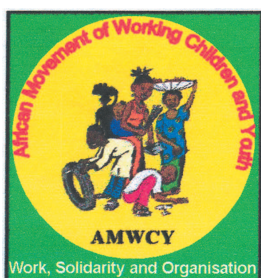


# *Mobile children: from “victims” to “actors”*



## *Early migration and child trafficking in West Africa*



**African Movement  
of Working Children  
and Youth (AMWCY)**

**JEUDA 119**

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■ **Photo credit:** AMWCY

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## History of the AMWCY, facing early migration and child trafficking

At the time of its creation in July 1994, the African Movement of Working Children (AMWCY) and Youth had identified among its twelve fundamental rights<sup>1</sup>, the "right to remain in the village (no migration)", at the request of child domestic workers (of rural origin), who constituted the largest part of the Movement's founders.

Migration and Child Trafficking were not yet recognized as issues in West Africa. Nevertheless, WCYs carried out many actions with other children in their home villages and cities and, since that period, approximately 100 Associations (AWCY) were created.



Since January 2004, WCYs launched an "action plan" in 5 countries of the African Sub-Region. Today this action has been extended to 8 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali and Niger, as well as Guinea Conakry, Senegal and Togo.

During the same period the AMWCY, as regional actor, have integrated the RWOGAT, a network of "regional organizations" which fights against Child Trafficking<sup>2</sup>. This report presents the results of a research designed and carried out by the AMWCY from June to October 2007, in order to assess and capitalize its actions towards the fight against early migration and child trafficking in 5 original countries and to improve them. This study is the fruit of a co-operation between the AMWCY and its partners: Enda Tiers Monde, Save the Children Sweden, Plan, and UNICEF. This study is also a challenge to clarify and systematize the knowledge acquired throughout the years and to explore the pertinence of actions carried out by WCYs, based on "WCYs' relevance of their reflections", as well as their own means".

### The main objectives of the study are:

\* To better outline the various perceptions of the phenomena by the target people

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://eja.enda.sn/maejt\\_objectifs.htm](http://eja.enda.sn/maejt_objectifs.htm), each right is the object of concrete WCYs' actions, which are aimed not only to convey them but also to implement them.

<sup>2</sup> The members are: ILO, MAEJT, Enda Tiers Monde, IOM, Plan, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, UNDC, and UNICEF.

\* To develop a series of recommendations to improve the quality of the AMWCY’s actions; and

\* To clarify the potential added-value of WCYs' actions.

## **I- METHODOLOGY**

The methodology is based on a qualitative and participatory approach, associating hundreds of actors (mainly WCYs themselves,) in the collection of information and their analysis, country by country, followed by a final regional workshop. This approach was chosen in the hope of gathering information to freely express the points of view of those concerned (in their local language), and for the analysis of that information according to the codes contained (in their own language). The collection of this information was made through, roughly, 500 interviews and stories, recorded in local languages based upon a pattern defined during the launch meeting of the project.

The information was re-transcribed in French<sup>3</sup> and enriched by national workshop analysis and discussion.

### **A- Three phases of the research**

- Launch of a regional workshop from the 10th to the 15th of June 2007 in Cotonou, Benin in order: (1) to clearly explain and share the objectives and the organization of the project and (2) to strengthen the capacities and to train the AWCY in the methodology of collecting information from children and communities.

- The collection of information, its re-transcription and translation from the 20th of June to the 31st of July 2007 and the participatory analysis of that information during a series of national workshops from the 3rd of August to the 16th of September 2007, in each of the five selected countries.

- The organization of a regional meeting assessing the experiences of WCYs by WCYs and their partners, and the drafting of the report, from the 15th to the 19th of October 2007 in Bamako, Mali.

### **B- Collection of information and Supervision Plan**

The team included:

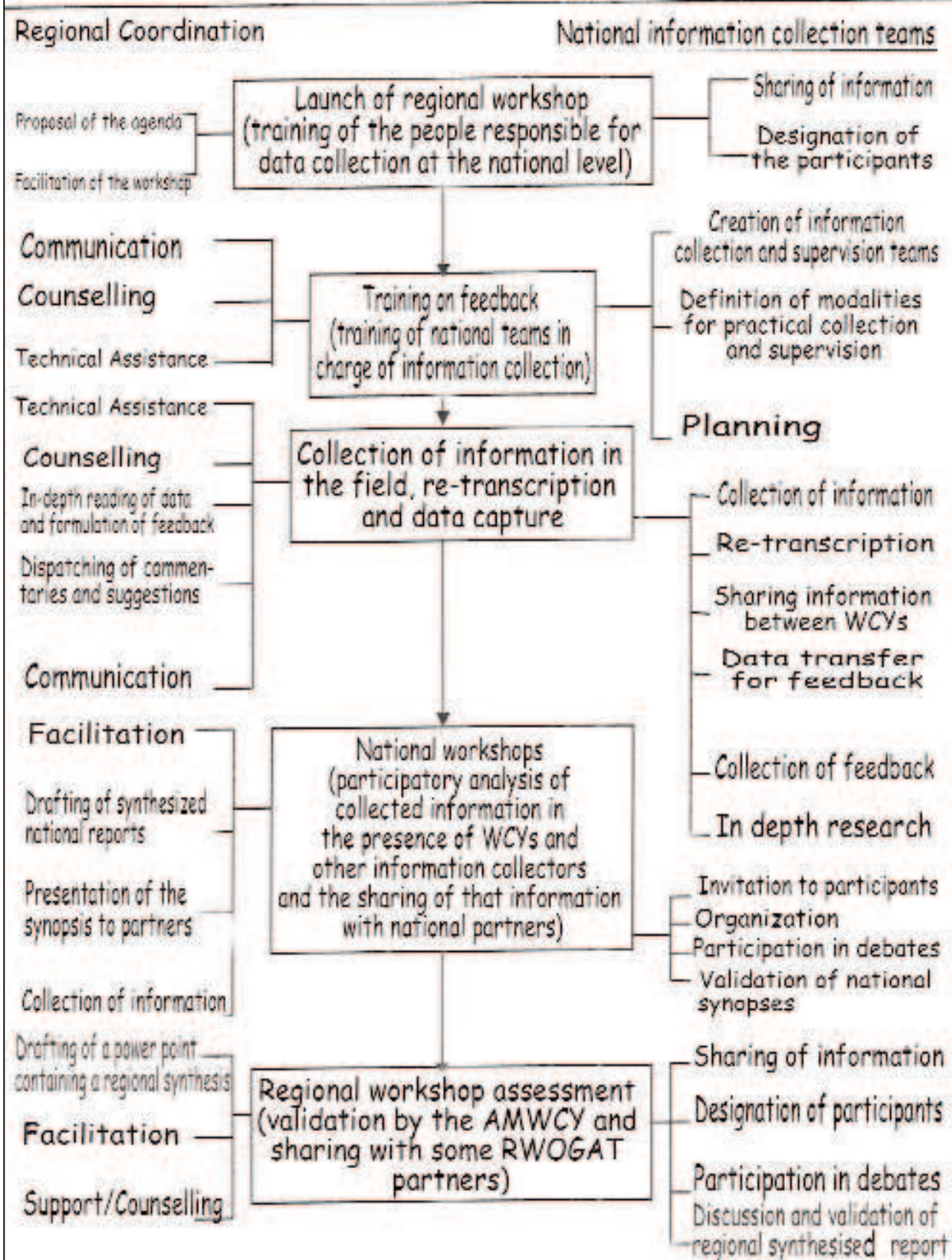
- At the national level (1) focal points of national teams of collection.

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<sup>3</sup> *This initiative was inspired by an experience of the "Most Significant Change - MSC" led in 2006, in collaboration with Plan in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.*

- Two facilitators (a socio-anthropologist and an AMWCY coordinator) who went from one country to another during the national workshops.
- One AMWCY assistant supported by the personnel of ENDA in Dakar. Another French "distant assistant", was in charge of the report follow-up.

Table detailing the process of the project's implementation



## C- Information collectors

It was determined that in each country, information would be collected from five villages and five cities (chosen in a systematic manner for each national team of collection) and by contacting the following information collectors:

- WCYs themselves.
- Other children, not WCYs, who lived or who are living in the same situations.
- Community (parents, employers/trainers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, transporters, etc.).
- Partners of WCY, the authorities and other actors who work on the issues of early migration and child trafficking.

**Table 1: Composition of the information collectors from whom the information was collected and/or validated**

Collection Phase Number of information collectors in Each country						Total
	Benin	Burkina Faso	Ivory Coast	Mali	Niger	
<b>Phase of collection of information in the field</b>						
Children and youth not WCYs (girls and boys)	78	37	17	21	66	219
Children and youth WCY (girls and boys)	76	20	13	11	10	130
Other information collectors	13	11	04	19	94	141
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>490</b>
Participants at national workshops	26	21	21	21	26	115
<b>Gand total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>605</b>

## D- Places where information was collected



Map of the African sub-region indicating towns in which information was collected

### Benin

- ◆ Abomey-town + 4 villages: Gnizinta, Zizounmè, Hlouinhouin and Houngoudo
- ◆ Cotonou: 3 districts in town: Sainte Rita, Fifadji and Gbogbanou
- ◆ Lac- 4 Villages: Sô-Tchanhoué, Vekky, Ganvié and Sô- Ava
- ◆ Zinvié- 3 Villages: Zoungomey, Dokomey and Gbodjè-Nougo
- ◆ Covè-town + 2 Villages: Houéton and houéyiho
- ◆ Ouidah-town + 3 Villages: Kpahou, Djonké and Gbèna
- ◆ Porto Novo-town + 4 Villages: Wando, Sakété, Mèdédjonou and Atakè

### Burkina Faso

- ◆ Ouagadougou-town + 4 surrounding Villages: Zagtouli, Pabré, Gampele and Bassinko
- ◆ Gaoua: 4 Villages / Koudougou: 4 Villages / Koupela: 4 Villages / Tougan: 4 Villages



**Collection of information in Benin**



**National Workshop and definition of concepts in Burkina Faso**

**Ivory Coast**

- ◆ **Aboisso** - 3 districts: Skroua, Commerce and Belle ville / Bonoua: 3 districts: Brounoukro, Koumassi and Bégénri + 1 Village: Samo/
- ◆ **Grand-Bassam**: 3 districts: Congo, Oddos, Marché and Pharé, 1 Village: Bassam
- ◆ **Korhogo**: 1 district / Bouaké: 1 district



**National Workshop on Analysis and Information Collection in Ivory Coast**

**Mali**

- ◆ **Bamako**: Ouolofobougou + 1 external Village: Samè
- ◆ **Koulikoro-town** + 1 Village: Mafèya / Mopti-town + 1 Village: Bankass / Sikasso-town + 1 Village: Herèmakono / Ségou-town + 1 Village: Sacoïba



**Workshop in Mali**

Niger

- ◆ **Konni** - 2 districts/ Dosso-town + 2 Villages: Franday and Koira-Zéno
- ◆ **Gaya** - 2 districts in town + 1 Village: Tarra / **Makalondi**- 1 district in town + 1 Village (Oufouanou)
- ◆ **Malbaza** - 1 Village / **Maradi** - 2 Villages



*Note: number of places for information collection, as well as number of information collectors for each country, went beyond the initial planning*

## E- The Linguistic Approach

In the course of this research, the ethno-linguistic approach imposed itself as a necessity in order to encompass, as objectively as possible, the different perceptions of the phenomena of early migration and child trafficking<sup>5</sup>.

During the national workshops, in order to encourage people to speak about the realities of their lives as they perceive them, and to encourage them to express themselves openly, facilitators of this research, asked the participants to find out into their original languages the words that they use to describe the concepts, "migration - trafficking - exploitation - abuse" and to translate in French the sense of those words.

In total, 13 languages were used: **Fon and Mahi** from Benin, **Mooré and Dioula** from Burkina Faso, **Dioula and Baoulé** from Ivory Coast, **Bamanan and Songhrai** from Mali, **Zarma and Haoussa** from Niger

During the workshop held in Bamako, Mali, some WCYs from other African countries, added their own languages: **Soussou** from Guinea Conakry, **Wolof** from Senegal and **Ewe** from Togo.

## F- Assessment

### *Did this WCYs' research rise to the challenge?*

Yes, in view of the quantity and the pertinence of the information collected and analyzed by a large number (145) of WCY and partners. Yes, if we consider, in spite of all the difficulties, the capacity of AWCY to get organized for a totally new exercise and to get through. Yes towards the WCYs formative process, as well as towards the internal reflection involving "friends"<sup>5</sup>.

The difficulties were uncountable and of different nature:

- Insufficient amount of time (5 months, while 8 would have been a minimum) and inappropriate timing (rainy season); the modest means of WCY; information collectors' initial distrust that has been overcome, thanks to the interviewers' patient dialogue and persuasion.

---

<sup>4</sup> Considering the recent media coverage about African migration to Europe, collectors of information have the tendency to repeat hostile slogans about migration, omitting the socio-cultural and sub-regional realities of migrations by children and youth (cultural acceptance, migration as a strategy of survival, etc..)

<sup>5</sup> Numerous alliances were established during this research, which, with so much "willingness", supported the WCY in their efforts.

- Technical problems (gathering and data capture); the difficulties for the children and youth with little or no schooling to generate written documents.
- Unexpected difficulties that WCY encountered in explaining their actions and daily behaviors, which had an impact - the greatest impact, according to the consultant.
- The fact that the WCY were the "interviewers", and the influence that could have had on their responses.

These difficulties were true learning experiences and will help to reinforce the future "research exercises" of the AMWCY.

In the presentation of their results, the editors chose to privilege a large number of the "true voices" of the people interviewed, an essential dimension of research in order to have the reader become intimately acquainted with people's stories, and to be able to judge for her/himself the importance of the research.



## II - MAIN RESULTS

### A- Concepts of migration, trafficking, exploitation and abuse

#### A1 - (Table 2) Display of terms or expressions used by linguistic groups and countries

Language	Migration	Trafficking	Exploitation	Abuse
Fon (Benin)	<i>E Gosin</i> <i>Gletoxome</i> <i>Boyi Tô</i> <i>Hunnukun Me</i> "leaving the village for the city"	<i>Me Sisa Do</i> <i>Togudo</i> "selling someone outside the country" (referring to the slave trade period)	<i>Medon Zan</i> "treating someone according to one's wishes, regardless of any contract"	<i>Ya Donu Me</i> "mistreating someone"
Mahi (Benin)	<i>Ego yin adage</i> <i>game boyi to</i> <i>hunnukun me</i> "leaving the village for the city"	<i>Mexi xo</i> "buying someone"	<i>Me zizan vonu</i> "making somebody work for nothing"	<i>Ya doni me</i> "mistreating someone"
Mooré (Burkina Faso)	<i>Koamb yiibu</i> "children who leave home in order to find a better existence and some money"	<i>Leebgo</i> "using children as merchandise" ( <i>Leebda</i> = "skilled in business")	<i>Koamb Ziim</i> <i>Gnumbu</i> "sucking the children's blood"	<i>Namsgo</i> "mistreating children, making them suffer" <i>Koamb-Zan-Winga</i> "treating children very badly"
Dioula (Burkina + Ivory Coast)	<i>Tunga</i> "to set off for adventure" <i>M'béta N'yéré</i> <i>Gnini</i> (I. Coast) "to go searching for themselves, to set off for adventure, to go looking for a better existence and for money"	<i>Demsé-Djago</i> "the selling of children" A new word in the Dioula of Burkina Faso <i>Demsé Féré</i> (I. Coast) "the selling of children" <i>Demsé Tounouna</i> the word is old and means "a lost or stolen child"	<i>Tognoni</i> (Burkina + I. Coast) "intensive work without any compensation"	<i>Toroni</i> is composed of two parts: Ni: "soul" and Toro: "to mistreat" in Dioula from Ivory Coast. Thus "to make the soul suffer, to mistreat children" in the sense of inflicting pain".

Language	Migration	Trafficking	Exploitation	Abuse
Baoulé (Ivory Coast)	<i>M'kô kundê</i> <i>Mi Wun</i> "to search for a better life"	<i>Bakamu</i> <i>Bea Té Ndê</i> "selling children"	<i>Bakamu</i> <i>Begnénéné</i> or <i>oulé Ndé</i> "working hard without getting any compensation"	<i>Bakamu</i> <i>Béouné</i> gnénéné or <i>oulé Ndé</i> "being hit, experiencing physical mistreatment"
Bamana (Mali)	<i>Kabo</i> "to leave" <i>Boli</i> "to run away" <i>Tama</i> "to walk, to travel" <i>Tunga</i> "to discover the world" <i>Kabo Kata</i> <i>Tungana</i> "he left to set off for adventure, migration"	<i>Demsé Féré/Djago</i> "to sell children" <i>Gnankata</i> - the word is used to frighten children by saying to them "if you leave, you will find <i>Gnankata</i> " that is to say "the consequences and the suffering" that one can encounter when speaking of migration. "Also, being at the mercy of anybody" <i>Djogna</i> "Slavery"	<i>Binkanni Ika</i> "cutting off the head", that is to say to refuse to pay (all) the salary to those who work for you. Also, "to make a human sacrifice in order to obtain money or an electoral result, to take advantage of a child's ignorance"	<i>Minéko</i> <i>Jukuya</i> "to make children work very hard, to do every possible wicked and bad things to them (inhuman treatment)"
Songhraï (Mali)	<i>Fâtta</i> "to set off" for migration	<i>Toroo</i> "the consequences and difficulties encountered while in migration": suffering and mistreatment. According to some people: "torturing and destroying children's bodies"	<i>Kam Boroga</i> "making children work all day long and refusing to pay, if not, all, part of their salary" <i>Kamaiga</i> "the same as <i>Binkanni</i> (above: in column exploitation)"	<i>Toroo</i> "being faced with difficulties in the city" (the fact that anything can be done to the child: mistreatment, insults and nose punching)

Language	Migration	Trafficking	Exploitation	Abuse
Haoussa (Niger)	<i>Yawa-dendi</i> "gone to look for money" "To make a journey through West Africa"	<i>Suhurin Yara</i> "a person who cheats and gets hold of children in an illegal way"	<i>Kontataw</i> "to put a child in a harsh working environment in which he/she does not eat well, cannot rest and is not even paid". This child is only obeying orders.	<i>Musgunawa</i> "beating a child, insulting him/her or giving him/her nothing to eat"
Zarma (Niger)	<i>Akoy Keki</i> "gone to look for money within the country" <i>Yamma</i> "gone to look for money outside the country and towards Western Niger" <i>Kouroumi</i> "gone to look for money in Ghana"	<i>Sarandi</i> "someone who breaks (the law)" <i>Doundoumandi</i> "taking a child out of her/his home, through bad conditions. To the children, this person has broken the law" <i>Naru</i> "to leave one's country"	<i>Potol</i> "to put a child in a harsh working environment in which he/she does not eat well, cannot rest and is not even paid." <i>Potol</i> can also be translated by "this child should obey orders given by someone who does not pay her/him"	<i>Tabandi</i> "beating up a child, insulting him or giving him/her nothing to eat"
Sousou (Guinea Conakry)	<i>Siga katadé gnama néma</i> "trying to earn one's living somewhere else"	<i>Doumédi khanifé gnama néma</i> "taking a child out of her/his home, then mistreat her/him"	<i>Doumédi Rawolfe agna khira</i> making children work in bad conditions"	<i>Dimédi ma soukhi agna khira</i> "khira "not taking care of a child properly": punishments, mistreatment, hunger, lack of rest..."

Language	Migration	Trafficking	Exploitation	Abuse
Wolof (Sénégal)	<i>Demna Taax</i> "leaving the village for the city" <i>Touki</i> "leaving one's country for another"	<i>Jay nit</i> "selling a person"	<i>Liggeey lo nit ki te do ko fey lu ko diar</i> "making someone work, using her/his skills without paying her/ him"	<i>Torokhal nit ki</i> "hitting, insulting someone"
Ewe (Togo)	<i>Djodjo le ape yi duta</i> "leaving the village you belong to and go to a foreign country in order to find a better welfare"	<i>Devi si TsaTsa</i> "children trade"	<i>Ame novi zazan yakameto</i> "exploiting another human being"	<i>Efu fiofio Ame novi</i> "hitting and exploiting a child"

## A2- Explanation of the concepts

In those 12 languages, there is a contrast between familiar concepts and unknown terms:

- "**Migration**": several terms are used, they express the idea of going somewhere else to look for money/ a better existence to be used once home. The destination could equally be the within or outside the country.
- "**Mistreatment**": to explain it, several words are used. They are known under several kinds of bad treatment and humiliation such as blows, injuries, privations, submission to all commands, hard work...
- "**Exploitation**": does not have a "literal" sense. To express it, two elements are conjugated: "mistreatment" and the fact of not "paying or rewarding" the child's efforts<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Note: During the regional workshop in Bamako, the WCY felt the need to explain the concept of exploitation as follows: "To make a child work for a long time, hard and excessively. Refusal to pay all or part of the salary agreed to. Not respecting the clauses of agreement or original contract (type or hardness of work and payment). Thus, to take advantage at most of the work of others (children) in order to make profits. Not allowing him/her to bloom (through WCYs' rights)".

- **"Trafficking"**: we could not find a key word issuing from those national languages to define it. The existing terms are often translated from the French (selling a child) in order to raise awareness. People mostly use terms referring to its consequences, when defining the word.

These results show that a large part of the terms (slogans) spread by the actors dealing with the struggle against "Child Trafficking", do not always have the "full score" of perceptions of some of the target population vis-à-vis these 4 basic concepts. Most of them have strongly criticized "migration" despite the fact that it is "admitted" in the different terms used, that it is referred to, as quest for "a better life". If we translate "selling of children" into the notion of trafficking, people will not understand it. The notion of "placement or fostering" is equally ignored, although it plays an important role in the lives of the populations. Fostering can be successful or it can turn into exploitation, or even into trafficking. Nevertheless, it seems we are ignoring it, as it was not "within the framework".

Therefore, referring to the Palermo Protocol does not exclude the fact that we are taking into account the uses and customs of those with whom we are dealing.



Interpretation of concepts in Niger

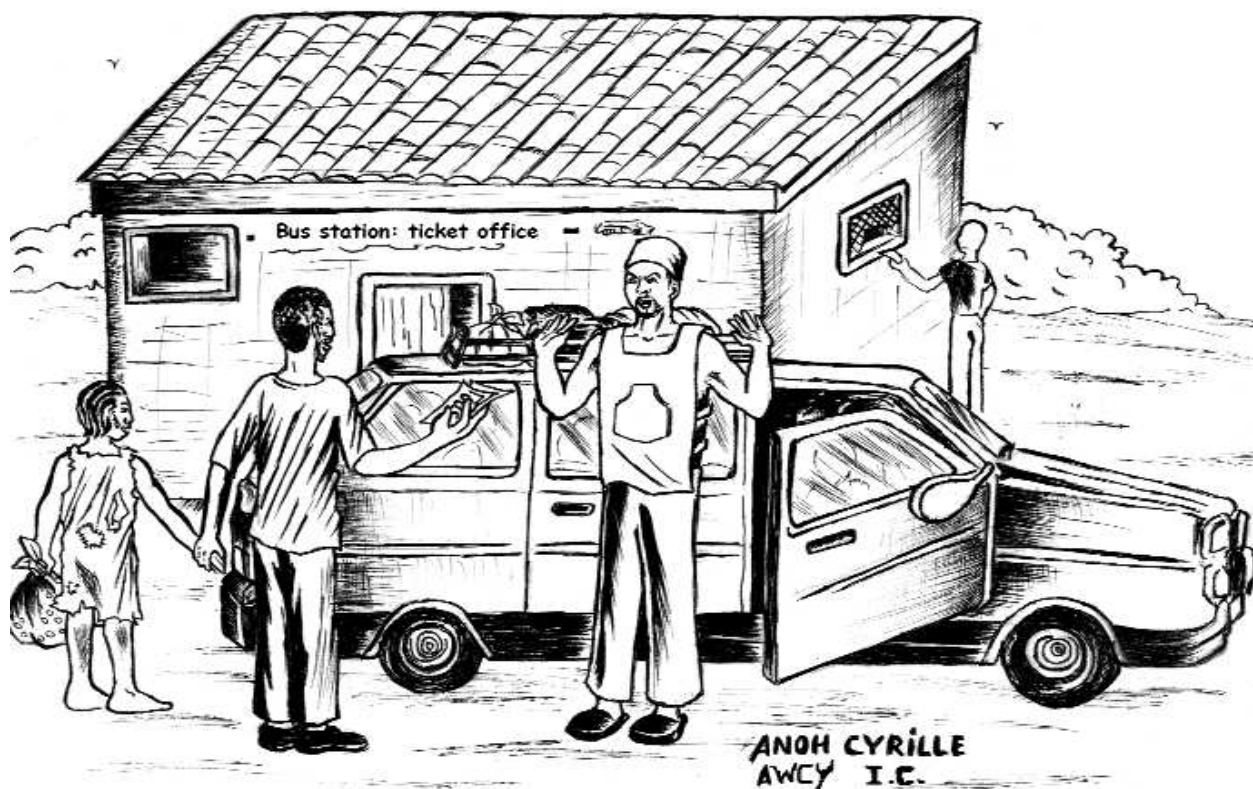
### **A3- WCYs and “early migration”**

The WCYs currently speak about the "struggle against early migration". But the idea of "early" does not really correspond to a birth date, which very often does not exist (officially) because of the lack of birth registrations. They refer, firstly, to the notion of "early" within the population.

In their practices, their manner of working, populations judge the "immaturity or the maturity" of the child, according to her/his physical force, experience and position within the family (including her/his ability to manage things, as well as her/his financial contribution), or still, the capacity to endure different situations (eventually migration). A "premature" child is "fit for learning" in a formal or Islamic school.

The "degree of preparation" for facing potential difficulties which the child could encounter during migration and in the destination zones, is thus taken into account.

Apart from this "maturity to face the risks", the WCYs also take into account the fact of being informed about what can be experienced, the capacity to establish good contacts: to know whom to contact and what to do when a problem turns up, the capacity of being able of negotiating "one's position", of foreseeing possible risks, but also of being creative, capable of protecting one's profits and of not remaining isolated.



## **B- Perception of migration by children, youth and relatives**

### **B1- The true lives of children and youth in their family environment**

#### **\* Children's words**

##### **- A child from Benin**

*"There are some parents who do not have the means to take care of their children and, in lieu of getting married to one woman, they prefer to get married to 3 or 4 and have many children. Therefore, they find themselves incapable of feeding their children and they send them to the city. And if someone proposes to be a foster parent to their children, they will immediately accept (...)"*

##### **- A youth from Burkina Faso**

*"(...) You know, my father had enrolled me in a school. But, when I had my CEP (first primary school certificate), he said that we were too many kids in the family going to school. As his means were scarce, he said he could only afford to pay school fees for a few of us. The rest of us should drop school and get training in order to learn a trade. It's sad to say, but when I left school, my father never found me a job. In the meantime, I went to Ouagadougou, the capital, to look for a job (...)"*

##### **- A girl about to wed (Aboisso), 15 years old, from Ivory Coast**

*"I was living with my parents, my younger brothers were attending school. I asked my father to enroll me at school, he refused. He would say that a woman's place is at home, not at school and that she should get married. So, each time I spoke about school, he beat me. One day, my mother decided to send me to another family for work. She could not do otherwise, because my father would keep bothering me (...)"*

##### **- A child from Mali**

*"What I have to say is that parents must really take care of their children. Money is the only reason that urges children to leave their villages and cities, even if they meet all sorts of difficulties. Nowadays, parents do not give a damn about their children".*

##### **- Girls from Niger**

*"In Maradi, girls suffer a lot. They do not have time to play. Boys play football, hide and seek (LANGA), traditional games. In any neighbourhood, You will never see two girls playing a game together, dancing together, clapping their hands, because they do not even have the time".*

**- Workshop in Ivory Coast (tradition carriers)**

*"We are forced to be tradition carriers. But for us, today's children, our parents and us do not have the same kind of life. So if we do not want to respect our traditions, we will be urged to set off for migration and some of us will never come back".*

**- Workshop in Benin**

*"With regard to our environment, we are subjected to unfairness, as soon as we are in conflict with adults. Even if they know we are telling the truth, it cannot be said, in any case, there will not be any justice, in order not to humiliate the elderly. That is the way our culture should be respected!"*

**- Workshop in Mali**

*"Working a lot and without any rest, we are always working in the fields (agriculture), without any compensation, because food and other needs of the family are already subsidized by the father. No economic support to satisfy one's own needs. In addition, we do not benefit from harvests".*

**\* Summary**

*In their family environment, children and youth complain about:*

- The lack of consideration and listening, preventing them from speaking, and break of dialogue with their parents (especially with the father).
- An education which is too rigid, including corporal punishment, insults, food hardships and bad treatment, like punishments and bad methods of apprenticeship.
- Overloading and painful work at home: doing the work of both themselves and their parents' as well
- Discrimination, unequal treatment, inequitable sharing of the harvested products and of the household tasks (notably initiatives imposed by a stepmother).
- The duty to be exclusively at the parents' and the community's disposal, lack of freedom and time for themselves, the obligation to do embarrassing things, generally those which adults are reluctant to do.
- The consequences of sanctions in case of error or insubordination.
- The marital tensions, separations, divorces and deaths of parents which profoundly affect their stability.

\* *Comments*■ *Education & Cultural and Traditional Conceptions of the Child*

The distribution of social roles, places the child at the bottom of the social scale, to the point that the child is considered as the "social junior". Patriarchy, as dominant social system, grants to the father the dominating place in the family. He is the ultimate representative of the authority within the family, and plays a leader's role. Whereas the mother is subordinated to the father; one of her roles is to make sure that the children obey and respect their father.

A "well-educated" child is a child who puts himself in the service of his parents and adheres to whatever decisions they make. He assists her/his parents, helps them with fieldwork and carries out the small jobs necessary to the maintenance of the house. But the consequences of these obligations leave little space for the realization of her/his personal aspirations of children and the spare time necessary for her/his development and blooming. Moreover, she/he is sometimes very severely punished when making a mistake or do not respond exactly to of her/his parents' expectations or other people's wishes.

Children's and youth's testimonies highlight the tradition of a rigorous and severe education which includes physical and psychological violence. These violent acts and mistreatments, of which some of them are victims, tend to encourage departure and "migration". Their wish is to escape from relationships of submission and subordination established in the group to which they belong. Children say they want freedom, but as they live within their family, they must limit themselves to the rules of life established within the family, the group and the community.

These rules remain motionless and in many situations, a dissatisfaction on both sides is expressed (cf. section B4 perception of parents). If we can admit the preservation of a hierarchy based on "age groups", and on diverse "groups" (children, youth, women, men, elderly) with their specific roles, it seems evident that these articulations have to evolve and that the same condition of collective success (and of development) lies in a dynamic expression of each of the constituents and of a full and complete dialogue between them. A similar dialogue including children and adolescents is possible and even necessary for their blooming and the village as well<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>*In certain cases, this dialog develops positively when children take the initiative, testimonies show that parents tend to encourage them (cf. II-C5).*

## 1) Hardness of the work and its little profitable character

Children say that their wish is to have the blessing of their parents (the adults) and to avoid being cursed each time. This search for the blessing of their parents appears as the daily challenge for them to the detriment of their financial concerns. For example, youth living in villages, say that when they turn 13, or 15 years old, they are faced with several financial problems, such as "taking part into their friends' celebrations (parties, etc.), to possess equipment which will allow them to join their friends circle. But they say that all their time is dedicated to family services, which families do not take their concerns into account. They say that they scarcely benefit from the financial outputs of their services and sometimes, even some of their aspirations are considered as pre- delinquency (dating girls, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, etc.).

Fathers, often think that they are not beholden to their children because they are already taking care of their everyday needs (food, equipment, water, soap, etc.). But children take these services for granted (father's duty).

Village children are no longer "isolated from the world", because flows of information get to them from the city (and beyond - from the world media) and their wish is to be able to live normally like anybody else (be like the others). This desire implies a certain degree of "consumption" difficult to implement within a context where "money is lacking".



## B2- In search of a "better life"

### \* Children's words

#### - Discussion group of WCYs from Niger

*"Some children will say that they do not wish to stay at home. Some others will say that they have had enough of fieldwork; some of them say that the city way of life is more pleasant than the village's life (...) Some of them were sent to the cities by their parents".*

#### - A youth from Burkina Faso

*"For me, poverty is the main problem, once the fields have been ploughed, and after the crop has been harvested, we have nothing to do and the only thing we have in mind, is to go downtown. (...)*

*What kind of situations do the children encounter in their original locations?*

*- Difficult situation, food problems...*

*- Lack of means, no activities;*

*- Lack of means, we would like to get things we can't afford;*

*- Lack of means of parents, working with parents is too tough".*

#### - A girl from Ivory Coast

*"We are Xenoufos (...) My brothers and I, we fled the village because we had to through that witchcraft practice, food conditions were bad, rural work all through the day, and so on... But our eldest brother was forced to stay to work instead; and to represent us in the village in order to ward off witchcraft from the village people".*

#### - A 13 year-old child from Burkina Faso

*"As I heard the other children say they went to Mangodara (city famous for its fruit trade) and came back with a bicycle, that's when I decided I'll do exactly the same.*

#### - Workshop in Mali: a young working girl

*"For me, "better life" means getting consumption goods you would never get when staying in your village. Children living in villages also go downtown in order to get good meals to eat. In their villages, they always eat the same kind of food, and that's not good. My living conditions are tough, but at least, I earn 500 cfa a day, a sum that I would never get within 3 months, if I stayed home".*

#### - A Zinvié boy from Benin

*"Last January/February, two children left their village, although their parents never forced them. For them, they were just imitating children when going away, come back with a new way of behaving and dressing. Riding their motorcycles, they can easily move from one place to another. They do not depend on their parents anymore. The other children get envious when they come across them".*

**- Discussion group of WCYs from Niger**

*"In the village now, in order to marry, the dowry should follow the trend which is in progress in the cities. That is the reason why if one marries within this year, this new trend has to be brought over to the village (clothes, equipment, etc.). It is a sort of a competition which encourages parents to send their children to the city to work, in order to be able to face these expenses for the marriage. These children do not get any salary at the end of the month. Their salary is shared between the two mothers concerned".*

**- A 14 year-old child from Mali**

*"Today, my situation has improved because I was able to purchase one ox and some sheep. Have I stayed in my village, I wouldn't have been able to get this livestock. According to the Bamana from Mali "sitting around doing nothing, won't bring you wealth".*

**- Workshop in Niger**

*"When you turn 17 years old, that's the age when you liable to get married, if you are a native from the village. So when you're in between 14 and 15, you must leave your village to find work in order to get money and come back. It is true indeed, parents subsidize the first marriage, but if you do not make the effort, yourself, to purchase 1 or 2 oxen at least, they will not help you".*

**- A child from Mali**

*"When I heard some of my friends say that it could take a full month to unload a boat, I thought that they were fooling me. So, I left with all my savings in order to eyewitness their story".*

**- A WCY from Koudougou during a workshop in Burkina Faso**

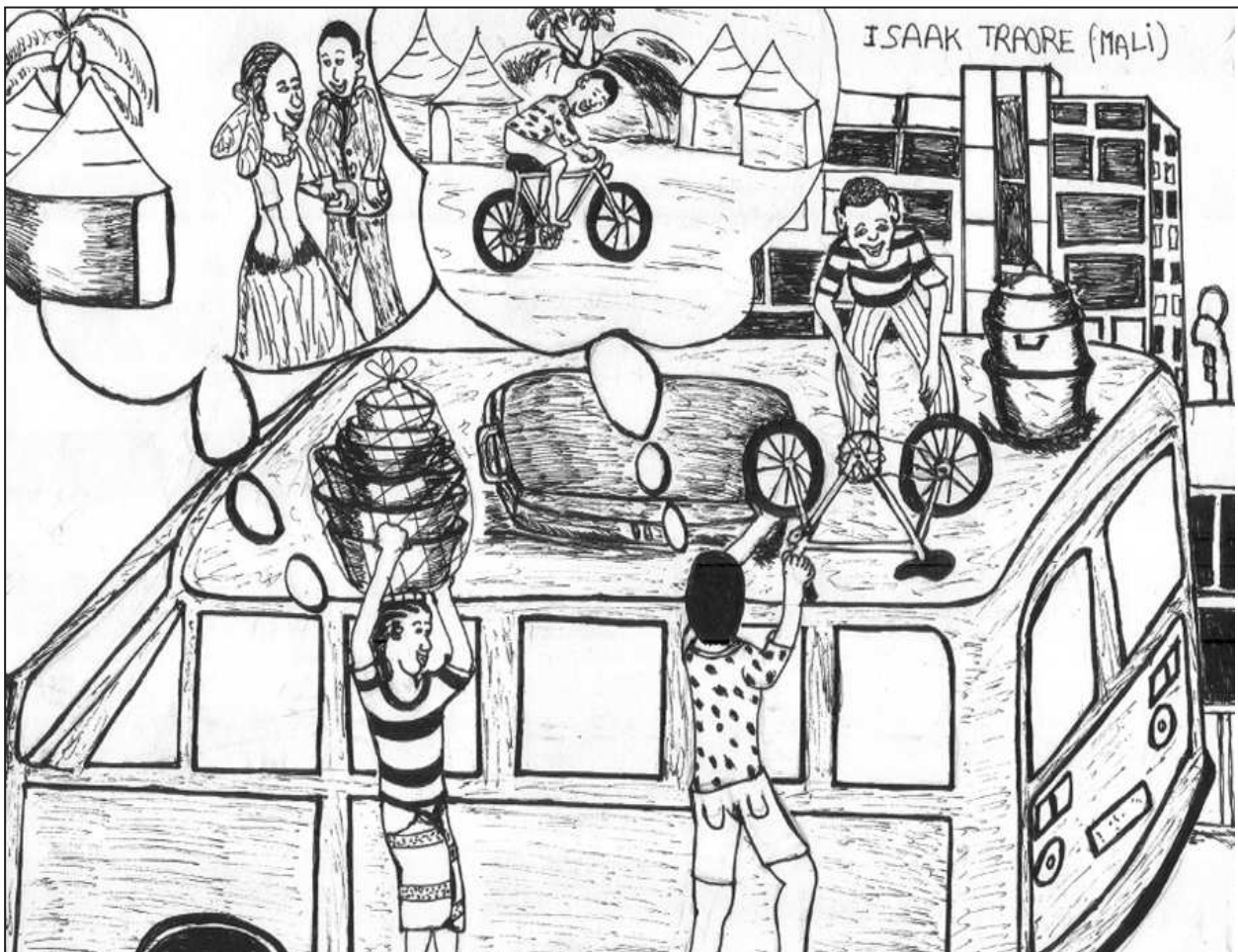
*"In Burkina Faso, If you are born and grow up in a village, you can't prove your manhood till you get to Ivory Coast. If you don't, you'll be made fun of, from those who've already been there".*

**- Workshop in Ivory Coast**

*"School education is insufficient, even non-existent, in some places, especially in rural areas where there's a lack of means. As for me, after attending primary school, I had to move to another city (15 kms from my village) to carry on with my studies".*

**- A child from Mali**

*"There are some children who go through a training to learn a job. But difficulties occur when they don't meet the right employer. Otherwise, migration is a good thing if you meet the right employer to work with".*



### \* Summary

**For children and youth, the perspective of migration enables them to:**

- Escape the realities of their environment (social, cultural, political, economic, physical, etc.),
- Live in hopes of getting the financial support that they need to face the challenges of their time (the purchase of a motorcycle or a radio),
- Find subsidies for their projects (dowry for marriage, school stationeries),
- Be granted social respect due to "the children who left their villages in search of a better life in the city",
- Gain experience and knowledge (they would not get while staying in their villages)

*\* Comments*

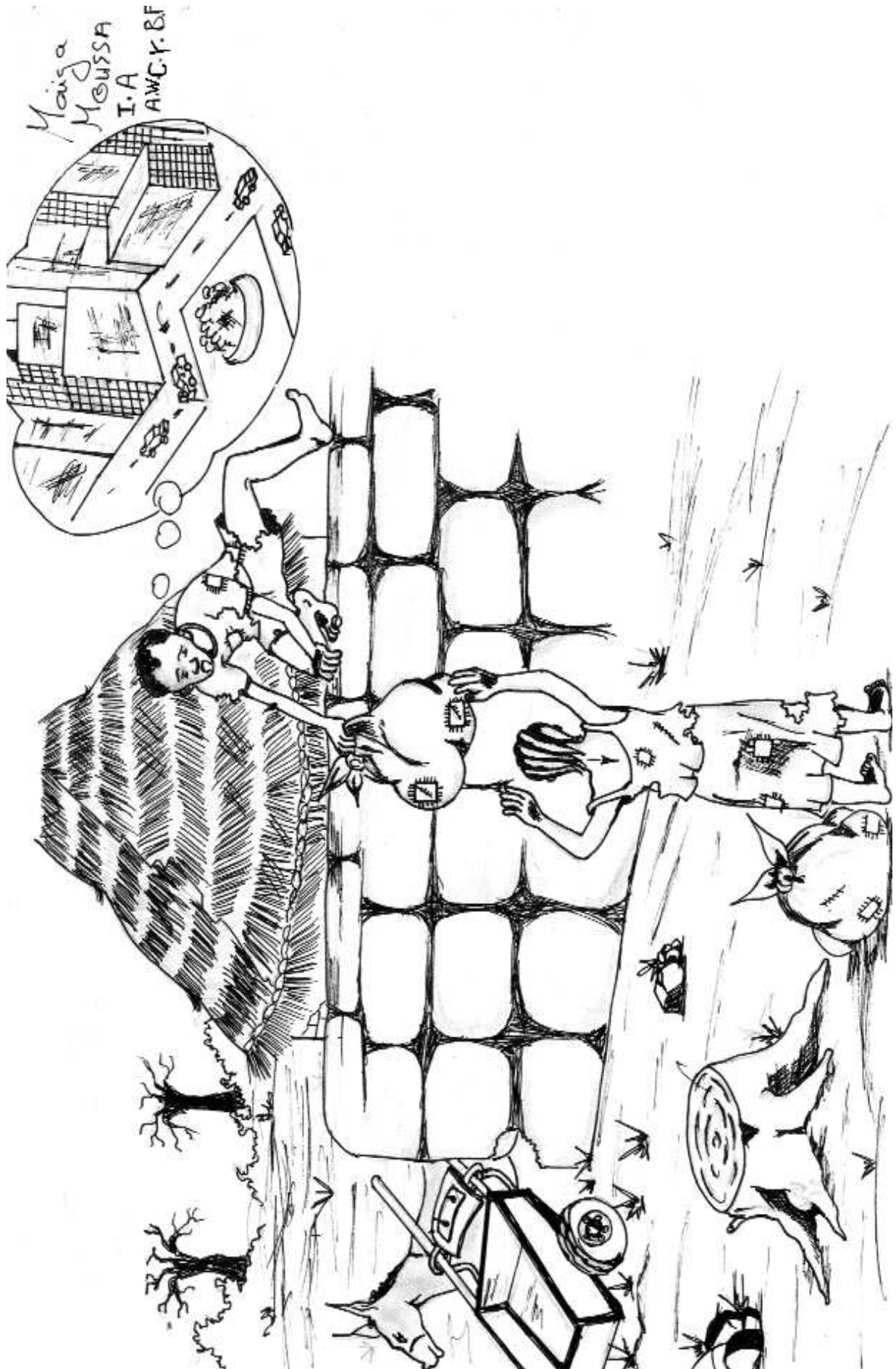
A confusion surely exists between "voluntary migration" through children's will and "forced migration" mainly through parents' will, and very often, through the intervention of a third person. But these two phenomena have in reality very different and distinct origins and modes, even if they can both result from a child's exploitation situation. Responsibilities involved in either case, are not the same.

There is a general tendency which tends to assimilate early and voluntary migration to forced departures of which children are victims. Traffickers and parents are designated as the only ones responsible for the migration of children and youth, and all the more of their exploitation.

But no one takes into account the children's and youth's words, because if one takes the time to talk to them and to listen to their real personal and individual motivations, one will discover that parents and traffickers are not always responsible for children's departures and that a difference should be made between the desire to leave and the obligation to leave one's village.

The words the WCYs shared within the framework of this research make us understand that reality is more complicated than previously thought; and that a great number of children and youth decided for themselves, and even in secret, to set off for migration for several reasons. Indeed, it is difficult to prevent children from leaving their village if such is their will. We came to the conclusion that raising awareness towards parents and children on the risks and opportunities of which they are the object (on behalf of go-betweens), is not enough. We have to understand that, as long as no alternative to migration is proposed, children will keep on leaving their villages.

Although it is justifiable that people in charge of child welfare have a "natural" tendency to think that adults are the only ones responsible for the misfortune of the children, it is necessary to refine analyses, and "it is necessary to have a good understanding, in order to act properly" when it comes to forced and voluntary migration. Parents have to be convinced, and alternatives have to be found. Children and adolescents' role as actors of migration should be acknowledged. Therefore, they should be given appropriate means to look for and to find alternatives.



## **B3- Children's ordeal while migrating**

### **\* Children's words**

#### **- A girl from Benin**

*"In Cotonou, I used to sell cakes and fresh water from 7 am to 6pm. I would return home exhausted, and there I would do the household chores, sometimes I was sleepy. In the house where I lived, the woman would beat me brutally. In my family, no one hits with a spatula nor pulls your ears. This woman, who was my tutor, when she was angry, she would do all those bad things to me (things which were prohibited in my family)".*

#### **- A young girl from Benin**

*"I was placed in the house of a rich Muslim man who was supposed to be my employer. This man made me sell water, ice cream, bissap (local sweet drink). That man also had a pepper mill which needed to be activated. These different activities were planned according to a certain schedule. There was a time for selling in the streets and another for the pepper mill, another for apprenticeship in the employer's workshop. That man had a problem: he would beat me severely. Even for little mistakes, he would tie me, beat me and left me tied up until the next day. I had to run away".*

#### **- A boy from Burkina Faso**

*"I worked in Ouagadougou for someone for 8 months, without being paid. Anytime I would ask him to give me my salary, he would refuse. He did not want to give me my money. I did not even have the money for the trip back home. I was obligated to go out and sell water for 10 francs cfa with a rickshaw, in order to get money for the trip back home".*

#### **- A girl from Ivory coast**

*"Only the father liked me and each time he saw me he gave me some money. I would refuse, but he would force me to take it. This man was in love with me. We went out on the sly until I became pregnant. When I told him I was pregnant, he denied it and got me out of his house. I slept in the streets and then I decided to have an abortion. I took a medicine and when I woke up I was in a health centre, with my mother by my side".*

#### **- A young 13 year-old girl from Mali**

*"I came from San, precisely from N. to work in Bamako; the son of my employer raped me. When I told my employer about it, she did not even listen to me. Now I am pregnant because of him. My employer didn't have any better idea than kicking me out. I met an elder girl who already knew the Association of Working Children and Youth; some members of the Association and myself went to see my employer for her to pay my money.*

*In front of the authorities, her son acknowledged that he was responsible for my pregnancy. Thus, they were forced to pay my consultation bills as well as my medicines. My main concern is: because I am only 13 years old, I might have a complicated delivery".*

**- Discussions with a group of WCYs from Niger**

*"Here is a problem: suppose that he is a new child who migrates. If you leave and you don't even know where you're going to be sleeping, it will be very difficult for you,*

*1- There will not be a place for you where to sleep.*

*2- You will also have problems to find a place where to wash*

*3- There will not be any one to look after you when you are sick*

*You will find out, some children sleeping in the streets, around the garbage, these are problems that I eye witnessed. If you set off for migration and you do not have a destination, if you do not have someone to welcome you, you will surely suffer. You might end up squatting a (car) station in which many thieves operate".*

**- A child from Niger in exile in Burkina Faso**

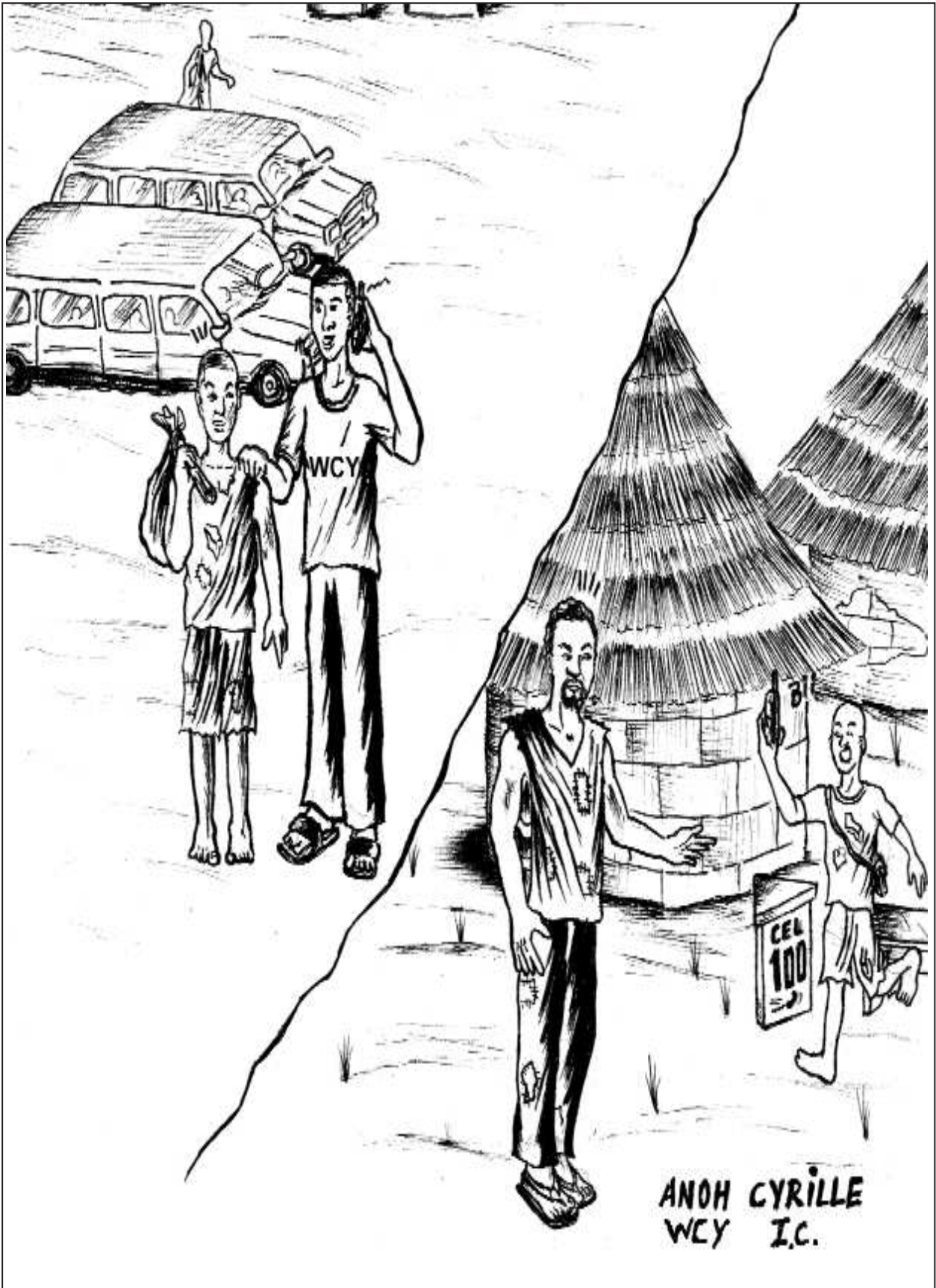
*"The person whom I worked for and I agreed on a salary of 125,000 F cfa per year. (...) After I worked for him, he refused to pay me. So I summoned him to the police station. When we got there, the police told me that I was a foreigner and that in Burkina Faso, foreigners do not summon natives to the police. That's when they told me that I would never get my money".*

**- Workshop in Niger**

*"2 of my friends worked in a cotton field for a whole year without any salary. One day, they asked their employer to be paid. The employer agreed, he gave them one of his cows to sell in order to get cash to pay them. Then, the employer gathered the people of the village to let them know that two of his workers had stolen one of his animals. People started chasing up the children. One was beaten to death and the other one, luckily escaped (...)"*

**- Workshop in Benin**

*"I'm going to talk about things you already know. Gabonese people are aware of it and even express disagreement. 5 year-old dirty children from Benin, are seated behind tables displaying goods. Most often, their hair and teeth are dirty. For example, you can see them with a 50 Fcfa doughnut in hand, sleepy but yelling at the passers-by: "Come on! Buy this comb, it costs 50F cfa!". In the meantime, the tutor (a woman) is seated in the back. Sometimes, when passing by, I break down in tears when I see those children. Some other times, I shout at the tutors in the distance "look at the child, he's sleeping!". Sometimes, the Gabonese television channel broadcasts pictures of those women from Benin. Some children even die. It really hurts and that damages our country's reputation".*



\* *Summary*

In places where children set off for migration, they say they are victims of:

**- Rights Violations**

Migration is generally synonymic of aggression, breach of trust, lack of assistance, blackmail, of arbitrary arrests, of job precariousness, accommodation problems, sexual abuse, etc.. We also have numerous testimonies of young migrants on the refusals to pay all or any of the agreed salary, to respect the clauses of agreement or preliminary contract (fixing the type, the duration and the payment corresponding to the work in question). Many accounts show that girls are victims of sexual abuse in migratory areas.

**- Isolation and intensification of their Vulnerability**

Several children and youth testimonies highlight situations of loss of citizenship and thus the lack of appeal to the services of protection, especially when the child or the young migrant undergoes unfavourable prejudices, especially towards foreigners. The child is left by himself when problems occur, he can only rely on his friends undergoing the same conditions, or on some people's goodwill.

Note: If the child's expectations regarding money, vocational training, or schooling are not met, he will also mention "treachery" and mistreatment.

\* *"Leaving or staying in the village?": comments*

"Leaving or staying in the village?" That is the question to which all children, one day or another, will ask to themselves. They are, from then on, brought to proceed to a comparative evaluation of the advantages of both these decisions.

The choice is always difficult for them, as far as:

- They seldom have the means to compare, and thus to evaluate fairly, the situation that presents the best advantages and which is the most interesting for them (they only have little or distorted information on migration).

- They tend to think that migration remains the most profitable solution and offers the best prospects.

- They generally have a very strong desire to extricate themselves from their original environment, a curiosity which carries them to want to discover things that they do not have at home (television, information, electricity, access to culture, education, training...) but above all, a great need to exist and a thirst for social gratitude and financial independence.

In their argument, children often say: *“Here I am mistreated, in my village as well, but at least I will earn something”*.

It means that the conditions of existence in the places of migration, are not taken into consideration, only the profits are. These conditions might be worse than the ones in the village, but if profits are there, they will "manage to deal with it" until the day when they get enough savings.

Furthermore, they estimate the suffering they will go through in the migration zones and the profits they will make. Generally, they say to themselves that in the village, they are mistreated by their own parents without being respected, neither do they earn money, while in the migration zones they are mistreated by someone else, but they earn a little more money. "Here, in my village, I am mistreated, somewhere else also, but at least I will earn something." Their dream is to get the same advantages as the city children, to buy equipment and to save up.

Their desire to escape their fate, makes them bolder and prevents them from considering the harshness of situations they have never been through. They tend to over-estimate their capacities of endurance and to underestimate the difficulties of their undertaking. "I know I will meet difficulties, but I am able to overcome them (...) I know that I got myself ready for it (...) If I go back to my parents and tell them about my suffering, they will ask me to go back, saying that everybody has already been through that experience before" *To stay in the village means giving up hope for a change in one's life, whereas departure can hold out hope that the child will be able to start a new life.*

But they are far from imagining that the isolation and the solitude in which migration places them, will make them sometimes more vulnerable than they have ever been. *If we admit that that children will continue taking the decision to leave, "how to reduce" this vulnerability, becomes the crucial question.*

## **B-4 Perceptions of migration and child trafficking through parents and communities**

### **\* Children's and adults' words**

#### **- Discussion group from Benin**

*"Parents living in villages want their children to bloom. But they do not have the means. They do not have the financial means to educate their children to the full. That is why they will do all that is within their power to foster the child to someone else, living in hope that the child will get money (...). Parents are responsible, to a great extent, for their children's early migration. They believe that by sending their children to the city, the latter will send them money for food".*

#### **- A traditional Chief in Burkina Faso**

*"We do not get any support; and especially when there's no rain, things are difficult, so we cannot sit around watching our situation getting worse; if children leave their villages for the city for work, this is mainly due to poverty. (...) Some children do not want to stay because they do not want to plough the land, so they look for jobs in order to survive".*

#### **- A mother from Mali**

*"It's ok if children (girls) leave their villages, because if they don't go to other places, they won't learn anything about life. You see, myself, I worked for 2 years in a house in Bamako. To tell you the truth, I've never had any problems. The piece of advice I can give to these children (girls) when they come to the city, is to be careful about boys. They should not steal and should take their work seriously".*

#### **- A father from Mali**

*"I am 60 years old. Children' migration is due to poverty (drought, lack of rain, no food). This situation obviously urges all the children to set off for migration. Generally speaking, when they get to the city, they are faced with two situations. It all depends on the people they meet: bad company can lead to serious consequences, whereas good company can be advantageous. This stands for both boys and girls. Today's migration is different from the past, because of changes in our society, through the drift of customs. A noticeable difference, even on the parent's side".*

#### **- A father from Niger**

*"It is the parents themselves who urge children to go to the city to find by themselves what it's like or to look for money. Because they don't have money at home, their women make fun of them and their numerous children as well.*

*So fathers are obliged to send the boys to the city to look for money. When children come back home, parents are happy with the money they earned, because they will spend it all”.*

**- A parent from Niger**

*“The advantage that they take of migration, is the prestige of returning home with wealth. A wealth which can improve both children's and parents' standard of living. Then one can say “they really made it”. In Sabongari, some of them, once back home, even bought a car. Some of them while in migration, can send amounts between 400,000 F cfa and 500,000 F cfa to their parents who do not earn more than 20,000 F cfa, that means an increase of the family income”.*

**- A man during discussion group in Niger**

*“The other day, I came across a situation that really broke my heart. In front of a mosque, I met a child. After asking him his name and what he was doing in this place, he told me that his father had fostered him to another person in order to learn a trade in his workshop. That person asked him to beg and bring money every morning, instead. It was the reason why he fled. Now this child washes dishes for my neighbour. What really moves me is, although he is in a very difficult situation, he sends money to his parents who must think, he is doing well, without knowing the ordeal this child is going through”.*

**- Discussions between parents and children in Benin**

*“One of my children fell ill and I wanted to foster his elder brother to an aunt (in order to get money). Somebody advised me not to do it, otherwise I would have done it to get money and to take care of my sick child”.*

**- A happy father from Mali**

*“My son left the village and he sends me money and I have a good life. One day, he advised me to marry a second wife, he was ready to pay all the costs. Ah!! I told him no, that I could not marry a second wife, when himself didn't have any. It was at that time that I found him a woman here in the village and now he still lives with her there with their children. If all the children who left their village behaved like him, it would be great”.*

**- Discussion group in Mali**

*“A father talks about the disadvantages of migration: “I don't see any advantage in the migration of rural children, neither in early migration, nor in non-early migration, especially for boys. But out of 100 boys leaving the village, only 10 will return home with money, all the rest (the 90 others) “will leave the village just to imitate the 10 others”. There are two way of leaving the village: some children set off for migration and often return there.*

*Some others who set off for migration do not return and do not earn anything there, they can't neither satisfy their own needs nor someone else's".*

**- A father from Burkina Faso**

*"Even if parents are not well off, they must keep their children at home and prevent them from leaving in order to avoid mistreatment. Years ago, migration was not so bad, when the child left, he would return fit and blooming. But nowadays, children suffer a lot more when they are away from their parents' house (...) To me, birth control is the solution, it's easier to take care of your children when you don't have too many of them. You don't gain anything by fostering your child to another person. Let us pray for more jobs in this country, more financial means for the care of children in the families".*

**- A father in Benin**

*"I believe that it is good to stay in the country in which you were born in order to better master the various skills available. Actually, if you exercise a job in your country, God will surely help you to develop successfully. There are people who feel better when staying in their village with regard to those who left. Often, those who left for Nigeria like fighting too much. They are more involved in crime and narcotics smoking (including children). They do not respect anything".*

**- A village chief from Mali: "my son refused to pay the tax"**

*"I believe children do not leave their village to look for work or money, the two main reasons are: the high standard of living in big cities and vagrancy of all sorts, especially sexual. Even if they were given a billion of francs, they would not stay in their village. Even if they are given a piece of land to plough, in order to earn their living, they'll flee before harvesting. That's the reason why I keep saying they leave for their own pleasure (...).*

*One of my sons who lives in Bamako came here last Sunday. I told him it was high time he told his brothers that they had to pay the taxes because people who work in this village, they sell charcoal to buy food and that taxes had to be paid by those working in the city. For ten years you never paid any taxes, it high time you and your brothers did so this year. His reply was: "you tell the Prefect we're all dead". Because if we pay taxes, they'll know we have money."*

**- A mother from Mali (talking about young girls)**

*"Nowadays, everything is upside down. Anybody can join big cities to work at an early age (not being engaged to anyone), without any intention to go back to their village. If you happen to meet them in the city, no use speaking to them, they won't listen to you. They get pregnant and when they give birth to a baby, they will throw her/him away".*

**- A father in Mali**

*"The problem is that children leave without being blessed by their parents. One fine day, you wake up and you realize that your child has left her/his village for the big city. How can they leave their parents without being blessed, or at least, being given permission? How can a child leave this way and hope to earn something and be happy? In fact, out of 100 children who leave, not many ask for blessings from their parents. Nearly 95% of those children, leave without telling their parents. When children don't respect their parents and leave without telling them what they are up to, should they be surprised if they suffer and finally return home with empty hands? Many of those migrants went through that experience".*

**- National workshop in Benin**

*"Children are fostered to tutors to get money in return, to satisfy the needs of the other children at home. The child acts like a guarantee for the family. So, each time a problem occurs, the family calls the tutor who sends the monthly child's salary. That is why the child must obey her/his tutor for the family's sake. But if the tutor does not send the money, parents will set off for the city to put matters right. No matter the conditions in which children live in the city, parents want their children to stay with their tutors, because a child who works in the city, gets a good reputation in her/his village".*

**- A boy from Benin explains to us the "true thoughts of his father"**

*"My sister was selling water for a woman. She would send 8000 F cfa to my father, each month (...). Some mothers of our village who usually go to the market of "Dantokpa" said to my father that my sister was being mistreated by that woman and that she was walking barefooted. My father did not even listen. Some Working Children and Youth (WCYs) tried to negotiate with him, so as to bring my sister back home. He said she was the only one who could send money to him and that he couldn't afford to pay for her apprenticeship".*



### \* *Summary*

*To some parents, migration is the "solution", more particularly:*

- In overcoming their own poverty and bringing some hope for their children's future
- In relieving their responsibilities and bringing supplementary income for the family

*But some problematic elements come out as well:*

- Discrepancy between children and parents with regard to the benefits of migration
- Sometimes, migration includes loss of respect
- Migration constitutes or becomes a problem when it leads to a dead-lock

**\* *Comments***

**- *Migration brings hope to parents for their children (through fostering)***

Families often foster their children to someone in order to help them carry on with their studies, to find a job or to be brought up, when parents cannot afford it. Their hope depends on the fact that their children will take advantage of the good conditions they are in for a better future: go to school, get a vocational training, get good education, become an important businessman, or turn into an important marabout (Muslim leader), etc..

**- *Children's departure (especially girls) is perceived as a "relief", and sometimes as a source of income for the family***

With regard to girls, parents mainly speak about "getting rid of them" because if they remain at home, they become an extra burden to the father, because they cannot help him with fieldwork or bring in income. In these situations, whatever the conditions in which girls live in the city, parents prefer that they remain there. Furthermore, the difficult working conditions experienced by children, are perceived as an "endurance training."

**- *When expectations are not met, parents will call it "Trickery or treason"***

As long as a child who has migrated, sends money to her/his parents, even if the child is abused, there are not any problems. But if the child does not send any money to the family, parents will ask lots of questions. Those issues correspond to trafficking criteria, they will sometimes mention: *intermediation, transaction, journey and exploitation.*

**- *Parents and children express disagreement over migration***

*...on mutual responsibilities and "respect"*

Parents and children accuse each other of being responsible for children and youth migration.

*According to children,* parents are responsible for their departures from the village because they are exposed to hard and hazardous labour without any security measures, without any financial support for their needs, and lack of education, training, and consumption opportunities. Furthermore, they believe, that the way they are educated is too harsh, involving corporal punishments, tough jobs and fostering. They complain about the fact that parents do not listen to them when they describe their painful living conditions in the city.

*According to parents,* they reckon children and youth are lazy and instead of staying home to help them, they run away to look for a good life in the city.

For these parents, nowadays, children and youth leave their village through own personal interest. According to them, most of the youth (especially boys) once they go to the city, they do not come back to the village any more and they do not even think helping their parents either. Parents are also worried about their children's change of behavior, especially their lack of respect.

*...on the profit shares (if any)*

When getting money regularly from their children who have migrated, parents tend to think that "everything is going fine". In some cases of child fostering, money is directly sent to the children's parents.

Employers get something out of paying "profits" to parents or go-betweens (or tutors). They pay nothing or very little to the children who are fostered to them through this tutorial deal.

But sometimes, children entrust their money to their employers or tutors (or go-betweens), but at times, this money can be misused by their employers or tutors.

As migration and work are especially perceived as advantageous to children, few parents and communities who are aware of it, consider children's work as exploitation, because there is not so much difference from the duties children are expected to carry out at home. Value is given to children according to the money they sent to the village.

Parents' opinions can diverge. Some of them tend to favour their children's interests, while others will favour the global interest of the family of which they are responsible. In the latter case, one gets the impression those parents do not really want to know about their children's living and working conditions

## **B5- Reflections on the causes and motivations leading to the migration of West African children and youth**

Data collected within the framework of this research and mentioned by the population, highlight several reasons, to explain early migration and Child Trafficking. Causes and motivations mentioned are, among others, as follows:

### ◆ *Poverty/survival/desire of financial independence*

Poverty is the major and omnipresent reason, because it limits the economic and professional opportunities of children and youth coming from rural areas, and urges those children, youth, or their families to resort to all means in order to increase their small income and improve their living conditions.

So, the first motivation for departures seems to be the search for resources due to bad crops, the lack of income (getting worse because of the drought), leading to the need and desire to leave the village through a survival instinct, but also a search for financial independence, and the satisfaction of one's desires conveyed by information about the "miracles" of consumption dispatched through a lot of different channels (especially from children who have set off for migration, themselves).

If, once again, interviews show the role played by parents in children's decision to leave their village, one can also observe that children accept this solution through despair (having neither means, nor arguments to refuse). In fact, the ancestral practice of "fostering", combined with family's precariousness, encourages parents to avoid their parental responsibilities which they cannot face any more. Very often, to them, the intervention of a go-between seems like an opportunity which is difficult to resist, and indeed difficult "not to seize".

Moreover, numerous stories also prove that, in some cases, children themselves decide to take the risk of leaving, even without informing their parents. In this case, the prime motivation is a sort of a survival instinct combined with the desire of purchasing consumer goods they think they will never be able to buy while staying at home (examples of bicycles and clothes often crop up). As proof of the intention of this, a youth from Burkina Faso says: *"In Burkina Faso, If you are born and grow up in a village, you can't prove your manhood till you get to Ivory Coast. If you don't, you'll be made fun of, from those who've already been there"*.

#### ◆ *Failures of society*

Testimonies from children, youth and parents, show instability of couples, gender inequality, and above all, the lack of social and educational infrastructure in some villages (lack of higher education classes, appropriate school books, etc.).

- Cases of orphans (or children whose parents are separated), fostered to an uncle or to an aunt, are frequent and mostly result in situations of child exploitation by those uncles or aunts and their families who use this orphan or child as "house slaves".

- Several children had to or wanted to leave to benefit a training which they could not get in their own village. Sometimes, there is no school at all. The city becomes then, not only, the only place where dreams of economic success can come true, but also a place to acquire knowledge and education.

Leaving for the city then, does not mean escaping reality, but it is a thoughtful decision, a very clearly defined need, to find the necessary means to change the situation. It is the outcome of a reflection upon the various ways to get out of that situation. In this case, departure becomes a means, not a goal.

Children setting off for migration to carry on with their studies or to go through training, are not trying to run away, but are trying to build something. This often places them in a better perspective than their colleagues, because children determined to leave for a very precise purpose, seem to be in a more conquering state of mind and feel less vulnerable.

- Unequal access to education (according the child's gender) tends to penalize young girls. Generally, a girl's education is not her parents' priority. Their education is often sacrificed for the benefit of boys. So young girls are sent to the city to work as maids, in order to send money to their parents.

- The informal sector (or popular economy) is not recognized, it is just "tolerated". There's a lack of "minimal standards" to regulate it. This facilitates the excessive and massive recruitment of children, in particular, because they are an easy prey and an ideal target for employers in search of profits. In fact, children are considered as workers easy to control (because of their young age) and liable to ruthless exploitation (due to their lack of appeal and absence of tutors).

- Testimonies from some children and youth, show that situations often start through hatred between blood brothers, inheritance problems, family disagreements, conflicts, quarrels, arguments, etc..

◆ ***Prestige/valorization and realization of one's self, no more domination and subordination***

- It is often about the search of respect, consideration and credibility on matrimonial matters. For instance, in a polygamous marriage, for status reasons, for their marriage dowry, all the girls' belongings must come from the city. While boys, feel that it will be easier for them to get married after setting off for migration.

- According to children's and youth's testimonies, migration allows them to seek for a better environment to live in and to get more affection elsewhere, in order to get rid of the family's heavy burden..

- A youth from Benin said: *"I have never made any decision in my life. I only do what I'm told to do. I need some freedom to do what I want to do"*. In Burkina Faso, several testimonies also show children do not want to be dominated and subordinated any more. Children got pride, dignity, the desire of being financially independent and to be able to possess a bicycle, a radio cassette and also to value him/herself.

◆ ***Ignorance of incurred risks, curiosity, city's attraction and cultural environment urging children and youth to work.***

- It came out from several stories that sometimes, children and even parents ignore the risks involved, not only during the journey, but also once they get to their destination place. In fact, the survey revealed that there are still some ignorance regarding situations faced by children and youth through migration. However, it is difficult to evaluate if this ignorance is intended or not. All children know they will experience suffering, but a few of them know what is involved in it.

- In fact, this survey confirmed that children from rural areas have a need for discovery and adventure. Many of those children want to know what the outside world and big cities look like.

- Work is regarded as an integral part of life's experience. Intellectual work and formal education tend to be undervalued and compared to idleness and laziness. Some children said they were forced to give up their hopes of carrying out their studies, so as not to be blamed by their relatives and by the community.

◆ **Invisible borders between West African countries**

Populations are already engaged in sub-regional integration, as recommended by their leaders. Populations have always been unaware of borders which are barely controlled by local authorities. Aspects can be positive as well as negative: the organisation of child trafficking in bordering countries. As child's journey is often trans-national, it is difficult to have an overall picture on migration flows and confine them to a limited space. Sometimes, children find themselves in places far away from the place they belong to, so, they do not always find the means to go back to their family and, in some ways, they find themselves trapped into child exploitation, making them more vulnerable.

◆ *This survey and several others show intricate reality*

The explanations and clarifications given to these different factors, should not minimize the intricate reality. Even if these causes can be potentially classified, in order to find out effective solutions, we should not treat child trafficking and early migration separately, because they are intertwined. In other words, the various factors facilitating the development of child trafficking and early migration, are by nature, interdependent and tend to deteriorate mutually. These various factors become entangled and interact.

It also appears that in West Africa, strong links between migration and trafficking have caused some confusion. At first, child trafficking gets mixed up with very old traditions such as child migration and placement (fostering). Furthermore, trafficking often implies mutual consent and encouragement of parents and children themselves.

In spite of those specificities and the recurrence of child migration - which amplitude seems to increase - the International Community responded to the phenomenon in West Africa through the law and criminalization of the people involved, facilitating the return to their country of children in situations of exploitation or potential exploitation. This kind of action proved to be effective in other contexts, in particular in Eastern Europe and in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, doubts have been raised about its relevance for West Africa.

Several studies have raised serious reservations about the approaches adopted so far:

- **Sarah Castle** and **Aissa Diarra** have been commissioned by Save the Children USA to carry out a survey in a Malian village identified as having a high migration rate. Their survey concluded that cultural aspects linked to child migration are underestimated; therefore, solutions proposed cannot reduce the phenomenon. They rather contribute increasing risks faced by the children.
- **Roger Botte's** report for UNICEF WCARO (not published) is particularly critical of the role of the surveillance committees and questions the relevance of focusing on child exploitation when they leave their home, while this exploitation is not really different from the one they experience within their family home.

- Another report (**Terre des Hommes 2004**) uses the terms "hard" trafficking which implies kidnapping or deceit resulting from a fraud, while "soft" trafficking is used when the child leaves his/her house on his/her own decision or his/her parents' decision.

Even if the outcome is the same, this distinction is crucial when actions to put in place are to be considered. This report also stresses the importance of making the difference between children who migrate in order to seek for a better future, (they should be supported in their project), and those who are taken away by a third person in order to be exploited or abused. Those distinctions are fundamental if we want to make sure that the measures taken against child trafficking will not have opposite results, worsening the situation, instead of improving it

Among the elements proposed by the authors, some of them think that:

- **We forget about agent's role of the children.** They are considered as shaped by society, rather than being actors within society (Terre des Hommes, 2005).

- **Children make a reasonable decision.** Anti-trafficking measures taken recently have only increased the exploitation of children who migrate, by turning each go-between (middleman) into a child trafficker. (Castle and Diarra, 2004).

- **Migration is a very old and natural process** which is more and more regulated. Therefore, children become more vulnerable towards traffickers and smugglers. (Anti-Slavery International, 2003).

- **Trafficking is an important human rights issue.** This issue needs more appropriate interventions. (Terre des Hommes, 2004).

- **Migration is a survival strategy** and rite of passage for youth who want to acquire a social status and to learn what they cannot learn at home. Most of the actions undertaken so far were misdirected and provided few results. These actions do not tackle the main problem, which is the violation of social, economic and cultural rights wherever they are. (Botte's oral part of his non-published report).

From results of the survey and quoted elements about the collective representations on child migration and trafficking, the question of ideological postures recommending a settled way of life for children and youth - which are based on the postulate that children are always better off staying at home - should be raised.

In fact, starting from the point that it is better for a child to remain in his/her family, village or region of birth, seems naïve to us, (still a child can be at risk by staying in his/her family) and condescending (romantic vision of the village environment, as being "the best place" to be).

The lack of professional opportunities for educated or uneducated youth is strongly linked to the debate over child trafficking. This element also plays a role in the recruitment of child soldiers.

Obviously, these two phenomena give them the opportunity to earn money and get economic opportunities. However, these questions point to much more important economic issues, such as Africa's access to Global Market and to Global Economy.

What we understand about a "child's best interest" changes a lot, and challenges us when we try to respect international criteria regarding children's rights.

This leads us to very different conceptions of exploitation that have been listed during this survey. It is evident that the experiences of exploitation undergone by youth staying in their village are often not very different from those experienced by trafficked children.

Furthermore, according to international definition of trafficking, each child who experiences trafficking is also exploited. However, general perceptions from some authors seem to negate this fact. This brings out two questions: first, if there's a wish for steps to be taken against child trafficking, we should find a meaningful language and messages towards the people concerned.

Then, is there any logic in tackling one situation (trafficked children), in which some of them are exploited, and not tackling situations in which other children (those who stay in their village) are also exploited?

## **C- Description and assessment of activities led by the Association of Working Children and Youth (AWCY)**

### ***C1- Awareness campaigns and Information group activities***

#### **\* *Children's words***

##### **- A young girl, from Burkina Faso**

*"This has helped population of Pabré so much, because some people had never watched those types of movies and theatre before. Now, we are more aware of this phenomenon. That is why we are asking you to come back, and show them again, so that those who couldn't attend can also benefit from it (...)*

*This will help our parents to understand their children's sufferings when they set off for migration in search of money."*

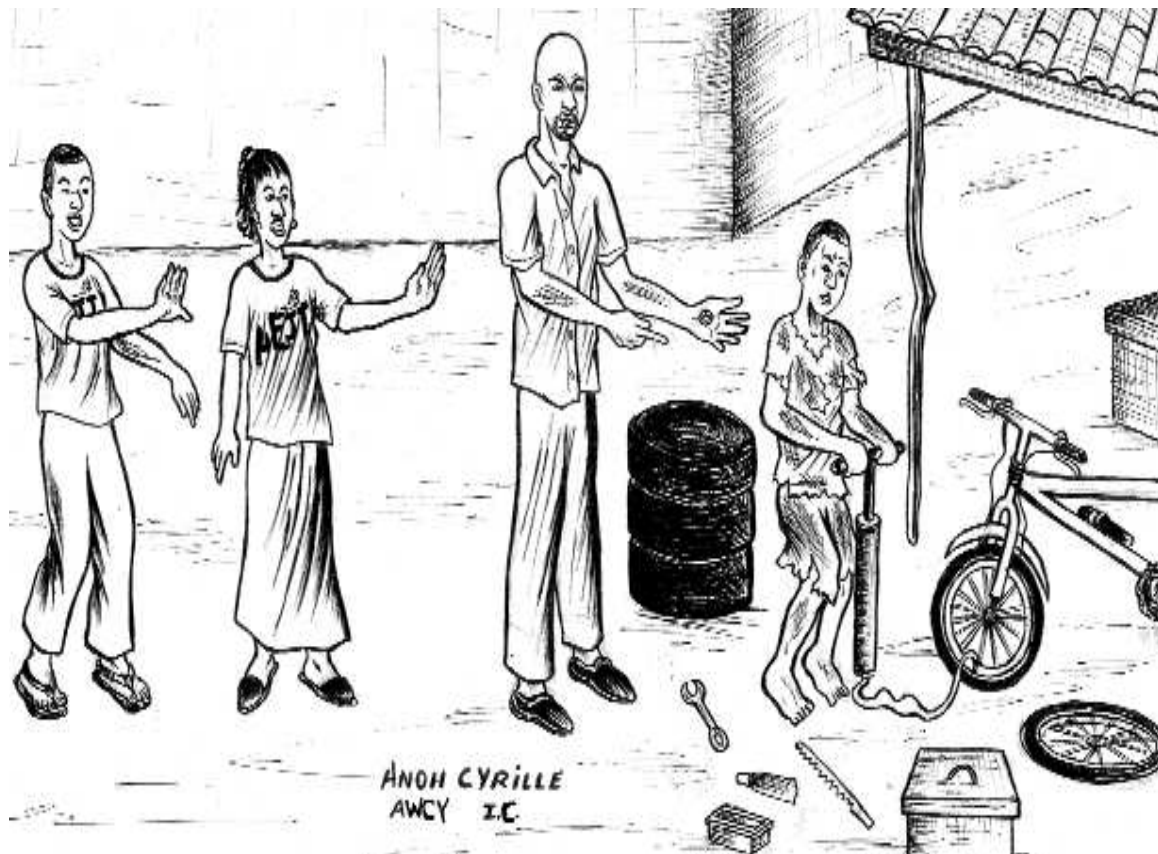
##### **- Different steps of an awareness campaign in Mali**

*"Nous avons quitté ici pour aller discuter avec le Maire de Sômon. Nous "We went to see the Mayor of Sômon to have a talk with him. We said a lot of things and in this way he mobilized the population of the village and we delivered messages about early migration in order to prevent young children from leaving their villages".*

##### **- Group discussion of WCYs from Niger**

*"If children leave for Benin or Burkina Faso, they will work in cotton fields (same job they do in Niger). They are carrying out awareness campaigns to make people understand that is the same kind of job they are doing in Niger (...)*

*This has nothing to do with the fact of staying in your country because you will suffer anyway. In our actions, we give information about difficulties you will go through there (in the destination places). If children are aware of troubles they will encounter when leaving their village, they can prepare themselves in order to face them. That's where the change of mentality starts".*



### \* Summary

*Awareness campaigns and Information Group Activities aimed at:*

- Bringing and dispatching as much as possible lots of information about dangers and risks of early migration, trafficking and abuses that affect children and youth;
- Raising awareness and commitment in order to find solutions;
- Helping populations to react spontaneously and with caution towards some situations (suspicion);
- Dispatching all information on the AWCYs' trans-national network which can offer protection and alternatives to migrating children (making them less vulnerable).

\* *Comments*

WCYs' major concern is *to restore the truth* on the situations experienced by migrating children and youth, *by informing people*. Because, in most cases, populations' information about migration, are systematically based on stories told by the children who migrated and came back, or through those children's parents. However, these stories do not always reflect reality and sometimes even highlight positive aspects of migration, only. For instance, very often, when people speak about migration, they won't talk about the sufferings children have to go through in order to earn money or about their living conditions. This "disinformation" tends to feed the collective imagination and hopes of children who have not experienced it yet and would like to give it a try.

These information and awareness campaigns mainly aim at *informing families* and the whole group of children, *as well as future candidates on risks likely to happen*.

Therefore, *in order to make populations understand the message* and to take part into the information and public awareness campaigns, WCYs use local languages, local resource persons and communication tools adapted to local realities (songs, sketches, public shows, "door to door" and "by word of mouth" communications, debates, radio/tv programmes, games (question/answer), movies, comic strips, creation and setting up of posters at the cities borders, testimonies of migration and trafficking victims, etc.). WCYs also take advantage of their leisure and sport activities (football matches), of thematic celebration days, of training workshops, as well as meetings, to dispatch their message.

WCYs also show patience and bravery *by developing dynamic solutions to overcome problems*. Those awareness campaigns, are also used to explain to populations how to intervene, how to listen, and people who should be involved in order to prevent risks.

These awareness and information campaigns are carried out *in two complementary ways, namely: planned awareness campaigns, permanent ones: daily and close contact ones*.

*Planned awareness campaigns* are generally carried out through radio broadcasting, movies, debates, sketches, caravans, etc. These campaigns are achieved through partners' support or "AWCYs' own funds".

*Permanent, daily and close contact awareness actions* are carried out, both daily and nightly, within grassroots groups, within working places, within families, and among friends; they are not financed at all. Through these actions, WCYs usually spread information wherever they are, by stimulating people to act, inform and find solutions.

## **C2- Creation of grassroots groups**

### **\* Children's words**

#### **- WCYs from Niger**

*"We met some youth from Makalondi which is located at the checking point border between Niger and Burkina Faso. In the beginning, we were welcomed by a group of 4 or 6 people. Since then, through our regular visits to those youth, we organize exchange-meetings, we exchange ideas about the Association, the history of "WCYs twelve rights", how we came to identify them, the way we are organized in Niamey and the activities that we are carrying out regarding those rights.*

*Little by little, after 2 or 4 visits, they began to be interested and announced their intention to organize themselves. Then, we planned some objectives and a meeting schedule. We invited them to participate in our trainings programmes and some other activities. With them, we organize awareness campaign sessions about child trafficking and early migration, all over Makalondi city and surroundings. They set up 6 grassroots groups which are run through subscriptions. They put in place a board that coordinates each group and regularly organizes meetings. They also carry out solidarity and mutual-aid actions towards village populations. During one of those meetings with them, we had a discussion on the "right to remain in the village (no migration)".*

*We told them that we had the right to remain in our village in order to exercise our activities in a safe environment. We talked about causes and consequences of migration and real facts such as exploitation, abuse, trafficking and early migration. In fact, they told us, most of the youth from the city presently set off for migration in neighbouring countries such as Benin, Togo and IvoryCoast. They told us that they will stay in the village and that they understood us. They also told us stories experienced by some of them. They said that they completely agreed and that they would think about action researches to carry out without us, and during their meetings, they would keep on thinking it over.*

*It was then, that an action-research process was started within the grassroots groups, involving the eldest children of the village.*

*After reflecting on the issue "what should we do once we stay in the village?", it was decided to take advantage of the revolving weekly markets in the area, and from the strong demand for vegetables and fruits in this region (characterized by a West African type of climate) to grow a market gardening as a collective Income Generating Activity (IGA). Income generated by this activity is shared among the members of the group, but it also contributes to WCYs funds. These funds are then turned into activities of public utility in the village, for instance, the well used by all the inhabitants which is close to the WCYs market garden, has been repaired by the WCYs. (...).*

*According to children and youth from Oufouanou, with the support of adult advisers, this year, in their village, not any children's departure to other countries, was recorded. Those children are now gardening around the village's well, they sell dead wood and to do cattle breeding.*

*They created a solidarity collective savings fund, to which they contribute 100 F cfa a month. Those IGAs are individual, but gardening and the selling of dead wood, are collectively managed within the group. (...). They wish is to set up training and literacy centres, in order to reinforce their initiatives”.*

#### **- A 16 year-old boy, from Porto Novo in Benin**

*"The reason why I joined the Association?: They are taking care of me and that's exactly what I was looking for. If I see a child with wounds on her/his body, with uncombed hair, I talk to her/him, then take her/her to the AWCY, so she/he can be taken care of. (...). When I joined the AWCY, I began to learn a trade; and now, I feel much better at home than before. Therefore, I invite other children living in the same difficult situations I was in, to join the Association, in order to enjoy these advantages to the full. Now, my rights are respected".*

#### **- A girl who migrated from Ivory Coast**

*"My working place was hectic, because when I was fostered to my female tutor, I was so young. I was 13 years old then and work was too arduous. I would wake up at 4 am, wiping, sweeping up, washing the dishes, cleaning the house and then go to clean another house (my tutor would receive my salary for that extra job), wash the kids, take them to school, pick them up at noon, and do the cooking.*

*In the evening, I would be home at 10 pm at the earliest; but I would often come back round midnight. (...) WCYs opened my eyes, and invited me to join the Association.*

*In the beginning I would not take them seriously, I would come to entertain myself, to make new friends, and then I understood that what I was going through before, was mere exploitation. They explained to me in which circumstances they came to identify their 12 rights. The Association is helping me to carry out with my studies by attending evening classes gradually. The Association is also teaching me how to use Internet...".*

### \* *Summary*

*The creation of grassroots groups is both up-stream and down-stream from migration*

- **In villages:** to keep children and youth where they live, reinforce their organization, and encourage them to carry out initiatives in there.
- **In cities:** (neighbourhoods, working places such as markets, car stations) to protect them against abuse, to help them find relief and alternatives.

### \* *Comments*

There are approximately 1364 grassroots groups<sup>8</sup> within the AMWCY, three quarters of which are based in West Africa. Most of the time, those WCYs are already organized between them on the basis of the same origin, the same trade, or the same working or living place. They are the core and the first interdependent aggregation federated by the Movement.

WCYs grassroots groups are made of children who carry out some activities and helps solving problems identified by the group. They constitute a social space for youth who are organized in clubs composed by their peers, living the same realities and sharing the same ambition: to take part in the promotion of their rights.

These grassroots groups can be described as spaces:

- of information and education by peers/friends;
- where they share the same living conditions;
- of problems sharing and listening and mediating in familial and extra-familial conflict resolution;
- of leisure activities, of expression of themselves and solidarity;
- where they claim rights and citizenship

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<sup>8</sup>Estimate from the African Commission of the AMWCY, March 2008.

These spaces are based on what already exists (natural groups, geographical proximity). They join together energies and create solidarities, and reinforce children (making them less vulnerable).

Their creation in villages is based on the exchanges between WCYs and children and youth or "village youth". This exchange comes after the first contact during "awareness campaigns/information activities", and through a common interest to carry on. At a certain point of this exchange, they bring to each other "support", but also a "method" to better analyse and face their situation, trying to find suitable solutions. Eventually, "village youth" can decide to create a "WCYs grassroots group" to adhere to the AMWCY's objectives and dynamics.

If a child in the village decides to set off for migration, they know that they can count on the AWCY's grassroots groups wherever they go, in order to avoid isolation and migration consequences.

### ***C3- Listening and Supporting group activities***

#### ***\* Children's words***

##### **- A migrant girl from Ivory Coast**

*"So then, one night, my uncle (the fostering uncle) said that he was going to go out with me. I did not accept and he hit me. I ran away and I landed in a place that I did not even know. In the morning I left and I walked up to a village called Aboisso. I met a man on the road and I explained to him my problem and he directed me to a centre called "WCY" where they take care of all children. I then explained my problem to them and they took care of me. I ate, I slept, I dressed and they took me back to my country where I joined my family".*

##### **- A child repatriated to Burkina**

*"But when policemen took us to the police station, at dawn, we were scared because they told us they were going to kill us, as we were Burkinabes. A man took us to Niangoloko (border between Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast), there, a woman came and took us here in Koudougou (...). WCY interviewed us individually in order to know our names, our surnames, our origins. They discussed with us the reasons for our departure, and informed us about early migration and Child Trafficking. One of the members spent the whole night with us and the day after, we washed ourselves, we ate and then, they entrusted us to a family. Three months later, they came back to enroll me in a training centre as a mechanic and now, I am working there".*

### - A migrant girl from Ivory Coast

*"(...) The tonton (elder person) was a WCY, I could not put the pan down, I said: "Tonton, I need your help to put my pan down, I am tired. He helped me". He asked me: "whom are you working for?" We went together to see my employer (a woman) and he said: "Madam, do not mistreat this child, she is just a child and you are mistreating her, it is not good". She did not want to understand. But after that, he came back with other children and youth to discuss and then my employer accepted. That woman said: "this child is a good worker; I will no longer mistreat her."*

### - The situation of a migrant girl in Benin described by the WCYs

*"(...) We met a 13 year-old girl who was selling doughnuts; we asked her why she was not at school at her age. She said that her father fostered her to a friend who promised to help her to carry on with her studies in Porto Novo. The girl studied for one year, she took her CPE<sup>9</sup> (Certificat de Premières Etudes ) and the man said to her that it was not worthwhile to carry on with her studies and that she should accept because she was far from her home. Then, he proposed to enrol her in a workshop so that she could learn a job. In the meantime, the children of this man kept going to school. (...). Sometime later, the man's wife started cooking doughnuts and gave them to the girl to sell. She carried out that activity for 2 years without any salary and her parents didn't even know that she was not going to school anymore. The man is an Inspector of Primary Education (...) we went to meet him. We talked to him in a certain way, avoiding to tell him the story this girl told us. The man agreed with us that it was not normal from his perspective, but it was due to a lack of means. And he said that as the girl did not have a salary, they saved the money from the doughnuts so she could learn a trade and be set up after her training. (...) Then, the man had a talk with his wife and they put in place a training workshop in their own house".*

### - A WCY from Mali

*"She was only paid for her first month of work. Since then, her employer (a woman) refused to pay the rest. I asked the girl to introduce me to her employer so I could have a talk with her. The following day, I decided not to go to work, I went to meet my elder brothers of the AWCY and along with them as well as MALI ENJEU, we paid a visit to her employer. We tried our best to convince her to pay her maid, that woman refused. That's when we decided to meet the Director of Women and Children Promotion for help. The director called the women who agreed to pay something. I recovered the rest of the money and I went to the girl's village to give it to her. Then, I spoke to her parents to tell them about more serious cases."*

<sup>9</sup> Certificate of First Studies allowing access to secondary school.

\* *Summary*

*Listening and support activities are of a moral, social and economic nature.*

- They are carried out in counseling centers, children's meeting and working sites, during daily meetings, or during repatriation actions (in collaboration with the authorities in charge).
- WCYs identify "friends" who have problems and help them in finding solutions.
- Some activities deal with "improving relations between WCYs and their employers; sometimes supporting WCYs in achieving projects they choose (return to family, apprenticeship, alternative economic activity).

\* *Comments*

Tens of thousands of listening actions have already been carried out at individual and collective levels in countries where WCYs are committed.

Main steps of listening actions carried out by WCYs are:

- a) *Listening, counseling and orientation*: identification of migrant children, approaching children where they are (streets, markets, working places), setting of mutual trust, information gathering on the lives and personal stories of children, development of relationships, efforts for regular children's follow-up ...
- b) *Taking care of urgent cases (food, finding a room to rent)*: economic aids depending on individual means (sharing of what we have) or through common pots subsidized by contributions of the AWCYs' members, for family return or the orientation towards structures able to support training and apprenticeship.
- c) *Protection and problem-solving*: constant children's follow up, identification of children in difficult situations, giving assistance for administrative procedures (birth certificates, etc.), coordination/collaboration (including awareness campaigns), activities along with public authorities.

But these actions are not carried out according to an immutable order, nor to a strict planning. They reflect above all, the daily existences of the WCYs, in places where they are and where they move. WCYs meet children daily, and some of them, through their behaviour and attitudes, or even through their physical appearance, seem to express distress or difficulties. It is especially all the expression of WCYs availability and attention, with a special care towards those children, which is at the basis of confidence necessary to listening. The idea is, that the other person should be considered just like yourself "a friend (girl or boy)", or even like a "relative" who should get support and whom you should share things together.

If some structures ("listening centres", very basic sometimes) have been set up, it is especially for the global strategy of "lending someone a hand", which has been developed and has brought results.

## ***C4 - Development of Partnerships***

### ***\* Adults' and WCYs' words***

#### **- Discussion among transporters from Niger**

*"I came across the case of a child who was picked up by a person with a non-identified vehicle. This person went through a few controls on the road and then, he was forced to abandon the child. The child went to the transporters who returned him to his family (...)*

*We first listen to the child, we check his/her identity, where he/she comes from and then we give to the driver a document signed by the authorities to take the child back home. Once the destination reached, the driver contacts the transporters' union from the destination place so that they can follow-up. After the child's return, we do the follow-up with the union or with the policemen in the destination place. We're doing it through the experience and the trainings that we have - that WCY shared with us - and with our own will (...)* Yes, as my friend was saying, the means we are using come from the WCYs (...). I do not know much about WCYs' activities. I know that WCYs strongly contributed to raise parents' awareness about this phenomenon, in order to ensure the protection of their children in Malbaza."

#### **- A police superintendent from Benin**

*"I am 46 years old. I am a police superintendent. I am married and I am father of four children (...)* On the field, WCYs are doing a tremendous job, even if their actions are still not very visible at all levels. However, we hope that in the future, these actions will be fruitful.

*Yes I can say that WCYs are at the beginning and at the end of the struggle, as they can explain to their fathers which attitude to show, and explain to their brothers the way to behave, once they are released...”*

**- A WCY from Mali**

*There was a Koranic teacher Mossi that had a lot of pupils and he mistreated them. They would leave his home in the morning and come back at night. Each child had to beg and bring back a certain amount of money. This koranic teacher would beat him up, if the child failed.*

*When I noticed it, I told it to other members and together we went to visit other services (Mali Enjeu, the police, and the DRPFEF). Now, after our intervention, several went back to their homes and it is really going better now, somehow....”*

**\* Summary**

*WCYs develop partnerships, they try to create links and collaborations with different actors in order to:*

- Facilitate communication and dispatch information everywhere;
- motivate one another to act and inform against [abuses];
- Look for solutions together, put energies together, develop synergies, mobilize resources (all contributions are taken into account)
- To enhance dialogue and solidarity between different generations

**\* Comments**

If WCYs, on their own, take the initiative to carry out the different actions described above, by no means do they claim to be at the beginning and at the end of everything. They make themselves known and create links, collaborations and partnerships between various actors, from children to adults, from those at the grassroots level to the authorities: police, NGO's and daily operating care centres, traditional chiefs, transporters, State relays fighting against child trafficking, mothers' organizations, women, children and youth, other State services, regional structures of citizens and children, consulates, etc..

Their belief is that "united we stand, divided we fall" and that all efforts should be made in order to improve the situation. Therefore, they see themselves like a cog in machine of the fight, with their own identity, means and constraints.

## C5- Skills acquired

### \* Adults and children's words

#### - A policeman from Benin

*"I am a policeman (...). The WCYs hold meetings from which good initiatives can come out. During their meetings, they talk about children's rights; children should be educated and fed, when fostered to someone. They also talk about child abuse. And when they are discussing these issues, I am proud of them. When a child is not educated, he/she should then learn a trade. In fact, we do not need uneducated children (idle children). I really appreciate the fact that each of those children saves up 10 francs cfa that they will later use for their Income Generating Activities. This allows me to say that there is some brotherly love existing between those children. We, parents, should encourage those children so that we can enhance their efforts through their different activities. Our support will allow shy children to become very skilful and agitated children to maintain the course".*

#### - A traditional chief from Burkina Faso

*"I am the traditional chief of Pabr  Naba Guigmd  (Lion), village of Pabr  (...). Yes, it is true, they even went to villages around to show films to those who had difficulty moving. During their visit in Pabr , they also organized village fairs for their awareness campaigns. (...) When you are illiterate, you do not have any knowledge and unless somebody teaches you, you won't know. Therefore, activities carried out by children really opened our eyes to the problems; in any case it was a success. People really appreciated it."*

#### - A co-president of Youth in a village from Mali

*"I am the co-president of the Youth of Her makono. All I know is that their "caravan" came here and they gave us information through animation and discussions about early child migration. Any where you'll go in this village, you will rarely hear about a child who has set off for migration, because the messages were properly dispatched. What I want to say is, that now, children know what migration is all about and it is the reason why children no longer set off for migration. Therefore, if children do not leave their village, it means they can have an occupation in there and children are aware of it."*

**- A father in a village in Benin**

*"Last time, they had a meeting which I attended. They said that the child who created the Association wanted to send money to carry out activities within the Association. There are some children who are learning how to make soap. Therefore, they are doing their best to teach children how to start Income Generating Activities in order to stop early migration. I really appreciated the way they handled the problem. One of the reasons when children meet, we support them and also advise them when they speak."*

**- A girl from Niger**

*"I have been sensitized; that's why I sensitize other girls. I am glad of what I am doing because I feel useful when I help other girls. Today, I know now how to live in society and within a family. (...) Before, I did not know that someone could take somebody else's children to exploit them. They really opened up my eyes to my close environment."*

**- A child from Benin**

*"Yes, in this Association, I changed my behaviour. Now I can dispatch better information to my mates who are doing fieldwork. The association also provides aids to children's education."*

**- A WCY from Burkina**

*"From what we heard from the village people themselves, I believe that today the number of children leaving their village has decreased. Many of the children who used to leave and come back during the rainy season, do not leave anymore". Grassroots groups and associations have been created in order to carry on with the work we started. Some of them got organised into collective activities during the low season (after the harvest). (...) Yes, if you go around, you will notice a lot more stalls in the market than before; it therefore means that youth and children found occupations in the village. And I think that people will be aware of the problem, as time goes by."*

\* *Summary*

*Main assets with respect to communities are:*

- Support and involvement with WCYs activities;
- Access to information and capacity building;
- Improvement of living conditions in some villages and limitation of child and youth migration;
- Development of new forms of solidarity;
- Switch from the "victimized" status to the "actor" status.

\* *Comments*

*Within communities:* the analysis of both testimonies and concrete actions on the field highlight some gains, such as the support of WCYs' actions, knowledge and information on migration and Child Trafficking, and the improvement of living conditions.

==> **Adhesion of communities to the WCYs' activities**

In spite of the gap between WCYs' positions (promotion of individual rights, the "right to remain in the village, not to migrate") and local principles, values and uses (promotion or reproduction of human qualities towards social cohesion - resting on the elderly's authority and local traditions regarding migration and fostering practices); and without mentioning initial suspicions (even "difficulties"), *WCYs' actions allow the development of dialogue and collaboration with communities.*

Both, during the collection of information on the field and during national workshops on participatory analysis of the data, communities expressed happiness about public awareness campaigns carried out by the WCYs, as well as the noticeable efficiency and the diversity of issues which were approached. Several people requested multiplication and extension of these campaigns to most remote areas, and continuation of awareness campaigns regarding themes such as forced marriages or protection against HIV/AIDS.

**==> Knowledge and information about child migration and trafficking by the communities**

By meeting to discuss their problems, both WCYs and communities provided each other with the means to defend themselves through a process of capacity building which started through daily interactions and scheduled trainings (technical assistance groups, communication trainings, literacy courses), and discussions, field activities and debates, during awareness campaigns.

In general, communities acknowledged:

- Getting access to information on real situations experienced by migrant children and youth;
- Acquiring attitudes of prudence, alarm and denunciation;
- Searching information on dubious situations (trying to better understand situations of children who left for the city);
- Reinforcing their capacities on how to intervene, how to listen, and how to identify the right people able to help reducing risks;

**==> Improvements for a more enjoyable life in villages**

Following the development of grassroots groups and relationships with children and youth in approximately 150<sup>10</sup> villages, children and youth carried out various activities which changed living conditions in village communities:

- Development of gardening, animal breeding, collective farming, and transformation of local products, (through parents' advice, as awareness-raisers). Those activities brought some money to the village;
- Leisure/animation activities, sports tournaments, theatre, and parties that only "elders" would organize before;
- Literacy, education, trainings activities (methodology to analyze their own situations, problem-solving, and marketing);
- Adult/child dialogue - children expressing themselves better, parents listening to them and supporting them more (parental presence during grassroots group's activities).

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<sup>10</sup> *At the end of 2008, more than 300 villages were addressed by Wcys.*

- Improvements in communication between children and youth who remained in the village and those who migrated (better dispatching of information);
- A larger opening: village members of grassroots groups have the opportunity to move about, to have exchanges with other villages and their friends from AWCYs in the cities (and in other countries).

Those few improvements have made life in the villages, somewhat more attractive and have reduced the desire to leave.

Children who decide to "travel" are more equipped and informed for their trip; they will be less isolated because they have contacts of the AWCYs in their migration areas.

### *Among children and youth*

#### **==> Emergence of new forms of solidarity**

Because AWCYs create spaces where children and youth can exchange ideas and express themselves, their work contributes to create new forms of community solidarity (solidarity of generations and conditions). These forms of community solidarity prevent children from remaining anonymous and isolated. In fact, it seems that the WCYs' work allows the creation of new social links and overlaps links which already exist in the group. In a sense, WCYs participate in the reinforcement of forms of solidarity and social cohesion in communities.

#### **==> To give a new direction to his/her own life by shifting from the role of victim to the role of an actor**

Children's and youth's personal contributions allowed them to:

- Develop their critical and analytical awareness, to get a turn for initiative and management;
- Learn collective governance practices;
- Learn how to read and write;
- Develop expression and communication skills
- Develop all sorts of economic and social initiatives which turn them into "actors" and urge them to progress.

## **C6- Main Difficulties**

### **- Participants of the sub-regional workshop in Bamako**

*"During the creation of a grassroots group in a village, first contacts with the people are not easy, especially with regard to the "right to remain in the village, no migration". In addition, parents, react in a negative way towards WCYs, simply because they think that WCYs try to prevent children from setting off for migration. Thus, for them, WCYs are against the development of children and the village in general."*

*"In some villages, parents complain about the fact that they can no longer punish their children because they know their rights. For them, they feel they cannot educate their children anymore. Therefore, WCYs are perceived like a danger to their children's education."*

*"On the other hand, in cities, some children's employers and tutors complain about WCYs. They are preventing WCYs from approaching their apprentices because they do not want their apprentices to be enrolled in grassroots groups, just to protect interests acquired on children (working time; services provided and economic gains)."*

*"There are laws which contradict solutions we are proposing, and there also some limits to our responsibilities. For instance: often, late at night, WCYs get in contact with some of the victims. WCY address them to the daily care centers and to the police stations which are closed or cannot receive people during the night. Showing mercy, WCYs take care of them without any official authorization. This can be a risk or a problem, once the child goes to the police".*

### **- Vice Mayor of Gaya in Niger**

*"Working children and youth activities should especially be directed towards public awareness campaigns through sketches, theatre, and information in order to sensitize parents. In 2006, public awareness campaigns took place in the villages and districts of Gaya. Populations really enjoyed it, allowing parents be aware and to better understand the situation. Unfortunately, there were no follow-up activities and everything went down the drain. I am convinced that, even occasionally, if a follow-up took place, or an external mission was sent to see what is going on, in order to help them out or financially support them, you know, these activities would sustain. Unfortunately, once a punctual activity is over, there is not follow-up. In that case, one year afterwards, how can someone evaluate, and what is there to evaluate?"*

### - WCYs from Burkina Focal Point

*"In order to convince those people, WCYs carry out actions which contribute to the good fortune of parents and employers. Humanitarian actions are carried out (to help the child to accomplish tasks for his/her parents or employers, to plough their fathers' fields, participate in or contribute to family ceremonies, to hold revolving meetings in WCYs workshops and homes, etc). The idea is to make them understand that they must be good friends of children who can get some opportunities (for training, travels, getting contacts, etc.).*

*In this way, they are trustful because they are attracted by the potential interests they may get through these children. A bit of competition settles in, in order to maintain the relations with WCYs who are often requested or invited to communitarian meals.*

*Some children and youth use these services for personal activities, and this gives another image of the grassroots groups to parents and employers. Some children will take advantage of the situation to deliberately break their supervisors' rules.*

*To face the situation, WCYs do not hesitate to organize meetings with parents and employers (supervisors of these children) to inform them about the negative attitudes of their children. In the presence of their children, WCYs ask them to apologize and to regain honest attitudes: there's neither shame and nor taboo, as long as the child wishes to carry on activities with her/his friends".*

### \* Summary

*Among various obstacles encountered by the WCYs (that are typical), major areas identified are:*

- Some initial mistrust appeared: their activities were mixed up with those of "more generous" actors. Populations were expecting "material gains" from their intervention;
- Their legitimacy was sometimes disputed by certain authorities or partners, bothered to see them "do a role play" ("illiterate children wanting to educate us");
- WCYs did not always have enough resources or the constancy "to follow-up" their activities.

*When faced by obstacles encountered in the implementation of their activities, WCYs have always tried to develop collective problem-solving dynamics, by closely associating their interlocutors to make them feel "the difference" of their approach.*

\* *Comments*

■ **Difficulties related to public awareness campaigns**

WCYs confirmed that during public awareness campaigns, people said: "you are politicians". Communities consider them as agents from wealthy NGOs, and ask them to bring bread, rice and sandwiches instead of rights.

There's a gap between WCYs position and other local practices which disappointed the communities who do not believe in them and think (in the first place) that WCYs are sent by the Government and they care about their own interests instead of sharing resources (though nonexistent) with them.

They are sometimes initially perceived as "policemen or spies". In the same way, WCYs pointed out that some traditional chiefs sometimes boycott their public awareness campaigns, because there aren't any beverages and other things (you cannot speak empty handed with a chief).

Moreover, one has to admit that collaboration and funding did not work so well in all the countries: some WCYs had difficulties of being accepted by bewildered actors disturbed by their presence, and by the fact they are perceived as encouraging "child labour".

■ **Legality, legitimacy of the activities and credibility of the WCYs' words**

Taking into account their role of "actors" (in the fight against early migration and Child Trafficking), their position as denouncers of abuse and as mediators between those who are affected, people with responsibilities and those in charge of security, protection and justice, WCYs are not always appreciated by whole of the actors. They say they often hear remarks such as:

*"Who are you to tell me that I should take care of my child?" "Is it your problem if I beat up my son?" "You did not even go to school and you want to tell me about children's rights?", etc..*

Furthermore, WCYs by acting "informally and spontaneously", can easily be outlawed. For instance, if they temporarily share a room with a child who migrated, or without a rooftop, they can be blamed in the name of "legality".

## ■ Challenges and dynamics for solving problems

As far as we know, activities carried out by WCYs, were based on their experiences and usual tools (12 rights empiric approach, Participatory Action Research -PAR-) without being hindered, from the beginning, by a "theoretic reflection" on the communities' approach and intervention practices. Most of them, simply "plunged into work" facing many difficulties but without being discouraged. Any time they would be in trouble, they would talk about it, trying to find solutions through problem-solving dynamics.

For instance, expression in diverse local languages was difficult, so they had translators in order to find the appropriate terms.

WCYs do not give up if children do not listen to them, or when they do not obtain full confidence and collaboration from adults, authorities and other children and youth, etc.. They react by cleaning up neighbourhoods and public squares and structures; by participating in family ceremonies; trying to resolve intra and extra family conflicts; collaborating with adults and authorities; carrying out solidarity and mutual-aid actions for adults; helping actions and efforts for free, to plough fields in order to compensate the time they will spend participating in WCYs' activities, etc. In this way, they want to prove everyone about their good will and serious involvement.

*Because of their condition, they are usually rejected, but they never give up because they have built a strong "collective willingness" in order to overcome this ritual initial step and to fulfill their goals.*

## ***C7- Lessons to be learned for the Future***

***The following issues come from the Assessment Regional Workshop, held in Bamako, in October 2007***

### **\* How shall we improve listening and support activities in the future?**

- ◆ Training a larger number of WCYs to listening techniques. Improving training through listening activities;
- ◆ Getting more in touch with children in cities and villages rather than "waiting for" them. Paying visits to children in prison;
- ◆ Setting up listening spaces in cities and in villages;
- ◆ Documenting listening activities (through the printing of documents or other supports);
- ◆ Bringing moral support to children "listened to" (solidarity with them, counseling, etc). Negotiations with tutors (both male and female);
- ◆ Supporting their immediate needs and orientation towards partner structures that can help them. Facilitating access to vocational trainings and taking part in the follow-up (support from authorities and institutions).

### **\* How shall we improve public awareness campaigns in the future?**

- ◆ Helping actors deliver clear and understandable messages<sup>11</sup> in national languages (clear concepts);
- ◆ Involving concerned children in the activities, and identifying their need for information (starting from what they already know);
- ◆ Improving quality.

### **\* How shall we improve the creation of grassroots groups?**

- ◆ Never imposing the creation of grassroots groups (as a primarily condition to co-operate);
- ◆ Sharing information and reinforcing existing organized children and youth;
- ◆ Developing more groups in neighbouring villages, in order to set up new WCY village associations (made of several groups); this might create various challenges when they participate in the National Coordination of WCY associations.
- ◆ Offering more trainings opportunities, so that they can grow up and solve their problems, themselves.

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<sup>11</sup> *A series of messages has been drafted during the Bamako Workshop (cf. annex in this document).*

**\* How shall we improve partnerships and collaborations?**

- ◆ Training the National Coordination (on lobbying, fundraising, management, leadership and communication), in order to mobilize partners;
- ◆ Creating synergies between popular actors and women, peasants, religious, community, traditional associations and trade unions;
- ◆ Reinforcing collaboration with the authorities, supporting structures and NGOs;
- ◆ Planning activities with partners and being included in national programmes;
- ◆ Creating advisory committees with partners.

**\* How shall we improve activities in the future?**

- ◆ Ensuring a better follow-up of the AWCYs and of the National Coordination;
- ◆ Documenting all those activities and dispatching them.

**\* How are we going to do it?**

1. By carrying on awareness campaigns and information actions on the WCYs' "12 rights", early migration, child trafficking and abuses inflicted upon children and youth.
2. Helping them to "settle down " in their origin places;
3. Protecting and securing child migration.

***Our AMWCY should focus on prevention:  
awareness campaigns, listening, organization,  
orientation, education and training.***

***We must inform about the risks  
and consequences of migration, and also inform about WCY  
associations presence everywhere,  
and support children "who migrate"  
in order to make them much less vulnerable.***

### **III- ADDED VALUE OF THE AMWCY IN ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST EARLY MIGRATION AND CHILD TRAFFICKING**

#### **A- Children's words**

During their regional workshop, WCYs enunciated some key points on "what they are able to do" (and what makes them different). They presented them to friends and partners:

■ *If a child is crying under the rain, we will stop to ask to him what is wrong and we will help him. (Rama)*

■ *We are able to know if a child needs help, even if he says nothing. (Jacques)*

■ *No matter the time and the day, if a child in difficult situation comes to us, we will take care of him. Then, we will inform the authorities. (Yves)*

■ *Those children trust us, they open their hearts to us as we open ours to them. We have thousands of hearts which do not ask for salaries. (Seynabou)*

■ *We are able to get to the village to speak to children, on foot, on bike, even under the sun. (Bassirou)*

■ *We know how to make ourselves understood through sketches, songs and words that reach children and their parents. (Rabi)*

■ *We are everywhere, even in places in which others do not dare to go. (Hadiza)*

■ *We accept others just the way they are (Jéronime)*

■ *We are able to offer, to our friends living in villages, courage and methods to solve their problems. (Bossiadé)*

■ *We do not consider borders; everywhere we go, we are "parents" (genuine "African integration").*

#### **B- Comments**

Children's status on the African continent might appear limited. Culturally, they are in a position of "respect" vis-à-vis their elders; but their demographic importance (children make up the largest portion of the population in Africa) and the widespread of poverty, illness, political instability and rampant unemployment, obliges them to play the part of economic, social, and even "political" actors. The AMWCY's actions are developed within this framework, where the success and sustainability of structures that properly support children, largely depends on those children's participation in that endeavor.

The AMWCY's approach derives in part from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It mostly derives from the children themselves, its members and the others not yet members. AMWCY encourages them to appropriate their rights, taking them and their self-respect back with their own hands. In this way, African children become their own rights' not only "defenders" but also "creators". Thus, AMWCY is building a coherent and feasible child rights building approach. It offers to children a choice between, participate to the implementation of their rights on a day to day base, or not participate, and remain speechless objects, in a position of "no rights, (thus no power)". The AMWCY is aware that African children tend to seek "social security" from their personal relationships in a system of interaction that becomes something like a "moral economy", a crucially important form of support received from family, neighbors and especially peer groups. The AMWCY operates in the same way; its actions are deployed within a network of support, communication and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by kin, community, peer groups and other affiliations. Within the AMWCY community, then, children can find protection, help and social advancement. AMWCY possesses the capability to work with and among children in long lasting relationships, utilizing their knowledge and understanding of local languages and values and their skills in promoting endogenous change.

### **B1- Extensive human and relational resources**

Today, in the five countries concerned by this study "Migrant children: from victims into actors": Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali and Niger, the AMWCY includes 70,849 members, as well as potential members, within 68 federated associations located in urban and rural communities. Then, they are clustered into 489 grassroots groups which are made up of working children and youth, such as housemaids, market salesgirls, independent working children, apprentices and schoolboys and girls working part time. The AMWCY is the main voice for African children and youth living in "difficult situations": those who have not been provided with basic social services like education, health care, or sanitation. Because of its extensive human and relational experience, the AMWCY can get in touch with a large number of children and youth who are on the verge of leaving their home villages or countries (or setting off for migration), who are already in transit, or children who have already reached their destination places. The AMWCY's recognition towards creating multiple alliances with adult and formal institutions and organizations (families, local/national authorities, traditional chiefs, international organizations, NGOs and other partners) allows him to increase legitimacy and to strengthen its capacity to communicate in an effective way with the target communities.

### ***Relevant strategy to prevent risks connected to child migration***

- Wide and transnational network through origin and transit areas, to follow and support children in every stage of their route.
- Facilitation of relationships between children, families, communities, and local authorities.
- Ability to weave numerous links and relationships between actors, in order to find solutions to problems.
- Ability to reach a large number of children.

### ***Benefits to Society***

- The AMWCY helps children from being abused.
- Because of its wide and accessible network, children can report abuse, speak to counselors and ask for support and advice without fear of reprisal.
- The AMWCY' involvement starts at the grassroots level, where problems first arise.
- Having strong communication skills and an important knowledge corpus, the AMWCY is able to provide information to WCYs, communities, authorities and other actors concerned. It has got the will, as well as the capacity to support their strategic and planned choices.

## **B2- "Humble" approach**

The WCYs belong to the original environment of migrant children, fostered children or trafficked children. Therefore, they are very familiar with their local languages and codes. This provides the AMWCY with easier access to information and a better relationship with the target populations. This "humble" approach is one of the main features of the AMWCY: its policies respect established social hierarchies, and its approach is open-minded and flexible.

A clear example of this humble approach, is the way they use "communication tools", which are suited to the usual practices of information used by local communities, through songs, musical programmes, skeches, images, testimonies on migrant children, and door to door campaigns. WCYs also organize leisure activities through football matches, programmes on special topics, and other games, in order to increase children's trust in organizing themselves. The AMWCY has successfully combined its methodologies of participatory action-research in order to find solutions to children's problems through a closer physical and moral approach.

***Relevant strategy***

- Increasing children's trust through experiences and skills acquired.
- Facilitation of action-research activities performed by target children and youth so that they can find solutions to their own problems.
- The AMWCY's approach is flexible and open to changes. This allows a quick re-positioning of its actions according to feedback from target children.
- The AMWCY's "horizontal" approach enhances its closeness to the target children, increasing access to information.
- The AMWCY's efforts and interest to develop the conceptual framework of its actions, bring more effective and appropriate strategies towards target children
- The AMWCY has developed original education and practices regarding risks connected to child migration, and shares them gladly with other organizations.

***Benefits to Society***

- Contribution to policies towards children and communities needs: education, health care and social welfare. These services become more effective and accessible, once target populations contribute, as proposed by WCYs who sometimes help them through informal education.
- Creation of opportunities for children's voices to be heard, allowing society to be more aware of the problems, needs, desires and aspirations of children.
- Induction of a better communication flow between generations, in order to reduce violence and help developing social harmony.

**B3- The right balance between formal and informal**

As many African societies operate in both formal and informal sectors, the AMWCY acts as a middleman between "the informal part of society" and the institutional system. The AMWCY's strength and credibility are based on its capacity to turn the child protection issue into more comprehensible terms; on its "know-how" to pass on available information towards target people's specific problems. Its "humble" and flexible approach, allows the AMWCY to deal with situations where the institutional system is inoperative or too expensive. The AMWCY's strategy is coherent with its willingness to set up synergies between informal and formal levels of action, and also to acknowledge the importance of partnership with local, national and international actors. For these reasons, The AMWCY's informal approach is supported by its well organized and structured network, which mainly operates at the grassroots, as well as institutional levels, in partnership with NGOs, United Nations organizations, through the sharing of information and contribution to their campaigns (school registration, birth registration, HIV prevention reforestation, etc..).

***Relevant strategy***

■ Filling the gap between institutional policies and expected objectives: the AMWCY has suitable organizational structure to deal with the lack of resources, over-bureaucratization of intermediary structures and the lack of motivation/dynamism from public institutions;

■ By taking up the challenge of the exclusion from the informal through the formal sectors, and to clearly express these two mainsprings of society, the AMWCY allows full expression of its potentialities

■ By establishing partnerships with organizations having different mandates, missions, backgrounds and cultures, the AMWCY through the bridging of the formal and informal sectors, increases solidarity among actors and facilitates innovation and effective problem-solving dynamics.

***Benefits to Society***

■ Increase in the capacity of authorities and formal organizations to communicate with children, involving them in policy decisions on child protection, children's rights and civic participation.

■ Contribution towards the creation of a secure and strong environment where risks associated with child migration are effectively reduced.

**B4- From "victims to actors"**

Children and youth from the AMWCY provide examples of their own lives' improvement, when bringing together their peers from the same social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

This makes the AMWCY a legitimate promoter of an "endogenous" change, a transformation that takes place within a local framework, where tradition and inner values are re-invented and reproduced according to the problems faced in a modern world (for example, places where illiteracy does not exist anymore). The AMWCY's actions come from this source and tends to turning children and youth from "unknown victims" into "our friends" and then into "full independent actors", much less vulnerable and able to promote their own citizen participation.

***Relevant strategy***

■ Contribution to the emergence of new community forms of solidarity by setting up of new spaces where children can exchange their ideas and their experiences and also express themselves. Those new forms of solidarity challenge their anonymity and isolation, which are two major risk factors affecting migrant children.

■ Leadership in turning children into community actors and thus, into an evolution of their traditional role in society.

■ By the prevailing use of its own resources, the AMWCY's activities are not only sustained, but also lead towards the promotion of an endogenous development.

### *Benefits to Society*

- Activities with parents, in order to encourage them to improve relationships with their children.
- Emergence of new forms of solidarity among children and youth.
- Improvement of their living conditions and opportunities for getting information.
- The AMWCY teaches respect towards "other children" and towards "environment"
- Modes of endogenous activities are a "positive and rewarding" lesson, on a long term basis.

## **B5- Is the AMWCY an actor of change? Opinions of different authors**

Through their actions and their awareness-raising efforts towards populations about child migration and exploitation issue, the AWCYs give hope to the idea of possible "endogenous" change. The AWCY's asset is its capacity to gather people belonging to the same social economic and cultural contexts, we are referring to.

- According to **Cheikh Tidiane Touré**, who in 2007 was in charge of drafting a report synthesizing the evaluation of the AMWCY:

*"By becoming aware of their situation and beginning to face it, WCYs place themselves as genuine actors of change of their working and living conditions and situations.*

*Thus, from their status as marginalized actors, they pass to the status of actors of change, able to modify their living conditions. By exerting transformative leadership within their Movement and their communities, they acquire a new status through which they can play an important role in society. Their ability to engage in awareness-raising and their heightened level of civic engagement derives from the civic education they received".*

Cheikh Tidiane Touré then adds that, participation has a double meaning: *"On one hand, it derives from the process of becoming responsible for children and youth recognized as actors able to influence the decision making process. On the other hand, it is inscribed in a capacity building and authorization process of WCYs who learn to manage development projects."*

As **Malick Ndiaye** highlighted in his report on the parents' point of views (2006): "It is not only about training and educating them on harmonious and respectful relationships or on some rules about family living or within the context of work, but it is especially about *placing working children and youth in an actors' position in the creation of a global society*".

- **Rosalie Diop**, in her report on the AMWCY's studies and documents (2005): "*The major achievements are in the sphere of rights consecration, particularly in the development of expression, in the enlarging of the Movement and its solidarities, in its recognition by local and national authorities, and in the beginning of a contribution towards policies*".

- In his report on Senegal's AWCYs (2005) Prof **Leiten** pointed out: "*In the participatory approach, working children take the initiative, carry out projects and organize themselves into associations. It allows them to make decisions themselves. ENDA only supports their initiatives*". These words show the efficiency of the WCYs' participation in the implantation of projects for the benefit of their companions.

- **Hermen Ketel**, author of an evaluation report in Senegal (2006) highlighted: "*WCYs feel more respected by neighbours and consequently, neighbours find WCYs more respectful. WCYs said that they are better equipped to live in society and also to initiate professional lives. Their enhanced mental and physical health, thanks to the WCYs' activities, is an additional asset that allows them to better focus on their personal and professional development*".

- Prof. **Manfred Liebel** thinks that: "*Considering children as "subjects", does not mean denying the necessity of protecting them in bad circumstances, but this protection cannot come to the detriment of their rights to participate and to be part of the power sharing*".

He also refers to the AMWCY as a "*social environment*" that widely favours children's expression and give them the possibility of "*testing*" new forms of sociability, other than the ones they undergo within their different communities. It is a "*social space*" where children can develop their talents, capacities, and self-esteem. The AMWCY should therefore offer "*a cultural project that reflects society and at the same time imports new visions and practices for a better life*". He then adds that the Movement leads a "*cultural change of prospective vis-à-vis childhood*" by making children become independent subjects, not passive actors, following a career trajectory already determined by society. The Movement has an influential role in the process that can give the child a new place in society.

Thus, as a symbol, WCYs do not only represent an opportunity, (especially due to good results), but a possibility turned out to enhance life conditions of the most vulnerable population, and of those most affected by socio-economic problems. WCYs, eventually bring to fruition the hope of endogenous development (by themselves) for the children of Africa: a development based on the solidarity of values that induce an opening and "relational enrichment", regardless of borders and ethnic cleavages.

Throughout this study, many people assessed in their own words that the WCYs are a source of hope that has become more and more important for them. These people also confirmed that they have seen numerous improvements after the arrival and support of the WCYs in their villages. Although it is difficult to correctly assess the extent of the achievements obtained by WCY's actions on the field, their role as a source of hope to the population, is indeed tangible and has been proved through testimonies collected during this survey.

**Now, African children and youth need  
"African and alternative" models and hopes  
in a globalized world which induces them to search  
"wealth and happiness" outside their continent  
and away from their values.**



## **IV- CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Orientation for the way forward, improvements for project sustainability and ways to reinforce the efficiency of the WCY's actions.*

**- To refrain from systematically preventing migration while developing an active "listening" posture towards victims,** as causes of migration arise most often from the structural dysfunctions of society, that cannot be quickly solved. One of WCY's "lessons learned" is that the obstinacy in discouraging children from migrating and in stigmatizing their families does not constitute a viable approach to solving the problem. Instead, the development of an active listening attitude toward victims, secures the follow-up in their migration, and ensures a safe displacement and salaried activities.

**- To continue the development of Income Generating Activities, without precluding the access of children and youth to education:** WCYs wish for children and youth to expand their personal resources by engaging in (Income Generating Activities) IGAs while pursuing their formal education.

The idea is to stimulate in children and youth the idea of "not putting all their eggs into one basket" by providing them with more avenues in which they can succeed.

In some villages, students are members of grassroots groups who wish to support and encourage their peers; also, the hours and spaces of training and leisure areas take into account the classes' starting hours

**- To reinforce and place value on alliances and collaborations among the AWCYs, service providers (protection, security and justice), transporters and embassies** aim to facilitate communication, motivate all actors' actions, bring information to any place where they are present, and better protect and secure migrants in destination areas (through declarations, establishment of employment contracts, respect of contract clauses, etc.).

**- To promote and to multiply actions that develop means for the WCYs to protect themselves:** knowledge and capacity building, development of economic initiatives, professional trainings, etc. in order to "fix" those who want to stay in their home villages and cities, and to encourage exchanges among children's groups in those villages and cities.

- **To research, establish and invest/cover the maximum of places:** the goal is to enhance the AMWCY's presence at the national and transnational levels, and reach the most isolated and least-informed zones.
  
- **To reinforce autonomous skills of children and youth in order to let them, in the long run, protect and get organized themselves and mutually.**
  
- **Preserving benevolence and work principles within the AMWCY:** the AMWCY's force lies in the strength of will and the determination of its members. Since its creation, the AMWCY's motive has been the personal (and unpaid) investment of everybody for the collective cause.

In fact, to face the (understandable) fear of partners, worried about the potential "professionalization" of the Movement, the AMWCY must anticipate the possible "denaturing" and deviation of the motivation on which the Movement and its development are based.

The Movement survives only from its members' will, and is based on the platform of organized voluntary work. Now, in order to secure its own sustainability and convince its partners that it is pursuing a determined idea, the AMWCY is interested in maintaining its working method in order to ensure that members' motivations are in line with the movement's spirit.

Thus, the point is to remain working in this direction, and ceaselessly remind former and future members that involvement in the Movement must follow the AMWCY's core principles, and cannot be motivated by personal or "external" ambitions.

## V- ANNEXES

### **Regional Workshop Assessment of Capitalization on WCYs' Best Practices in the fight against early migration and Child Trafficking.**

**Bamako, 15 to 19 October 2007**

### **The Bamako Declaration**

**Since 1994 we have been acting to achieve our right to "stay in the village and not set off for migration" and to fight against all forms of exploitation.**

In 2004 we set up a plan to fight against "early migration and Child Trafficking" in eight West African countries. Three years later, we decided to conduct a survey in order to better understand where we are. For five months, we gathered hundreds of stories and interviews from children, parents, authorities, transporters, etc... Together, we analyzed all the information in five countries, and then, here in Bamako, we reflected on the lessons to be learnt from all this information and analysis.

**Exploitation** is to make a child work a long time, hardly and excessively, refusing to pay all or a part of the agreed wage. Not to respect the agreement or contract. To take a maximum advantage of the child's labour to make profits, and not allow him/her to thrive by implementing his/her WCYs' 12 rights.

**Child abuse and violence are frequent and well known;** we reject the imposition of physical and psychological sufferings to the children, the same sufferings that no one would even like for himself/herself.

**Child Trafficking** is like trading. The child is displaced, exploited, abused, even if he was the one who wanted to leave, he would never find what he looked for. They flout his/her dignity. Even if it is not easy to understand when there is "trafficking", we must condemn it and prevent it from going on. To listen and to help children in the best way possible: if they want to go back, just help them to go, if they want to stay and get trained, help them to stay.

**Early migration** is bad, and we are doing our best we can to prevent it.

**Migration that only benefits adults** who organize it, is bad, we condemn it; sometimes it turns into "Child Trafficking" which we condemn. **But we cannot stop those who want to leave** and discover city life. Our struggle is gradual to help children in the villages to have a more enjoyable life, and delay as much as possible the age of their departure. *We inform them, especially about the risks of exploitation and abuse, and give them some advice for their safety.*

- There are a lot of **dangers and risks** that you may face!
- **Look for the right information.** Ask for information before you leave. Once there, do not let people take advantage of you, carefully examine promises before accepting a job.
- **Do not remain isolated**, but rather get organized in the village and in town, remain in touch with us.

■ **Parents** are not always able to prevent their children from leaving, sometimes they even encourage them to do so. We tell them:

- **Educate through dialogue**, to have their views and opinions, not through violence, brutality and insults. Improve the way you educate your children so that they feel at ease at home.
- **Do not let** your children go downtown **very early** to work.
- If they go downtown, **keep in touch with your children**, pay attention to them, if possible, call on them.

■ Our **authorities** should do everything possible to help in the development of villages.

- **Reinforce** education (and provide schools with equipment), health, training, socio-economic and leisure structures in villages so that children want to stay there.
  - **Promote** birth registration and identification of children.
  - **Strengthen** your children's safety, make sure that they are not exploited by punishing those who exploit us and abuse us.
  - **Help child-led organizations** (AWCYs, children's parliaments) by providing the material, human and financial resources to intensify their actions.
- Other actors** should be united in order to act effectively.

■ **Institutions and NGOs**

- Act more in the villages (starting points) to encourage children to stay
- Help children in the villages to develop activities (IGAs, training)
- Support the initiatives of child led organizations.

■ **Trade Unions of transporters**

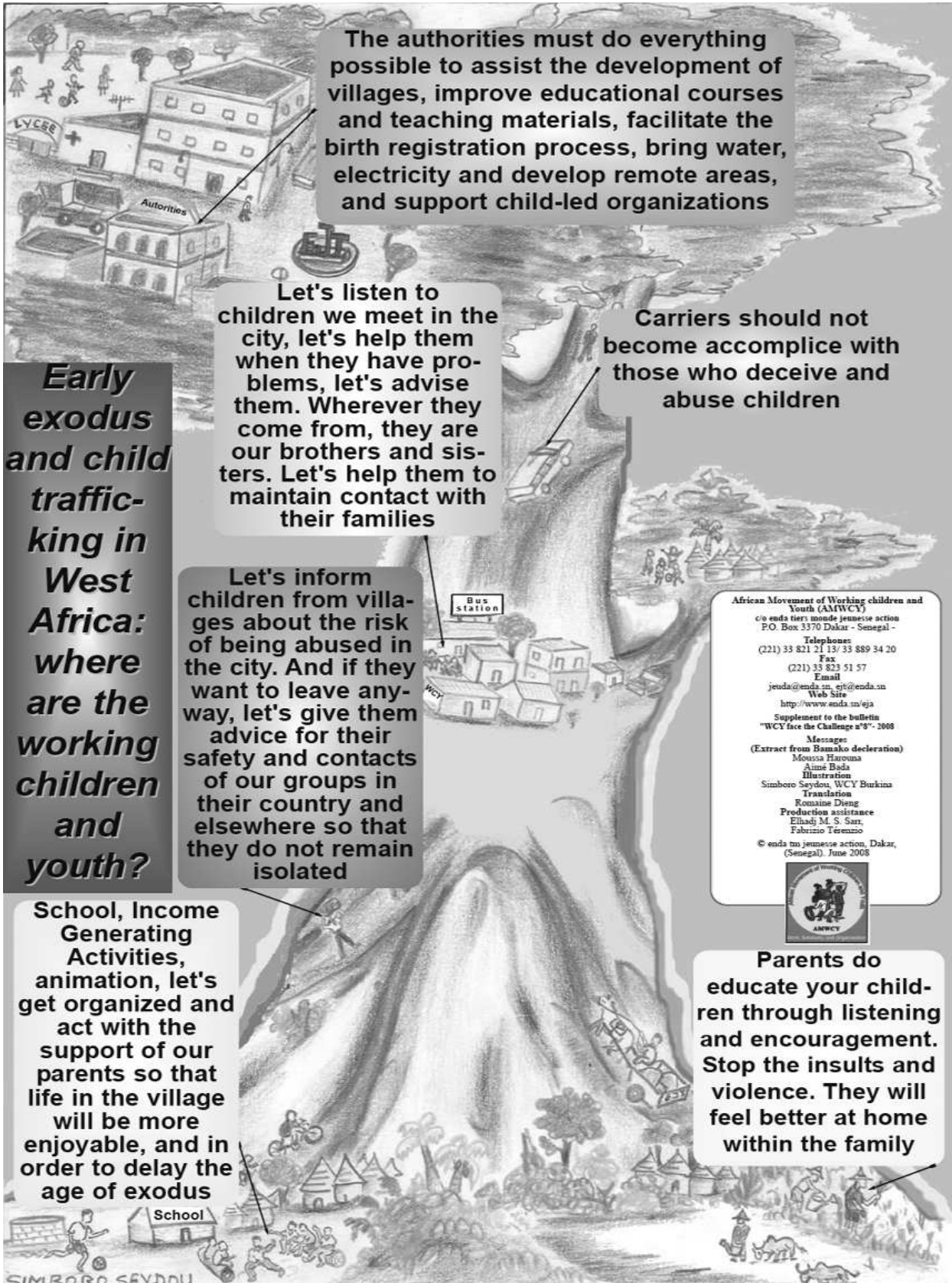
- Be vigilant and do not be accomplices.

*As for us, the AMWCY, we should focus on prevention: awareness, organization, listening, orientation, education, and training. Inform on the risks and consequences of migration, share information on the existence of AWCYs everywhere. We must reinforce communication between our AWCYs. Listen to and support children -our friends- who come into our communities. If life in the village improves, the children will no longer want to flee to the city. In places where children are organized, they are better protected and their rights are more respected.*

Drafted in Bamako, on October 19th, 2007

# Poster : “Early migration and child trafficking in West Africa : What progress have WCYs made?”

(Supplement to the AMWCY bulletin  
“WCY face the challenge” n°8, June 2008)



The authorities must do everything possible to assist the development of villages, improve educational courses and teaching materials, facilitate the birth registration process, bring water, electricity and develop remote areas, and support child-led organizations

Let's listen to children we meet in the city, let's help them when they have problems, let's advise them. Wherever they come from, they are our brothers and sisters. Let's help them to maintain contact with their families

Carriers should not become accomplice with those who deceive and abuse children

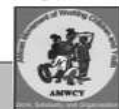
**Early exodus and child trafficking in West Africa: where are the working children and youth?**

Let's inform children from villages about the risk of being abused in the city. And if they want to leave anyway, let's give them advice for their safety and contacts of our groups in their country and elsewhere so that they do not remain isolated

School, Income Generating Activities, animation, let's get organized and act with the support of our parents so that life in the village will be more enjoyable, and in order to delay the age of exodus

Parents do educate your children through listening and encouragement. Stop the insults and violence. They will feel better at home within the family

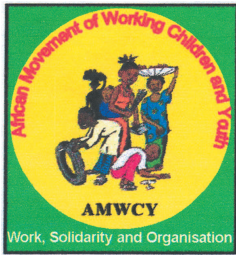
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# Migration and child trafficking in West Africa

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