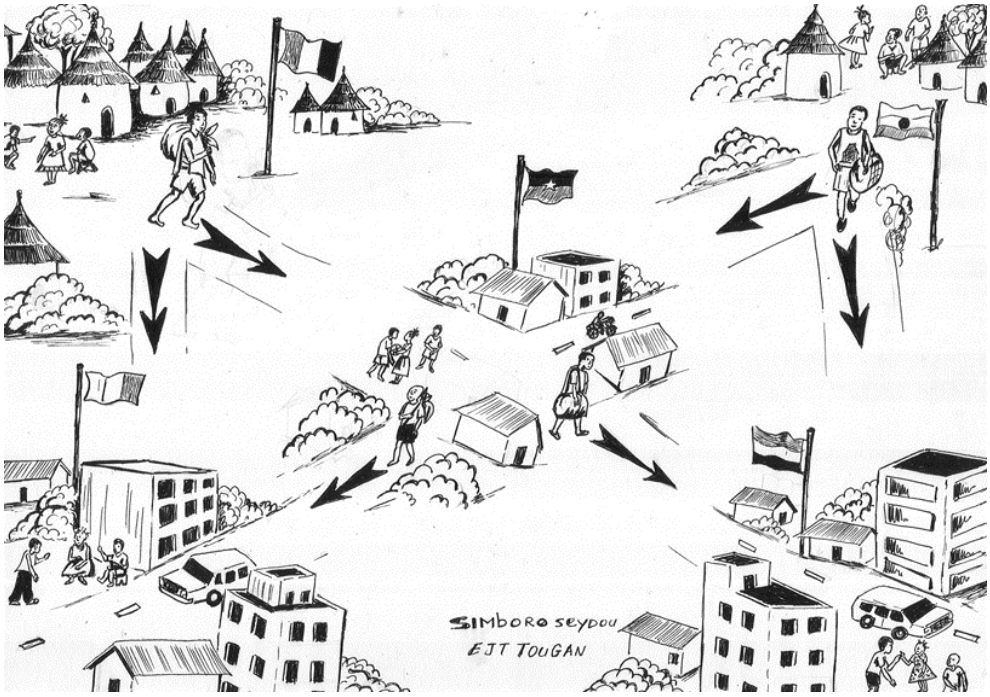
Project of Joint Regional Study on the Mobility of Children and Youths in West Africa

Which protection for children involved in mobility in West Africa



Our positions and recommendations

PLAN WARO ENDA Jeunesse Action AMWCY

ILO Terre des hommes Foundation IOM

Aide à l'Enfance - Suède UNICEF WCARO

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List of acronyms

AEC	Save The Children Canada
AMWCY	African Movement of Working Children and Youths (in French MAEJT)
PAPC	Protective accompaniment of children
ILO	International Labour Office
CADBE	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ENDA	Environment and Development in the Third World
BIC	Best Interest of the Child
LASDEL	Laboratory of Studies and Research on Social Dynamics and Local Societies
NGO	Non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organisation
PLAN WARO	West African Regional Office of Plan International
PEP	Endogenous practices of child protection
PFT	Worst Forms of Child Labor
Tdh	Terre des hommes Foundation - Lausanne
UEMOA	West Africa Economic and Monetary Union
UNICEF WCARO	Regional Office of the United Nations Fund for Children for West and Central Africa

Executive Summary

From 2008 to 2010, a regional study project, supported by a broad platform of child protection agencies, has documented and analyzed the many forms taken by the mobility of children and youths in West and Central Africa. The project has synthesized researches engaged in the sub-region since the early 2000s, and conducted its own study on the routes of children on the move. It also implemented a process of capitalization of experiences across four pilot countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo) to encourage collective reflection on responses to protect children involved in mobility. This process has enabled the project stakeholders to get closer to empirical realities, to better listen to the children and to develop a comprehensive approach of the issue, with common positions and recommendations. This reference is the theoretical and practical basis on which to develop joint advocacy and operational actions in the framework of the second phase (2011-2015).

For a long time treated as child trafficking, the movement of children outside their usual place of residence for work and education purposes gives rise, in fact, to very diverse and widespread practices throughout the sub-region. Trafficking does exist and is a criminal phenomenon, fundamentally wrong and unacceptable, that should be fought. But it only covers a limited part of the movements of children and should be viewed in a broader context, that of mobility. Speaking of Mobility allows embracing the multitude of practices and experiences of children who move (trafficking, migration, fostering, adventure, etc..), while keeping a vigilant attitude in relation to trafficking and to the worst forms of labor. The personal, family and community motivations and logic behind the phenomenon can be better understood, the specific situations of children better analyzed. Instead of limiting the problem to its criminal dimension and to its economic causes, the analysis of contexts, factors, mechanisms and effects of mobility of children allows to take a fresh look at the phenomenon and to take into account the cases of voluntary mobility. Other facets of the reality are revealed, as for children mobility appears to be an effective strategy for survival, status seeking and identity formation.

This openness on the complexity and diversity of children's mobility should not overshadow the seriousness of the risks faced by children on the move. The links between mobility, work / exploitation, mistreatment, abuse and withdrawal of children from school have been widely documented. **However, the analysis shows that the heart of the problem is not mobility per se, but the extreme vulnerability of children engaged in mobility.** On the one hand, the circumstances and contexts in which children move and live outside the family home are sources of many danger, on the other hand, the protection they receive from the institutional (governmental and non-governmental) actors and from (formal or informal) community actors is insufficient, inadequate or not adapted.

The mobility of children goes both with risks and vulnerabilities as well as with opportunities and personal development. This dimension of "opportunity" has long been overlooked or unrecognized. Listening carefully to children who have experienced mobility has allowed correcting this gap. To assess the potential positive and negative aspects of the mobility of a child, it becomes necessary to establish a balance between risks and opportunities: risks associated with certain forms and practices of mobility *versus* risks of staying in the usual life environment; opportunities to grab in some forms of mobility, but at what cost and with what chances of progress for the child?

Taking into account the age and gender of the child, his will, his personal abilities and needs is crucial in assessing this balance and best interest of the child. It is also crucial to assess the capacity of protection of the child when he engages in mobility, taking into account both its self-protection capabilities, the supply of institutional protection and the endogenous practices of protection

implemented by so-called “Community” actors, as distinct from the institutional and specialized actors. The "Mobility» project has emphasized the existence of this endogenous protection, based on tradition and experience, as well as on the active part taken by children on the move themselves in this primarily supportive and informal protection. It has also noted its limitations and is highlighted stakes in terms of articulation with the institutional protection. The latter also has its own limitations and needs to improve and strengthen its collaboration with key actors in the environment of children in the community of origin, of transit and of destination of children on the move.

The use of the concept of mobility and a better understanding of realities allow contemplating the protection of children without systematically fighting mobility or blaming all actors involved. Admittedly, present child protection systems are built on ideological and normative models that may suggest that mobility is not compatible with the protection of the rights and welfare of the child. The inter-agency collaborative work, however, favored the evolution of the reflection on this issue, and identified potential innovative and pragmatic solutions. The experiences engaged in the field demonstrate their relevance and effectiveness. **The concept of protective accompaniment of Children (PAC) has emerged in theory and in practice,** geared both towards the prevention of early, criminal or dangerous mobility, and to helping children in mobility or moving back from mobility. Many organizations are implementing protective accompaniment systems covering spaces and routes of mobility, linking them to allow for the continuity of the protective environment of children on the move. These arrangements take into account the specific contexts of the action and enhance the involvement of families and communities in the protection of children and their rights. **Linking them to national protection systems is one of the main objectives of the project stakeholders during the next phase (2011-2015).**

INTRODUCTION

The regional study project on "the mobility of children and youths in West and Central Africa» is a unique inter-agency initiative in the sub-region. Led by eight regional agencies, the project was implemented during the first phase (2009-2010) in 4 countries of West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo) [1], with the assistance of governmental and non-governmental structures gathered within National Steering Committees (NSCs). Its main objective is twofold:

- documenting contemporary practices of mobility of children;
- developing and promoting strategies for child protection based on the lessons learned from research and from experience.

This document provides a summary of key outputs achieved in this project. It aims to facilitate sharing of information, reflections and strategic directions to support the players who wonder about the stakes, challenges and ways to better protect children on the move in the sub-region. Note that the mobility of youths[2] was discussed in the context of the study, but the analysis and recommendations focused on the protection of children (under 18).

The first two chapters of the document is dedicated to the context of the study, the project itself and the conceptual tools that have allowed having a different perspective on the relationship between mobility and protection of children. This introduction is followed by a summary of findings and analysis on the phenomenon of mobility of children in West Africa, its practices and its actors. The fourth chapter presents the approach advocated by the platform of the Mobility project to protect children "involved in mobility." The paper concludes with the positions and recommendations on which will be implemented the next phase of the project (2011-2015), geared towards the operational and advocacy aspects.

The voice of children has been set at the heart of the approach of the "Mobility» project. Research and Capitalization of experiences have called on the children as victims and actors, beneficiaries and witnesses, fragile individuals but determined to exist as whole persons. This voice of the children has been heard at the heart of the platform of the project, shedding a new light on the empirical realities, calling upon agencies, states and communities on the meaning and scope of their actions. This innovation is a first step that intends to trigger others: an invitation to rethink ***with*** the children the ways and means of their protection, and to support their efforts for their well-being and recognition of their rights.

I. the issue of child protection in West Africa

[1] Empirical studies and exchanges of experience could not be developed in Central Africa during the first phase of the project.

[2] The African Youth Charter (2006) defines a young person as aged 15 to 35 years. The United Nations defines a young people as people aged 10 to 24 years, and youths as those aged from 15 to 24 years (see A/36/215 and Resolution 36/28, 1981).

A. Focus on the fight against child trafficking and the worst forms of labor

During the past decade, West Africa has witnessed an unprecedented mobilization of governments, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs and major donors against a phenomenon universally condemned as abhorrent and unacceptable: child trafficking.

On a national or transnational level, the attention of governments and agencies was first focused on two related and visibly growing phenomena: **the exploitation of children and illegal migration**, characterized by a net infantilization of flows. Many testimonies and research reports have progressively described the bleak picture of hundreds of thousands of children sold, traded or smuggled each year in their home country or across national borders to be reduced to forced labor and appalling living conditions in farms, mines and quarries, production workshops, building sites, markets, in private homes or brothels.

In the sub-region, a particular attention has been focused on the perversion of an ancient practice of movement of children, called "fostering". Initially, this practice corresponded to a mechanism of socialization of the child by work / education and to a form of mutual support among social and family segments. Parents entrusted the child to a foster home thanks to the opportunities it could offer. We note in recent years a form of perversion of the practice of placing some children in a situation of production of goods and services for the benefit of the guardian.

Child Trafficking has been defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, hosting a child for the purpose of exploitation[3]. Internationally, the recognition of trafficking as an extremely serious violation of children's rights provided a legal basis for the fight against various forms of sale, trafficking or exploitation of children. Two legal instruments, the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999)[4] and the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Repress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children[5] (2000), have been used as pillars to engage this fight, in addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

[3] For a more detailed definition of the concept of child trafficking, see the appended Box 1

[4] See the definition of the worst forms of child labor in the Appendix (Box 2)

[5] The 'Palermo Protocol' is an additional protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

B. The place given to mobility in the framework of the « trafficking» approach

Many issues need furthering relating to the ins and outs of the definitions of trafficking, exploitation and the worst forms of labor, including:

- ✓ **the issue of the means used** to place and maintain the child in situations of exploitation (force, threats, abuse of vulnerability, manipulation, debt, etc.).
- ✓ **the issue of the intentional and conscious nature** (or not) of the exploitation since theoretically there is not trafficking if there is not moving "for the purpose of exploitation";
- ✓ **the issue of consent or of the will of the child** having found himself in a process of moving (even if it was illegal) or in a work situation (even if it was illegal or equivalent to exploitation).

When taking a step back on this approach built around the concept of trafficking, it is striking to note how **the displacement of the child is never seen as potentially voluntary on the part of the child**. Therefore, the distinction between trafficking and economic migration becomes ambiguous.

"Movement of children, vulnerability and victimization" of the child seem to be the negative side of a model which positive side branch back to the triptych of "family, school and local community", synonymous with integration, security, well-being and development "at home". **Thus, the rejection and denunciation of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse tend to embrace all the movements of children by assimilating them to these harmful practices**.

C. The categories of vulnerable children linked to mobility

The idea that the displacement of children can correspond to actions motivated by legitimate purposes, organized in order to protect and resulting from voluntary and rational choice of children or of their parents is still struggling to fit in the traditional view of actors in child protection.

In four countries of the sub-region (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Togo), a situation analysis of child protection was achieved in 2009[6]. This status has allowed listing the main issues / target groups identified as being related to the mobility of children (*Table 1 in Appendix*). The links between mobility and several groups of so-called "vulnerable" children has been established, the mobility of children crossing almost all the themes of protection inventoried in these four countries. The exercise also allowed testing how the phenomenon has a negative connotation and is viewed implicitly or explicitly, as the cause or aggravating dimension of many problem situations encountered by children.

[6] *Premier rapport régional de synthèse de capitalisation*, O. Feneyrol, A. Diallo, Projet Mobilités, juin 2009

D. The inter-agency regional project on the mobility of children and youths

The genesis of the « Mobility» project

The "Mobility" project is unique. While the coordination of the players has always been a stake and a major challenge, the project succeeded in gathering as of its inception in 2008, a committee representing the regional offices of 8 international organizations (two United Nations agencies, an international organization, 4 international NGOs and one movement of children and young workers)[7]. In the four pilot countries of the project (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Togo), about sixty national stakeholders (offices of UN agencies and of international NGOs, associations and national NGOs, cooperation agencies and government departments) have joined the regional initiative in the form of National Steering Committees of the project (NSC).

Why address the issue of the « mobility » of children?

Since 2007, several researches and experience capitalization have had as objective a better understanding of the forms of mobility of children in West Africa. The phenomenon having been ever increasing, the attention of actors has been focused on the cases of thousands of children who do not receive the protection they are entitled to. The concept of mobility of children has been developed as part of this work and reconciliations have taken place to cross the lessons learned and confront the interrogations. The will to unite and coordinate the learning and reflection efforts as part of a regional study led by a group of agencies is born from this exchange and sharing process[8].

The objectives of the project: phases I and II

From its inception, the project has set two main objectives for itself, corresponding to two major stages of development:

1. Mobilizing key actors at regional and national level, to jointly develop positions and recommendations based on a more objective and harmonized understanding of the mobility of children **(Phase I: 2009-2010);**

2. Developing protection systems tailored to socioeconomic and cultural realities in order to reduce the vulnerability of children on the move and to strengthen the participation of children, families and communities **(phase II: 2011 2015).**

The approach of the project during its phase I: research, capitalization, synthesis

[7] The ILO, IOM and UNICEF (UN), Enda Jeunesse Action, Plan International, Save the Children Sweden and Terre des Hommes Foundation (Lausanne), the AMWCY movement of chidlren.
[8] Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Trafficking in Children (RWOGAT), Dakar, December 2007

From March 2009 to December 2010, the Phase I of the project was deployed in the field of research and capitalization which aim was to deliver to researchers, experts, practitioners and policy makers a knowledge and analysis base resulting from a collaborative work[9].

This work has fed the joint development, at the level of the regional platform bringing together the regional committee and the NSCs, of a series of positions and recommendations based on research and capitalization results.

II. The concept of mobility of children

A. The emergence of a new concept as regards child protection

Children's mobility means the movement of children between various geographic and social areas, as well as the experiences of these children during their movements and stay in various parts of their journey. **A child on the move is a child who, having left his place of normal life, goes through transformations of identity and living conditions**. This definition is not limited to the geographical concept of displacement. It encompasses the entire period during which the child lives outside its native environment but still identifies him as his own environment. It applies regardless of the child's age, sex, the reasons for his displacement, its route, how he moves, his living conditions, the consequences resulting from his "mobility" etc.

In West Africa, the recent introduction[10] of the concept in the vocabulary of child protection is linked to **two triggers**:

- ✓ **A more empirical attention paid to movements of children** and to experiences of children outside their usual places of life,
- ✓ **taking a critical distance vis-à-vis the conceptual framework and strategies of fight against child trafficking,** particularly in relation to the fact of assimilating trafficking, in practice or in theory, to all displacements of children leading to (or suspected to lead to) exploitation, work or worst forms of child labor[11].

The notion of mobility has been adopted to go beyond the specificities and limitations inherent to the terms used so far to address the phenomenon of "children who move" (displacement, movement, migration, exodus, foster care, placement, trafficking, etc.). It allows capturing the diversity, richness and complexity of the phenomenon, and to take it as whole taking into account its many forms, mechanisms and practices. While the concept of trafficking, for example, focuses on a small part of the reality, the concept of mobility broadens it to a variety of situations, processes, events and actors. **Furthermore, it is a neutral term, without positive or negative connotations.** It

[9] See in the appendix the details of the work produced under the "Mobility" project

[10] The concept was introduced in 2006 by Plan International as part of an ethnographic study conducted in the sub-region (*A l'écoute des enfants et des jeunes agents de notre monde contemporain*, 2005). Several studies on the mobility of children have been initiated by Plan WARO during the year 2007 (see appendix) and a workshop on the concept of mobility, organized with the contribution of the laboratory LASDEL and the NGO Terre des hommes (Parakou, Benin, in January 2008).

[11] See. *Premier rapport de synthèse de recherche*, G. Massart, Projet Mobilités, juin 2009. See also the article of G. Massart drawn from the synthesis report : *Les pratiques de mobilité des enfants et des jeunes en Afrique de l'ouest. Analyse de leurs motivations et expériences*, septembre 2009

can then be used in an objective manner, without introducing at the outset ideological or normative connotations that might distort the look and the analysis. Its use is appropriate in a research perspective (describe and explain social facts) as well as in a perspective of protection (analyze the situation of a child and build on this analysis to act on his behalf).

The "macro" analysis of the mobility of children raises questions about the changing of the status, the role and place of children, the education, the family, the intergenerational relationships, the labor market, the communities, the civil rights, the standards governing the movement of people and goods, the relationships between Governments and citizens, the relationship between men and women, of violence in social relations, etc. This concept is of real heuristic interest as it will allow exploring the links between these many issues and child protection.

As to **the "micro" analysis** of the mobility of a child, it encourages to explore:

- ✓ his path of life (where does the child come from? What happened to him? What causes and motivations may explain his mobility? What ongoing processes guide the evolution of his existence ?...);
- ✓ his relationship with his environment (does he live in a protective environment or he does not have any attachment because of his mobility? What actors are involved in his mobility? Who are those playing a key role in his life?...);
- ✓ the changes affecting his welfare, rights, development, own practices and representations, integration / socialization.

IMPORTANT!

The mobility of a child can lead to increased vulnerability as well as to an increase of opportunities. A priori, the causes and consequences of mobility are neither positive nor negative. We must make an inventory to determine if the mobility of the child is partially or generally harmful or favorable to him.

B. Children on the move and children «involved in mobility »

Children on the move are children in the process of mobility, moving between various spaces and living "on the move." [12] The notion of displacement of children on the move refers to several possible situations: from the place of origin and arrival at a destination, movement between places of transit, passage from one destination to another, movement back to place of origin. Also fall into this category children placed, even when very young (0-6 years), in families or in an environment different from their original homes.

The group of children "involved in mobility" designates a broader category (*figure 1 below*). **In addition to children on the move,** it indeed covers **three other profiles of children whose life conditions and fate are closely related to mobility.** They are:

- **potential children on the move** who live in areas heavily influenced by the mobility of children in general and whose existence, even sedentary, is imbued with the mobility of other children and with the logic/ representations underlying mobility;

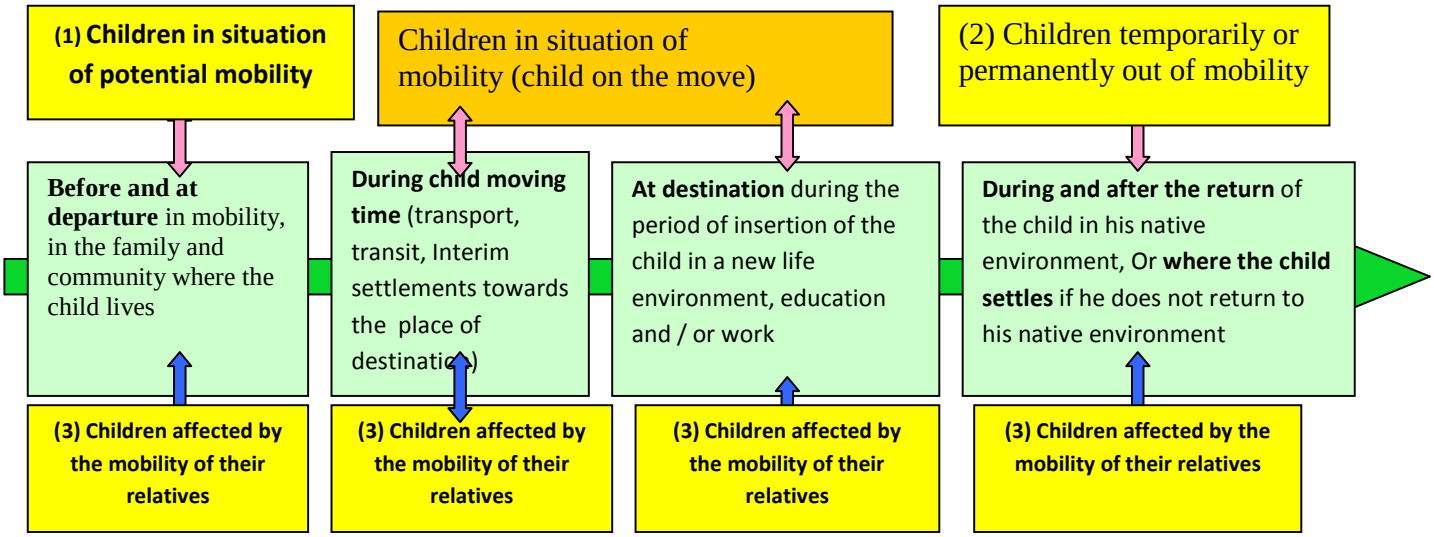
- **children temporarily or permanently out of mobility,** who see their lives, their growth and integration determined or at least influenced in a more or less longer period of time by the episode of the mobility they went through; in West Africa, it also usually happens that the mobility of a child takes place in cycles, with alternating periods of mobility and non-mobility, this situation often extending throughout the period of youth (period after adolescence);

- **children whose relatives have gone to mobility** (parents, siblings, caregivers) who are themselves, either influenced by the successful model used by those relatives or affected by their absence or departure.

These categories have been constructed to facilitate the design and implementation of responses to prevention, protection, reintegration support and protective accompaniment to vulnerable children. They indeed make it possible to not only focus on children on the move but also to develop actions that generally include all children whose current, past or future existence appears to be linked to the fundamental phenomenon of mobility.

[12] This definition corresponds to the English-speaking term "children on the move", recently established at the international level see *Leaving home. Voices of children on the move*, Annie Kelly, Global Movement for Children, Save the Children UK, Barcelona, juin 2010

Figure No. 1 : Children involved in mobility



Note: It is important not to reify each profile. In reality, a child may fall under multiple profiles simultaneously. For instance, a child can return to his family after an episode of mobility (profile 2) and already getting ready to leave (profile 1). Another child may be affected by the mobility of his parents, who left without him for long (Profile 3), and wants to go for adventure or learn a trade (profile 1). From the perspective of child protection, **the interest of this categorization is not to lose sight of the variety of links between childhood and mobility, nor the need to work upstream and downstream of the situations of mobility, in several places and moments of the life course of children**

C. Vulnerable children and mobility

The group of children "involved in mobility" combines several groups of vulnerable children already targeted by protection systems: migrant children, exploited children, victims of trafficking and worst forms of labor, street children, displaced or refugee children, child-soldiers (*Table No.1 in Appendix*). These groups correspond to issues so far addressed in a separately and segmented manner. It now seems appropriate to combine them in a broader perspective, to analyze their respective links, and identify their common points.

This approach breaks down the boundaries between thematic "blocks" ("silos" structuring) and replaces a vertical perception by a funnel perspective (Figure 2 in appendix). It allows identifying, in a large child population problem-situations that could affect separately, simultaneously or successively the same individuals.

In the inverted pyramid that this funnel shape pictures, the less numerous vulnerable groups of children are situated towards the lower tip of the pyramid. There is also an evolutionary logic, from the situation the most general and least concern (upper part of the figure) to the most harmful and inacceptable (lower part of the figure). Belonging to the large group of moving and working children, a child can be found specifically in that of exploited children, victims of worst forms of child labor or of trafficking.

This approach should be able to support practical and programmatic innovations. Further to the previous thematic separations, preventive or curative actions could thus protect the large group of children "involved in mobility," while more targeted measures may be proposed in order to adequately address specific problems related to specific target groups.

III. The mobility of children in West Africa

A. An extensive and multifaceted phenomenon

1-The number of children from West Africa currently in mobility is known to none of the departments or organizations. States and agencies have real difficulties to provide reliable and updated figures. The scope of the phenomenon is nevertheless recognized, many thousands of children being involved. The movements are largely internal to the region, but also external (between two or more countries), mainly to Central Africa. The proportion of children on the move in the Maghreb and Europe is estimated at less than 10% of children on the move from West Africa, with a figure close to zero below the age of 12[13].

Research and experience sharing have notably highlighted:

- ✓ **that among children living "in the village,"** a large proportion said they already have experienced mobility and / or considered as probable ("normal" ...) to one day experience mobility, or to go back in mobility;
- ✓ **that in some rural and poor areas**, inhabited by large families, the involvement of children in the mobility is so massive that the villages are populated with a majority of adults;
- ✓ **that throughout the sub-region there is a** local forms of mobility for young children (8-12 years) who travel on short and medium distances according to a seasonal agricultural calendar, these local forms prepare children to greater mobility;
- ✓ **the placement of children of 8-16 years in apprenticeship with craftsmen or tradesmen** (informal sector) is a highly developed form of mobility due to structural lack of opportunities in the areas of origin.

"The people back home are mostly in the cure when they go to Cotonou. I have many friends and relatives who are in business there. When I wanted to learn a trade, it is natural that my parents entrusted met to one of them to become his apprentice "(*12 year old boy, from Kétou Benin, apprentice vulcanizer in Cotonou, Survey AMWCY "routes of mobility of children and youths in West Africa", March 2010*)

2. Children's mobility is characterized by its multifaceted nature and the wide variety of practices through which it occurs. Already numerous at the origin (historical basis dating back to several decades, even centuries), the forms of mobility of children and youths since 30 years tend to multiply, diversify and mutate. Some forms called "major" are readily distinguishable. However, a child on the move does not fall exclusively and permanently in one form of mobility. Each main form has many variations, and a child can move from one form of mobility to another. For example, initially placed by his parents with a Koranic teacher, a Guinean boy of 12 can run away and go on an

[13] Cf. *Interventions sur les migrations en Afrique*, Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), 43ème session : Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples, 23 mai 2008, p. 1. See also The *myth of invasion. Irregular migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union*, Hein de Haas, International Migration Institute, octobre 2008, and *Making migration a development factor: the case of North and West Africa*, International Labour Organization (International Institute for Labour Studies), 2010..

adventure, meet other children and engage with them in an economic migration and falling into a trafficking situation, be reinstated in his family by an organization of child protection ... before returning to migration!

Table No.2: Main forms of mobility of children in West Africa[14]

MIGRATION (travel / stay out of the usual place of life to access work opportunities, education or training)	Long or seasonal mobility Point or cyclic mobility Independent or socially structured mobility Mobility internal to nation states or transnational Mobility as a group or unaccompanied, Voluntary, consensual or forced Mobility, ...
FOSTERING (the child is transferred by the parents or guardians to other guardians, under whose authority he finds himself placed)	Fostering in a family home Fostering as "maid" Fostering with an older to help Fostering with an employer for a traditional learning Fostering with an employer as part of family or community economy of collective type Fostering with a travelling Koranic teacher Fostering in a religious or educational institution...
ADVENTURE (wandering, new nomadism, children living on the street ...)	Individual or collective mobility, Independent or socially structured mobility, Long time or time-limited mobility Point or cyclic mobility...
TRAFFICKING	There is trafficking where one of the steps in the travel of the child (recruitment, transportation, transfer, reception, accommodation) is accompanied with a deliberate intention to exploit the child for the purpose of abusively taking advantage of him and to submit him to a worst form of labor (slavery, forced or toxic and dangerous labor, criminal activity, sexual exploitation ...) Internal or external trafficking
CHILD SOLDIERS	Children forcibly recruited or volunteers in armed conflict
REFUGEE CHILDREN (abroad) Or DISPLACED (in their own country)	Children displaced due to natural disasters or to political, social or military crises, accompanied or unaccompanied children, temporary or permanent mobility, internal and transnational movements ...

[14] These forms of mobility are also called "cases of mobility", the plural indicating that mobility can take several forms (cases of mobility). Note that, as part of this project, research and reflection focused on the first 4 forms identified: migration, fostering, and going on adventure and trafficking.

In addition, practices related to the mobility of children are now characteristic of many social identities. To the people residing in the destination areas, it has become customary to identify certain children:

- ✓ **by their communities of origin** *(eg housemaids of Sourou / Burkina)*
- ✓ **by the economic activities they engage in** (eg Togolese girls working in the bars[15] of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Gabon),
- ✓ **the nature of the relationship linking them to their new environment** (eg in Togo, the "viléamegbo" or "foster children", called « vidomégon » in Benin)
- ✓ **by their mobility periods** (eg in Benin, the "houefifovi" or "children of year-end," students who move during the holidays and year-end in search for money to meet expenses related to their education), etc..

These cases of mobility are listed in the modes of socio-economic reproduction of membership groups[16]. These modes determine the age, gender, destination, route, the actors involved, the activity and the role to be given to the child (*Box 1 in Appendix*).

B. Causes, risks and opportunities

There are few causes triggering automatically the mobility of children. The situations observed rather highlight a number of factors justifying the fact that children move, or that adults move them (*Box 2 in Appendix*). These factors and reasons come into play in decision-making in the face of others which incite to immobility.

Studies on the mobility of children clearly show the weight of the **structural constraints** on the environment of origin of the child. They also highlight the importance of (*family, social, economic, political* ...) **crises** that destabilize the child and / or its environment, crystallize an issue or precipitate and trigger the departure / fostering / trafficking of children.

The research also identified deeper mechanisms that determine the practices of mobility further to the various types identified:

- **The management of opportunities,** or the rational assessment, by the child or his parents, of the comparative advantages to live temporarily or permanently in other areas where it is possible to evolve and acquire assets and property that do not exist

[15] Popular Institutions delivering beverages, catering and moments of socialization

[16] Research conducted in 2010 by AMWCY in the framework of mobility on routes of children on the move from Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo provides insight into the many possible scenarios of mobility in children. They illustrate the conjugations of parameters involving the kind of child, gender, socio-ethnic community of origin, the activity before and during the mobility, the places of departure, transit and destination, family or community mechanisms underlying and organizing the mobility. See the three research reports at national level and the regional synthesis (cited in the Appendix).

locally: money, land to farm, property, education, training, knowledge, know-how, husband / wife, hallmarks of "civilization", etc.. And this management is usually made for the collective interest of the family group before taking into account (or without taking into account ...) the personal interest of the child;

- **The distribution of the burden and responsibility of education:** the solution to the difficulties encountered for the survival, welfare and development of the child is ensured through sharing or transfer of this responsibility to other guardians (foster care) or to the child himself, who takes upon himself to explore new environments and to gain independence by leaving the original home. Older children contribute to the education of the youngest in relieving family of the weight of their own burden and bringing back money and property upon return of mobility. Family and community networks, which have "colonized" various areas through mobility, are used to take over from the biological parents while the integration of new generations contributes to their own reproduction, consolidation, and growth;

- **transfers of wealth (cash, assets) but also of innovation, knowledge and identity and cultural elements** from other places and from a general process of globalization: children on the move and youths play a fundamental role in the reproduction of their families and communities, even if they are distancing themselves from these groups by leaving them, on the one hand, they are bound by social and moral obligations that force them to feel accountable to their families and to be devoted and useful for the family; on the other hand, **upon return, they transfer to these families new ways of thinking, organizing themselves and acting which connect them to the surrounding world and to universal standards, and that therefore transforms them profoundly;** the child on the move who caters to the needs of his group of origin acquires in return a status and authority that strengthens him vis-à-vis the adults and contributes to protect him, with significant collective effects on other children[17]; access to resources is not only related to gender and birth order, but also to the ability of exploiting various resources in various areas and to circulate these resources between various spaces[18].

What happens to children engaged in mobility?

A high number of cases of mobility lead to a situation of work, the few statistics that we have indicate that less than 20% of children on the move and youths move to take part in specific training[19].

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[17] A study conducted in Togo shows that young women returning to the village after a period of absence of 2 to 4 years gain in status and are less abused than their comrades left behind. Regional (listed in the Annex).Cf. *L'impact psychosocial de la traite sur les enfants dans la région des Plateaux et la région centrale au Togo,* A. Behrendt et S.M. Mbaye USAID/FHI/Plan, Dakar: Aware, 2008

[18] See the article of Guy Massart, September 2009, already cited.

[19] Ibid, p. 18

Child labor even if it is considered legal (light work) bears the risk of exploitation and abuse. Child light work can become hazardous labor depending on the capabilities of the child and working conditions (*Excessive workloads and overwhelming schedules, rest deprivation, excess of authority, lack of protection in the handling of tools or products harmful to health, ...*).

Given the early age at which large numbers of children move (under 15), given the largely informal structure of the labor market, given the lack of social and institutional control exercised over conditions of child labor and given the specificities characterizing the category of working children[20], it is very common that children on the move fall into situations of exploitation or find themselves squarely **in the worst forms of child labor.**

Forms of exploitation can range from economic exploitation (*children are not properly paid, or are deprived of any remuneration)* **to extreme abuses** such as slavery, servitude, forced labor, illegal activities, and sexual exploitation**. These forms of exploitation are unacceptable.** As for abuse, it is often associated with exploitation and covers all sorts of abuse (*beatings, insults, deprivations, and humiliations*), acts of negligence or characterized violence.

The risks of abuse and exploitation related to the activity carried out in the destination environment or to subordinate role reserved in some quarters to children from elsewhere (*host family, bosses and employers, Koranic teachers, ...*) also added to that are **dangers encountered while traveling** (*accidents, poor transport conditions, abuse by intermediaries, diversions from the planned route or getting lost, bad encounters, ...*) and **trials / accidents of life away from the usual family or community environment**. [21] However, **all forms of mobility do not cause the same risks, at least not to the same degree of frequency or seriousness.**

In the case of child **fostering**, the risks stem primarily from the choice of the guardians and from the "agreement" concluded with the parents, the crotch rot endured by the child, the potential loss of access to educational opportunities, lack of monitoring of the situation of the child once given to guardians, of a discriminatory attitude on the part of guardians towards the child, and the instrumentalization of the latter without consideration of his rights and his welfare, nor of the responsibilities of the guardians.

In the case of **migration,** or of **going on adventure**, the risks result from the isolation of the child (in route or at destination), from adjustment and survival difficulties in the new environments (*housing, food, hygiene, security, social recognition, affection, socialization,* ...), lack of monitoring and support of children by their families, their communities or peers,

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[20] This is indeed a kind of underclass extremely flexible, exploitable, not very demanding in terms of pay and virtually unprotected by labor unions.

[21] Early or unwanted pregnancies for girls on the move are a critical issue not only for their health but also for the success of their individual project. This problem also weighs heavily on the conditions of their return to their original environment.

the possible loss of access to educational opportunities, and the exploitation by adults of the project of the child and of his capacity of enduring evil and suffering.

In other kinds of situations, trafficking and association of children in armed forces / groups are basically two forms of mobility basically harmful to the child and condemned by the law. The exploitation and abuse of children is part their logic. No benefit can be gained from these kinds of mobility that are extremely dangerous and detrimental to the child. The child may be trafficked from his departure in mobility (recruitment), or fall in the trafficking during his journey of child on the move. Fostering and trafficking are intertwined because of the perversion of traditional practices of fostering or travelling Koranic education. Migration and nomadism expose unaccompanied children and left to themselves to dangerous encounters: an unscrupulous employer may sell a maidservant to traffickers, a crooked intermediary can divert a migrant child into a course of sexual exploitation or other worst forms of child labor. Although rare, it happens that sometimes a child enrolled in the course of trafficking manages to escape his situation and continue his course as a migrant child.

Risks and opportunities

Mobility of children is therefore associated with risks, but also with opportunities (*of educational, economic, professional, status seeking, self-fulfillment nature,...*). If, locally, living conditions were not so bad, and if mobility did not open up real prospects for improvement and development at the individual and collective levels[22], children and adults would not have been so many to choose mobility, despite the risks involved. Mobility always involves a quest (*for survival, security, education, money, assets, values, identity, well-being, status seeking ...)* and a hope of solution for a situation that is deemed unsatisfactory or unbearable. The whole ambiguity of the choice lies in the tension between the risks and the opportunities.

While the mobility of children often proves to be an effective strategy of reproduction of the community of origin and of self-production, it generates undeniable episodes in which children and youths are particularly vulnerable[23]. Does the search for opportunities justify the risk encountered by the children? Are they not sometimes sacrificed for the gains and benefits that covet their parents, they themselves not enjoying anything? Are the risks associated with mobility equivalent, higher or lower than those encountered when one stays in his place of origin? Doe the capacity of protection of the children or of their self-protection allow reducing the amount and severity of risks? Are the children's protection abilities sufficient to enable them seize the opportunities presented by mobility and derive a real benefit?

Taking into account the child's age, personal abilities and needs is essential in assessing the balance between risks and opportunities. The conditions of travel and living away from home environment must be considered in relation to the rights and needs of children on the move.

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[22] See *Children and Migration*. A. Whitehead & I. Hashim, Background Paper for DFID Migration, 2005

[23] See *L'impact psychosocial de la traite sur les enfants au Togo,* A. Behrendt et S. M. Mbaye, already cited.

Children from 0-12 years are in dire need of guidance and of a very protective accompaniment in a kind of family setting. Mobility can provide such a setting provided a close monitoring of its implementation and operation is ensured. Children of school age (under 16) must have access to formal or adequate alternative education. Preadolescents and adolescents (12-17 years), faced with the challenges of the transition to adulthood, should be able to find in mobility opportunities to meet these challenges if the solutions are lacking in their usual life environment[24].

C. Mobility, work and education of children

Mobility is often equated to child exploitation and deprivation of education. Certainly there are objective reasons to establish this equivalence, but the reality is often more complex. This biased perception is due to the conceptual and normative framework used by the institutional players to assess child protection. Yet this framework is not fixed. Its confrontation with reality offers the opportunity to question and to revise it.

First of all, the link established between mobility and exploitation is no accident: it is based on a set of findings and analysis drawn from experience and research (see above).

Exploitation, as defined by the conventions and laws, however, differs from the perception that children and communities have of it, that is, not to compensate for, reward and remunerate properly the effort made by the child and impose working conditions too difficult, dangerous, unfair or humiliating for him[25]. So, there are work situations that children and their families do not find to be a matter of concern, that they are even satisfied with, but that fall under a national legal provision assimilating them to exploitation. Indeed, according to Article 2 of Convention 138 of ILO (1973), it is up to each country to specify the minimum age for admission to employment or work within its territory. This minimum age should not be less than the age of compulsory schooling and, in any case fifteen years, or even fourteen years under certain conditions (economy and educational institutions not sufficiently developed). In its Article 3, the C138 stipulates that age should not be less than 18 years for certain types of work particularly harmful and dangerous[26], subject to very protective specific provisions.

On the other hand, the C138 excluded from its scope «family and small-scale businesses producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers" (Article 5). It specifies in Articles 6 and 7 conditions that can authorize work by children and adolescents in the framework of an educational institution or orientation program, as well as the so-called "light" work (13-15 years or 12-14 years).

It also provides that *"the relevant authority may not apply this Convention to limited*

[24] See Young people in West and Central Africa. Trends, Priorities, Investments and Partners. Julie E. Larsen UNICEF WCARO, juillet 2009

[25] See Second rapport de synthèse des recherches, C. Buono, Projet Mobilités, décembre 2009

[26] Identified as the worst forms of child labor in the framework of the ILO Convention 182 (1999)

categories of employment or work where the application of this Convention to these categories would raise special and substantial difficulties" (art 4). Despite its flexibility, adaptation and implementation of the Convention at country levels and to the realities of West Africa raise several difficulties in practice. This situation shows the differences between the national elites that set the standards, and the local populations, who very often bypass or ignore them.

It is also true that many children on the move who are workers or not, do not access formal education services (primary and secondary schools, vocational training). However, **education as children, their families and communities perceive it, is not confined to school.** In the broader sense, it remains for them a core value that mobility should not compromise, but turn into a reality. Moving out of his place of life is thus perceived as a guarantee of access to general knowledge of the contemporary world and to knowledge useful to one's place in society.

So there is, behind the focus on mobility, value judgment about the school in the community of origin of children. Although aware of the limitations of the current school system, the institutional actors generally tend to consider that mobility takes children away from school and that it is in the best interests of children to keep them as long as possible in the formal education system. Programs of maintenance and reintegration in schools appear as legitimate and effective ways to fight against early departure or against child trafficking. Children and their parents, especially in rural areas, view it differently. They question the training and reintegrating capacity of existing school structures, while proclaiming the need to learn, to read, write, count, reason, memorize knowledge, to acquire cognitive and intellectual skills, etc.. To them, the school, like vocational training, seem too untied to local contexts, too cut off from the social routines and of local economic activities. It seems to maintain their pre-teens and teens in a situation of dependence vis-à-vis the parents and the community, without their level of learning of school subjects being satisfactory. However, the empowerment of adolescents is particularly valued in these environments, namely their ability to create dependencies within the family and the community in order to have a voice that counts and that can be listened to[27].

Withdrawal of children of school to go on mobility is then not necessarily perceived by the child and his entourage as a infringement of the right to education, especially if mobility provides other educational opportunities (*learning a trade, Koranic school, bridge school, evening classes, discovery of the city and of the world, socializing in a family or community network located in another jurisdiction, etc.*).. Moreover, the issue is not necessarily viewed in those terms, since children on mobility are often already out of school, while others have never attended school.

The links between work and education can also be viewed in another order: working to pay for his training or his education (or that of his brothers and sisters), working during the holidays until the start of school, working to build on the skills acquired through family community and / or school education. **Again, the representation of the child's age is an**

[27] See Premier rapport de synthèse des recherches, G. Massart, already cited.

obstacle over which stumbles dialogue between institutional and community actors. For the former, according to law, the place of a child under 16 years is at school, not at work[28]. For the latter, the school, with the limitations that he knows, does not always correspond to the interests and needs of the child from a certain age[29]; for them, there are more effective or most useful ways to acquire education that will amount to socialization, integration and personal development.

D. The involvement of families and communities

The concept of mobility has allowed researchers and practitioners to reconcile with the empirical realities which the concept of trafficking has separated, confining them into a narrow and partial perception of the phenomenon of "children who are moving." Thus, as part of the trafficking approach, the main roles are kept by active traffickers, corrupt intermediaries, unscrupulous employers and clients, and families that are needy and can be manipulated, insensitive or unconscious communities, parents that are gullible or accomplices and children who are victims. This casting does not account for the social mobility of children in all its forms. It tends to caricature reality by reducing it to simplistic patterns. **One can understand the difficulty of taking into account the complexity and variety of situations, but it is the responsibility of players to make the effort of analysis required to protect children with adequate and sustainable solutions.**

Individuals or groups with a role in the mobility of children are many. These roles vary from one country to another or from a socio-cultural group to another. However, there are regional similarities that could be schematized as follows[30] :

- ✓ **in the departure areas,** the main actors are the parents, children and intermediaries called *coxeurs* (Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire), *Oga* (Togo, Benin, Nigeria), the "big ladies / aunties "(Togo) or traffickers;
- ✓ **in the transit zones,** except for the children on the move, the main actors are intermediaries involved in the transportation and the geographical orientation of children, support of their basic needs (*housing, food, health*), their hosting at various stages, the passage of checkpoints and borders, etc.. ;
- ✓ **in the destination areas,** the major roles are held by:
  - o the children on the move themselves,
  - o intermediaries that connect children to guardians or employers,

[28] National laws differ on the age at which the child is allowed to perform certain tasks. In the sub-region, the cursor is between 14 and 18 (extreme case of Nigeria).

[29] The age of 12 is often mentioned in the interviews as a pivotal age between childhood and adolescence.

[30] For more details, see *«itinéraires de la réussite » ? Mobilité des enfants et jeunes au Bénin, Burkina Faso et Togo*, A. B. Imorou, MAEJT/Projet mobilités *jeuda 122, ENDA, 2011*

- guardians to whom has been entrusted the care, education and use of children (housewife, shopkeeper or artisan, Koranic teacher, boss, masters / mistresses of animist convent, ...)
- Employers who employ children (implied contracts in general)
- Individuals or groups involved in various circumstances, informally, to provide support to children on the move, surround them with attention and affection, to help them solve problems, to continue their journey or return home (*landlords, nationals, religious people, humanistic people, mentors, etc.*)..

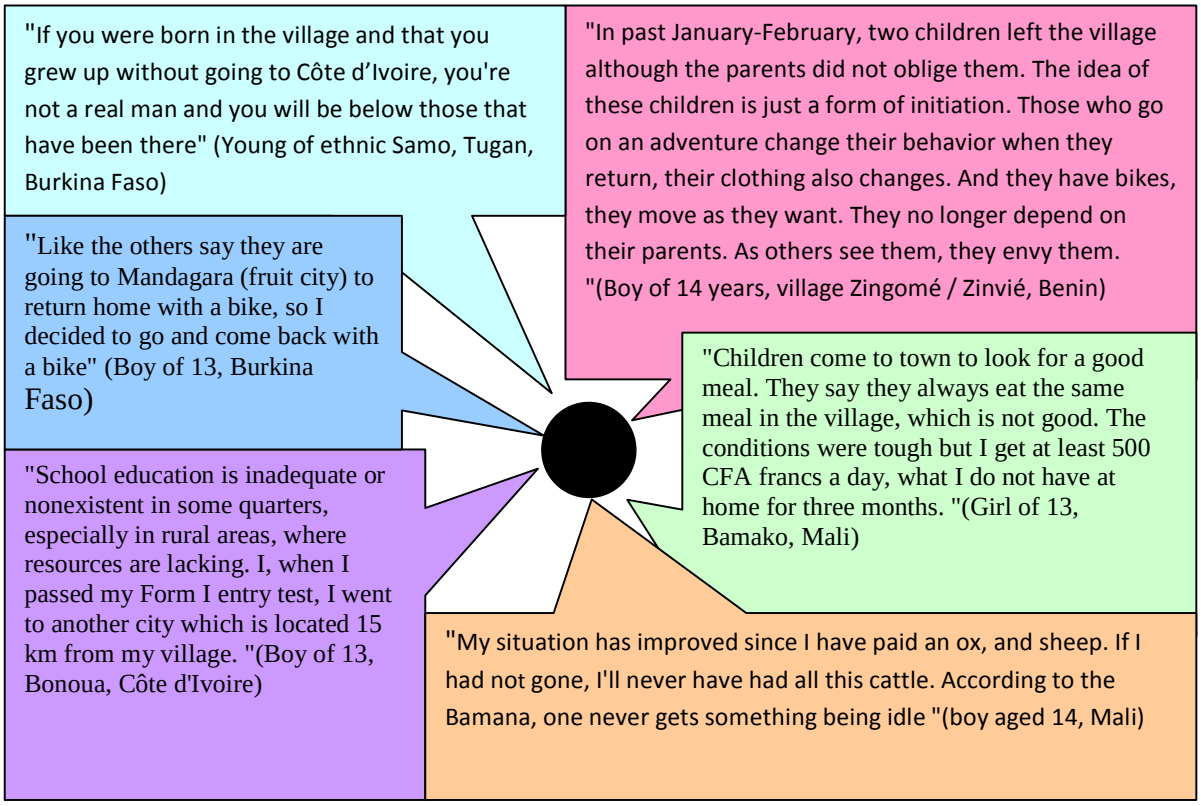
To understand the logic family and community who organize and accompany the mobility of children, it is necessary to go beyond a limited representation of what is covered by the family and the community. In West Africa, **the family** is not confined to biological parents and to the home they govern. The family is more extended and branched, socially and geographically. Forms of protection of family type also exist outside the bonds of blood. In fact, **the child engaged in mobility does not necessarily live outside a protector family**. As for the notion of community, it is too often equated to the village or locality. In fact, various links of solidarity, of belonging and territoriality underlie entities and networks of various kinds (*ethnical, clan, religious, local corporatist, associations, virtual,).*

E. Children, actors of their mobility

When one listens carefully to the words of children and youths, the choice of mobility is emerging as a common reality as of the age of 12 years, with a very high rate among children aged 14 to 18. Taking into account the views expressed put in perspective a certain perception of children as mere children, fragile and immature, unable to enter actively in mobility and to work towards the realization of a project related to this mobility. It highlights, however, the social role some children are ready to play and their taking of responsibility through mobility[31].

[31] See *Voices of child migrants : « A better understanding of how life is »*, Development Research Center of Migration, Globalization and Poverty, 2005

Words of children: our motivations and experiences[32]



All children on the move are not victims of trafficking. The notion of choice also applies to children, according to their maturity and their ability to think with reason and discernment. Researches conducted allow estimating that from 11-12 years, most children on the move are able to explain the motivations and circumstances of their departure. It is the same risk taking, as evidenced by the theme song so often heard: **"Suffering here or elsewhere, I prefer to try my chance elsewhere."** However, recognizing the existence of choice on the part of children does not mean that all cases of mobility are voluntary. In fact, there are two opposing situations: **forced mobility and voluntary mobility**. In between, there are several intermediate situations

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Forced Mobility

"Forced mobility" means that the decision to move does not come from the child and is taken against his wish or willingness, despite his internal refusal or his resistance. In this case, the child is been obliged to move and someone having authority over him / her or taking care of

[32] The citations are from the survey conducted from June to October 2007 by AMWCY with the support of ENDA, Save the Children Sweden, UNICEF and Plan WARO WCARO: *"Mobile children: from victims to actor"s*. Gomis, Sambou, AMWCY/ jeuda 119, ENDA, Dakar, 2008

him/her could have been used. Various forms of threat, deception or coercion or outright force (*eg: kidnapping*) could be used[33].

Voluntary mobility and intermediate situations

The term "voluntary mobility" means that the child is actor in the decision-making and decides himself to move, or not encouraged by his entourage, sometimes against the will and without the consent of his parents. Between the voluntary act expressing an autonomous decision and submission to coercion or obligation to leave (forced mobility), several situations may arise. These notably include the consent under influence, the digested consent, the spontaneous adherence to the proposal to leave or ownership by the child of a project of another person (a parent, family, ...). In this case, the child pushes the consent to the point of finding personal reasons and motivations to go on mobility. The idea did not initially come from him, but eventually becomes his.

What youths say: Mobility exposes the irresponsibility of parents

"There are parents who have no means to support children and, instead of taking one wife, they prefer to take 3 or 4, and have many children. After they are unable to feed the children and they send them to town. And if someone comes to ask for fostering, they accept without thinking ... **"(Boy over 18, Benin)**

"I was with my parents, my younger brothers went to school. I told my dad I wanted to go to school, he said no! That women are not made to go to school, they are made to stay home and get married. So whenever I went to school he beat me. My mother decided to send me to work in a family. She had to because my father did not leave me in peace ... **"(Girl of 18, Aboisso village, Côte d'Ivoire)**

"You are forced to be guardian of tradition. But we, the youth of today, our lives are different from that of our parents. So, if you do not want, you will have to leave to go on exodus and some do not come back. **" (Girl of the Senufo tribe, based in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire)**

"Working a lot and without rest, you're still in the fields, without any compensation because the father is already funding the food and other needs of the family. No economic support to meet the private needs. In addition, crops are not shared. " **(Boy of 21, Kolikoro region, Mali)**

F. Protection granted to children involved in mobility

Broadly speaking, two forms of protection can be distinguished on the basis of observation of empirical realities:

[33] Displaced children and refugees represent a special case of forced mobility; the main constraint here comes from a drastic change in the natural, social or political environment of the child.

- ✓ **An endogenous protection**, provided by children and adults who are themselves involved in mobility processes or that act informally in various areas of life or transition of children on the move;

- ✓ **An institutional protection,** placed under the authority of the State and bringing together government departments, international agencies, the NGOs, actors of the civil society and community structures (institutional liaison structures).

Endogenous protection

This protection is taken into account **since the movements of children for the purpose of work are no more systematically related to child trafficking.** The reformulation of the problem and the recognition of the phenomena of migration / mobility of children allowed seeing that the mobility players are also concerned about the protection of children on the move. The concept of "endogenous practices of protection" (PEP) and has thus widened to Tdh since 2005. **It refers to attitudes, behaviors and actions to protect children using beliefs, knowledge and ways of doing based on tradition or experience.** Individual or collective practices have been identified through research and capitalization processes[34]. They are practices aiming at preventing risks *(blessing, donating money, information about routes and risks, support for travels, ...)*, make mediation or direct action to help children in distress, providing minimum of well-being, security and education for children on the move to facilitate the success of their venture, maintain social control, etc.. Preventive measures are taken in some communities to delay departures and reduce early mobility (*eg sheep fattening entrusted to preteens in Burkina Faso, the village fields made available to children farmers in Benin*).

Several categories of actors are authors of these PEPs: mothers and aunts / mentors, heads of family and lineage, traditional groups (*eg fraternities of hunters in Guinea*), intermediaries belonging to the community of origin, transporters, landlords[35] (*Reception and fostering of children at destination*), citizens living outside the community of origin (*acting alone or collectively as an association*), teachers / bosses / mentors (*with whom children are fostered*), not to mention the children themselves: peer groups, "senior sisters" watching over their younger sisters[36], etc..

Recognizing the existence of these practices does not mean recognizing their full effectiveness, making it unnecessary the intervention by institutional actors. Far from overrating the PEPs and idealizing their authors, it is rather taking them into account as active elements of the protective environment for children, to understand their logic, but also to analyze their limitations and ambiguities. The idea is to consider how to strengthen and connect them to the institutional

[34] See Les pratiques endogènes de protection des filles migrantes du Sourou travaillant comme domestiques à Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso et Tougan (Burkina Faso), M. Somé et I.J. Hema, Tdh/UNICEF, avril 2010. See the Rapport de synthèse de l'étude sur les itinéraires des enfants mobiles, A. B. Imorou, already cited.

[35] See Les logeurs, protecteurs ou trafiquants ?, Tdh/Performances, Ougadougou, 2007 (capitalization brochure)

[36] See Saly, grande sœur, Tdh/Performances, Ougadougou, 2010 (capitalization brochure)

mechanisms of protection. This pragmatic approach can also lead to changes in behavior of actors who have so far played a role that is more dangerous than protective of children[37].

Institutional Protection

The situation analysis conducted in 2009 as part of the project allowed establishing that the responses of institutional protection against migrant, fostered, children, or who are victims of trafficking or who are adventurers were organized during the 2000s around 6 main strategies[38] :

1. Prevention of risks linked to mobility	**2. Supporting and caring for children identified as victims**	**3. Withdrawal and return /repatriation in a protective environment**
4. Sustainable solution on behalf of victims	**5. Coordination of actions and collaboration between actors**	**6. Advocacy based on research, capitalization, monitoring and evaluation**

A seventh type of intervention, **the protective accompaniment of children**, has been identified to describe new and innovative strategies, aiming at ensuring "the accompaniment, traceability, tracking as well as survival, security, development and empowerment of children on the move voluntarily for work and / or education purposes." These various strategies have been the subject of collective reflection at various stages of the project, at regional and national levels. Combining and enhancing these strategies appeared indispensable due to the frequency and severity of distress and abuse experienced by the children on the move. However, some ambiguities and contradictions were raised: **Should we really prevent all mobility in order to prevent the risks? Or should we securitize the travel and reception facilities to the risk of encouraging mobility?**

Difficulties have also been identified in the detection / access to children on the move, enforcement of standards on the movement and child labor, security of travel (underground migration promoting the development of corrupt and dangerous intermediaries), reintegration (high rate of new departures), awareness of the population (low impact) and community mobilization.

The discussion identified four main problems and making relative the impact of current strategies:

- **The continuing engagement of too many children in early and dangerous mobility, at the initiative of their parents, third party or themselves;**
- **The significant lack of institutional visibility, monitoring and protection of hundreds of thousands (millions?) of children on the move and / or workers in the sub-region;**

[37] This has been the challenge (successfully) met in 2007 by Tdh with Beninese nationals receiving children from Benin in Nigeria of 10-17 years for stone quarries in Abeokuta. Negotiation and cooperation were based on the logic of endogenous and exogenous requirements (eg no children under 14 years in the quarries). This approach has allowed the group to rally several actions of prevention and protection in areas of destination and home environments.

[38] For a detailed discussion of these strategies, see le *Premier rapport de synthèse des capitalisations*, O. Feneyrol, A. Diallo, already cited, pp. 5-11

• The fact that a significant number of children on the move withdrawn/ intercepted and then reinstated in their place of origin go back on mobility and are lost to the projects;
• The widespread lack of cooperation and adherence of children, families and communities in relation to preventive and repressive measures implemented by the institutional actors of protection (States, agencies, NGOs, media, etc..) ;

G. Major challenges of child protection

The following table breaks down, following the perceptions specific to institutional and community actors, five major challenges for the protection of children on the move.

PERCEPTION OF INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS	PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY ACTORS
1. Mobility can cause or contribute to painful, dangerous and harmful situations for children.	
The risks of abuse of children are numerous and important. Crimes are related to mobility (*sale, trafficking*). Universal concepts have been internationally forged and disseminated in West Africa to identify the evils and fight them (*sale of children, trafficking, and exploitation*).	The risks and harms associated with mobility are not perceived the same way by the components of African societies. Extreme forms of exploitation and abuse are condemned by the local social norms, but the local concepts exposing these realities are not identical to the concepts adopted internationally[39].
2. Mobility can place the child in a situation of illegality.	
Child labor is prohibited under an age set by law, which differs from one country to another. The child on the move who enters in a foreign country through illicit means, without permission and without identity papers is in a situation of illegal immigration. National legal frameworks are developed but not implemented, partly because of the limitations and weaknesses of Government organs and departments.	The will to carry out their projects led the children on the move and / or actors of their mobility to opt for underground ways and to bypass control and law enforcement systems (*deterrence, prohibition, interception, forced withdrawal and punishment of illegal acts*). National standards setting the boundaries between legal and illegal do not correspond enough to local social norms and do not sufficiently take into account the views and interests of children and populations. The mechanisms of corruption and flaws in control systems facilitate their circumvention but pose threats to children.
3. Mobility draws the child out of the conventional and localized setting for his protection	
All basic services to ensure the welfare and rights of the child must be in its environment and be accessible, yet this model seems to (erroneously or rightly) easier to achieve in the community of origin than in the environments	Children in mobility are not familiar with their environment and the services they might benefit from or how to access them. According to children interviewed, when the family

[39] The views of communities on imported concepts by international organizations has been heard and analyzed in the framework of the Mobility. See among other works the *Second rapport de synthèse des recherches*, C. Buono, already cited, and *Escaping from 'suffering' and 'submission' : Social norms, children's rights and child migration in selected west african contexts*, Sarah Castle, Projet Mobilités, décembre 2009

of transit or destination. The protection of a child on the move abroad is confronted with the challenges of cooperation between legal or administrative services and systems.	and community of origin is oppressive, discriminatory, abusive or dangerous, leaving them becomes synonymous with protection. This view is not shared by the other categories of community actors.
4. The mobility of children involves many risks. It can also be a factor of integration, fight against poverty and personal and collective development.	
Some children on the move do acquire assets, income and skills that allow them assist their families and / or that promotes their integration and development.	Children and their families know the risks but the lure of gain, lack of hope in the country and entrusting their fate to God / ancestors outweighs their fears (*culture of risk taking, of letting go, of positivity*). Nationals who have succeeded in mobility support their families and communities. They are models of success and points of support for children on the move.
5. The mobility of children is a widespread phenomenon which is outside the conventional framework of child protection. Taking into account this reality obliges actors to adjust their model and find ways to integrate mobility into a protective frame.	
The phenomenon cannot be eradicated as a simple problem. It must be understood in its reality and its complexity in order to be mitigated and to especially control its effects.	Generally, the mobility of children is a choice accepted, assumed and valued, sometimes even actively supported by the children themselves (*obedience, personal or family project*). The roots of the phenomenon are historical and cultural, but its current forms derive from poverty and from economic and social situations related to globalization. The child is an asset that his family does not want to lose and that must be protected.

The protection of children involved in mobility appears as a matter concerning all stakeholders in community and institutional their environment. Reducing the gap in perception between these categories of actors is therefore a prerequisite for the development of sustainable and adequate solutions both at the level of the child and at the levels of the State and society.

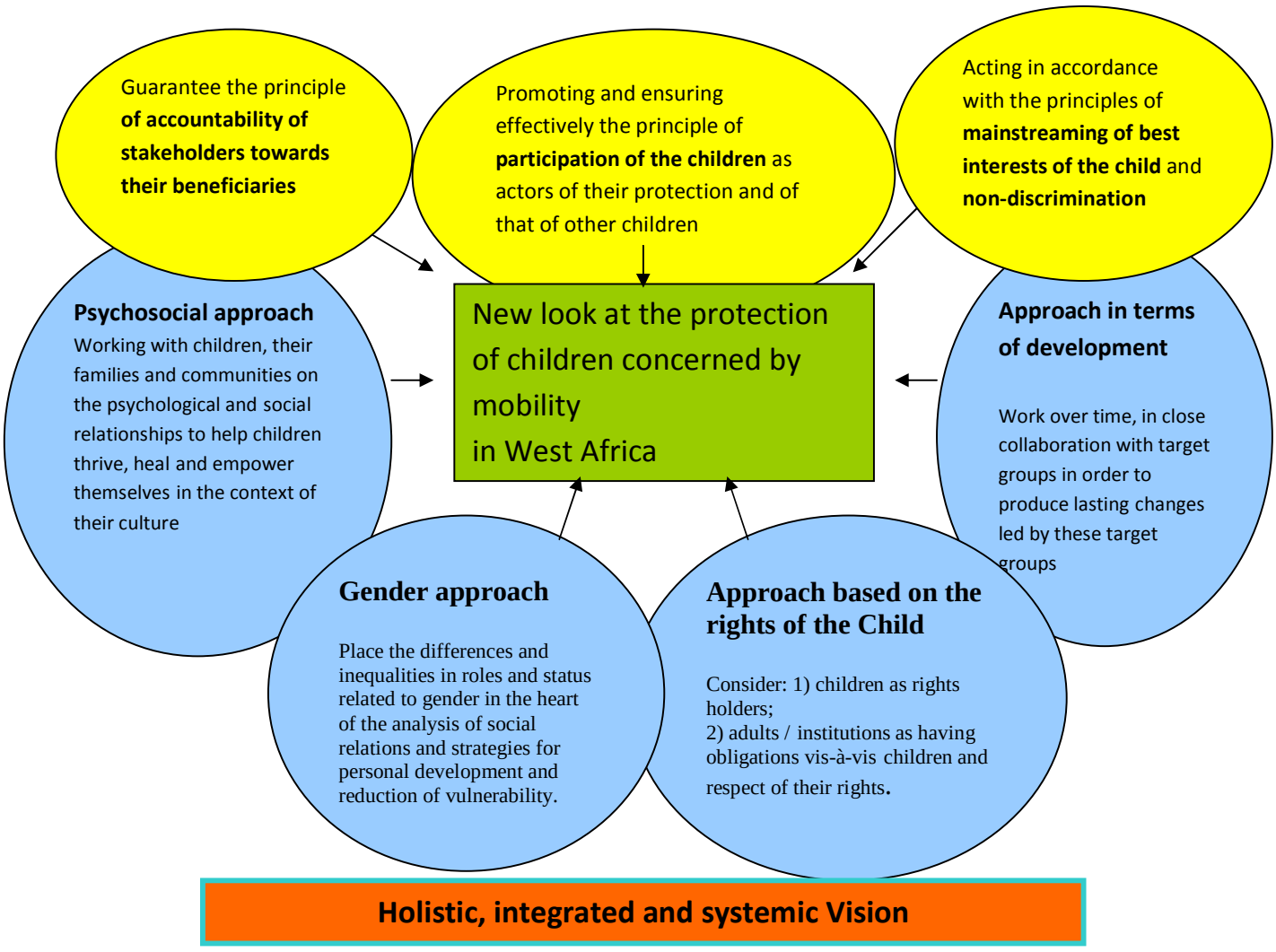
IV. Protective accompaniment for children involved in mobility

Better understanding for a better action

On the basis of knowledge, analysis and reflections produced and shared during the first phase of the "Mobility" project?, the platform of the partners agreed to jointly develop responses to the main question: **"how to better protect children involved in mobility in West and Central Africa? ".**

A. The foundations of an approach combining protection and mobility

The diagram below allows viewing the main approaches **(blue bubbles**) and basic principles (**yellow bubbles**) that can be found at the foundation of the model advocated by the actors of the project to help vulnerable children "involved in mobility ". The whole approach is based on a base corresponding to a holistic, integrated and systemic vision, not only of child protection as a collective action, but also of the mobility of children as a social phenomenon.



B. The « mobility » approach

The main issue, its causes and its consequences

The main issue to be addressed for a better protection of children on the move into West Africa is not mobility per se, but **the excessive vulnerability of children vis-à-vis the mobility *and* in the framework of mobility.** Mobility is neither good nor bad in itself. Generally speaking, it has some efficacy in learning and education, the acquisition of property and income, the redistribution of resources and expenditure, access to new opportunities, social and identity upgrading, self-fulfillment, and so on. However, too often it exposes children to excessive hardship and suffering, acts of abuse, various forms of exploitation and abuse. The violations of the rights and well-being of children in their mobility emphasize the need to reduce risk, without losing sight of the opportunities it can offer and to which access should be facilitated for children on the move.

In addition, the "choice" of mobility and its development proved dependent on a set of constraints against which the children are very vulnerable **in their home communities in the framework of mobility**[40] :

- ✓ violence in daily interactions, related to the exercise of power in the society and the transformation of their economies;
- ✓ exploitation of children, their "malleability" anchored in societies strongly hierarchical and highly deregulated economic areas;
- ✓ the challenge of social integration through education and vocational training;
- ✓ the identity ambiguity that surrounds children and youths, linked to the difficulty of forging valued identities in line with the local, regional and global world in which they live.

The problem of the vulnerability of children is then not limited to the threat of mobility on their life and future. More broadly, the problem relates to inadequate protection against the challenges and critical issues that we have just mentioned. **Mobility can provide answers to these constraints, or emphasize their weight and their destructive effects.** Child protection should be provided with the same vigilance and determination wherever children live:

- ✓ **in the community of origin**, where mobility should not be imposed on children as an obligation or a necessity, but as a reasonable option
- ✓ **in the context of mobility,** so that every child on the move can live decently and in security, seize the opportunities available to them and to benefit from adequate care.

[40] See Premier rapport de synthèse des recherches, Guy Massart, already cited.

The objectives and the strategic orientations

The solutions to be implemented refer to various times and places of the path of life of the children. Four strategic directions can be distinguished:

- ✓ **support children involved in mobility** in their decision-making (including that of not moving) and in their struggle to exist and access their rights;
- ✓ **secure travel and experiences** of children on the move**,** including fighting against their isolation, hiding, the slavery, child trafficking and exploitation;
- ✓ **provide support for fast, efficient, adequate and equitable support** of children on the move in need of special protection measures;
- ✓ **Maximize** opportunities for children to grasp the opportunities of education, integration and development that mobility gives them, referring to their best interests and also by offering them viable alternatives to mobility.

The actions to undertake and the levers to activate

All of the actions to engage in order to implement these strategies should derive **from having a realistic and pragmatic understanding of the contexts in which the interventions take place**. It is therefore important to go from the actors, practices, mechanisms and logic that characterize the mobility of children and to take into account the existing resources, as well as their limitations and contextual constraints.

Given these challenges, the key levers to activate refer to:

- ✓ the strengthening of the **collaboration between institutional and community actors**
- ✓ a **more effective participation of children in protective systems**
- ✓ a **linking of these systems with the national protection systems**
- ✓ a strengthening **of social services (primarily education) as well as local economic systems**.

The areas of prevention, assistance to child victims and support to personal development mark the field of action to undertake. Included in that are conventional actions such as awareness raising, information, building local capacity, accompanying for socio-economic and education integration or reintegration, the mobilization of community actors, the immediate or gradual withdrawal from situations of abuse or exploitation, etc.., however, **It is no longer question of wanting to maintain at all costs the children in their communities of origin or to condemn or stop the mobility in all its forms.**

The idea is to act with discretion, in consultation with children and their families to:

- ✓ **detect and avoid forced departures and child trafficking of children,**
- ✓ **offer alternatives to children who do not wish to engage in mobility**
- ✓ **enhance preparedness and accompany for voluntary mobility,**
- ✓ **reduce early departures, dangerous movements and clandestine mobility,**

- ✓ **Prevent children on the move from falling into trafficking or the worst forms of child labor**
- ✓ **accompany children on the move for them to take advantage of their mobility**
- ✓ **Accompany children after an episode of mobility.**

More than an awareness process, the approach requires an ongoing dialogue aimed at building a consensus and strong basis among stakeholders. On this basis, a greater participation of children, families and communities in the design and implementation of protective responses, can be developed. Innovative activities should be designed and implemented, in order to reduce the differences in perception, misunderstandings and tensions that can compromise the adherence, mobilization and sustainable involvement of these actors in the same systems.

Actors to be mobilized and systems to put in place

The actions to be undertaken lead to the identification of the actors and resources able of implementing them. Conversely, specific actions can be designed on the basis of a prior identification of the actors whose legitimacy, roles and resources can be leveraged to protect children. The analysis of the mechanisms of power, authority, education, resource allocation and socialization within the intervention community can provide valuable keys for the identification of these actors[41]. In a climate of dialogue and reconciliation, links are thus created or strengthened between private and public, governmental or nongovernmental, institutional or community actors who engage in a **more or less formalized cooperation**, or in networks allowing them to pool their resources, to adjust their actions and build **safety nets**, where children live and move[42].

The integration of local actors within the systems covering wider geographical areas should allow for the establishment of a **chain of protection** linking the localities located on routes used by children on the move (*called "corridors").* **These protection systems are thus imbedded in the territories.** Their purpose is to place the children throughout their journey in the heart of a protective environment managed by actors aware of their responsibilities and knowing their roles. These systems aim at also strengthening the links established by the actors of mobility between the areas concerned, even if they are separated by one or more borders between States.

The «mobility» approach and national child protection systems

The approach advocated by the "Mobility" project starts from the field actors, children actors, from the environment and intervention communities identified by experience. Gradually, the setting of the action expands to larger territories, more complete routes, and to vast cross-border migration spaces. This horizontal approach increases by stages the scope of the action and the possible actors. It facilitates the collection and transmission of information from one

[41] For an excellent illustration of this approach, see the study by UNICEF in Niger on community-based protection through six case studies (L. AMORE, September 2010)

[42] On the links between institutional networks, protection systems and endogenous practices, see capitalization studies conducted in Togo (C. Komlan, January 2010) and Burkina Faso (R. Traore, 2009).

area to another and the implementation of appropriate responses adapted to the most complex cases.

No organization or institution has the capacity to build by itself such systems and to support the operation. **The approach is therefore deliberately placed in a systemic logic**: coordination, cooperation and the establishment of synergies are the basic mechanisms of these systems. At national, political and institutional levels, the logic of intervention "from the bottom" of the "mobility" approach must therefore be able to meet the intervention logic "from the top" **of national child protection systems.** The two approaches should converge and get reinforced as they meet and are put in coherence. **Achieving this articulation is a key challenge to meet in view of a better protection of children on the move.**

C. General pattern of action

The "mobility" approach can be represented as a theoretical form of a **pattern of action** adapted to contexts structurally marked by mobility (*Figure No. 3 below*). This pattern represents a system allowing organizing **accompaniment, security and optimization of practices related to children's mobility** in order to reduce the vulnerability of children and to support their personal development.

The intervention logic proposed by this pattern combines **four complementary modes of action**. It focuses on both **the experiences of children** and **their protective environments.** It intends to provide adequate responses to individual cases while increasing the overall provision of institutional and community child protection. The convergence of the effects of these modes of action should support a positive change of social relationships conditioning the lives of children in strategic areas such as families of origin, foster families, public and community spaces, education and learning structures, workplace, etc.

The first two modes of action (*upper part of diagram*) target the **personal protection of the child** *through* his accompaniment and / or an approach of support and care that is more interventionist. These modes refer to situations handled on an individual basis, through:

- **support the acquisition of well-being, decision-making and its implementation**
- **detection, referral and support** for children in need of special (and / or urgent) measures for protection.

The two other modes of action (*lower part of diagram*) relate to **building of protective environments** in the **areas of origin** (to facilitate the reintegration of returned children and propose alternatives to mobility), **transit and destination** (in order to ensure the security of the children on the move and to promote the success of their projects).

This reinforcement can take two main forms, which themselves are broken down:

- **The building of skills and capacities of actors of protection** (including children) through:
  - **empowerment** of children, families and community actors,
  - **The building of protection capacities** of various active institutional and community players in the protection systems.

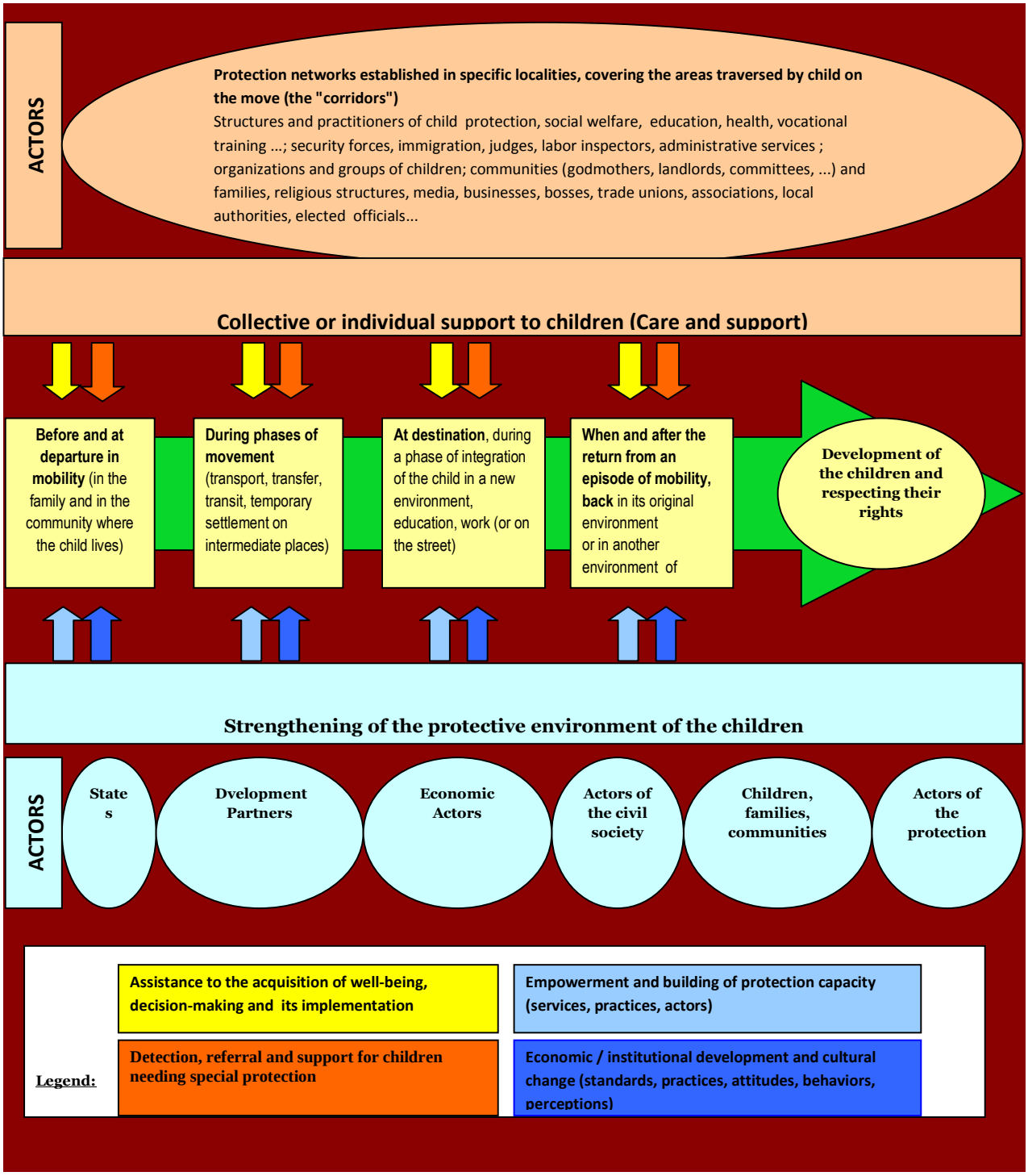
- The **transformation of the socio-economic, institutional and socio-cultural setting of the children** in the various areas connected by paths of mobility:

  - **Support to local economic development** (*production, employment, training, infrastructure, services, etc.*).

  - **Support to local institutional development** (*education, social welfare and health structures, leisure and development spaces for children and youths; animation structures for young children, etc.*).

  - **Support for cultural change** (*adjustment, alteration or dissemination of standards, practices, attitudes, behaviors and perceptions that influence the role, place and treatment of children*).

Figure No. 3 : General Model of protection of children involved in mobility



The protection actors are heavily involved in the actions of support, care, capacity building / empowerment and cultural change. Their supportive role is also important in strengthening institutional structures and mechanisms directly related to children. However, their contribution to economic development is secondary as compared to that of the State, development agencies, economic actors, elected officials and actors of the civil society.

D. What is protective accompaniment for children involved in mobility?

Protective accompaniment for children (PAC) is still a concept in the making[43]**.** The term combines two separate but complementary actions: **Accompaniment and protection. Accompaniment in order to protect, protecting while accompanying.** In the field of social action, accompaniment is defined as a practice of *"helping for a limited time a person who is in a difficult situation upon his request. This involves analyzing the situation with the person and seeking together with him ways that allow him access to a future that he may then decide"*[44]. Its application to the area of protection specifies the aim of accompaniment: **helping a person to protect himself or to protect one or more people under his responsibility.** If this protection involves children, the protective accompaniment consists is in **building a relationship of listening, dialogue, empathy, mutual reflection, advice and support:**

- ✓ **with one or more children** in difficult circumstances,
- ✓ **or with one or more adults** who have difficulty in managing certain situations or to meet their obligations vis-à-vis the children under their responsibility.

From the perspective of the protection of children involved in mobility, the notion of protective accompaniment seems appropriate at three levels:

- ✓ **the posture** which underlies it;
- ✓ **the practices** through which it occurs;
- ✓ **the systems** to be implemented to organize and generalize these practices in the areas linked by the mobility of children

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[43] Introduced in late 2008 by the NGO Tdh in the vocabulary of the protection of children in West Africa (see cf. *Rapport de la réunion régionale annuelle sur les phénomènes ETM*, Tdh, décembre 2008), this notion has been the subject of a thematic study in the framework of the "Mobility" project: *Différenciation entre migration et traite des enfants. Les expériences d'accompagnement protecteur et d'empowerment des enfants en situation de mobilité*, Rufin Traoré, CNP Burkina Faso, août 2010. See also *La Palabre* n° 3, Liaison newsletter of the regional psychosocial support network, Tdh, Lomé, août 2010

[44] See *Penser et pratiquer l'accompagnement*, Gérard Wiel et Georges Levesque, Chronique sociale, Lyon, juin 2009, p. 101

The posture and the philosophy of the protective accompaniment of the children (PAC)

As part of the PAC, the child is not reduced to the status of victim. His role in identifying problems, finding solutions and their implementation is emphasized. This posture responds to the call of children's organizations with experience in mobility[45]. It also reflects awareness among practitioners of protection of the importance of not underestimating the capacity for reflection, action and resistance of children to solutions imposed on them. While taking into account the minority of the child and limitations affecting certain capabilities, the PAC considers children as individuals in the making, capable of acting independently and of helping adults to better protect them.

The APE also recognizes the active role of the child in his protection and in that of others. **The posture also applies to family and community actors** that those supporting will try to help in their efforts to better protect their children.

This approach differs from training, advocacy, education or accompaniment. The first stake is not to transmit or teach skills, messages or knowledge, but to build relationships of mutual commitment and cooperation around specific situations affecting the well-being and rights of children. **That approach is in line with the humanization of child protection.** It intends to develop social relationships (within families, communities, NGOs) as well as strategies that have so far preferred standardized solutions, disconnected from the empirical realities and social and identity issues that are priorities for the individuals concerned .

A variety of practices to develop or invent

In the framework of APE, relationships can develop between children and adults, among children themselves (*peer education*) and between adults who caregivers (*institutions, families, communities*). The application of the APE to the issue of mobility can lead to a wide variety of practices (*see infra point E*). The APE may be **individual or collective**, **direct** (*involving the child or group of children in need of protection*) or **indirect** (*involving one or more adults who are caregivers*), **short or long term**. The setting of the relationship may be an open or semi-open space (*travelling social teams, recreation centers for children, listening and meeting spaces* ...), a school, a reception center for children, a training center, home visits, a support program for a target group of children and adults identified in specific contexts, and so on. The APE could be offered to children / adults who have been identified by stakeholders as potential beneficiaries, or respond to support requests made by individuals or groups in need. It will involve **specialized practitioners** (*social workers, educators, facilitators, psychologists, teachers,* ...) or will be implemented by **non-specialists**, trained in supporting or practicing in an informal social context (host families, mentors , landlords, peer groups, children's organizations, actors of associations, ...).

The systems of protective accompaniment of children involved in mobility

To organize and generalize the practices of protective accompaniment of children, it is necessary **to set up at various levels (starting with the local level) mechanisms, methods and frameworks of intervention geared towards the APEs.** These systems intend to link the practices of support themselves with other practices of protection and prevention (*information, awareness, detection, case management, support and care*,...). They are generally addressed to all vulnerable children,

[45] *Transformer les victimes en acteurs : l'exode précoce des enfants en Afrique de l'ouest*, D. Gomis, déjà cité.

whose specific problems and situations could be identified, analyzed and treated correctly in the context of the APE.

Gateways are then proposed with programs of assistance and protection tailored to predefined target groups (*orphans, apprentices, victims of trafficking or PFT, child soldiers, young mothers, etc.*). **The ideal would be to connect these systems to national systems of child protection in all countries connected by the mobility of children.** This "macro" strategy would have as effect the strengthening of the continuity of the protective environment of children throughout their routes.

E. Ongoing experiences and good practices and challenges

The strategy of the protective accompaniment of Children covers both innovative practices and more conventional practices. A capitalization of these practices have been undertaken in the framework of the "Mobility" project, illustrating what the actors on the ground are doing, the challenges to meet and what they consider to be "good practices"[46].

Detection, listening and expression places

Social teams travel the markets and streets to come into contact with the child on the move. Listening points or "shacks" offer working children fixed places of play, meeting and expression. Grassroots groups of working children and youths (WCY)change among child on the move, share their living conditions and break the isolation of the most vulnerable. Collaboration with NGOs facilitates the detection and treatment of severe cases. It also offers children the answers based on their aspirations, living conditions, lifestyles and life plans. Across West Africa, NGOs, community structures, teachers and students develop attitudes of care and encourage rural and urban populations to become involved in the mechanisms of detection and listening to children. Providing children in mobile phones and / or access to other information technologies and communication technologies (ICTs) are also strengthening their ties with a protective environment. In Togo, a green line (Hello 111) reports cases of child abuse and triggers an intervention system. In some communities (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea), children are registered in local documents by assistants of village chiefs and associations. This practice is not as protective as the official registration of births, but enhances the detection and monitoring of departures in mobility.

Management of crises and concrete case

Responsiveness of support services is one of the keys to the protection of children within or outside their home areas. Crisis affects families and weakens the situation of the child. Participating quickly in the rapid treatment and analysis of a situation with the children / families can avoid the worst and strengthen their ability to manage their problem. Proximity social work and relationships of trust *before* the crisis promote its management, including the collection of reliable information on the situations encountered. The existence and enforcement of agreements, roles, resources and mechanisms for coordination and multi-sectoral cooperation allows addresses the various cases with relevance and effectiveness.

Determining the best interests

UNHCR has developed a remarkable tool for determining the ISE, used in West Africa to help the displaced or refugee children. This tool could be adapted to other moving groups of children (eg *migrants or victims of trafficking*). Another tool, dedicated to child victims of abuse and exploitation, has recently been produced in Asia by Save The Children. As part of the EPA systems, it is about clarifying:

- Who Is authorized to determine the ISE;
- What procedures to follow to achieve this;
- How to ensure that decisions to protect the child reflect the ISE;
- How to organize the monitoring and adjust the response.

[46] See studies and reports of thematic workshop of capitalization made in Benin (participation of children), in Burkina (endogenous protection practices ; Accompaniment practices, empowerment and accountability), in Guiney (community mobilization, reintegration and reinsertion, community structures, coordination and collaboration) and in Togo (institutional networks ; determination of the best interest of the child). See also regional synthesis reports produced in June 2009 and in July 2010.

Protection by peer groups

The AMWCYorganizes and deploys "core groups" in all areas associated with mobility to help children, either not to go on "exodus" against their will or to do according to their needs, in good conditions and supported. These groups borrow practices from among the NGOs (*listening points, advocacy, referral of cases, funding for IGA, coordination with local service s and authorities, etc.*).. They also replicate practices prevalent among peer groups formed in communities of origin or in mobility: support each other, exchange useful ideas / information, to give advice, seek solutions, to make loans or grants to meet emergency needs or to seize opportunities ... A fundamental principle of the WCY is to support the "living together" in solidarity, helping the children to continue to listen to each other and avoiding that individuals are be isolated. The WCY also create bridges between children, community and institutional actors as well as between localities, the national and international levels.

Mediation of meanings

The differences in perception, standards and representation among actors involved in the mobility and the protection of children are deep in West Africa. To build cooperative relationships and protective support weaving a weft around the children and their rights, it seems necessary to confront and reconcile these different ways of seeing, thinking and doing. This reconciliation must be achieved in a climate of dialogue, not in a repressive or awareness raising climate. Protection officers in the field have many methods and opportunities to engage in this dialogue, but they are less equipped to facilitate the work of mediation between the different or opposite positions, balancing local and universal standards, and reducing the differences in perception. However, it is necessary to gather around a common sense (and behaviors / attitudes related to it) all the actors to be involved in a protection mechanism. Experiences are underway to develop methods / tools to manage these processes. They are based on actions taken in Togo and Mali to strengthen women's rights and to fight against female genital mutilation.

Empowerment of Children

This action aims to stimulate, encourage and support the child to become aware of his rights and power to act. An Individual or group support allows children to acquire and develop skills used to better protect themselves, protect others and to participate in public life *(citizenship*). This support takes place in the context of psychosocial activities and teaching implemented in schools, in reception centers or in non-formal settings located in villages, neighborhoods, markets, etc.. (*Liaison schools*, "*Points Espoir").* Giving rise to alternative initiatives and taking into account the real conditions of life of children, it attracts and values them (*expression, empowerment, self-esteem*), respond to their thirst for knowledge and open perspectives. They contribute to their well-being (*development*) while strengthening their ability to manage difficult situations (before, during or after mobility). They position the children in an innovative way in relation to adults (families, communities) and to the services they are entitled with (*facilitating contacts and exchanges, assimilations of mechanisms*).

Socio-professional empowerment

Migration and placement of the child are often linked to the prospect of learning a trade and integration in the economic space, especially for the 11-16 years age group. Reception and training centers provide to adolescents a chance to reach that goal without being exploited or deprived of school education. Programs direct and support young apprentices in small workshops, or more rarely involved in traditional learning (*eg blacksmiths*). This support continues in the best cases to the equipment and professional installation. Structures for child protection also promote the establishment of micro finance structures in disadvantaged areas to help adolescents and youths (under 25) access to micro credit (Guinea).

Accountability and outcome measures

To account for their actions and ensure that they reach children (principle of accountability), organizations have conducted studies measuring the change in the situation of hundreds of children in their programs and after their exit (Guinea , Togo). Tools (software) are being developed to extend this approach and make it more systematic. This is to enhance transparency of actions and to analyze what was done to enhance the quality of current and future programs. The participation of children, families and communities in these processes is essential. In Burkina Faso, a tool called "Scale of decency" has been developed to ensure regular monitoring of the individual situation of migrant girls and housemaids. This tool has been built on both principles of law and ethics (legal and / or universal standards) and on the perceptions that these children have as to what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of living conditions and work.

Social and institutional cooperation, networks and safety nets

This area is booming (national level), in progress (local) or stuttering (transnational). Actors undertake to strengthen their coordination / synergies in concrete situations. Frameworks of exchange and working groups promote experience sharing, collective thinking, organization of joint actions / procedures. Focus groups, technical committees, consultative meetings, conference calls or seminars of experts are

V. Our positions and our recommendations

A. Our positions

The positions taken by all stakeholders of the "Mobility" project at the regional level and that of the pilot countries result from a truly collaborative work. Their development is the result of a patient process of discussion, reflection, pooling and reciprocal consultations, fueled by research and experience capitalization (2008-2010).

These joint positions assume a common reference guiding our actions in behalf of children involved in mobility and form the basis of our advocacy.

Position 1
All children involved in mobility are entitled
to protection based on their best interests.

Position 2
Trafficking must be fought, but all children
involved in mobility are not victims of trafficking.

Position 3
The mobility of children requires protection systems to
reduce their vulnerability and personal development
at local, national and regional (transnational) levels.

Position 4
The specific needs of children involved in mobility should be taken into account by the national systems of child protection through the implementation of systems of protective accompaniment.

Position 5
Community mechanisms of support and child protection are part and parcel of the protective systems.

Position 6
The actual participation of children and their organizations is
an essential element to include in the protection systems.

Position 7
The protection of children involved in mobility requires the reconciliation of local social standards, national laws and international standards.

B. Our recommendations

The actors of the regional inter-agency mobility of children and youths in West Africa have jointly developed recommendations related to joint positions they reached. **These recommendations aim to ensure that intervention methods, operational projects, programs, strategies, policies and laws are now based on these positions, or draw on them.**

Recommendations linked to position No. 1

All children involved in mobility are entitled to protection based on their best interests.

- **Actors of the regional platform for the protection of children involved in mobility:**
  - ✓ Develop **advocacy actions to ECOWAS for the adoption of an action plan for mobility of people,** especially children and youth.
  - ✓ **Create and support frameworks for exchange** between various countries for the establishment of cross-border initiatives to better coordinate the protection of children involved in mobility.
  - ✓ **Develop synergies with stakeholders in the economic sector** (public and private, formal and informal) and with those involved in the development of **basic social services** (primarily education, health and social protection).
- **States and development agencies:**
  - ✓ Mainstreaming mobility in development strategies and policies for child protection at local, national and regional levels.
- **States and all those involved in child protection:**
  - ✓ **Initiate information campaigns and outreach** aiming at calling on the population and organizations on an equitable **support of children** from villages, towns and other countries, regardless of their status and gender.
  - ✓ **Rely on the one hand, on the regional and sub-regional conventions** relating to the movement of people on the other hand the realities of the phenomenon of mobility of children in the ECOWAS.
  - ✓ **Develop clear messages,** based on the experiences of children as well as dialogue institutional and community actors for a common and sustainable mobilization of all stakeholders involved in child protection.
  - ✓ **Strengthen coordination of government and non-government services** for a better quality of care for children and for the effective implementation of the principles of the CRC, the CADBE ACRWC ???and the approach based on children's rights.

- ✓ **Harmonize tools of intervention, and of management of** (individual or collective) cases to achieve a coherent action in the same areas of intervention.
- ✓ Adopt a common procedure for determining the Best Interests of the Child (BIC) that addresses the reasons that have pushed the child to change environment and opportunities available to him.
- ✓ Basing their actions on the procedure for determining the BIC.
- ✓ Improve access of children, families and communities to HIV prevention, detection, reporting, referral and monitoring of child victims or at risk of violence and abuse.

Recommendations linked to position No. 2

Trafficking must be fought, but all children involved mobility are not victims of trafficking.

To the actors of the regional platform for the protection of children involved in mobility:

- ✓ Ensure that the **future action plan of ECOWAS on the mobility of people**, especially children and youths, integrates the fight against trafficking and against child labor as part of a coherent and pragmatic vision of the mobility.

To the states and to all actors of the protection, including children and youths:

- ✓ **Build their ability** to detect children victims of trafficking and to distinguish between trafficking and other forms of mobility.
- ✓ **Evaluate and strengthen the implementation of guidelines for the protection of the rights of children victims of trafficking** so that the fight against trafficking does not conflict with the rights of children.
- ✓ **Get harmonized tools of analysis** that will allow giving an adequate answer to the response of a child on the move from detection to the lasting solution.
- ✓ **Strengthen and improve** prevention of trafficking and protection of trafficked children **through the development of protective accompaniment systems for children** in spaces and contexts where the phenomenon of trafficking is significant.
- ✓ **Not consider children on mobility as guilty of an offense,** including migrant children and those victims of trafficking.
- ✓ **Designing with children on the move sustainable solutions** that are not limited to return to their families or repatriation in the country of origin.

Recommendations linked to position n° 3

The mobility of children requires protection systems ensuring the reduction of their vulnerability and their personal development at local, national and regional (transnational) levels.

Other actors in the protection of children in West Africa:

- ✓ **Develop and support the establishment and operation of protective accompaniment systems for children** at local, national and transnational levels.

- ✓ **Develop, adopt and / or implement codes of conduct to protect children and young workers** in various contexts, combining government services and ensuring the meaningful participation of children, their employers and their families / communities.

- ✓ **Reduce the underground nature** of children on the move, **strengthen their traceability, avoid their isolation** and ensure that they are carrying **identity papers** and the **minimum money** needed to ensure their survival up to the destination.

- ✓ **Involve and support the adults ensuring the protection** in supporting children on the move and youths, in order to help these children and youths to become more effective (individual or collective) actors of their own protection.

- ✓ **Inform and educate adults on the dangers of violence and discriminatory practices vis-à-vis children.**

- ✓ **Know the quantitative and qualitative limitations of formal education** in order to:
  - **build its (**qualitative and quantitative) **capabilities**
  - **develop alternative forms of education** adapted to the contexts and to moving non children on the move.

Recommendations related to position No. 4

The specific needs of children involved in the mobility should be taken into account by the national systems of child protection through the implementation of protective accompaniment systems.

To the States and to national and international agencies of child protection:

- ✓ **Allow national systems of child protection to take into account the specific needs of children involved in mobility** through the implementation of protective accompaniment systems of Children.

- ✓ Ensure that the implementation of protective accompaniment systems of children is **based on existing resources** and occurs **in conjunction with the national systems of child protection.**

- ✓ **Base programs and policies for children and youths on the move,** not only on **a risk reduction strategy,** but also on **a strategy to strengthen the opportunities and resources that can be mobilized for their development.**

Recommendations linked to a position n° 5

Community mechanisms of accompaniment and protection of children are part and parcel of the protection systems.

States, actors of civil society and technical and financial partners:

- ✓ **Identify, through empirical research and action research, community practices and mechanisms of protection** that will be given a major role in the child protective accompaniment systems.

- ✓ **Continue to identify the routes used by children on the move and set up protective accompaniment systems** for the children on these routes.

- ✓ **Establish and strengthen linkages between formal and informal mechanisms of protection** taking into account the specificity of contexts and without distorting the endogenous practices and logics through excessive formalization.

Recommendations linked to the position No. 6

The actual participation of children and their organizations is an essential element to include in the protection systems

To the States:

- ✓ **Ensure the implementation of provisions guaranteeing the right to information, expression and association of children** in their protection.

To the actors involved in the protection of children:

- ✓ **Consider children as actors of their lives** and listen carefully to their views and messages to ensure effective participation of children and their organizations in the protection systems.

- ✓ **Provide children and youths the means to organize themselves and develop their ideas and initiatives** by listening carefully, by responding to their demands,

encouraging them and showing patience and flexibility in the monitoring of their actions.

- ✓ **Develop measuring mechanisms and tools of accountability vis-à-vis children,** preferably in a joint, coordinated and harmonized manner in order to increase the benefits in terms of project quality and *empowerment* of beneficiaries.

To Movements and Groups of children and youths:

- ✓ **Ensure a broad and deep ownership by children and youths of the results of the "Mobility" project, build capacity for protection and self-protection, and support their commitment** to implement in the recommendations of the project.

- ✓ **Continue and intensify efforts to collect and share information** on real-life situations and on protection of children involved in mobility.

- ✓ **Play an active and proactive role in the establishment and operation of protective accompaniment systems for children.**

To adult actors of institutional, family and community protection:

- ✓ **Not assume that the protection measures put in place by children exempts adults from their responsibility to protect children.**

- ✓ **Engage in facilitating children's participation** and in the support practices for their protection.

- ✓ **Help children to develop cross-border linkages of communication and exchange** they have established and to facilitate their articulation with other linkages with institutions, organizations or networks made up of adults.

Recommendations linked to position No. 7

The protection of children involved in mobility requires the reconciliation of local social norms, national laws and international standards

To the States, to actors of the civil society, actors of protection and technical and financial partners:

- ✓ **To promote, encourage and support spaces for exchange, information and dialogue** that enable various stakeholders to discuss the norms, values, attitudes and laws on child rights and development.

- ✓ **Ensure that the protective accompaniment systems for children systematically integrate this type of space** and that the institutional and informal actors learn to confront and understand their views, in order to reduce the gaps in perception that compromise their collaboration.

- ✓ **Make the determination of the best interests of the child a special time to reconcile** social norms, national laws and international standards.

To the actors of the regional platform on mobility of children:

- ✓ **Initiate action research on the reconciliation of social norms and institutional standards, local standards and global standards,** in particular to test methods of dialogue and of "mediation of meaning".

CONCLUSION

The first phase of the "joint regional project to study the mobility of children and youths in West Africa"(2008-2010) ended with the production of an important amount of information, of analysis, innovative designs and questions. The research and capitalization on experience supported a process of sharing and of collaboration which has largely mobilized regional and national actors. **A change of perspective is emerging on the basis of solid arguments.** Mobility, including trafficking that is an inherently negative form, no longer appears as an evil in itself. Fundamental dimension of experience and future of millions of children in West and Central Africa, its structural and sustainable character should be recognized, while asking questions on its implications in terms of protection, integration and changing status of children in the context of contemporary African societies.

Attentive listening of practitioners, adult populations and of children and youths on the move showed that the mobility of children can be forced but is often voluntary, motivated by the search for well-being and personal development. **Mobility can be accompanied with vulnerability, abuse, exploitation or mistreatment. It is also beneficial to children and to the groups they belong to, in social and economic contexts known to be difficult.** The scope is undeniable; its causes are deep and structural. As for the motivations of children, they are rooted in the evolution of the contemporary world. It is therefore unrealistic to think that States, civil societies and development partners have the capacity and legitimacy to simply terminate the multifaceted practices of the mobility of children.

Recognizing this reality complex incentive to change one's look on the phenomenon and to want to support it rather than to fight it, to secure it rather than to reduce it to illegal underground venture, to optimize it rather than to ignore or demonize it. This perspective is a turning decisive point for child protection. The objective is no more to prevent at all costs migration, fostering and child labor, but to reduce the vulnerability of children on the move and to support their personal development.

The proposed strategy is not limited to protecting and supporting children already entered mobility. It also intends to prevent early and dangerous departures by supporting actors in decision-making, and offering alternatives to mobility that are truly child-friendly. Moreover, beyond children on the move, all the children involved in the mobility must be better protected thanks to a consideration of the "mobility" dimension in their individual and collective existence. Present situation, future prospects and past experience, mobility is a way of life and a strategy for millions of people in West Africa. Its recognition does not mean to trivialize the unacceptable, but

taking it from the realities and the field of possibilities to create with the people and specialized actors involved the conditions for better protection of children involved in this phenomenon.

The implementation of this strategy lie in the establishment of protective accompaniment systems of Children along the routes of mobility, while balancing interventions between areas of origin, transit and destination.

These systems must be based in existing resources in communities and institutions within the framework defined by the national systems of child protection.

Protective accompaniment means that children and their families must be "supported for the purpose of protection" in the analysis of their problems, finding of solutions, decision making and the implementation of their projects or initiatives. The child should not be regarded *only* as victims or at risk in terms of predefined issues. Protecting a child means helping him gain a better life and move forward in life according to real needs, his skills and specific contexts.

This protective accompaniment of children requires the establishment of more or less formal networks, linking various types of institutional and community stakeholders (*public departments, NGOs, private sector, children, families, endogenous actors , formal structures established by the State or NGOs*). These actors pool their resources to reach for and support individual vulnerable children (*detection, listening, dialogue, support and advice, mediation, assistance, etc*.). The framework of protective accompaniment is open and operates on the basis of empirical and solid data, on behalf of a fundamental principle: **the best interests of the child.** The approach could lead to improved conditions of travel, living and work of children on the move. It can also lead to maintaining children in their community or their interception, immediate or gradual withdrawal, referring them to specialized services, their reintegration in their families or in an appropriate protective environment.

The implementation of the protective accompaniment of children has to be through a strong proximity commitment that should necessarily be linked to national child protection systems. Even if departure areas are of strategic importance, we should not forget that a large number of vulnerable children is already engaged in mobility. It is therefore necessary - and urgent - to invest more human, material and financial resources in the areas of transit and especially destination, so far too often neglected. Similarly, **we should go beyond the idea that there exists, on the one side, the actors of mobility, and on the other hand actors of protection.** Once actors play (or could play) a positive role in child protection, specific efforts should be made to integrate them into in the protective accompaniment systems.

The evolution of thinking patters and operation of agencies, NGOs and public services is a prerequisite to resolving difficulties encountered in the field of the protection of the rights and well-being of children. A change of perception has begun to take place in the minds of actors, hence the adoption of common positions and recommendations in this document.

These actors are now facing the challenge of implementing these recommendations through concrete actions, to plan and carry out jointly with the various stakeholders involved (children, families and communities, state and non-state actors, national, regional[47] and international organizations). In this context, this paper is intended to serve as guidance, advocacy and

[47] First ECOWAS, UEMOA and ECCAS

mobilization tool for millions of children that mobility involves in West Africa, whose protection is still not adequate.

APPENDICES

1. BOXES

BOX No. 1: Definition of child trafficking from the Palermo Protocol (p. 7)

- The Palermo Protocol defines trafficking as **an act of recruitment, transportation, transfer, hosting or reception of a person in order to exploit him** inside or outside the country in which he lives.
- **Exploitation** shall include, at minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
- According to the Palermo Protocol, **the consent of the victim to be exploited cannot be considered if he is a child** (person under 18 years), even if none of the following has been used: "force, coercion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of authority or actions carried out while the victim is vulnerable or under the control of another person."

Box No. 2 : Definition of the Worst Forms of Labor (art 3, C 182 of ILO) (p. 7)

For the purposes of this Convention, the term **worst forms of child labor** include:

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

Box No. 3: Profiles of children on the move for work and / or education (p. 16)

Girls (9-18 years) who migrated to exercise a domestic activity, alone or in a community network, with a boss identified in the destination area

Girls who have been placed very young in foster families (3-6 years), in their own country or abroad, in which they play the role of "maid used for all kinds of work" (housework, help with informal economic activities,)

Girls and boys (6-18 years) who migrated or were placed with an institution, a teacher or a foster family to have access to education facilities and to vocational training

Boys (10-18 years) who migrated to work on a seasonal basis or for a longer period in the primary sectors in their countries or abroad (agricultural sectors: cotton, cocoa, coffee, vegetables, ...; extraction areas: quarries and mines, fisheries, construction)

Boys and girls (10-18 years) who migrated in their country or abroad, to carry out "small businesses" (porters, fixed or traveling sales, shoe shine, ...), work in the food service and / or learn a craft trade

Boys (7-18 years) having been placed with an employer to learn a trade in an economic sector "colonized" by his community of belonging (*eg curing*)

Boys and girls who have migrated or been placed with a relative in economic networks run by citizens of their community in the country or abroad (specialized trade or craft, fishing, agricultural sector, stone quarries, construction, food service ...)

Box No. : Factors that could lead to children's mobility (p. 16)

The lack of support for children, especially in the context of large families and poor

Lack of money in the family to cover major ritual expenses (death, marriage) or to deal with crisis situations

Idleness and precariousness in the village

The lack of identity markers and opportunities (*success, education, integration, development*, ...) for children and youths (No opportunities in the offing)

The lack or poor state of training centers and schools

School failure, often seen by parents as a justification for the cessation of school expenses and the orientation of the child towards another activity, school dropout, which may result from academic failure or other factors; academic achievement, which can lead to further studies outside the usual place of residence,

The condition of orphan (early death of one or both biological parents),

Conflicts with parents / elders / guardians

The conflicts between teachers and students

Violence (including female genital mutilation) and harassment (physical, sexual, psychological) in schools, training centers, family and community spaces,

Curiosity, thirst for knowledge, the desire to discover another “world''

The need for affirmation and independence vis-à-vis parents

The feeling of being exploited within their own family

Bandwagoning and other practices of imitation for the purpose of socialization

Marriage, some initiation rites, traditional practices more or less active according to ethnic groups and localities (fostering children at birth or in infancy, placement of children / adolescents in animist convents, placement of children with a Koranic teacher, keeping away of "*child witches*", etc.).

The quest for prestige and property glorifying the return to the village,

The need to acquire property or financial resources to carry out an individual project (*marriage, education, training, economic activity, ...*) or to help the family group (*domestic work, purchase of livestock, income generating activities, ...)*

2. Tables

Table no. 1 : **Issues and vulnerable groups of children linked to mobility** (p. 13)

Issues and identified groups targeted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo as linked to mobility of children (June 2009)
Children in (*early, dangerous, unaccompanied, illegal*) **migration**
Children in **illicit work** (*age, activities performed, underground*)
Children at risk or victims of **exploitation** (*through work or sexually*)
Children at risk or victims of **trafficking** (*internal or transnational*)
Children victims of **mistreatment** and **abuse** (in households, workplaces or institutions where they are placed)
Children deprived of access to **care** and **education** (such deprivation can be the cause or the consequence of a departure in mobility)
Orphaned, lost or abandoned children
Streetsmart Children
Children affected by **crises, disasters and conflicts** (refugees, displaced persons, associated with armed groups)
Early and forced marriages (*early / forced departure from home and risk of sexual abuse / exploitation and by the work in a non-protective environment*)
Minors in conflict with the law (*entered into conflict during the mobility or went into mobility due to a conflict*)
Harmful traditional practices (*FGM, discrimination of children so-called "sorcerers", ...*)

Table No. 2 : Main forms of mobility of children in West Africa (see p. 16)

3. Diagrams

Diagram 1: The children involved in mobility **(see p. 13)**
Diagram 2: Funnel prospects of vulnerable groups of children engaged in mobility, labor, exploitation and trafficking

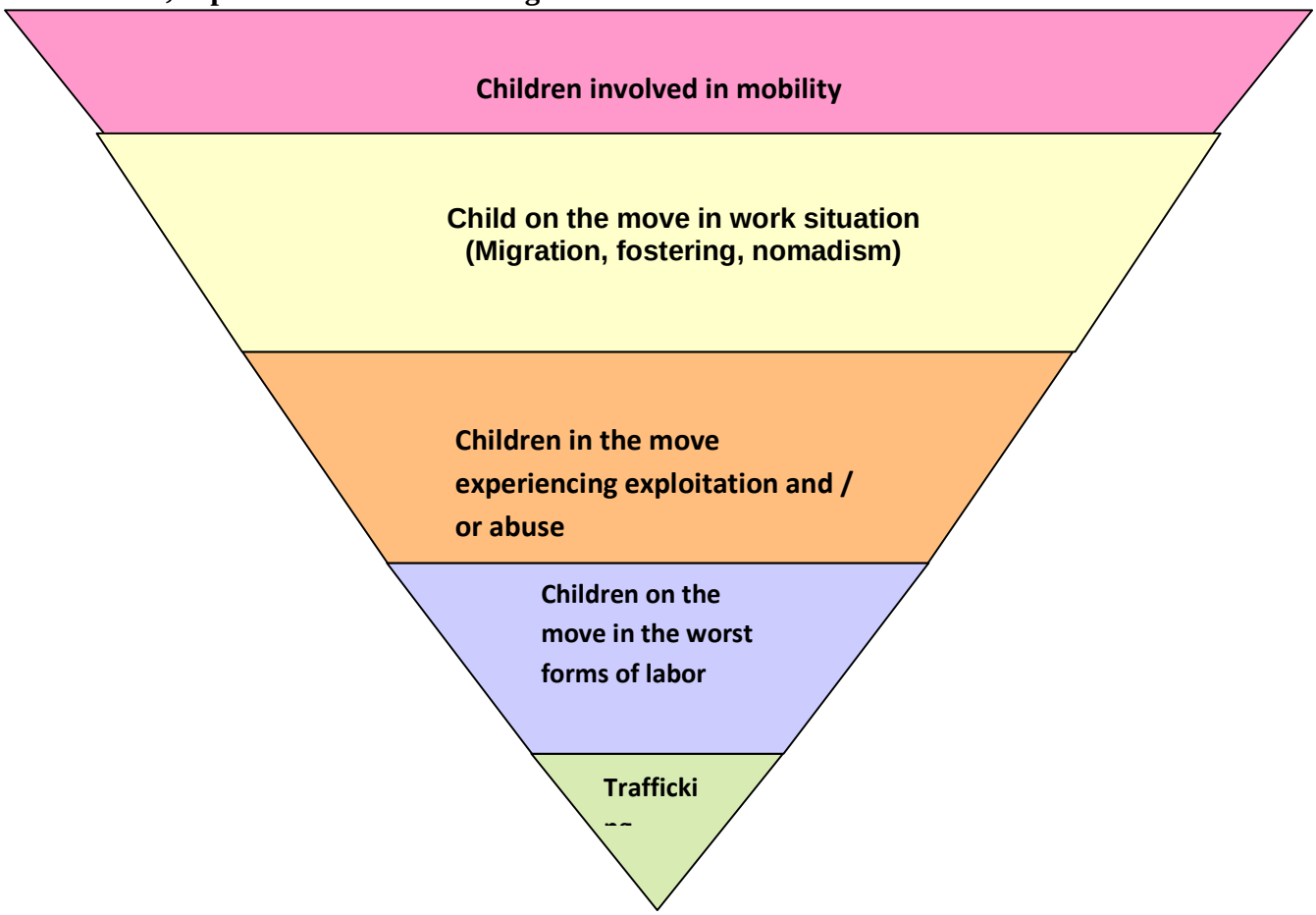

Diagram No. 3 : General model of protection of children involved in mobility **(see p. 37)**

4. References

4.1 Works produced in the framework of the project and by the other stakeholders of the project[48]

4.1.1 Works produced in the framework of the project

a) Research

Synthesis of the research on the mobility of children and youths in West Africa

- *Premier rapport de synthèse des recherches*, G. Massart, Projet Mobilités, juin 2009
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b) Capitalization of experiences

Situation analysis of the institutional responses to the protection of children involved in mobility

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- *Analyse documentaire au Bénin,* A.B. Imorou, CNP Bénin, août 2009
- *Analyse documentaire au Burkina Faso,* R. Traoré, CNP Burkina Faso, août 2009

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[48] Per area and per chronological order

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- *Rapport de l'atelier sur la réintégration et la réinsertion*, CNP Guinée, mai 2009
- *Rapport de l'atelier sur la mobilisation communautaire,* CNP Guinée, mai 2009
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4.2.2 By the actors of the project, before and parallel to the project

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