, J., & Hesketh, T. (2007). Child Work in Agriculture: Acute and Chronic Health Hazards. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 17(4), 1–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/cye.2007.0019>
- Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardo, C. (1992). *Children in danger: Coping with the consequences of community violence*. Jossey-Bass/Wiley.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1992-97848-000>
- Gartzke, E. (2007). The Capitalist Peace. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 166–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00244.x>
- Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour (National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour) 2023—2027 | ICI Cocoa Initiative*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 20, 2024, from <https://www.cocoainitiative.org/knowledge-hub/resources/ghana-accelerated-action-plan-against-child-labour-national-plan-action>
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2014). *Ghana living standards survey*.
<https://www2.statsghana.gov.gh/nada/index.php/catalog/72/study-description>
- Glover, J., Liebling, H., Goodman, S., & Barrett, H. (2018). Persistence and Resistance of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) Perpetuated against Girls in Africa and Asia. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 19(2), 44–64.
- Goetschel, L., & Hagmann, T. (2009). Civilian peacebuilding: Peace by bureaucratic means?: Analysis. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9(1), 55–73.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800802704911>
- Goodman, N. R. (2012). The Power of Witnessing. In *The Power of Witnessing*. Routledge.

- Goulart, P. V. (2024). Child labour, Africa's colonial system, and coercion: The case of the Portuguese colonies, 1870–1975. *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 39(1), 82–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2023.2243034>
- Gready, P., & Robins, S. (2017). Rethinking civil society and transitional justice: Lessons from social movements and 'new' civil society. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(7), 956–975. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2017.1313237>
- Grossman, S., Cooper, Z., Buxton, H., Hendrickson, S., Lewis-O'Connor, A., Stevens, J., Wong, L.-Y., & Bonne, S. (2021). Trauma-informed care: Recognizing and resisting re-traumatization in health care. *Trauma Surgery & Acute Care Open*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1136/tsaco-2021-000815>
- Gwanyemba, J., Kiwia, R. H., & Zuberi, B. G. (2016). The Effectiveness of Formal and Informal Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Rural Areas of Tanzania: Evidences from Selected World Vision Tanzania Projects. *Developing Country Studies*, 6, 43–47.
- Gyan, J. K., & Bajan, B. (2022). Market analysis on cocoa beans export: The case of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa. *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, 66(4), 375–384. <https://doi.org/10.17306/J.JARD.2022.01646>
- Haile, G., & Haile, B. (2012). Child labour and child schooling in rural Ethiopia: Nature and trade-off. *Education Economics*, 20(4), 365–385.
- Häkli, J., & Kallio, K. P. (2014). The Global as a Field: Children's Rights Advocacy as a Transnational Practice. *Environment and Planning D*, 32(2), 293–309. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d0613>
- Harcourt, D., & Sargeant, J. (2011). The challenges of conducting ethical research with children. *Education Inquiry*, 2(3), 421–436. <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v2i3.21992>

- Harris, I. M., & Morrison, M. L. (2012). *Peace Education, 3d ed.* McFarland.
- Hartjen, C. A., & Priyadarsini, S. (2012). *The Global Victimization of Children: Problems and Solutions.* Springer US. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2179-5>
- Heathershaw, J. (2008). Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36(3), 597–621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298080360031101>
- Hecht, I. (2020). Postcolonial Reconstruction in Ghana, 1952–66. *Monthly Review*, 51–60. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-072-01-2020-05_5
- Hepburn, S., & Jackson, A. (2022). Colonial Exceptions: The International Labour Organization and Child Labour in British Africa, c.1919–40. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 57(2), 218–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009420988063>
- Hillis, S. D., Mercy, James A., & Saul, J. R. (2017a). The enduring impact of violence against children. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 22(4), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2016.1153679>
- Hillis, S. D., Mercy, James A., & Saul, J. R. (2017b). The enduring impact of violence against children. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 22(4), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2016.1153679>
- Hillis, S., Mercy, J., Amobi, A., & Kress, H. (2016). Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: A systematic review and minimum estimates. *Pediatrics*, 137(3).
- Hilson, G. (2010). Child labour in African artisanal mining communities: Experiences from Northern Ghana. *Development and Change*, 41(3), 445–473.

- Hosseilverdi, M., Pourassadi, Z., Keshavarz, S., & Kakavand, A. (2021). Effectiveness of compassion-focused therapy on self-esteem, empathy, and forgiveness in child labor. *J Child Ment Health*, 7(4), 181–196.
- ILO. (2017). Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012–2016. *International Labour Organization; International Institute for Labour Studies*.
- ILO, U. (2021). Child labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward. *New York: International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund*.
- Issaka, J., Adams, F. H., Gyimah, E., & Kissi, B. A. (2021). Impact of Child Labour on Children's Academic Activities in Krachi East District. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2021/v18i230439>
- Jack, G. (2004). Child protection at the community level. *Child Abuse Review*, 13(6), 368–383. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.871>
- James, A. (2007). Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2007.109.2.261>
- Johansen, R. (2006). Child trafficking in Ghana. *Perspectives*, 1(1), 4–7.
- Judicial Service. (1992). *The Constitution of Ghana*. <https://judicial.gov.gh/index.php/the-constitution>
- Juichiro Tanabe. (2017). Beyond Liberal Peacebuilding: A Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding and Exploring a Postmodern Post-liberal Hybrid Model of Peacebuilding. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 5(8). <https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2134/2017.08.001>
- Katz, J., & Csordas, T. J. (2003). Phenomenological ethnography in sociology and anthropology. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 275–288.

- Kendhammer, B., & Chandler, W. (2021). *Locating the “Local” in Peacebuilding*. RESOLVE Network. <https://doi.org/10.37805/lpbi2021.1>
- Kivuva, R. M., Lumayo, M., & Okeche, P. (2021). Community-Based Child Protection Systems: Prevalence of Child Abuse in Mukuru Kwa Njenga Informal Settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2021/v9/i10/hs2110-038>
- Koomson, I., & Asongu, S. A. (2016). Relative Contribution of Child Labour to Household Farm and Non-Farm Income in Ghana: Simulation with Child’s Education. *African Development Review*, 28(1), 104–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12170>
- Kostelny, K., Wessells, M., & Ondoro, K. (2014). *Community-based child protection mechanisms in Kilifi, Kenya: A rapid ethnographic study in two rural sites*. <https://jilifc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/5-Ethnographic-report-Kilifi-draft-2.pdf>
- Kostelny, K., Wessells, M., & Ondoro, K. (2019). Enabling Full Participation: A Community-Led Approach to Child Protection. *Peace Psychology Book Series*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-22176-8_18
- Kpalam, E. T. (2023). Child Protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality, Ghana. *Religion and Development*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.30965/27507955-20230004>
- Kpalam, E. T., Nyarko-Tetteh, E., & Ahiataku, E. (2024). Examining Religious Leaders’ Engagement in Child Protection in Dzemeni, Volta Region, Ghana. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20245149>
- Krauss, A. (2016). Understanding child labour beyond the standard economic assumption of monetary poverty. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, bew019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bew019>

- Kufogbe, S., Awadey, C., & Appenteng, B. (2005). Child Labour in Fishing in the Gomoa and Awutu-Efutu-Senya Districts, Ghana. *A Baseline Survey Report*.
- Kumari, R. (2021). Production of ‘Safe’ Spaces for Adivasi Children and the Armed Conflict of Bastar, India. In J. M. Beier & J. Tabak (Eds.), *Childhoods in Peace and Conflict* (pp. 203–222). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74788-6_11
- Kuyini, A. B., & Mahama, F. K. (2009). Implementing child rights and protection law in Ghana: Case study. *Retrieved March, 13, 2018*.
- Lawrance, B. N. (2010). From child labor “problem” to human trafficking “crisis”: Child advocacy and anti-trafficking legislation in Ghana. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 78(1), 63–88.
- Lawson, D., Dubin, A., Mwambene, L., & Bisrat, W. (2020). Engendering access to justice for the poorest and most vulnerable in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Gender, Poverty and Access to Justice* (pp. 3–14). Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315407104-2/engendering-access-justice-poorest-vulnerable-sub-saharan-africa-david-lawson-adam-dubin-lea-mwambene-woldemichael-bisrat>
- Leavitt, R. A. (2018). Suicides among American Indian/Alaska Natives—National violent death reporting system, 18 states, 2003–2014. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 67.
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6708a1.htm?utm_source=Weekly+Spark+4%2F5%2F19&utm_campaign=Weekly+Spark+April+5%2C+2019&utm_medium=email

- Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. Syracuse University Press.
- https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=G_6NcdYs1ZoC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Preparing+for+Peace:+Conflict+Transformation+Across+Cultures&ots=R-dcuvzO5m&sig=M2SjT8U4xN7MbQYb1ILu-eUYFic
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies. *Washington, DC: USIP*.
- Ledoux, K. (2015). Understanding compassion fatigue: Understanding compassion. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 71*(9), 2041–2050. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12686>
- Lee, S. Y., & Özerdem, A. (2015). *Local ownership in international peacebuilding*. Routledge.
- <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315766386&type=googlepdf>
- Leming, M., Vries, R. D., & Furnish, B. (2009). *The Sociological Perspective: A Value-Committed Introduction*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Lenzer, G. (2015). Violence against children. In *Routledge International Handbook of Children's Rights Studies*. Routledge.
- Leonardsson, H., & Rudd, G. (2018). The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: A literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding. *The 'Local Turn' in Peacebuilding, 9–23*.
- Letourneau, E. J., Schaeffer, C. M., Bradshaw, C. P., & Feder, K. A. (2017). Preventing the Onset of Child Sexual Abuse by Targeting Young Adolescents With Universal Prevention Programming. *Child Maltreatment, 22*(2), 100–111.
- <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559517692439>

- Levitt, P., Merry, S. E., Alayza, R., & Meza, M. C. (2013). Doing vernacularization: The encounter between global and local ideas about women's rights in Peru. In *Feminist Strategies in International Governance*. Routledge.
- Ligiero, D., Hart, C., Fulu, E., Thomas, A., & Radford, L. (2019a). *What works to prevent sexual violence against children*. <https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/31565/>
- Ligiero, D., Hart, C., Fulu, E., Thomas, A., & Radford, L. (2019b). *What works to prevent sexual violence against children*. <https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/31565/>
- Lin, A. M. (2015). Researcher positionality. *Research Methods in Language Policy and Planning: A Practical Guide*, 21–32.
- Ljungkvist, K., & Jarstad, A. (2021). Revisiting the local turn in peacebuilding—through the emerging urban approach. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(10), 2209–2226.
- Lo, C., & Cho, Y. W. (2021). Community-Based Interventions to Reduce Child Maltreatment. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 31, 621–633.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731520986968>
- Lomazzi, V. (2023). The cultural roots of violence against women: Individual and institutional gender norms in 12 countries. *Social Sciences*, 12(3), 117.
- Lord, J. (2011). Child labor in the Gold Coast: The economics of work, education, and the family in late-colonial African childhoods, C. 1940-57. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 4(1), 88–115.
- Lowe, A. (2017). *Creating opportunities for young people in Ghana's cocoa sector*. Working Paper 511, Overseas Development Institute. <https://www.odi.org>
- Mac Ginty, R. (2010). Hybrid peace: The interaction between top-down and bottom-up peace. *Security Dialogue*, 41(4), 391–412.

- Mac Ginty, R. (2014). Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies. *Security Dialogue*, 45(6), 548–564.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2018). Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding. In *The 'Local Turn' in Peacebuilding* (pp. 24–40). Routledge.
- Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2013). The local turn in peace building: A critical agenda for peace. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), 763–783.
- Makinde, O. A., Meribole, E. C., Oyediran, K. A., Fadeyibi, F. A., Cunningham, M., Hussein-Fajugbagbe, Y., Toye, F., Oyemakinde, A., & Mullen, S. (2018). Duplication of effort across development projects in Nigeria: An example using the master health facility list. *Online Journal of Public Health Informatics*, 10(2).
<https://ojphi.jmir.org/2018/2/e62323/PDF>
- Malisa, M., & Missedja, T. Q. (2019). Schooled for servitude: The education of African children in British colonies, 1910–1990. *Genealogy*, 3(3), 40.
- Manful, E., Esson, D., Aryee, C., & Wiafe, B. A. (2024). Narratives of Ghanaian Social Workers on Community Leaders' Response to Child Maltreatment. *Global Social Welfare*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40609-024-00337-7>
- Mansur, N. N., Kryst, E. L., Levitan, J., Zhang, M., Jing, S., & Lee, S. (2016). *Child labor and education: New perspectives and approaches*.
- Marini, M. A. (2020). *Samaritan Bundles: Fundraising Competition and Inefficient Clustering in Ngo Projects* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3575753). Social Science Research Network.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3575753>
- Mavunga, R. (2014). A Critical Assessment of the Minimum Age Convention 138 of 1973 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182 of 1999. *Potchefstroom Electronic*

- Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad*, 16(5), 121.
<https://doi.org/10.4314/pej.v16i5.3>
- Mazurana, D., & McKay, S. (2001). Women, girls, and structural violence: A global analysis. *Peace, Conflict and Violence*, 130–138.
- McEvoy-Levy, S. (2006). SILENCED VOICES? *A World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*, 133.
- Meinck, F., Cluver, L. D., Boyes, M. E., & Loening-Voysey, H. (2016). Physical, emotional and sexual adolescent abuse victimisation in South Africa: Prevalence, incidence, perpetrators and locations. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 70(9), 910–916.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-205860>
- Melton, G. (2022). Strong Communities for Children: A Community-Wide Approach to Prevention of Child Maltreatment. *Handbook of Child Maltreatment*.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7208-3_17
- Millar, G. (2014). Disaggregating hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(4), 501–514.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343313519465>
- Millar, G. (2020). Ethnographic peace research. In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* (pp. 1–3). Springer.
- Milne, J. V. (2010). Method: Theory and Ethnography in Peace and Conflict Studies. In O. P. Richmond (Ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches* (pp. 74–98). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282681_5

- Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56–69.
- Moshe, M. (2001). Peace building: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 10(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2397.00149>
- Murithi, T. (2006). African approaches to building peace and social solidarity. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 6(2), 9–33.
- Muthukrishna, N. (2011). Structural Violence Effects on the Educational Life Chances of Children from Low Income Families in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 21(1), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2011.10820430>
- Muvingi, I. (2016). Donor-Driven Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 11(1), 10–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2016.1146566>
- Newman, E., Paris, R., Richmond, O. P., & United Nations University (Eds.). (2009). *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding*. United Nations Univ. Press.
- Novak, M., Drummond, K., & Kumar, A. (2022). Healthcare professionals’ experiences with education in short term medical missions: An inductive thematic analysis. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 997.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.
- Nyaaba, A. A., Ameyaw, E. K., & Matthew, A. (2022). Beyond the COVID-19 Vaccine: The “Epidemic” of Violence in Ghana and Strategies to Keep Women and Children Safe from

- Gender-Based Violence. *International Journal of Translational Medical Research and Public Health*, 6(1), 1–7.
- Oduro, G. Y., Swartz, S., & Arnot, M. (2012). Gender-based violence: Young women's experiences in the slums and streets of three sub-Saharan African cities. *Theory and Research in Education*, 10(3), 275–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878512459395>
- Okyere, S. (2017). 'Shock and Awe': A critique of the Ghana-centric child trafficking discourse. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 9, Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121797>
- Okyere, S., Agyeman, N. K., & Koomson, B. (2024). A critical reflection on Ghana's childhood, child rights, and child labour governance modalities. In T. Abebe, A. Dar, & K. Wells, *Routledge Handbook of Childhood Studies and Global Development* (1st ed., pp. 420–432). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003155843-37>
- Onyango, P. (2015). The Role of Advocacy against Child Labour. *CMI Report*.
- Osei Bonsu, F. (2021). *The Challenges Of Identifying Trafficked Children: The Experiences Of Non-Governmental Organizations In The Ghanaian Fishing Industry*.
- Ozoh, J. N., Uzoechina, B. I., Madueke, C. M., & Imoagwu, C. P. (2022). Child labour and violence among street children in Anambra State: Implication on access to education. *Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization*, 6(1), 34–51.
- Paffenholz, T. (2015a). Civil society and peacebuilding. *Development Dialogue*, 63(3), 108–118.
- Paffenholz, T. (2015b). Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: A critical assessment towards an agenda for future research. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 857–874.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908>

- Paffenholz, T. (2021). Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move Beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 15(3), 367–385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1925423>
- Paffenholz, T., Poppelreuter, P., & Ross, N. (2023). Toward a Third Local Turn: Identifying and Addressing Obstacles to Localization in Peacebuilding. *Negotiation Journal*, 39(4), 349–375. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nej.12444>
- Paris, R. (1997). Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism. *International Security*, 22(2), 54–89.
- Pervin, N., & Mokhtar, M. (2022). The interpretivist research paradigm: A subjective notion of a social context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(2), 419–428.
- Pherali, T. (2016). Education: Cultural Reproduction, Revolution and Peacebuilding in Conflict-Affected Societies. In O. P. Richmond, S. Pogodda, & J. Ramović (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace* (pp. 193–205). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40761-0_15
- Phillips, N., Bhaskaran, R., Nathan, D., & Upendranadh, C. (2014). The social foundations of global production networks: Towards a global political economy of child labour. *Third World Quarterly*, 35(3), 428–446.
- Piccolino, G. (2019). Local peacebuilding in a victor's peace. Why local peace fails without national reconciliation. *International Peacekeeping*, 26(3), 354–379.
- Pilisuk, M. (1998). The hidden structure of contemporary violence. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4(3), 197–216. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac0403_1

- Pilisuk, M. (2001). Globalism and structural violence. *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, 149–157.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839950080103>
- Porter, G. (2003). NGOs and poverty reduction in a globalizing world: Perspectives from Ghana. *Progress in Development Studies*, 3(2), 131–145.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1464993403ps057ra>
- Psaki, S. R., Melnikas, A. J., Haque, E., Saul, G., Misunas, C., Patel, S. K., Ngo, T., & Amin, S. (2021). What are the drivers of child marriage? A conceptual framework to guide policies and programs. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(6), S13–S22.
- Pugh, M. (2011). Curing strangeness in the political economy of peacebuilding: Traces of liberalism and resistance. In *Rethinking the Liberal Peace* (pp. 147–163). Routledge.
<https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203819050-12&type=chapterpdf>
- Pugmire, C. (2022). Child Labor in Ghana. *Ballard Brief*, 2022(3), 2.
- Quarshie, J. (2024). *The Cultural Lens of Childhood: Exploring Parents' Awareness of Children's Participation in Family Decision-Making in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana*. 32(2), 380–408.
- Rashid, I., & Niang, A. (2020). *Researching Peacebuilding in Africa*. Routledge.
- Ray, R. (2002). The determinants of child labour and child schooling in Ghana. *Journal of African Economies*, 11(4), 561–590.
- Richmond, O. P. (2011a). *A post-liberal peace*. Routledge.

- Richmond, O. P. (2011b). Chapter 3. Local Conflict Resolution in the Shadows of Liberal International Peacebuilding. In M. J. Brigg & R. Bleiker (Eds.), *Mediating Across Difference: Oceanic and Asian Approaches to Conflict Resolution* (pp. 57–72). University of Hawaii Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824860967-005>
- Richmond, O. P. (2014). The Impact of Socio-Economic Inequality on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. *Civil Wars*, 16(4), 449–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2014.985876>
- Robins, S. (2011). Towards victim-centred transitional justice: Understanding the needs of families of the disappeared in postconflict Nepal. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 5(1), 75–98.
- Rosato, S. (2003). The flawed logic of democratic peace theory. *American Political Science Review*, 97(4), 585–602.
- Ruf, F. O. (2011). The Myth of Complex Cocoa Agroforests: The Case of Ghana. *Human Ecology*, 39(3), 373–388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10745-011-9392-0>
- Ryan, S. (2013). The evolution of peacebuilding. In *Routledge handbook of peacebuilding* (pp. 25–35). Routledge.
- Rylko-Bauer, B., & Farmer, P. (2016). *Structural violence, poverty, and social suffering*. <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28019/chapter-abstract/211805814>
- Saldana, J. (2014). *Thinking Qualitatively: Methods of Mind*. SAGE Publications.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52, 1893–1907.

- Selby, J. (2013). The myth of liberal peace-building. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 13(1), 57–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2013.770259>
- Senehi, J. (2020). Theory-building in peace and conflict studies: The storytelling methodology. In *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 45–56). Routledge.
- Shonkoff, J. P., & Garner, A. S. (2012). Committee on psychosocial aspects of child and family health committee on early childhood, adoption, and dependent care section on developmental and behavioral pediatrics the lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), e232–e246.
- Sorensen, G. (2018). *Democracy and democratization: Processes and prospects in a changing world*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780429495328/democracy-democratization-georg-sorensen>
- Souza, R. L. A. de, Mutti, C. F., Santos, R. P. dos, Oliveira, D. C. de, Okido, A. C. C., Jantsch, L. B., & Neves, E. T. (2021). A hospitalização na percepção de crianças e adolescentes em tratamento oncológico. *Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem*, 42, e20200122.
- Spiro, D. E. (1994). The insignificance of the liberal peace. *International Security*, 19(2), 50–86.
- Stark, L., & Ager, A. (2011). A Systematic Review of Prevalence Studies of Gender-Based Violence in Complex Emergencies. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 12(3), 127–134.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838011404252>
- Takyi, E. (2014). Child labour in Ghana: Ecological perspective. *Developing Country Studies*, 4(10), 35–44.

- Tanabe, J. (2017). Beyond Liberal Peacebuilding: A Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding and Exploring a Postmodern Post-liberal Hybrid Model of Peacebuilding. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 5(8). <https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2134/2017.08.001>
- The Sustainable development goals report 2019* (Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019). (2019). UN. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3812145>
- Thiessen, C. (2011). Emancipatory peacebuilding. *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies*, 115–143.
- Thorsen, D., & Maconachie, R. (2023). Children’s work in West African cocoa production: Drivers, contestations and critical reflections. In *Children’s Work in African Agriculture* (pp. 251–272). Bristol University Press.
<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/62007/1/9781529226072.pdf#page=272>
- Todres, J. (2018a). *Violence, exploitation, and the rights of the child*.
https://readingroom.law.gsu.edu/faculty_pub/2711/
- Todres, J. (2018b). *Violence, exploitation, and the rights of the child*.
- Torimiro, D. O. (2009). *Children exploitation in the labour process: Empirical exposition from Ile-Ife, Nigeria*. *Children and youth in the labour process in Africa* (Vol. 63).
- Twum-Danso Imoh, A. (2013). Children’s perceptions of physical punishment in Ghana and the implications for children’s rights. *Childhood*, 20(4), 472–486.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568212471404>
- UN. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *United Nations: New York, NY, USA*.
- Unicef. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

- UNICEF. (2021). *Fulfilling the commitment to child protection in Ghana*.
- Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Routledge.
- Van Damme, J. (2013). From scientific research to action in Southern Kivu: Ethical dilemmas and practical challenges. In *Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story Behind the Findings* (pp. 84–95). Springer.
- Van Hear, N. (1982). Child Labour and the Development of Capitalist Agriculture in Ghana. *Development and Change*, 13(4), 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00133.x>
- Visoka, G., & Richmond, O. (2016). After Liberal Peace? From Failed State-Building to an Emancipatory Peace in Kosovo. *International Studies Perspectives*, 18, ekw006. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekw006>
- Wahl, M. E. (2023). *Protecting Childhood: Examining European Policies on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*. <https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/glo100/4/>
- Wessells, M. (2006). *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*. Harvard University Press.
- Wessells, M. G. (2015). Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems: Placing children, families, and communities at the center. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 43, 8–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.04.006>
- Wessells, M. G. (2016). Children and armed conflict: Introduction and overview. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(3), 198.
- Wessells, M. G., & Kostelny, K. (2021). Understanding and ending violence against children: A holistic approach. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 27(1), 3.
- Wiafe, E. (2021). Formal Education in Gold Coast-Ghana: An Overview of Colonial Policies and Curriculum from 1919 to 1927. *Educational Considerations*, 4(2), n2.

- Wilson, S. (2020). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood publishing.
- Wolff, J. (2022). *The local turn and the Global South in critical peacebuilding studies*.
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Violence against children* (No. b).
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children>
- Yeboah, S. B. (2023). *Coping strategies of street children during the Covid-19 pandemic in Ghana* [masterThesis]. <https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/29116>
- Zainab, S., & Kadir, M. M. (2016). Nutritional status and physical abuse among the children involved in domestic labour in Karachi Pakistan: A cross-sectional survey. *JPMA. The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 66(10), 1243–1248.
- Zdunnek, G., Dorothee, D., Britt, K., Gertraud, M., Szrama, R., & Wenz, K. (2008). *Child labour and children's economic activities in agriculture in Ghana*.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Informed Consent



Peace and Conflict Studies Graduate Programs

252 St. Paul's College 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba Winnipeg,
MB R3T 2N2 Canada Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: “Eradicating Violence against Children: Understanding the Experiences of Community Activists and Advocates (Peacebuilders) in Addressing Child Labour Practices in Ghana”

Principal Investigator and Contact Information: Joshua Okyere, PhD Candidate

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, Adjunct Professor Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Manitoba

This consent form is designed to facilitate your informed consent to participate in this research. The document provides some basic information about the research, the nature of your potential participation, and the use of data collected from the research. You are being asked to participate in a research study involving interviews. This research is being conducted as part of the requirement for a PhD program. Please take your time to review this consent form and discuss any questions you may have with the principal researcher, your friends, family, or doctor before you make your decision. Please ask the principal researcher to explain any information that you do not clearly understand. The principal researcher will complete the consent form with you in person or over video call (e.g., Zoom). Before completing form, the researcher will send a copy of the form to you and allow you a reasonable amount of time (between one and three days) to review it. After reviewing and completing the form with the researcher, you will be asked to sign the consent form. The researcher will give you a copy of the signed consent form for your reference and records.

Purpose of this Study

The aim of the study is to explore community-driven efforts in Ghana that aim to build peace and promote activism and advocacy against child labour practices. The study will seek to understand the experiences of community activists and advocates (peacebuilders) who work to combat child labour practices and understand how their experiences can inform strategies and policies for addressing the child labour in Ghana.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a child labour advocate or activist from Ghana who is above the age of 18 and resides in Ghana, has worked/working in local organizations, and local NGOs, Community Child Protection Committees, a stakeholder engaged in child welfare in the community. We ask that you provide your valuable insights regarding your experiences relating to combatting child labour practices and violence against children in Ghana.

You are one of 25-30 participants who will be asked to participate in the research.

Study procedures

- The method of data collection for this study will be interviews. Interviews are discussions between two people who know something about the topic of interest. Interviews are ways of finding out people's thoughts and ideas about a specific topic.
- You will be in an interview with the researcher, Joshua Okyere, who will ask questions and facilitate the discussion.
- Sessions will be approximately **1 hour and a half**.
- You will be asked some questions relating to your experiences working as an advocate against child labour practices and violence against children in Ghana. These questions will help us to better understand your perceptions and experiences related to child labour

and violence and how we can best support advocates like you in their quest to champion the welfare of children in Ghana.

- Please, note that you can decline to answer any questions you do not wish to respond to. There are no penalties for refusing to answer any questions and the researcher will not repeat such questions or attempt to rephrase such questions to get you to answer them.
- Interviews will be audio recorded using a SONY ICD-UX570 digital voice recorder if done in person, and recorded using UM Zoom for virtual interviews, and transcribed by the principal researcher manually to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide. In the case of Zoom interview, participants can choose to have camera on/off throughout interview.
- As participants may be quoted in the study results, anonymity will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms and non-identifying information in the transcriptions and subsequent use of the data. Pseudonyms will be used as well as general descriptors, and a random 3-letter name will be generated and randomly assigned to you with no relation to the study or yourself.

An example of a general descriptor for primary participants is "KSI, an advocate, described the strategies they use in fighting child labour. Other pseudonyms such as Adwoa, Kwame, and Akwasi (fictional names) or general descriptors such as 'one advocate' or 'one participant' will be used.

- Confidentiality: To ensure confidentiality, your name and other identifying information will not be included in the study's report. All the information collected (including the demographic information, the consent form, and recorded audio files and transcriptions) will be stored securely in the principal researcher's home in Ghana and subsequently in Canada. The principal researcher will live alone in a house, which will be secure from intruders. Information collected in hardcopies will be stored in a physical file and locked in a private cabinet in the researcher's home workspace. Only the researcher will have access to the cabinet. Information collected electronically (such as audio recording and email documents) will be stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer and on a secure University of Manitoba OneDrive that will only be accessed by the principal researcher and the research advisor. Electronic records of data collected will also be saved in an encrypted USB stick that is only accessible to the researcher as a backup. The USB stick will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home workspace. Following the submission of the study's result, all data with the exception of transcripts collected will be destroyed by August 2025. Electronic data will be deleted from USB devices and OneDrive and hard copy data will be shredded. Transcripts will be kept until the successful completion of the dissertation and kept for 2 years afterward for the sole purpose of use in academic publications. They will be deleted on 31st January 2028.
- For Zoom recordings, audio only will be recorded.
- The audio files will be transcribed by Joshua Okyere to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide.

- The researcher will not discuss any recorded information with anyone other than the research advisor, where necessary.
- A mental health provider will also be on standby during the interviews as well as after to provide any additional support to participants. Following the interview, the researcher will ask if you require any assistance or referral services and will ask how you feel about the interview process.
- All participants will be provided with an emailed copy of the research results within 6 months of the completion of the interview process.
- As part of the requirement for completing the PhD program, the study findings will be submitted to the research advisor and the members of the exam committee. The findings will be reported in a doctoral dissertation that will be publicly presented and made available in the University of Manitoba library. No identifying information of research participants will be included in the dissertation to ensure confidentiality. Findings from the research may be considered for dissemination to stakeholders such as government agencies to help inform policies. Findings may also be disseminated as academic publications in journals or books. You will be informed of the anticipated time for the analysis and the estimated time for which the dissertation will be completed. You will be asked to indicate if and how you wish to receive a brief 2-page summary of the study's result.
- The principal researcher and the research advisor will give you the option to go over your interview transcript. You will have one month to review your transcripts but if transcripts are not returned by this time, it will be assumed no changes are required. You will receive your transcript and you can return them via email to the primary researcher, Joshua Okyere.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no anticipated physical risks to participants. All interview participants will be asked to keep the information confidential. All interviews conducted with the researcher will be bound by confidentiality and no responses will be able to be traced back to the participants.

It is possible that discussing your experiences related to child labour practices and violence against children might be emotional, traumatic, or stressful for you. Therefore, the interview will be paced at a rate comfortable for you, with breaks as desired, and allow you to skip questions or topics that cause distress. Beverages will be available throughout.

All efforts will be made to minimize discussions related to traumatic events. If recounting your experiences causes trauma, appropriate interventions will be undertaken to help alleviate the effects of the interview on the participant. Counseling will be provided at no cost to the participant. Contact details of the counselors have been provided (See Appendix F). Assistance will be obtained whenever the need arises for psychological counseling. The PI will emphasize and encourage participants to share only what they feel comfortable with.

Should you need any additional help or support we will refer you to the mental health provider who will be available on standby during our sessions or help you to find other counseling help.

Benefits

Being a member of this study can help inform policies and interventions. The findings of this research can inform the development and implementation of policies and interventions aimed at addressing child labour and promoting child protection in Ghana. By understanding community activists' and advocates' perspectives and experiences, policymakers and organizations can design more effective and contextually appropriate strategies to combat child labour practices.

Also, the research may identify areas where community activists and advocates require additional support, resources, or training to enhance their work in addressing child labour practices. This knowledge can help local and international organizations to develop targeted capacity-building programs that empower these individuals to make a more significant impact in their communities.

Again, by highlighting the efforts and experiences of community activists and advocates, this research can raise public awareness about the issue of child labor in Ghana and the importance of community-based interventions. Increased awareness may lead to greater engagement from various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and the general public, in addressing this critical issue.

On a personal level, participants will be empowered to take ownership of the content and overall direction of this project by having the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives.

Cost

There is no material cost to you to attend the interview session.

Honorarium

To compensate for your time and voluntary participation in this study, you will receive 150 Ghana Cedis or roughly \$20 CAD. For interviews that are conducted virtually, you can provide the principal researcher with a bank account or MoMo number that can be used to send your compensation electronically. The honorarium will be provided right after you have signed the consent form and prior to commencing the interview.

Permission to Quote:

For the purpose of this study, all information shared by participants will be kept private and we will not refer to individual people by name or use any identifying information.

Yet we may wish to quote your words directly in reports and publications resulting from the study. With regards to being quoted, please check “yes” or “no” for the following statement:

The researcher may publish documents that contain quotations by me:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Any participant who wishes to withdraw will inform the principal researcher directly or through email or phone call of their wish to withdraw. If you decide to withdraw, all the data gathered from you will be deleted. You will be able to keep your compensation and will face no consequences. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. Should

you wish to withdrawal, please do so by January 1, 2024. During the interview, you may withdraw verbally by telling the PI.

Summary of results will be sent to those who wish to receive approximately in August, 2024.

Questions

If any questions come up during or after the study, please contact the principal investigator

Statement of Consent:

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Officer at HumanEthics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Option to Review Transcripts (Member-Checking)

After the transcription of the interview, I will do member checking by sharing the transcripts of the collected data with the participants and allow them to review the content for accuracy, completeness, and proper context. This will ensure that the data accurately reflect participants' experiences and perspectives. Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the

data, suggest revisions or clarifications, and request the removal of any information they deem inappropriate or sensitive. You will be given the opportunity to review and edit your responses, transcripts of your interview will be sent to you securely via email, mail or in-person (whichever is most convenient and possible for both the PI and you) approximately December 1, 2023, and you will have one month to review it. However, please note that this review must be completed no later than January 31, 2024, since it may be difficult to edit after the data has been used in my analysis and dissertation. If the PI does not hear from you before this date, it will be assumed that no change to the transcript is required.

I would like to review my transcripts	Yes	No
Please provide email or mailing address where you would like to receive transcript		

Option to Receive Summary of Results

I would like to receive a copy of the summary of results of the study	Yes	No
Please provide email or mailing address where you would like to receive the summary of results		

Consent Signatures

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide



252 St. Paul's College
 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba
 Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada
 Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828
 Peace and Conflict Studies Graduate Programs

Interview Questions

The aim of the study is to explore community-driven efforts in Ghana that aim to build peace and promote activism and advocacy against child labour practices. The study will seek to understand the experiences of community activists and advocates (peacebuilders) who work to combat child labour practices and understand how their experiences can inform strategies and policies for addressing the child labour in Ghana.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Thanks for completing the consent forms. As discussed, you do not have to address all questions and you may withdraw from the study at any time before January 31, 2024. I will now ask you some questions. Please respond to the questions that you are comfortable answering.

Demographic information

Can you please briefly tell me about yourself?

Main Questions

1. What is it like being an advocate for children?
 - a. What sort of work do you and your organization do?
 - b. How do you go about doing the work?
 - c. What has been the results?

2. Why did you choose to become an advocate for children's rights?
 - a. Can you tell me more about that?
 - b. Do you have some examples?
 - c. What is your expectation each day as you work as an advocate to protect children's rights?

3. How would you describe your experience working as an advocate against child labour in your community?
 - a. Can you share some of the memorable encounters you have had working as an advocate against child labour in your community?
 - b. Tell me what usually goes on in your mind when you meet children subjected to abusive labour practices.
 - c. Has there been any case (or cases) of child labour that made strong impressions on you (e.g., kept you awake at night?; traumatized you?; made you very emotional?; made you feel happy/accomplished?). Why do you think you felt the way you did about such a case (cases)?
4. Can you explain how you understand child labour and how children are exploited in the community?
 - a. Can you give examples of child labour practices in your community?
 - b. What types of work do you consider to be child labour exploitation?
5. Can you tell me what you understand by violence against children?
 - a. Do you consider child labour as a form of violence against children?
 - b. Can you explain why?
7. Have you witnessed any initiative(s) to eradicate some or all of the child labour practices in your community? (can you give an example?; Can you tell me more about that?)
8. Have you been involved in such initiative(s)? (if so, can you give an example?; What role(s) did you play?; Can you tell me more about that? Was it successful or not?)
9. What strategies do you use to advocate against child labor in the local community?
 - a. Do you believe these strategies are effective?
 - b. What other approaches do you think could be utilized or explored, and why?
10. Can you elaborate on any challenges you have encountered in your effort to advocate against child labour?
 - a. Can you provide examples of such challenges?
 - b. How do you cope with those challenges?
 - c. What do you need to continue doing this work?
11. What do you think are the most pressing needs for Ghanaian children affected by child labour practices? Can you provide examples?
12. What more needs to be done to stop child labour practices in your community?

- a. What new strategies should be adopted by your organization and the government to combat child labour practices?
- b. How would you describe the relationship of organizations such as yours and the government? How can the government and such organizations work better together?

Appendix C: Invitation Letter



Peace and Conflict Studies Graduate Programs

252 St. Paul's College 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba Winnipeg,
MB R3T 2N2 Canada Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

**Subject Title of Email: Study Invitation Related to the
Experiences of Community Activists and Advocates (Peacebuilders) in
Addressing Child Labour Practices in Ghana**

Dear Agency:

My name is Joshua Okyere, and I am the primary researcher for a study on *Eradicating Violence against Children: Understanding the Experiences of Community Activists and Advocates (Peacebuilders) in Addressing Child Labour Practices in Ghana*. I am a Ghanaian but currently based in Canada, as an international PhD student at the University of Manitoba's Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. As part of my studies toward the award of a Doctoral degree in Peace and Conflict Studies, I am required to conduct a research study. The aim of the study is to explore community-driven efforts in Ghana that aim to build peace and promote activism and advocacy against child labour practices. The study will seek to understand the experiences of community activists and advocates (peacebuilders) who work to combat child labour practices and understand how their experiences can inform strategies and policies for addressing the child labour in Ghana.

I was wondering if members (18 years and above) from your organization who have been involved in peacebuilding initiatives related to child labour practices and ending violence against children in Ghana would be interested in participating in this research study that seeks to understand the experiences of community activists and advocates (peacebuilders) working to combat child labour practices in Ghana. The study also seeks to understand how their

experiences might inform strategies and policies for addressing child labour. Additionally, if you know of any advocate or activist that you think would be interested in providing their perspectives on the issue under study, please share this invitation with them so they could contact me.

I would be grateful if you could grant me an interview lasting about 1 hr 30 mins. This discussion will be held at a convenient location of your choice. There is also the possibility of meeting virtually via zoom if that is more convenient for you. The discussion would be conducted in English. You will be given some light refreshments and water during the discussion. An honorarium of 150 Ghana cedis will be given to you as well. You may keep this honorarium irrespective of whether you withdraw from the study or not at any point in time.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the principal researcher Joshua Okyere indicating your interest. I will respond by asking you a few questions if you meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Once it is confirmed that you can participate, a date and time for the interview will be arranged with you at your convenience. Consent forms will be provided for your perusal ahead of time for the interview. An interview will be scheduled only if you consent to participate in the study.

I will greatly appreciate it if you distributed this invitation among your employees and colleagues. Interested participants should contact the Principal Investigator directly via email or on phone.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joshua Okyere