

2 | Contexts of migration

'We arrived at the household of Ayaraga Mbilla at about 9 a.m. to begin the detailed questionnaire. The household head wasn't ready for us so we sat and waited under a tree. There was a man in his 30s sitting outside in the shade (the brother's son I think), who said he was "resting small" as he had spent all morning on the farm. A little apart, the young girl with the limp (polio I suspect) whom I'd noticed before, as usual was looking after the baby. She must be about ten or so. A boy a little older was husking maize and two other boys were just hanging around. A girl of about 15 came out of the compound with a basket of millet and started to winnow it. A group of about ten young men then arrived and grabbed sticks that were lying outside. They jostled and fought for the best ones, and then went inside with the household head's brother's son. There were pounding noises and occasionally they would burst into song. They were threshing rice. Two tiny children in the distinctive purple uniform of the nursery school arrived. We asked them why they had come back from school. They were so shy they were barely able to bring themselves to talk to us. Apparently, the teachers had a meeting in town so had sent the children home. They went inside and then reappeared minutes later, minus uniforms, and disappeared off; to play presumably. Even now, I still can't get used to how such young children are free to move around unsupervised. A young woman then appeared and started breastfeeding the baby. She said something to the teenage girl who went off, after fetching a large basin from inside. She came back about 15 minutes later with water, I assume for the threshing party since it was not from the nearby well, but from the borehole. The household head then arrived and apologised for keeping us waiting. He commented that he had forgotten we were coming today and that the household's women "had escaped early" for work, since it is harvesting time, so they were not available to be interviewed. Nor were his brother's granddaughter and grandson, who were at school.' (Field notes from Ghana, 15 November 2000)

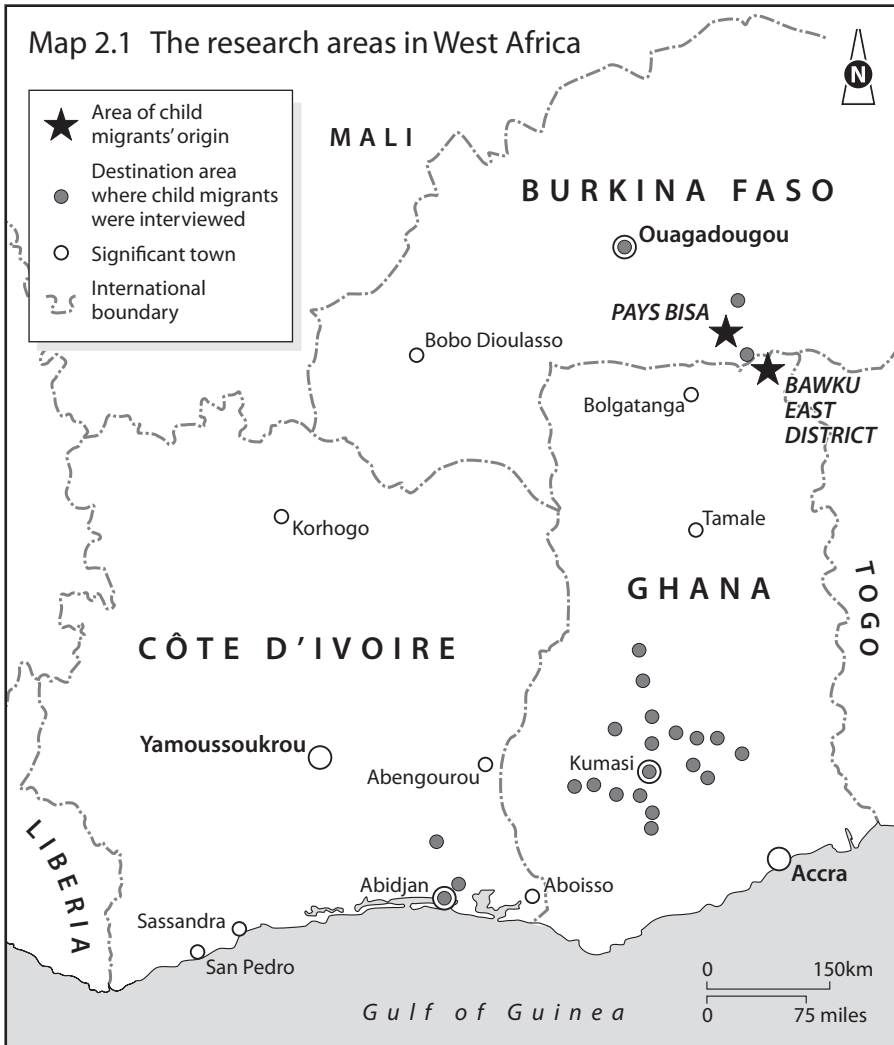
This extract from one of our field diaries represents a typical morning during harvest time in farming households of the savannah areas of West Africa, where we have undertaken our research. It illustrates how children are occupied with a variety of activities that include work, in addition to learning and play. These dimensions of rural childhood contrast with the universalized ideals of childhood discussed in the opening chapter, which portray childhood as a 'work-free,

dependent, vulnerable and care-receiving phase of life' (Abebe 2007: 78) and one consisting of school or playful leisure (Boyden 1997; Robson 2004b: 239). Undoubtedly the extent and nature of children's work varies according to a variety of factors such as age, gender, household wealth and whether they are raised in a rural or urban setting (Punch 2001a: 806). Nonetheless, for many children work can and does occupy a significant amount of their time (Hashim 2004; Katz 2004; Nieuwenhuys 1994; Reynolds 1991).

Significantly, work is a central part of children's identity formation and both self-perceptions and others' perceptions of them as 'a good child' (Hashim 2004: 83). This is well illustrated in a conversation that took place in the Upper East Region of Ghana with fifteen-year-old Aduma, as he built a protective mud wall around his onion seedlings planted on land 'begged' (borrowed) from a neighbour whom he had repaid with onion seed.

If they send you [to the farm] and you go, your parents will note this and help you. Those that don't go will be seen as a bad child. When I'm free I go to my own work. I decide myself. If I don't and sit down, how will I get to eat [...] All that children do in the household is important because it brings money to the household and the children can even get money and give it to the landlord [household head] to drink *pito* [millet beer]. [...] My work for my family is important because it is where they will get their food to eat. It is also good for me because I'll get food too and get strength that will allow me to go to my own work and get money [...] Because of my work for them, if I have friends to help me with my rice farming, they will fetch millet for me to prepare food for them. [...] And when I marry my father will give me the animals for my bride-wealth.

Adamu's narrative introduces the general discourse on children's position in their household in his community and underscores our argument that a narrow conceptualization of childhood as a period free from work does not capture the reality of childhood in the West African context. His description and understanding of his work, its role in acquiring practical and social skills, as well as its economic significance, and the role it plays in creating interdependencies between different categories of people inside and outside of the household, demonstrate how the universalized ideals of childhood are entirely inadequate for understanding many children's lives. We argue, therefore, that it is imperative to pay attention to the set of ideas and practices that constitute childhood in a particular context and acknowledge their validity, even if they differ from the universalized model. Only through addressing the specific forms of childhood experience that are the context for migration decisions is it possible to understand children's migration. In this chapter, we lay the foundation for a situated understanding of the young migrants who are the primary focus of the book by providing information about the rural areas from which they originate. This is important for following our arguments in the subsequent chapters but, at the



abstract level, the chapter also raises questions that are imperative to examine in every context where children's mobility is scrutinized.

Communities generating child migrants

Although the children we have undertaken research with come from communities located in different countries and colonial language zones and are comprised of different ethnic groups (Bisa in Burkina Faso and Kusasi in Ghana¹), as is evident from the map above, they are located only some 125 miles apart and share many social, cultural and economic similarities. Historically, the two communities are linked through the resettlement during colonial rule of Bisa families in the area inhabited by Kusasi without subsequent ethnic

conflicts. In this section, the similarities between our communities will be laid out, which will also facilitate a discussion at the end of the chapter of the differences in migratory trajectories evidenced in the two contexts, particularly along gender lines, despite these similarities. This will serve to illustrate further the importance of in-depth knowledge of the context from which children move when attempting to comprehend fully children's independent migration.

The communities in which we work are among the poorest in Burkina Faso and Ghana. In Burkina Faso, Pays Bisa is located in Province du Boulgou, Région Centre-est, where the proportion of the population earning an income below the national poverty line of 82,672 CFA francs per year (approximately US\$0.36 per day) was 55.1 per cent in 2003 (INSD 2008a). Asset-based well-being indicators also show that 23.4 per cent of the households in this region are poor and 34.0 per cent very poor – values that are somewhat higher than those for the entire country, which are 21.5 per cent and 23.3 per cent respectively (INSD 2008b). Levels of poverty are comparable to those of the Bawku East district² of the Upper East Region of Ghana, from where the children in the Ghanaian research originate. The region was identified as the poorest in the country and one where poverty had got worse when Canagarajah and Pörtner examined the regional trends in poverty in Ghana on the basis of the 1991/92 and 1998/99 rounds of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (Canagarajah and Pörtner 2002: 22).

Both communities' principal livelihood strategy consists of farming, which is rain-fed and has a low level of mechanization where ox-ploughs substitute for the hoe – for those who can afford an ox or its hire. They are also both located within a large belt of West African savannah in which households on average are quite large, and inheritance and kinship affiliation is patrilineal. The communities are exogamous, with wives moving to live in their husbands' communities on marriage. One other important common feature of these societies is the way in which households are organized as intricate layers of sub-units through which individuals are linked with one another and make claims on resources. What this means is that, normatively, household heads have a heavy responsibility for ensuring sufficient food for all household members ('dependants' or 'juniors') and for managing livestock, so larger expenses for healthcare, funerals and young men's marriage can be met (Whitehead 1998: 22–5). To do this they use the labour of all household members, who are expected to contribute to production on household farms. By working in this way, household members make implicit claims on food, shelter and other collective resources. Household heads are also concerned about maintaining a web of social relations to facilitate good marriages for children of both genders, and to access resources and assistance if need be (Thorsen 2005: 96–101).

In addition to their work on the compound farms, all household members are allowed to farm independently, organizing the work and controlling the crops or income realized. The extent to which they are able to spend time on

these independent economic activities, however, depends on the gender, age and status of a dependant. We found that, as was the case in earlier years (see Whitehead 1996)³, among the Kusasi, young male youth, for example, spend considerable time in household fields and may be 'sent out' to communal work parties. In contrast, a middle-aged but junior brother of a household head may have his own granaries and considerable independent income and largely be providing separately for his wives and children. He may work on his older brother's farms only on certain symbolic occasions. The household head will still call on his wives and children, and in return each wife will have a share in the periodic distributions of grain from the household head's granaries (*ibid.*). Similar patterns for the organization of male labour exist among the Bisa, but here women have a more significant role in household food security. In Zéké village, for example, married women's independent farms accounted for around one third of the cultivated land in 1997/98 and much of their land was planted with millet, the main staple (Thorsen 2002). Although girls and women work in the household fields⁴ and attend working parties on behalf of the household head, they sometimes negotiate and are allocated time to work on their own farms for the entire day, especially in households where many women are the wives of absent migrants or are widowed (Thorsen 2005).

Women's obligations are demanding, given both the nature of labour hierarchies in these contexts and the arduousness of domestic tasks. In addition to their roles in farming, they are responsible for processing foodstuffs and for providing ingredients for the soups that accompany the staple porridge. They are also responsible for other domestic tasks, such as childcare, water collection, cooking and cleaning. In contrast to their responsibilities in farming, however, Kusasi women do this work only for their husbands and children (Hashim 2004; Whitehead 1996), while age-based hierarchies among Bisa women imply that young married women carry out much domestic work for their mother-in-law and often serve an elderly household head food and water (Thorsen 2005). The hierarchical system of control and command over labour means that a successful household head is one who manages the balance between the various kinds of activities of household members and who is successful in the social management of negotiations and tensions around this (Whitehead 1996: 111–12).

From a young age, children are encouraged and expected to contribute to the household's subsistence. This is a theme we will treat in more detail below; here it suffices to offer a quick overview of what is expected of children growing up in these farming communities. From when they are first able to toddle around, children are helping with tasks such as caring for their siblings and running errands. From age seven onwards their activities begin to make a contribution to the running of the household and to its livelihood activities. By the age of fourteen, they are carrying out all those tasks that adults of their gender are able and expected to do. Children's tasks are gendered to the extent that few

activities are undertaken both by boys and by girls. Adolescents are significant labour assets. Girls are essential to the domestic running of most households, since domestic labour is both arduous and time-consuming. Most women farm and/or engage in income-generating activities, such as the brewing of beer or trade, so they benefit from the additional labour of young girls or their taking over of domestic tasks so the mother has more time on her hands (Hashim 2004: 58). As we have noted, male youth, too, are significant labour assets, and the part they play in communal work parties secures their household heads' moral claims on labour when they require their own reciprocal labour, which is important in contexts such as these, given the labour-intensive nature of particular farming tasks (Whitehead 1996: 253).

Unpredictable rainfall coupled with highly depleted soil fertility and increasing demands on land in the face of a growing population has meant that it is difficult to secure subsistence through farming (Awumbila 1997; Devereux 1992; Dietz and Millar 1999; Mazzucato and Niemeijer 2000; Reenberg and Lund 1998; Roncoli et al. 2002). In both areas, cotton and rice have been introduced as cash crops. Although rice is an important cash crop in the Bawku East district, in Pays Bisa long delays in the provision of grain for seeding and payment for cotton crops, as well as falling prices, have undermined the economic potential of these crops. Even in the Bawku East district, despite this diversification, making a living from farming is a stressful and arduous task. Consequently, as we have noted, most households in both areas are very poor, and, like other farming households in such circumstances, they engage in multiple activities to secure their immediate as well as long-term well-being (see Whitehead and Kabear 2001). These livelihood activities include the rearing of livestock, hand-irrigated gardening and off-farm activities, such as petty trading or artisan production. The other key livelihood strategy for both communities is that of migration.

Histories of migration

The literature on migration frequently presents the movement of individuals away from a household as a means of reducing demand on scant resources and/or of diversifying potential sources of income (Cordell et al. 1996; de Haan 1999; Hoddinott 1992). Certainly, for many years, large numbers of people have travelled out of rural areas to take up seasonal or longer-term work (Cordell et al. 1996; Breusers 1998; Zongo 2003). The migration system from the West African savannah to the plantations in the coastal countries has been comparable in importance and duration with the system of labour migration to the mines in southern Africa (Cordell et al. 1996). The communities in which we work are no exception. When addressing the migration of children independently of their families, it is important to take into consideration these scales of migration, as well as their history, to understand how people of all ages think about relocation, the status of migrants and the effects of migration on well-being.

In the Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), the movement of people, especially of young men, soared in the years of colonial rule, when the French developed a system of taxation and labour conscription to pay for the costs of the administration and to develop the Ivorian plantation economy (Breusers 1998: 102; Şaul and Royer 2001: 88). These policies were similar to those of other colonial powers; the difference being the degree of force imposed on the local population to make them comply with the colonial rulers' objectives. While the French coerced their subjects to work on French-owned plantations in Côte d'Ivoire, the British colonial administration pursued a policy of underdeveloping the north of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) precisely to promote its role largely as a labour reserve for the south (Thomas 1973). Migrants from Burkina Faso also moved to the cocoa-growing areas of the Gold Coast, in part to evade labour conscription and in part to benefit from the higher wages. However, when the cocoa economy declined in the late 1950s, along with northern Ghanaians, they increasingly shifted their migration from Ghana to the thriving cocoa farms in Côte d'Ivoire (Anarfi and Kwankye 2003; Finnegan 1976).

Earlier sources describe migration from the savannah as occurring during the long dry season, when there was little or no farm work to be done (Caldwell 1969); however, by the 1970s most labour migration was much more long term, with men staying away for several years (Cordell et al. 1996; Whitehead 1996). By the late 1980s, long-term migrants from northern Ghana also shifted their destinations from cocoa-growing areas to work in rural Côte d'Ivoire because of the adverse economic situation throughout Ghana. By 2000, adult male migrants had been joined by significant numbers of women and children and were working and living away, and more migrants were once again working in the cocoa-growing regions of Ghana, which by then had expanded from the south into the centre of the country. Migrants of rural origin did not limit themselves to plantation work but also spread into the cities to take up various kinds of trades, piecemeal work and other income-generating activities, especially when world cocoa prices declined throughout the 1990s, making its production less profitable (Amanor 2001).

The history of female migrants is not described to the same extent and in the same detail as past male migrations. However, a few studies in francophone West Africa have examined panel data on migration to shed light on gender differences among migrants aged twelve to twenty-five. A study in Burkina Faso showed that whereas in the 1950s female first-time migrants were either family helpers or enumerated as 'unoccupied', their occupations had become more diverse by the late 1980s and 1990s. By then 39 per cent of the young female migrants were self-employed, 15 per cent were students, 2 per cent apprentices, 2 per cent private sector employees and the remaining 42 per cent family helpers or 'unoccupied' (Le Jeune et al. 2004: 161–6). Another study from Mali combining census panel data and interviews shows that while boys' labour migration rose

steadily in the 1940s and 1950s, girls' labour migration picked up only in the early 1970s. By the 1990s, boys mostly travelled to other rural areas to work as farm labour and herders, while 90 per cent of the girls travelled to urban areas to become domestic workers. This migration is particularly important for girls, argue the authors, because they build up a material and symbolic capital that enables them to assert themselves in a more personal way and increases the way they are valued by their peers, but also by young men (Hertrich and Lesclingand 2007). Lambert's historical analysis of young Jola women's migration in Senegal shows that some girls and young women migrated to the Senegambian groundnut basin in the 1930s, where they helped their brothers and received a small remuneration in kind for their work. Jola women became independent migrants in the 1950s and 1960s when increasing urbanization opened up possibilities for domestic work (Lambert 2007).

In spite of the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, which escalated in 2002, migration to the country remains a source of livelihood for both rural populations. This is especially so for the Burkinabé migrants who, in 1998, comprised 56 per cent of the migrant population in Côte d'Ivoire, whereas a mere 3.3 per cent were Ghanaian migrants. About half of the Burkinabé migrants and one quarter of the Ghanaian migrants were born in Côte d'Ivoire (Bredeloup 2003: 90–91). Although many were forced to leave the country early in the civil war, many also remained, either because they were too poor to return or because they had invested all their savings in property or businesses with a view to remaining permanently. The accounts told by people in Pays Bisa in 2005 revealed that, throughout the civil war, both men and women continued to travel to and from Côte d'Ivoire because the wage levels and income from trade were still considerably higher than in Burkina Faso, in spite of the deteriorating employment opportunities.

Thus, the historical roots of migration in both areas have continued as a dominant experience for most households in the region, to the extent that the 2000 Population and Housing Census found that of the 379,007 Kusasi indigenous to the Upper East Region of Ghana, only 192,360 were residing there (GSS 2002: 23). Surveys we each undertook in our communities of origin indicate similarly high levels of migration. For example, 68 per cent of household heads in the village of Tempene Natinga in Ghana's Upper East Region reported that they had at least one adult male migrant and 13.5 per cent had four or more in 2001.⁵ Similarly, in Zéké village in Pays Bisa, 85 per cent of the households had at least one adult male migrant and 12 per cent had four or more in 2005.⁶

Children may also have spent their early years in towns or villages in Côte d'Ivoire or southern Ghana or have seen their mothers travel abroad to spend a couple of years with their father before returning to the village. With few exceptions, the current generation of fathers and grandfathers in Pays Bisa and Bawku East district have been migrants to the central and southern regions of Ghana or to Côte d'Ivoire, as have some mothers and some grandmothers.

At social gatherings, stories about migrant life and urban lifestyles in Accra, Abidjan, Kumasi and Ouagadougou often crop up, both to reinforce the social status attained as migrants and to obtain information about current migrants. Children see older relatives leave the village and return looking fatter and more smartly dressed, and bringing gifts and money to invest in livestock, housing, consumer items and other desirable objects.

Clear, too, is that children's migration without their parents is also extensive. For example, in Tempane Natinga, 51 of its 96 households reported having at least one independent child migrant. Moreover, the total is probably higher, given the sex-ratio discrepancy between girls and boys (190 to 257 respectively), which is likely to be due in part to the under-reporting of girl migrants. Moreover, migration was not only out of the village but also into it; the polio-inflicted girl in the opening extract being one example. The normality of children's movement between households is well illustrated in the following case study of just one household in Ghana's Upper East Region.

A young man, Paul, who is aged 30, heads this farming household. Paul is the most junior of five brothers, the other four brothers being migrants, three in the south of Ghana and one in Côte d'Ivoire. Other household members include Paul's aged mother, his wife and their baby daughter. In addition, Paul's wife's teen-aged sister lives with them to help with childcare and domestic work while her elder sister carries out some petty trading and trains as a seamstress. Another teen-aged girl living in the household is the second-born brother's daughter who helps her grandmother with her domestic work. Also in the household is one of Paul's eldest brother's sons, aged about 17, and the third-born brother's 14-year-old son, who was sent back by his parents in order to receive 'traditional' treatment for the epilepsy from which he suffers. The 17-year-old moved into the household a few years earlier to assist Paul by looking after the livestock and to carry out farm work. Prior to this, his older brother had lived in this household for a number of years for the same reason. He had then moved to the third brother's household, in Côte d'Ivoire, to look after this brother's family and property while the brother was away on long trips, trading in kola and other goods between Ghana and Nigeria.

Children's worlds and work

Children in the majority world undertake a myriad of work tasks. Girls and boys of all ages work in rural locations in agriculture, in domestic tasks and as cattle-herders (Abebe 2007; Hashim 2004; Katz 2004; Nieuwenhuys 1994; Punch 2001a; Reynolds 1991), as well as in fishing (Anarfi and Kwankye 2003; Caouette 2001). They work in the informal economy of urban areas as hawkers, shoe shiners and porters (Agarwal et al. 1997; Anarfi and Kwankye 2003; Beauchemin 1999; Castle and Diarra 2003; Khair 2005; Kwankye et al. 2007; Thorsen 2007b),

as garbage collectors (Khair 2005), as well as assistants to market women (Robson 2004a; Schildkrout 1981). They can work as carers (Robson 2004b) and be employed in factories (Cauoette 2001; Nieuwenhuys 1995), in shops, restaurants (Castle and Diarra 2003; Thorsen 2009c) and hotels (Iversen 2002), in mining (Bøås and Hatløy 2008), the construction industry, commercial agriculture (Bastia 2005; Punch 2007), and as domestic workers (Camacho 1999; Jacquemin 2004; Khair 2005; Somerfelt 2001) and in the commercial sex industry (Cauoette 2001; Montgomery 2001; O'Connell Davidson 2005).

These various studies of children's work indicate that children's tasks can be paid or unpaid, that they can work for themselves, for their families or for others, and that the work in which they participate involves a wide range and varying degrees of hazard (Hashim 2008). The majority, though, are more concerned with children working in abusive and exploitative situations, primarily because they are oriented towards advocacy or policy issues, often responding to the huge attention that the issues of child labour and child trafficking have received in the last decade or so. This international advocacy has been effective in highlighting the plight of those children in particularly difficult circumstances. However, it has also resulted in a totalizing discourse where the diversity of children's experiences and work situations becomes treated as equivalent, reducing all working children to the status of victims, and serving to shore up a characterization of them as without agency (O'Connell Davidson 2005; Whitehead and Hashim 2005).

It has also had a number of other repercussions. For one, certain aspects of children's work have remained largely unconsidered. Katz, for instance, bemoans the paucity of data on children's labour in rural areas, especially in domestic work, arguing that even when it is discussed it is rarely documented systematically, which she suggests reflects the metropolitan concern with remuneration and the market (Katz 2004: 279). It is also the case that work for one's own household has tended to be considered as 'helping out' and not genuine work (see, for example, Bequele and Boyden 1988; ILO 1997); consequently, little attention has been given to children's work in the domestic arena (Hashim 2004: 16). This is despite the fact that many children work as unremunerated members of their families' labour force (Nieuwenhuys 1994: 203); the majority of the 90 per cent of child labour in Ghana, for example, being unpaid family workers involved in family farms and enterprises (Canagarajah and Coulombe 1997: 10). Zelizer, for her part, argues that the dominance of attention to child labour and its representation as a corrupting force has inhibited careful examination of children's economic activity, little consideration being given to children as authentic economic agents (Zelizer 2002: 377). Whitehead et al. suggest that this is largely due to perceptions of children as economic dependants in the family (Whitehead et al. 2007: 37–8).

Third, a very austere picture of children's engagement in tasks that contribute

to production and reproduction has been painted. In contrast, many child-centred studies present an alternative picture. Katz, for example, refers to how play and work intertwine in children's lives in a village in the Sudan where she carried out her research, where children 'worked at play and played at work. They worked while they played and played while they worked, they worked around their play and they played in the interstices of their work' (Katz 2004: 60). In our own research, we frequently found that this was the case too, even when the work was tough, as three young cattle-herders made evident when they were observed taking turns to chase the cattle away from the crops, between times playing and wrestling and swimming in the dam.

This morning at 8 a.m. we found two young boys sitting under a tree while another boy was chasing some cattle away from crops. They were Michael, who is nine, Luke, who is ten or so, and Abugre, who is old for a herder at about 13. As usual, after some initial shyness, they were eager to tell me about their experiences. Apparently, they bring out the cattle at about 7 a.m. to graze and then take them down to the dam at around midday to drink, before finding a shady area to rest until sunset, when they take them home and pen them. They were looking after about 30 cattle in total and they take it in turns to chase the cattle away from the crops, starting with the most junior. When I asked them how they decided who was the most junior they told me it was decided by wrestling. They drank water from a well as we went down to the dam and took the opportunity to have a dip, although the respite didn't last long as other herders arrived and the animals got mixed up, so they chased their cattle, whacking them to separate them from the others. (Field notes from Ghana, 30 October 2000)

Girls in Pays Bisa used the occasion of work parties as an opportunity for gossip and banter.

Four adolescent girls, one of whom had recently married, had entered a small rotational work party arrangement with a woman in her mid-30s; this day, when we were working along, they were harvesting her bambara groundnuts and in the following days they would harvest each girl's field in turn. During the work we chatted and the girls were accusing the Fulani herders, who had settled in their village, of being sorcerers because one of them had beaten a pregnant woman from the neighbouring household during a quarrel. At another much larger work party to harvest millet, where all the participants had been sent by their household heads, young girls were gossiping about a married woman whose husband was in Côte d'Ivoire. Although they were made up beautifully, with coloured dots on their foreheads and cheeks to attract the attention of young men at the work party, they echoed adult gossip and disapproval in their own manner by noting that it was frightening how that woman applied make-up. (Field notes from Burkina Faso, 15 October and 10 December 2001)

What these examples illustrate is the risk of separating activities from their meanings if we look at children's work in isolation. As a result, we fail to understand that, in addition, for example, to constructing an identity of being a good child through work, the social context of the work, of running an errand or participating in ceremonies on behalf of an adult, gives children the opportunity to develop other identities through observing, reflecting and participating. Thus, it is not just play which is integrated with work in this way, but also the learning of a variety of practical and social skills.

Work is a central part of children's lives and reflects the high value placed on hard work in the West African savannah. The principal greeting from a passer-by to those engaged in any activity, for instance, in Kusasi vernacular is *tom'e tom'e* and in Bisa vernacular *zibeu-zibeu* – terms that literally translate as 'work work' and signify that the passer-by wishes the worker good luck. However, people never compelled young children to work, but children were present in all work spheres and were encouraged to take up small tasks by their parents and older siblings, such as collecting water or caring for younger siblings. Tasks were usually carried out in the company of other children and under the guidance of adults, and children took significant pride in their participation in work, in the rewards for their work or in the purchasing of small items from the proceeds of their work.

Five-year-old Pascal was very proud that he had participated in a work party in his own right that day. It was a work party called by one of the old women in the household and before setting off to her farm, he had told his mother that she didn't need to call him when the meal was ready for he was off to a work party and would eat there. (Field notes from Burkina Faso, 1 October 2001)

Although young children in the village in the Upper East Region of Ghana also were not compelled to work, they sometimes were accused of being lazy if they refused to work. Expectations grew, though, as they became older, and sanctions could be more severe, in extreme cases with the withholding of food or beatings (Hashim 2004: 90). Thus, by the age of twelve or thirteen, as was the case among the Bisa, children were increasingly expected to contribute, and so became integrated into all tasks and obliged to take part in agricultural work.

Our findings are in keeping with other studies of children's work in both developing and industrialized countries, which indicate that the amount and type of children's participation in tasks increase as they get older and that the tasks they perform increase in complexity and responsibility (Punch 2001a: 806). Work thus becomes more important to children's sense of self as they get older and is as central to being a child as it is to being an adult. Children's development is often measured in terms of their embracing a positive attitude to work (Hashim 2004: 78), as reflected in Adamu's story above.

Although parents and grandparents are concerned that children become

skilled at various economic and social activities, also important was that children adopted a sense of self-reliance, as nicely described by Lamisi in the village of Tempane Natinga. 'As children grow they follow you to the farm but then they grow enough to see that they, by themselves, want to start doing something for themselves. You pull back small and then they are responsible for themselves' (ibid.: 78). Similarly, in Pays Bisa, Minneta's mother often told anecdotes about her youngest children, among others about her seven-year-old daughter's dream of selling the harvest from her tiny rice field to pay for her school enrolment. Some weeks later, she helped her daughter buy school clothes, adding a little extra money to the revenue from the rice (Thorsen 2005: 143). Children are expected and encouraged both to contribute and to provide for themselves by engaging in economic activities, usually by being allocated a small field. Among the Bisa, most boys and some girls have a rice field from an early age and older boys also tended to have a millet field, while the girls had a groundnut field. In Tempane Natinga almost all boys and girls from age ten and sometimes younger had a small rice field, although younger children did not produce enough to earn very much from their farming. In the dry season, older boys in their mid to late teens farmed onions if they had access to the land, but older girls did not. This, in part, accounts for the differences we found in the likelihood of girls migrating, as we shall explore later.

Children did not always spend their money in ways of which their parents approved – spending it on sweets, for instance; but what is clear is that children in these contexts exercise autonomy⁷ over their own income. Among the Kusasi, children tended to buy things like soap and, their income supplemented by their parents as a means to encourage and reward them, cloth to be made into clothing for celebrations. However, as they get older and are able either to produce more or to pursue other income-generating activities, in addition to cloth and soap, children begin to purchase those items that are necessary for their progression into adulthood; namely pots, basins and bowls, in the case of girls, and livestock to rear, in the case of boys. If they are students, they often take on some of the costs associated with their schooling. Older children also give gifts to seniors who have assisted them with land or labour. In so doing, they are demonstrating an understanding of the nature of social relations in this context (Hashim 2004: 81).

Thus in the contexts in which we work, children's core pursuits are, at all ages, doing many domestic, farming and livelihood tasks. Moreover, it is not simply that children have to work – for example, because of family or community poverty – but that work is seen as correct behaviour for children. Both children and adults define a good child by conformity to such behaviour. Undoubtedly, there are differences in children's working roles on the basis of age and gender, but, crucially, work is fundamentally implicated in the identity of a child and working is viewed as part of her or his 'healthy' development.

Children's worlds and learning

As discussed in Chapter 1, childhood and formal education became inextricably linked during the changes in the industrialized world in the nineteenth century. As a result, one of the key concepts that has become intrinsic to the definition of 'average' or 'normal' childhood is formal education (Boyden 1997: 200). There is a tendency, consequently, to view children's inability to access schooling as an opportunity denied (Hashim 2007), both because it is seen as a precondition for economic growth and social development, and importantly because of its role in individual self-realization (Kabeer 2000: 463). Although the normalcy of schooling rarely comes into question, constantly under debate is formal education's purpose (e.g. to prepare children to join the workforce or to facilitate them to pursue their unique strengths and interests), its most appropriate content (e.g. basic skills acquisition or critical thinking) and the best means of providing it (e.g. teacher-imparted information or student-led learning). Policy-makers nevertheless do perceive universal formal education as important, because it is seen as vital to economic development and to the proper functioning of the social and political process (Boyden 1997; Cheney 2007; Kabeer 2000). Consequently, national governments, as well as organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF, pursue a policy of increasing school enrolment and attendance rates in the belief that only through increasing formal education will countries be able to develop. In particular, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) initiative of Education for All (EFA) in 1990 established an international commitment to bring the benefits of formal education to every citizen in every society; this was reaffirmed in 2000, when 189 countries adopted two of the EFA goals among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Owing in part to EFA, both Ghana (see GME 1999) and Burkina Faso (see Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation)⁸ pursue the principle of free primary schooling. However, although in theory primary schooling is free, we both found that schools usually demanded levies for a range of items, such as equipment, extra teachers, lunches and other items and services, some of which benefit the schoolchildren while others do not. These costs, in addition to others, such as for uniforms, textbooks and notebooks, are significant in a context where most families are poor or very poor and family sizes large, placing formal education for all household children out of the reach of many.

This is reflected in the relatively low rates of school uptake in both our communities of origin. In the village of Tempene Natinga in the Upper East Region of Ghana, for example, only 62 per cent of school-aged children were enrolled in 2000/01. It is important to note, too, that these children were concentrated in the early stages of the formal educational system, with 47 per cent being enrolled in primary school, 10 per cent in junior secondary and just 5 per cent in senior secondary school. This contrasts with the national gross primary enrolment

rate of 73 per cent for boys and 71 for girls,⁹ between 2000 and 2007 (UNICEF 2008: 134).

Across the border to the north, in the Bisa region, the formal educational take-up rates were even lower. In 1999/2000, the primary school uptake was as low as 24 per cent at the district level (Koné 2001) but 35.1 per cent at the regional level and 43.0 per cent at the national level. By 2007/08, the enrolment rates had increased to 69.8 per cent and 72.5 per cent at the regional and national levels respectively (INSD 2008a), but it is difficult to say whether this increase is also reflected in more remote rural villages. Even within the Bisa region, school development differs significantly. Some villages had schools built in the 1970s and early 1980s, while others still do not have any school buildings. The primary school in Zéké village where we lived opened only in 1988 and served three small villages. In 1992/93 it had 160 pupils (44 girls and 116 boys) (Berthelette 2001) and the number increased slightly in 1999/2000 to 176 pupils (55 girls and 121 boys). It decreased again in 1999/2000, when only 109 children attended (28 girls and 81 boys) (Koné 2001). This decrease reflected the disillusionment felt by parents when the teachers pleaded with the school authorities to be moved to schools in rural towns or, at least, to larger, less remote villages. Nonetheless, in both our cases most parents, even in the poorest families, enrolled at least one child in primary school, only thirteen households in Tempane Natinga, for example, having no children enrolled in school.

Despite the difficulties associated with schooling, some children were not only successful in completing schooling but went to extraordinary lengths to do so, as exemplified by the story of one teenaged boy, who was in the first year of junior secondary school in Tempane Natinga.

In 2000, David was 14 years old and lived in a large household of 18 people. His father, Abanga, who was in his 50s, was the head of the household. Overall, David's family was very poor. His father had no education and described himself as a farmer, but produced very little. He was also a well digger and earned some income from this. David's mother grew a little rice, but, because she was sickly, was unable to do much. David, for his part, was very active. In fact, it took two weeks of us trying to interview him before he was available because he was so busy with a variety of different activities. In addition to farming rice, he farmed bambara groundnuts and onions. David also engaged in other income-generating activities. Along with two friends, he contracted himself out to work on people's farms during the rainy season and to build mud walls around onion farms in the dry season. In the school holidays, he pushed a donkey cart and sold water in the district capital, Bawku. David spent his income on school levies, books, pens, eggs to rear guinea fowl, ingredients for his mother to cook for a work party to weed his father's farm and, because he had no time to collect this himself, grass for roofing the compound's rooms. Although David's mother

had paid most of his school costs until Primary Six, since then he had covered all expenses himself, except for his uniform, which was bought for him by his senior brother; himself a migrant to the south.

It is clear from David's story that he was working incredibly hard to put himself through school; not only by covering his school expenses, but also by securing the necessary labour to ensure that vital farm work was done. However, by 2004 David had dropped out of school and was working in nearby Garu, operating a grinding mill. He was, though, using some of his income to help with his younger siblings' school costs. Whether it was his decision to drop out or he was encouraged by his elders to do so is not clear. Among Bisa families with access to more labour, seniors sometimes encouraged their juniors in secondary school to find paid work outside the family to meet some of their own educational expenses, as did the elderly household head, Nokwende, in January 2005.

One of my [grand]sons has [attended] secondary school in Tenkodogo [for] three years. When he returned home at the beginning of the holidays, I advised him to find a temporary job in town rather than hanging about in the village. My son was lucky and found work in a bar, but after some time he came home for a visit and this time he complained about not having enough sleep. I told him that life is like that and asked if he preferred to come home or wanted to continue working. In fact, my son is still working and he will only stop once the new school year starts!

Children's own role in pursuing schooling in this way is rarely addressed in the literature. It tends to be assumed that parents decide to fund or not to fund children's schooling, and that if they do, then children go to school (Hashim 2007). These examples clearly show how this may not be the case; David's account shows the ends to which children may go to remain in education if they believe this will benefit them in the longer term, and Nokwende's account shows that some elders support this type of strategizing. In an important sense, the aspiration to go to school, to continue schooling and to get through school is as much an individual commitment by the child, and children demonstrate this commitment by contributing to the costs of their formal education, especially when and if parents cannot meet them (Hashim forthcoming).

In contrast to children like David, other children clearly doubted the value of school. This was especially so as, although there are some jobs and opportunities in the local labour market which require formal education, these are very limited, so that children's chief ways of earning incomes locally did not require formal education. Also relevant is that dominant modes of securing resources in these areas are through patronage relations and communal labour; for which, again, formal education has no relevance. A further disincentive to schooling

was that formal education was rarely considered to be beneficial unless a child completed secondary school, since formal job opportunities were uncommon without a senior secondary school certificate (Hashim 2007). Also relevant is that the benefits of education are evaluated not only in terms of its merits for an individual child, but in terms of securing a household's well-being, as made explicit in the following, when one elderly father explains why he struggled to send one of his sons to school: 'If they do well they can get jobs. By the time they finish I will be old and they can feed the younger children' (Hashim 2004: 76). This comment reinforces how relational is well-being in this context; as will be taken up later in later chapters. In this sense, decisions related to schooling involve multiple considerations related to a number of individuals' well-being, and are not simply an evaluation of the educational benefits for an individual child.

Thus, even when they could technically afford the costs of schooling, parents still did not usually send all their children to school. Some researchers suggest this is due to parents' ignorance of the benefits of schooling (Ike and Twumasi-Ankrah 1999), while others have suggested that parents prefer to send their children to work rather than school, believing their role as parents is to prepare their children for adulthood – for example, by teaching them a trade early (Boyden 1997: 212). Alternatively, in contexts such as ours, wealthier households may have more incentive not to send their children to school, since in those households which are successful in farming, children's labour is needed and is more 'productive'. This is related to a further vital factor in determining whether formal education is considered a viable option for the poor in rural areas, which is the perception of the benefits of formal education compared with other available opportunities (Punch 2002a: 126). These considerations are particularly important if the labour market 'is structured such that there is a market for children's work and for unskilled adult labour, but a limited market for semi-skilled labour offering limited improvements in returns in addition to poor quality education' (Moore 2001: 8). Some economists, in particular, pursue the idea that 'formal education makes very little difference, given limited formal sector opportunities, and most skills are acquired by the "learning by doing" principle' (Grootaert and Kanbur 1995: 193), reflecting the ideas of Rogers and Standing, who queried the dichotomy between work and education itself. They suggest that commentators should not 'make an automatic assumption that work by children impairs education and intellectual development [...] work itself may be an important component of "education" especially in household-based production systems' (Rogers and Standing 1981, cited in Akabayashi and Psacharopoulos 1999: 121).

We too have highlighted how children's work is partly about their learning; both how to undertake their principal roles in domestic, farming and income-generating activities, and learning about the nature of social relations in context.

This is especially so, as formal education in the area is either perceived as of too poor quality to be worth the investment or not likely to provide livelihood opportunities on completion. However, we also caution against seeing all children's work as the process of acquiring the skills necessary for their advancement into adulthood. Children also work because, in contexts such as these, work is an age-appropriate behaviour (Hashim 2004).

Also significant is how households in contexts such as those in which we work, where there is considerable agro-climatic difficulty and uncertainty, adopt a range of strategies to secure immediate and long-term security, including both crop diversification and diversification of livelihoods (Whitehead and Kabeer 2001: 8–9). Migration itself is a diversification strategy, in that it expands potential sources of income (Cordell et al. 1996; Hoddinott 1992). Formal education is also one means of potential diversification, with households investing some resources as it represents the *possibility* of future alternative livelihoods (Hashim forthcoming). However, because formal schooling is not a guarantee of security, it remains, for most households, just one of a range of activities, and parents often express the need to balance out the various strategies to secure present and future well-being, as well expressed in the comments of one household head in Ghana, himself educated: 'If you have four boys, you send two to school and two will stay to care for animals and help you on the farm. That way you can care for those in school. If you have girls, you give them vocational training, such as sewing or hairdressing.'

In the Bisa region, the mother of a young boy who was approaching school age explained their educational strategies for him and for two older half-brothers, whose mother had remarried and left the village. None of the parents was formally educated and only two daughters had been enrolled in school earlier, but one had dropped out when her father died and the other died in her first year of school.

Of the three boys, the oldest is helping his father on the farm. He is the one to lead the oxen when they plough. The second one will be sent to a Koranic school in a village near the Ghanaian border when he gets a bit older. Eventually that will give him work, for someone who knows how to read the Koran can teach others and he can also perform ceremonies. The youngest – my son – will go to the school here in the village. He is too soft to endure a Koranic school.

This comment also illustrates how there is diversification within strategies for learning. In addition to the formal education system, which in Burkina Faso include state- and mission-run schools, parents, and in particular fathers or male household heads, sent children to different types of Koranic schools. Mostly they sent one or two boys to a rural Koranic school, where the children worked on their master's farm in addition to learning the Koran.¹⁰ Some children were sent to a '*franco-arabe*' school in Tenkodogo, where the system resembled

the formal school system in the sense that the children lived with kin and were taught French, mathematics and the Koran at regular hours. Finally, some were sent to masters in town, where their training would include begging and working for various employers to get food. Another strategy was to find an apprenticeship for a son, usually with kin, as otherwise it would require a large fee to be paid to the patron. This diversification of learning strategies diminishes competition between children and also increases the chances that some are successful and can support others (Thorsen 2007b).

The ability to adopt learning diversification strategies, of course, is dependent on the opportunities available locally, and one contrasting aspect of our sending communities is the availability of formal and informal education. In the village of Tempene Natinga, the recent addition of a senior secondary school to the existing primary and junior secondary schools meant that children were able to complete their school education without leaving home. Nevertheless, many still preferred to go to other schools owing to the village school's relative newness and perceived deficiency, especially as the village had no electricity, limiting the operation of the school and its appeal to good teachers. Limited opportunities to carry out apprenticeships locally meant children had to travel farther afield to pursue opportunities in the apprenticeships they preferred. In both our areas, favoured apprenticeships were as vehicle or moped mechanics and in carpentry for boys, as well as tailoring in Pays Bisa. Girls in both our areas preferred tailoring, followed by hairdressing apprenticeships. In Pays Bisa, however, all learning strategies outside farming meant that children had to leave home before the age of eighteen. Secondary formal education required that they moved into the nearest rural town at the age of twelve or thirteen; some attended Koranic school from the age of seven or eight but often started when they were a few years older, and apprenticeships were usually initiated when children were in their mid-teens. Thus, in the contexts in which we work, schooling is not intrinsic to childhood. Parents view formal education as just one among a variety of ways of preparing their children for adulthood and ensuring their ability to secure a livelihood, which is also tempered by perceptions of what types of learning are more appropriate for girls and for boys and by a child's perceived interest and ability. Adolescent children also begin to make conscious decisions regarding which form of learning to pursue.

Conclusion: the importance of context

In the opening chapter of this book, we discussed how the universalizing ideal of childhood may not capture the reality of children's lives in diverse contexts. This chapter has illustrated just how different are the local ideas and practices related to childhood in the areas in which we work. For one, in contrast to the global model, clearly work in these contexts is intrinsic to childhood. Moreover, schooling is not. We argue, as a result, that when trying to comprehend

childhood, it is necessary to explore this situationally. The importance of this is made clear through a comparison of our studies in two rural communities, which despite many social, cultural and economic similarities have significant differences in children's migratory trajectories.

The most significant difference between the areas of origin in our studies concern girls' opportunities to migrate. Although Bisa girls are just as keen to migrate as boys, the girls are far more constrained socially in their movement compared to boys, who set off on their first migration in their mid to late teens. Parents are generally reluctant to allow adolescent girls to migrate independently of relatives, hence only six of fifty-nine young migrants interviewed in Ouagadougou and two rural towns in the south-east in 2005 were girls. This, moreover, was not a methodological bias emerging from the more hidden nature of the work that migrant girls tend to do, as it was supported by household composition surveys in the area of origin in 2001/02 and 2005 that showed that teenaged girls primarily moved to join their husband. This contrasts with the findings from the research in Ghana, which showed that girls were migrating independently in larger numbers than were boys, with thirty-six boys compared to forty-one girls living outside the village at the time of a migration survey in March 2001, while eighteen boys and thirty girls migrated into the village. Moreover, as noted earlier, the sex-ratio discrepancy between boys and girls is likely in part to be accounted for by the larger number of girls migrating.

A further difference was that, although in both cases boys were found to take matters into their own hands and run away from home if parents did not give permission for them to migrate, Bisa girls seemed more reluctant. In contrast, as we shall discuss in more detail later in the book, in the Ghanaian research, girls as well as boys were reported to have 'run away', and three of the four runaways interviewed in southern Ghana were girls. Both of us found that one tenet of the discourses surrounding girls' migration was the imagined benefit of acquiring trousseau items. For girls in Pays Bisa, someone 'who has acquired most of this herself has a better standing vis-à-vis her in-laws, and in the case the marriage broke she will not have to start anew' (Thorsen 2010: 273). The paradox of adolescent Bisa girls wishing to migrate and see the world, and yet having their movements constrained, was actually pushing them not to delay marriage, and to preferably marry migrants who more readily guaranteed to take them abroad.

These kinds of discourses linking girls' migration with the acquiring of a trousseau are common in other contexts too, and referred to in a number of academic and policy-oriented studies of children's migration in West Africa (cf. Beauchemin 1999; Castle and Diarra 2003; Kielland and Sanogo 2002; Riisøen et al. 2004). For instance, one study which looked at *kayayòos* (head porters) in Accra, Ghana, found many of these girls to be migrants from the north, who see their migration 'as the short-term cost to be paid for a long-term gain – change

to a better occupation, marriage, or the purchase of capital goods necessary for training for a better occupation' (Agarwal et al. 1997: 257). Casely-Hayford's work with the Dagomba of the Northern Region of Ghana found that 'in the last few years young girls and women have begun migrating to the cities on a seasonal and yearly basis to find work and improve their income. Girls interviewed stated that they went on "*kayayoo*", to "have their eyes opened" and also buy the necessary items for marriage' (Casely-Hayford 1999: 16). An interesting longitudinal perspective of this is provided by Lambert, in his analysis of young Jola women in Senegal. Lambert argues that, in the beginning, the mobility of the early urban migrants in the 1950s and 1960s was circumscribed by their elders' fears of losing control over their domestic capacity in the day-to-day and longer-term running of the household. Nevertheless, young women were able to overcome the opposition to their urban activities by returning each farming season and by justifying their migration with the need to amass a trousseau, a practice that had become increasingly widespread during the 1950s. According to Lambert, this justification has been transformed in the course of time to entail, in the 1970s, girls providing some or all of their own clothing and, by the 1990s, girls aspiring to be urban residents. Part of this transformation, he argues, was rooted in the development of new youth styles associated with school and modernity and enacted through clothing and visits to dance halls. Older girls were able to orient their identity construction towards these styles only after working in domestic service and, in turn, spurred the material desires of their younger sisters (Lambert 2007). Limitations on Bisa girls' ability to migrate in turn pushed boys to migrate because otherwise they might have had a hard time finding a wife. Marriage was also a factor in boys' movement among the Kusasi in the Upper East Region of Ghana; however, in this case it was related to the need to earn an income, as there appears to be increasing pressure on boys to have certain items, such as furniture, in order to marry (Hashim 2005: 50). Consequently, while in both our cases children and youth expressed the desire to see a bit of the world outside the village, along with other migratory aspirations, in Pays Bisa this put pressure on girls to marry early, while in the Upper East Region the effect was to delay marriage.

Thus, in spite of some parental concern, in the Upper East Region of Ghana girls appear more able to migrate, while just a couple of hundred kilometres north, in Pays Bisa, despite the many similarities in economic and social relations, girls are far less able to move away from home except as wives. As females farm more actively in Pays Bisa, this may be significant. Because of this, Bisa girls were more able to earn an income in their home villages from the sale of the proceeds of the crops. In contrast, girls in the Upper East Region of Ghana, who were less able to farm privately yet still had a need for an income, used this as leverage when negotiating with their seniors to migrate in order to acquire either an income or what they hoped to purchase with it – for example, by being gifted

it by a relative whom they ‘helped out’. Also crucial are strong taboos against having children outside marriage and elders’ fears that their daughters will fall pregnant if they migrate independently. Parents also feared that daughters might marry a man from a different region at the migration destination and thereby decrease the parents’ ability to call on married daughters’ help and on the labour contribution that was part of their son-in-law’s lifelong obligations to them. Kusasi elders are similarly concerned that girls may not marry a Kusasi man if they are migrants, as this might mean the loss of valuable bride-price cattle; however, as we shall see later, the pressures brought to bear by girls to be allowed to migrate can be quite significant.

While this discussion of migration may be somewhat pre-emptive here, it is useful to make these comparisons in order to illustrate the very important point that the economic and social dynamics of a place make possible or constrain girls’ and boys’ mobility in diverse ways, such that children’s migratory paths and trajectories cannot be assumed but need to be established.

to be abused or harmed. For example, in the UK the vast majority of children who are killed are killed by a parent or close relative (Moore 2004: 739). This serves further to underscore how this model of childhood is an idealized version, and one that is far from the reality in much of the world.

8 See Van Hear (1984) for an exceptional early example of the inclusion of children in a study of migration.

2 Contexts of migration

1 Kusasi children dominated the research in Ghana; however, Mossi and Busanga (another ethnonym for Bisa) children were also interviewed.

2 Since both phases of research were carried out in Ghana, the Bawku East district has been divided into the districts of Bawku Municipal and Garu-Tempane.

3 Iman Hashim's work benefited greatly from having access to Ann Whitehead's 1975 and 1989 research and baseline data in the same village of Tempane Natinga, which showed remarkable stability in many aspects of household organization and community life.

4 The division of work and dependants' – wives, married sons and unmarried children of both genders – rights to engage in own-account farming, trade or other income-generating activities is highly institutionalized and reflected in Bisa vernacular. *Dɔcta ho*, which is the household head's farms, literally means morning activities, while *yile ho* literally means afternoon activities and encompasses all the things that children, youth and women do.

5 Owing to the nature of the kinship structure, anyone who has an agnatic link in previous generations may be thought of as being a household member. However, until they return one does not know which household they will return to, whether they will build a new household, or indeed whether they will in fact return. It is very difficult, therefore, to make claims regarding the exact numbers of migrants from a specific household (Whitehead 1996).

However, these numbers reflect individuals who heads considered to be part of their household and who, at the time of the survey, were living elsewhere.

6 These numbers derive from a questionnaire focusing on the household composition and reflect the whereabouts of village women's children and/or married women's absent husbands. Consequently, the numbers may not include long-term migrants whose mother or wife does not live in the household.

7 Although children exercised a great degree of autonomy over their income, this is not as straightforward as it would appear in the Ghanaian case as the landlord or household head, theoretically, owned any assets in his household. Consequently, if income is converted to livestock, in theory at least, the landlord has the ultimate say over its disposal, although he may choose not to exercise this control.

8 <http://www.meba.gov.bf>, especially the sector programme for developing the educational system at the level of primary education and alphabetization (PDDEB).

9 This refers to the number of children enrolled in primary school who are of official primary school age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of official primary school age.

10 This system of farm Koranic schools was described in the early 1980s by the anthropologist Mahir Şaul (1984).

3 Choosing to move

1 At the time of both periods of fieldwork, the education system in Ghana consisted of nine years of free, compulsory schooling – six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school (JSS). Following this, students who qualify can proceed into senior secondary school (SSS). Students who pass the SSS Certificate Examination at the end of three years of SSS can then pursue a degree course at university, or a diploma course at some other tertiary institution (GME 2000). NB: The education system was again reformed in 2007.