

## **Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion (YOVEX) in West Africa: Ghana Country Report**

**Emmanuel Addo Sowatey**

## About this study

Youth and youth issues have emerged as key elements in the discourse and realities of Africa's conflict, security and development landscape over the past two decades. There is growing recognition that young people are at the heart of Africa's opportunities and challenges in the 21st century. This is founded on the continent's youthful demography (youth bulge) and the centrality of young people (as victims and victimizers) in civil wars, armed insurrection and stagnated socio-economic development. This study of youth vulnerability and exclusion in Ghana provides empirical data and evidence of the points of contact and disconnect between the state and youth. It assesses alternative choices and pathways available to and embraced by young people in the context of psychological and material deprivations, and highlights the different outcomes of youth's coping strategies.

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Emmanuel Addo Sowatey

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>CSDG</b>  | Conflict, Security & Development Group               |
| <b>GHC</b>   | Ghanaian cedi  |
| <b>GHS</b>   | Ghanaian new cedi <sup>1</sup>                       |
| <b>GLSS</b>  | Ghana Living Standard Survey                         |
| <b>JSS</b>   | junior secondary school                              |
| <b>MMYE</b>  | Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment           |
| <b>NDC</b>   | National Democratic Congress                         |
| <b>NGO</b>   | non-governmental organization                        |
| <b>NPP</b>   | New Patriotic Party                                  |
| <b>NR</b>    | not registered                                       |
| <b>NYC</b>   | National Youth Council                               |
| <b>NYEP</b>  | National Youth Employment Programme                  |
| <b>NYP</b>   | National Youth Policy                                |
| <b>SSS</b>   | senior secondary school                              |
| <b>STEP</b>  | Skills Training and Employment Placement (programme) |
| <b>UN</b>    | United Nations                                       |
| <b>USD</b>   | United States dollar                                 |
| <b>YOVEX</b> | Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion (Project)          |

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1 Introduced in July 2007; GHS 1 = GHC 10,000.

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# Executive summary

The youth of Ghana (like their counterparts in other West African states) constitute the vast majority of the population. According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) 4, the country's population is generally young, with about five out of every ten people being less than 20 years of age and about 69 per cent under 30.<sup>2</sup> Yet their views hardly feature or matter in the major decision-making processes of the state, or even of political parties. Thus, the youth have very limited space to contribute to decisions and programmes that affect them directly. This has a number of very critical implications for security and development.

An emerging issue about youth-hood is the complex nature of this term and what it means. Although the vast majority of respondents to the questionnaire distributed as part of the study (about 77.8 per cent) cited age as the key criterion to determine who constitutes this sector of society, there were other important supporting indicators. These varied from strength to issues of powerlessness within young people's respective communities and marital status.

The study also revealed that youth exclusion and vulnerability is the consequence of a number of factors. Important issues include governance processes and the policy structure of the state, reinforced by the invented culture pertaining to youth. This cultural explanation claims that the youth are to be passive recipients of programmes designed for their welfare. As a result, very little space is left for them to contribute meaningfully to youth policies and programmes. This assumption has a number of implications. Firstly, most of the programmes for youth are regarded by the youth themselves as an imposition. As a result, their ownership and 'buy-in' (which are critical components of the realization of various security and development programmes) are virtually non-existent. Furthermore, the lack of adequate consultation translates into a gap between the aspirations of the state and those

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2 Ghana Statistical Service (2000).

of the youth. Thus, the full potential of the youth is hardly harnessed for security and development programmes.

A key result of the lack of adequate youth involvement in government programmes for the youth is the latter's lack of trust and confidence in state-sponsored programmes. It came out clearly during the study that the overwhelming majority of youthful respondents did not have any trust in state-led programmes, but rather those led by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The study also revealed the complexities surrounding the relationship between, on the one hand, youth exclusion and vulnerability, and, on the other, peace, security and development. While in certain circumstances youth who are unemployed (partly as a result of their marginalization and vulnerability) are linked to violence, in other circumstances their ingenuity in developing more positive coping mechanisms (most notably in the informal economic sector) was brought to the fore. The responses of young people to marginalization and vulnerability can broadly be divided into four categories.

Firstly, in some parts of the country, youth with tertiary education have either decided to stay and complain (about their exclusion and marginalization) or have decided to migrate (or exit) to the so-called developed world.

Secondly, others with the same level of education have ventured into private businesses, but have often faced very difficult barriers. Although impediments to establishing a business in Ghana are not unique to the youth, their challenges are made worse by certain structures and perceptions that exclude and marginalize them in particular. For instance, the youth are perceived to have no or at best very little experience in venturing into certain types of businesses that are regarded as the preserve of mature, experienced people.

According to this notion, experience means the ability to think strategically, which in turn means success. This tenuous perception fails to consider the ingenuity of the youth. Furthermore, this perception seems to disguise the covert (and sometimes overt) attempt of some older people to control access to wealth and power.<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that the so-called lack of experience and all its perceived consequences may be the means to perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of the youth from gaining early access to wealth, power and leadership.

The third response is commonplace among the less educated youth, i.e. those with junior secondary school (JSS) education and below. Survey respondents in this category claimed that membership of the youth

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3 This conclusion is partly anchored in the way in which some older people, including politicians, support their kith and kin who can be categorized as youth to start and manage certain key businesses.

associations that can be found throughout Ghana is one response mechanism to youth marginalization and exclusion. These associations serve as avenues where some youth (1) share their future aspirations and grievances; (2) create a special and friendly space to harness their resources in support of one another; and (3) provide a platform for recognition within their communities.

The fourth type of response is youth involvement in violence and crime. This has various forms and manifestations. Some respondents provided candid observations about the relationship between youth marginalization and exclusion, on the one hand, and security and development, on the other, asserting that sometimes the more violent the youth are, the more they wield influence and power among their peers and communities; i.e. this behaviour very often translates into recognition (whether positive or negative) within their communities.

Most notably, some of these criminal responses include smuggling, and armed and unarmed robbery. Some of these criminals are not necessarily regarded as such within their communities, but are sometimes seen as modern day Robin Hoods who steal from the rich and redistribute the perceived wealth of the state to the excluded and marginalized poor.

The most revealing part of the research is the ability of the youth (irrespective of their educational status or/and geographical locations) to become drivers of change if they are offered strategic opportunities and support by public, private and voluntary actors. They have the desire, passion and other resources to become key players in the security and development agenda of the state. And it is these resources, and in particular the resources of youth associations, that could become new entry points for security and development programmes.

These new entry points can be aligned with some strategies already in place to achieve aspects of the various security and development agendas as envisioned in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals.

Specific recommendations are as follows.

**The Ghanaian government should:**

- provide more space for the youth (of all statuses) to contribute towards policy and programmatic interventions that seek to respond their needs;
- show more commitment in translating the numerous youth initiatives and programmes (such as those on employment and education) into reality;
- develop a more robust mechanism to evaluate and monitor youth programmes in line with best international practices;
- empower the youth through the creation of a particular platform in the state media for active political dialogue and engagement with state

institutions and personnel, with the aim of holding these institutions and personnel accountable regarding issues pertaining to the youth; and

- encourage the need for stronger parental care and guidance through creating awareness of the impact of irresponsible parenthood on the state, security and development. One way of doing this is stronger punishments for parents who do not properly care for their children.

**Youth associations should:**

- find ways of influencing decisions and policies that affect them and their members. This can be done through using the media to articulate their concerns more forcefully and building networks with other youth associations with the aim of combining their strength to influence policymaking.

**The international and donor community should:**

- encourage government to be much more sensitive to youth issues;
- offer training facilities to the youth to acquire employable skills;
- provide micro-credit facilities to the youth to support their own business/employment initiatives;
- streamline youth concerns into development aid; and
- encourage stronger parental guidance of youth.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Ghana is centrally located in the West Africa sub-region with a population of about 20 million people. It is generally a low-lying country and covers an area of 238,539 square kilometres. In terms of its literacy rate, 50 per cent of adults in Ghana are literate in a local dialect or English, but there is an obvious difference between the genders across the various locations. GLSS 4 revealed that a little over six out of every ten males are educated, while a little less than four in every ten women are literate. In the urban settings, about 66 per cent of adults are literate, but in the rural areas only 41 per cent are literate. The common illnesses that afflict Ghana's people are generally malaria, upper respiratory tract infections and waterborne diseases. HIV/AIDS infection rates seem to have been receding for a while, although the problem is still present.

This report presents the findings of the Youth Exclusion and Vulnerability (YOVEX) Project in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> The study suggests that Ghanaian youth (with all the definitional conundrums related to this term) are in most cases marginalized in the major decision-making and policy implementation processes of the state. The reasons are numerous and complex, but the primary one is how new norms and cultural attitudes shape and influence the relationship between the youth, on the one hand, and the state and the communities in which young people live, on the other.

According to the National Youth Policy (NYP) (which is being revised), although youth-hood cannot easily be defined, for the purpose of its policy, youth are defined as 'young men and women who fall within the age brackets 15–35. Further, anyone who is acknowledged by deed as identifying with and committed to youth development may be considered as youth'.<sup>5</sup>

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4 This study is part of a broader West African YOYEX Project. Although it has a number of objectives, its prime aim is to observe and listen to African youth in order to discover promising entry points for public, private and voluntary initiatives that could assist them (CSDG, n.d.).

5 MYS (1999), 2, sec. 1.4..

At first hand, this definition seems to be an enlightened piece of policy and a definition that adequately responds to the challenges inherent in using age as the sole criterion to determine youth-hood. This is because youth-hood can be determined by other factors such as the marital status of a person, culture and other indicators. The above definition also has an additional credence by clearly indicating that those who are acknowledged by deeds (i.e. not words or rhetoric) as identifying with and committed to the development of the youth may be seen as such.

In addition to this encouraging definition, the NYP also states in clear terms the need for the youth to be involved in all programmes and decision-making processes that affect their lives, because they constitute the future of the state. The NYP was put in place by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government, which subsequently became the opposition, but which has returned to power since the elections of 7 January 2009. The New Patriotic Party (NPP), while in power prior to the 2009 elections, also instituted a number of projects and policies that reinforced what some see as the lip service given to issues affecting the youth.

In 2001 the NPP government also began to address the unemployment and underemployment problems of the country. It started by registering close to one million people who were mostly youth. It further initiated a number of programmes such as the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP) programme, the National Youth Fund and the Presidential Special Initiatives. Additionally, other micro-credit schemes were put in place to support small-scale enterprises with the aim of providing self-employment for the youth.

In this regard, the president at the time, John Agyekum Kufuor, directed the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE) to establish a national employment task force in collaboration with the National Security Secretariat and other sector ministries and agencies. The constitution of the task force was clearly indicative of the government's understanding of the relationship between the socio-economic condition of the youth and peace, security and development.

In this direction, one of the flagships of the NPP government was the Ghana Youth Job Corps Programme, or what is widely known as the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP; often called the National Youth Employment Scheme), which was started in 2001. In the MMYE's view, the overall objective of the programme is '[t]o empower the youth to be able to contribute more proactively towards the socio-economic and sustainable development of the state'.<sup>6</sup> President Kufuor also stated that 'the objective of providing employment for the youth of Ghana, both to enable them to support

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6 MMYE (2006), 2.

the national effort, as well as to plan for their own future security, has always remained a central aspect of [his] government's development agenda'.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the above, the National Service Scheme, which was started in the 1970s, has also been a crucial piece of legislation that directly affects the youth. This law makes it mandatory for the youth to render voluntary services to the state after completing their tertiary education.

In 2003 the Ghana National Voluntary Service was established. In 2005, 19,603 volunteers were deployed across the country and in 2006 there was an increase of about 7,000 more volunteers.

Although the above seems to be an impressive picture of youth policy and programmes, the YOVEX Project research revealed a different scenario. For example, although some of these training programmes looked good on paper, their core objectives were hardly realized. Also, although the micro-loan scheme of the NPP government seemed to be laudable, it was in fact woefully inadequate: a number of respondents complained that the micro-credit facilities needed to start and/or expand a business were insufficient. In other words, the ability of the youth to access loans to start and/or expand their businesses remained limited.

It is the nature of the above state programmes on youth that makes this study timely and revealing. It certainly serves as the voice of the voiceless, as this field report indicates. Many respondents said they were not involved in the design processes of the various government projects, such as those mentioned above, and as a result felt marginalized and vulnerable. Whereas some have resorted to violence, others have exhibited a high level of ingenuity to cope with their marginalization. And these two groups of youth are found in both secure and insecure environments. In response to their situation, the youth have adopted a number of measures often removed from the mainstream institutions of the state, evolving a number of strategies that serve as a source of voice and coping mechanisms.

Their coping mechanisms are facilitated by a number of factors. These include (but are not limited to):

- local peculiarities;
- the availability of mentors;
- educational opportunities; and
- social networks.

This report is structured as follows. Section 2 deals with methodology and the research process, while section 3 deals with research themes and findings. Section 4 deals with the context of youth exclusion and vulnerability, section 5 deals with youth coping mechanisms, section 6 gives an indication of the nature of these coping mechanisms in the words of the youth themselves,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

and section 7 deals with the social outcomes of young people's attempts to manage their lives. Lastly, section 8 presents conclusions and recommendations. Two appendices give information about youth group initiatives in the country and provide a fact sheet on Ghana.



# Chapter 2

## Methodology and the research process

The study depended on primary and secondary data. Primary data came from:

- the administration of a questionnaire;
- focus group discussions; and
- in-depth interviews.

Secondary data included:

- published material;
- newspaper reports and commentary; and
- documents from state institutions.

### 2.1 General introduction

The methodology adopted for any study is central to its overall success. Key issues include:

- how respondents are chosen;
- how questions are asked (whether in focus group discussions or in-depth interviews);
- how questionnaires are administered;
- understanding the norms and culture of respondents; and
- adhering to the basic principles of research ethics.

Accordingly, this part of the study sets out to do two main things. Firstly, it aims to illustrate why and how the various study areas were chosen and how research assistants were trained for data gathering. Secondly, it illustrates some of the lessons learned in the field.

### 2.2 How study locations were chosen

Two important factors underpinned the choice of the study locations; these factors conformed to the guidelines agreed at the methodology meeting of the

YOVEX Project. The set criteria also reflected the diversity of respondents. The first requirement was to have a geographical representation of respondents. Therefore, the country researcher divided the country into three main sectors, namely the southern, central and northern parts.<sup>8</sup> This was done to reflect broadly the relatively developed urban south and the largely underdeveloped rural north.<sup>9</sup> Strikingly, the northern sector (which is the least developed) has witnessed conflicts of the highest intensity in Ghana since the 1990s (although their intensity is lower than that of conflicts experienced in the Mano River Union). The latest conflicts are in Dagbon/Yendi (an intra-ethnic conflict) and Bawku (an inter-ethnic conflict).<sup>10</sup> As a result of the preponderance of these conflicts in the northern parts of the country, some have argued that impoverishment is not only a result of conflict, but a major contributory factor as well. The third bloc, the central sector, was included to capture any distinct features as they relate to the socio-economic outlook and patterns of the two other sectors, i.e. the north and the south. Another major reason that informed the choice of the study locations was the issue of security. The aim of the study was to examine the conditions experienced by youth in 'secure' and 'insecure' environments.<sup>11</sup>

After these locations were chosen, the researcher went on to identify specific regions, districts and towns that would meet the criteria that had been identified. Finally, respondents were chosen to reflect the diversity of these locations, according to such criteria as religion, gender, ethnicity and age.

Within these three broad geographical sectors, the study focused on the towns of Ashiaman, Nima and Madina in the southern area, while the central area was represented by Kpandai. The northern locations chosen were the towns of Yendi, Tamale and Bawku. Interestingly, Yendi and particularly Bawku in the northern area represented the insecure environment of the study.

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8 These sectors do not relate the official division of the country into regions, districts, etc. Ghana has three major tiers of governance: the capital, which is the seat of government, where major political decisions are taken; ten regions; and 138 districts. The districts were created in line with the government policy of grassroots participation and it is the basic unit for decision-making. Within the districts are the unit committees, which are supposed to foster grass-roots participation.

9 What accounts for this developmental pattern is complex and contested. Nonetheless, it may be argued that colonial policy and strategy are key contributory factors that have shaped this trend, which is more common in Anglophone Africa.

10 Characterizing these conflicts as simply intra-ethnic (Dagbon/Yendi) and inter-ethnic (Bawku) is certainly a simplification, since these conflicts are a culmination of past and current factors and events.

11 What constitutes a secure environment became contentious after primary data had been gathered in the field, although the country researcher initially posited that an insecure environment in this study refers to an area that is witnessing violent/armed conflict. But what became increasingly clear to the researcher was that most of the respondents felt insecure, whether they lived in a so-called secure or insecure area. They felt insecure in terms of their human security such as their vision for the future, access to education, employment, etc.

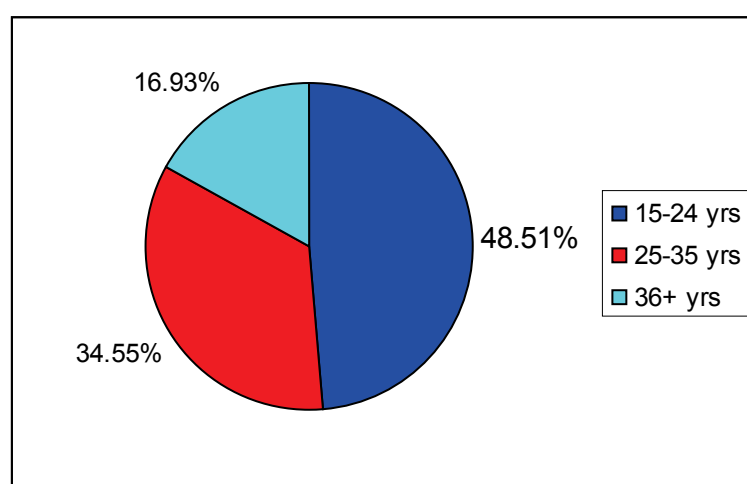
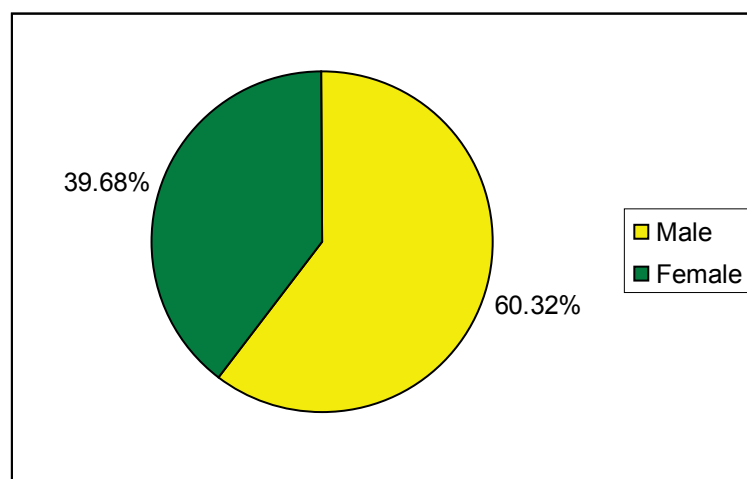
In terms of religion, Bawku, Nima and Madina also represented the Muslim constituency, since these places are predominantly populated by Muslims.

The study adopted three main research methods to gather voluntarily given information for its analysis. These were (1) the administration of questionnaires; (2) focus group discussions; and (3) in-depth interviews. A core feature of the methodology was the strict adherence to the ethics of research. In all, about 450 questionnaires were administered in the study locations, while about 20 focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were also conducted in these areas. Most of the respondents (90.2 per cent) classified themselves as youth and the rest (9.8 per cent) said that they did not fall within that category (see table 1).

**Table 1: Responses to the questionnaire question 'Are you a youth?'**<sup>12</sup>

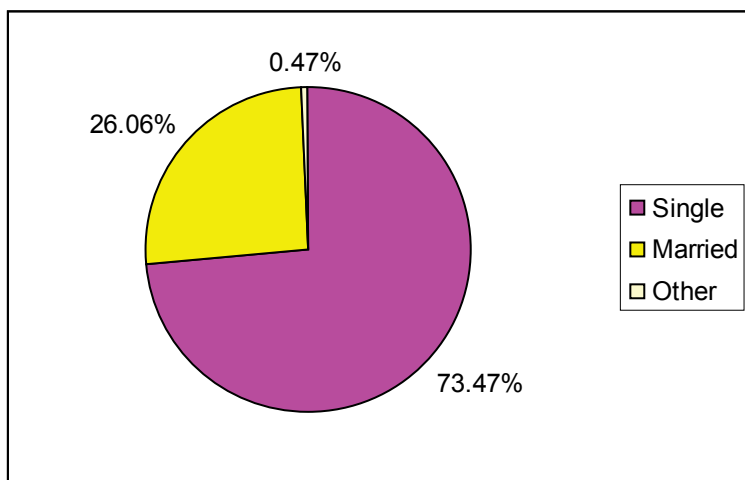
| Frequency    | %          | Valid        | %            |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 394        | 90.2         | 90.2         |
| No           | 43         | 9.8          | 9.8          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Figures 1–7 provide some basic background information about respondents gathered from the fieldwork.

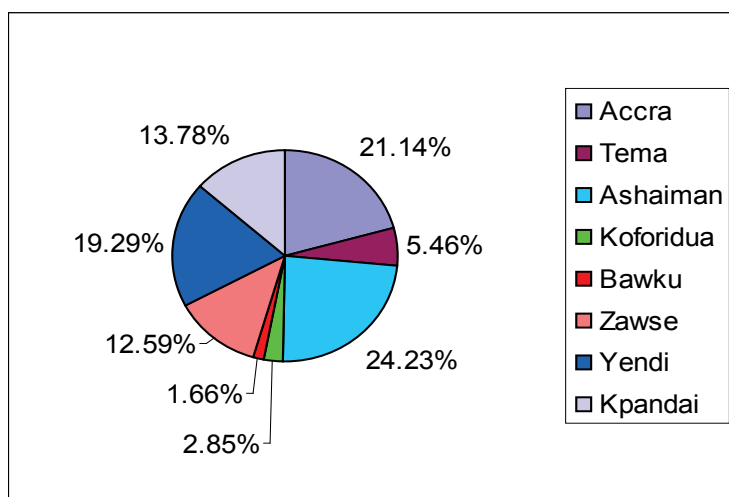
**Figure 1: Age of respondents****Figure 2: Sex of respondents**

<sup>12</sup> The source of information for all the tables in this report giving responses to questionnaire questions is fieldwork carried out between December 2007 and June 2008.

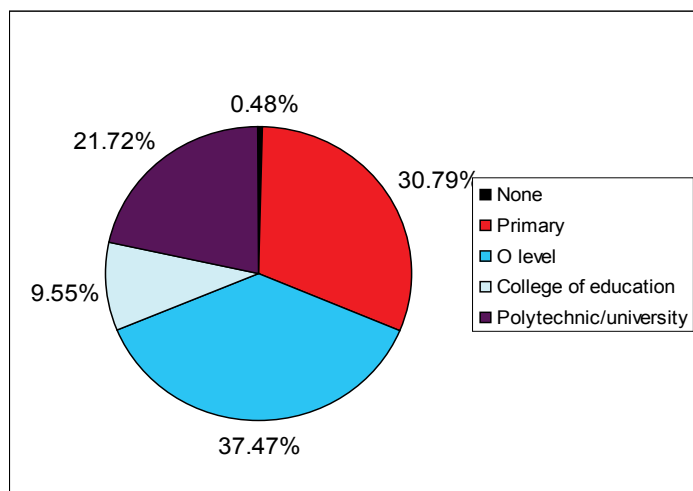
**Figure 3: Marital status of respondents**

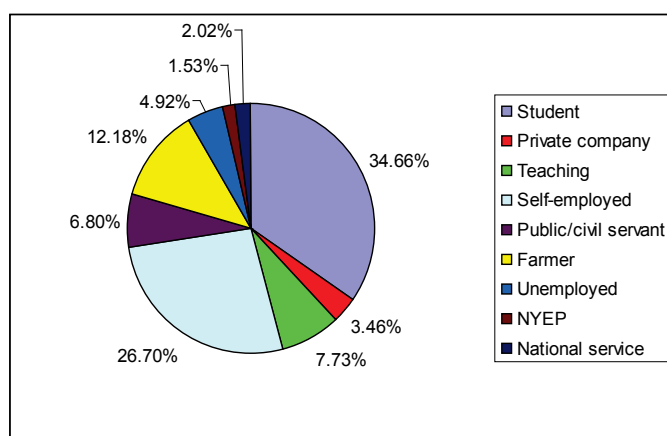
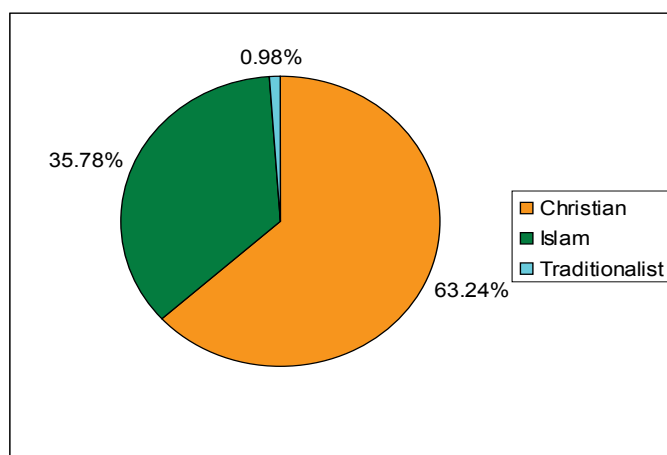


**Figure 4: Place of residence of respondents**



**Figure 5: Educational level attained by respondents**



**Figure 6: Occupations of respondents****Figure 7: Religion of respondents**

### 2.3 Prior training of research assistants and how questionnaires were administered

After the study locations had been chosen, the next stage of the study was to prepare the research assistants to administer the questionnaires. The research assistants for the southern sector were:

- Samuel Ntewusu, a PhD candidate at the University of Leiden;
- Edward Gborgbor, a senior research assistant at the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Ghana;
- Victor Adu, a teacher;
- Mabel Ama Pinkrah, a senior research assistant at the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Ghana;
- Amasaba Abdel-Yakem Aluwisah, a journalist;
- Lydia Owusu, a final-year student at the University of Ghana; and
- Rahaina Tahiru, a teaching assistant at the University of Ghana.

In the central part of the country, the research assistants were:

- Anyarss Ibrahim, a final-year student at the University of Cape Coast and an executive member of Adom FM Base, a youth association in Kpandai; and
- Tanko Ibn Osman, a trained teacher and also an executive member of Adom FM Base.

In the northern area, the research assistants were:

- Awini John Muniru, a first-year student at the University for Development Studies; and
- Alhaji Gonji, head of the National Council for Civic Education in Yendi.

All the research assistants were between the ages of 22 and 37 and they all considered themselves to be youth. The country researcher took pains to go through the whole questionnaire with the research assistants, all of whom had some experience in research and data gathering. As a result, it was not too difficult to direct and sharpen their (already acquired) skills to administer the questionnaires for this study.

The first step in this process was to give the questionnaires to the research assistants to study for a day or two. This was firstly to assess their ability to translate some of the key words into local dialects and, secondly, to evaluate their research skills. The evaluation was used to help the researcher design further training programmes to suit the different levels of competence of the research assistants.

The next step was to go through all the questions with them, taking pains to identify and clarify certain contentious issues. This was not done in a single session, but at various sessions specifically tailored to sharpen the skills of the assistants and deal with specific contentious issues.

Research assistants were encouraged to administer questionnaires within their respective localities as much as possible, since they would be familiar with the area and its inhabitants and would speak the local language.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.4 Research ethics

One of the key preparatory sessions centred on the ethics of research. The researcher administered some of the questionnaires (about 100) himself, to ensure that the study met the minimum requirements of research ethics.

In the course of the training, the research assistants were told to strictly adhere to basic ethical procedures. This approach was part of the strategy to

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13 Although being familiar with respondents has its advantages, there are disadvantages as well. For example, questions in the questionnaire that sought to identify the fears and anxieties of respondents were not likely to be answered convincingly by respondents whom the research assistants knew well, since such respondents may have seen such questions as an attempt to pry into their private affairs, and they would be unlikely to reveal such information to someone they knew well, lest it could be used against them later.

build a relationship of trust and confidence with respondents. These procedures were, firstly, to explain to respondents the purpose of the research and, secondly, to make clear to respondents that they could choose to answer the questions or not; i.e. respondents were under no obligation to answer all the questions, and they could also leave at any time if they so desired. However, the research assistants were instructed to encourage respondents to endeavour to answer all the questions as far as possible.

The next thing that the research assistants were trained to do was to tell the respondents that the information, time and other resources that they were giving to the research process were highly valued. In other words, the respondents were doing the research assistants a favour, and not vice versa (although it is hoped that the findings will feed into designing policy that will respond to some of the respondents' human security challenges).

Lastly, the research assistants were required to give respondents the opportunity to ask questions, which the research assistants would respond to as fully and as truthfully as possible. They were also instructed to tell respondents that no answers to the questions were 'right' or 'wrong'; i.e. responding to the questions was simply a process of giving information and was not some kind of examination requiring 'correct' answers.

Although some may think that the respondents were given too much freedom to leave the research process, only one person left (out of the nearly 500 people who either answered the questionnaires or participated in the focus group discussions or in-depth interviews). Adhering to the principles of honesty and full disclosure was a major contributory factor to the success of primary data gathering. Clearly, therefore, adhering to such research ethics is a highly recommended strategy in social research in Ghana.

## 2.5 Strategies to identify respondents

Another session was held with the research assistants to discuss how to identify respondents. The respondents were to be chosen by using certain indicators, apart from getting a fair balance of gender, age, religion and ethnicity. Firstly, the research assistants were trained to look out for certain indicators that would help them identify respondents who would be willing to fill out the questionnaires. For instance, in the central part of the country, one of the best times to make contact with male respondents was during the afternoons when people were relaxing<sup>14</sup> under trees or outside huts. Such places were often the meeting places of various youth associations.<sup>15</sup>

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14 'Relaxing' is used here guardedly, because although a lot of the youth in this part of the country seemed to be 'relaxing', various interviews with them indicated the opposite. In fact, these were youth who were often deep in thought and anguishing about their lack of employment and their inability to either further their education or eke out a living. The habit of gathering under trees



For females, late afternoons were not the best time to make contact, as they were often getting ready to cook, draw water, fetch firewood or bath children. Even so, this time could also be suitable for contacting some female respondents, depending on the nature of their domestic chores, e.g. if these chores did not demand constant attention, they could be available for a reasonable period (about 30 minutes) to a friendly researcher. Notwithstanding some past experience, the attempts to contact female respondents showed that male researchers are sometimes seen as unwelcome by husbands and/or boyfriends of female respondents. This is more the case when these husbands and/or boyfriends perceive their counterparts to be unfaithful or cheating on them. Research assistants were therefore advised to avoid such situations as much as possible, with female research assistants interviewing female respondents and male research assistants interviewing males. This was impossible to achieve fully, chiefly because it was almost impossible to get a 50–50 per cent gender balance of respondents.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, about 40 per cent of respondents were females.

Another strategy was for the research assistants to buy something from informal traders and then use that opportunity to establish a rapport with them. Based on their judgement of each potential contact, they were to proceed by outlining the purpose of the study and clearly indicating the basic principles of the research ethics that they had been taught, such as the right of respondents to stop or leave at any time and the protection of their identity.

## 2.6 Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews

Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted by the country researcher in all three broad geographic areas into which the country

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was part of their coping strategy, allowing youth to meet and share their plight and visions for the future.

15 One intriguing thing about these associations is their names, which have two characteristics. Firstly, the names are almost invariably a state or town in Europe or the United States and, secondly, they end with the word 'Base', e.g. Chicago Base, London Base, German Base, American Base, California Base, etc. These names are mostly informed by the aspirations of members to travel to these places to seek greener pastures, and they hold the view that such places will provide a haven for them and an end to their socio-economic woes and those of their loved ones.

16 The difficulty in getting female respondents is partly attributable to gender socialization, where from infancy gender roles are defined and shaped by societal norms and values. Those who go against these roles are given names and tagged as deviants. Some of these gender stereotypes are that: (1) women do not speak in public; (2) they should listen when men speak; (3) they are not expected to take major decisions about their families and/or communities; (4) they are witches if they play men's roles, etc. The paradox is that in the Ghanaian case there are some ethnic groups (such as the Akan and Ewe) who have women in very senior traditional political positions. Prominent among these officer holders are queen mothers who often wield traditional political power to nominate and even destool (dethrone) a chief. Destoolment is a serious disgrace for an individual and that individual's family, hence the person who has that power is highly influential.

was divided for the purposes of the research. In the central part of the country, the focus group discussions were held with various youth associations.<sup>17</sup>

In conducting the focus group discussions, respondents and the researcher sat in a circle. This was intended to remove any form of hierarchy where a researcher sits at the head of a table and the respondents sat around the table.

As much as possible, the focus group discussions were made up of young males and females, and people from different ethnic extractions. It was, however, noted that the culture and belief of respondents had a tremendous impact on their responses. In particular, the presence of an adult male in these discussions affected respondents' responses. For instance, often, younger respondents started their responses with statements like 'as my elder brother has said' or 'as my father has said'.<sup>18</sup> This attitude posed a challenge, as the researcher had to navigate a complex route between respecting the culture of the respondents, on the one hand, and prompting respondents to express their opinions freely, on the other. This proved to be very difficult.

The researcher responded to this challenge in two main ways. The first was to encourage younger respondents to express candid opinions even if they contradicted the position of an adult male (which was not easy to do), while the second was to carry out follow-up interviews over the telephone.

Another challenge was how to respond to the Eurocentric research approach that requires that a researcher should not show emotions or feelings. On a number of occasions, respondents made comments to which they expected the researcher to respond. A response was necessary, because otherwise the respondents could have felt that the researcher was not interested in what they had to say, but such a response had to be phrased so as not to influence the respondents to answer the questions in a way that reflected the researcher's views rather than their own.

Conducting focus group discussions had some other subtle challenges. For instance, some respondents (although few and mostly male youths) attempted to respond to all the questions in these discussions. It was therefore important to control such respondents without necessarily killing their

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17 Although the researcher initially intended to conduct two focus group discussions per location, he conducted about six in this area. This was to address the seeming dissatisfaction of some youth groups, who thought that those associations that were interviewed were regarded by the researcher as being better organized than their own group. No explanation that sought to convince these groups that being chosen to be interviewed was not a matter of competition was successful. In response, the researcher conducted a higher number of focus group discussions as a way to build trust and confidence for any follow-up research in the area. Interestingly, it was worth the time and effort, as more information served as an additional source of triangulating information gathered from earlier focus group discussion and in-depth interviews.

18 The statement 'as my father has said' was the most prevalent statement. Older women (and other respondents) would almost always precede their contribution or responses with these words.

enthusiasm to contribute. Such vociferous respondents were more outspoken when other respondents were not forthcoming with contributions.

Accordingly, the most reserved respondents (mostly females) were encouraged to express their views in the discussions. Even so, they hardly spoke, which, one may argue, is a reflection of their cultural upbringing where a female (and young people in general) are expected to keep quiet in public. This was often the case when there were male adults present.

The experience gained during focus group discussions (where the presence of male adults indicated the nature of power relations in certain parts of Ghanaian society) attests the marginalization of the youth in decision-making in Ghana.<sup>19</sup>

The other challenge was the lack of adequate time and finance. More of both would have allowed the researcher to conduct more focus groups discussions focusing only on women.

## 2.7 Risks in the research

In Bawku, in the northern part of the country, the administration of the questionnaire and the conduct of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were dangerous at times. The study coincided with what some describe as an 'inter-ethnic' conflict between the Kusasi and the Mamprusi. This was one of the numerous conflicts that these groups have been engaged in for decades, but its intensity at the time that the research was conducted was unparalleled, and sophisticated weapons such as light machine guns, G3 rifles and AK-47 assault rifles were deployed.<sup>20</sup>

At the time of the study, a curfew was in place between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., and tension was mounting in the town. Without a doubt, research in Bawku was the most dangerous aspect of the study, but it was also very revealing in terms of the role of the youth in peace and security.

Due to the dangerous situation at the time, it was impossible to use a tape recorder or even take copious notes during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. However, questionnaires were administered in the area. Paradoxically, it was an area where the chief and the assemblyman<sup>21</sup>

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19 The dominance and influence of male adults raises a number of the questions, which include: (1) Are developmental programmes sensitive to the peculiar needs of the youth? (2) What easily accessible avenues are available for the youth to raise their concerns? (3) How are youth matters incorporated into development programmes such as the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II? (4) Do youth concerns really matter in developmental programmes and policy design? (5) How are youth concerns integrated into such programmes and policy design? and (6) What are the implications of this for Ghana's democratic consolidation and overall development?

20 With the improvement in the communication network, most notably mobile phone services, it is easy for the fighters to rapidly organize themselves and disperse, share intelligence and, as a consequence, mobilize more resources to fight much quicker than previously.

21 An elected official representing a local community, in particular, a number of unit committees.

facilitated the administration of questionnaires, the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews. The assemblyman in particular used his powers to command anybody to stop and answer the researcher's questions. Although ethically not acceptable, this was convenient for the researcher, who wanted to leave the area in as short a time as possible. What the researcher tended to do after the fieldwork was to telephone a number of the respondents to thank them for their assistance and rich information and also to clarify certain answers.

In the southern part of the country, focus group discussions were held in Madina, Ashaiman and Nima. These are predominantly Muslim settlements with their own unique features. In Nima in particular, community leaders did not permit respondents to give their names to the researchers. The reasons were, firstly, that respondents were still building trust and confidence with the research team and, secondly, that the nature of their work did not permit them to give out their names to 'strangers'. In terms of their work, the focus group was mostly made up of youth who were members of a youth association that fights violent crimes such as armed robberies in their localities. Consequently, these youth are very careful when dealing with people whom they do not really know. This protective strategy was mitigated for the country researcher after he had recruited a former member of this youth association (with credibility within the group) to be an interlocutor. Another observation in Nima was the powerful influence that certain members of this youth association wield over others.<sup>22</sup>

What was also interesting about the Nima case was how some youth in the community have organized themselves to provide their own security as a response to the lack of security from the (discredited) state security apparatus.

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22 Obviously, the control and command exhibited at the focus group discussions confirms anecdotal evidence of private armed groups in the area. The youth strictly obey commands from their 'superior', and it is such youth who could be manipulated for violent purposes.

## Chapter 3

### Research themes and findings: Youth identity and perception

Worldwide, the criteria for determining who constitutes the youth have elicited doctrinal squabbles. As a result, various standards have been used to determine who this constituency is. One thing is clear, however: the definition of youth is complex and contested and it is often shaped and understood within particular cultural norms and settings – and sometimes the history – of a people.

Nonetheless, and in recent times, age has gained international acceptance (with all its inherent flaws) as the key criterion for identifying youth worldwide. This standard has been challenged by Phase I of the YOVEX Project. Phase I revealed that the term is socially constructed. This is reflected in the position of Ghana's NYP. According to the policy document (which is being revised), although youth-hood cannot easily be defined, for the purpose of its policy, 'youth' is defined as 'young men and women who fall within the age brackets 15–35. Further, anyone who is acknowledged by deed as identifying with and committed to youth development may be considered as youth'.<sup>23</sup>

The above age bracket is given an additional prominence and justification by the National Youth Council (NYC), which was established in 1974 by the National Redemption Council Decree 241. The NYC defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 35. In its view, 'the process of socialization really begins at 15' and Ghanaians tend to assume full adult responsibility at the age of 35.<sup>24</sup> The basis for this definition has not been provided by the NYC.

Most of the respondents who claimed that they were youth cited their age as the reason (86.3 per cent). This was followed by those who claimed to be youth because they were energetic (3.8 per cent) and the rest (3.0 per cent),

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23 MYS (1999), 2, sec. 1.4.

24 NYC (n.d.).

who claimed a youthful status because they were not married. A total of 6.9 per cent did not know why they referred to themselves as youth (see table 2).

**Table 2: Responses to the questionnaire question 'If yes [i.e. if they considered themselves to be a youth], why?'**

|                  | Frequency  | %                       | Valid %      |
|------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Younger age      | 340        | 77.8                    | 86.3         |
| Very energetic   | 15         | 3.4                     | 3.8          |
| Not married      | 12         | 2.7                     | 3.0          |
| Don't know       | 27         | 6.2                     | 6.9          |
| <b>Sub-total</b> | <b>394</b> | <b>90.2<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| Not applicable   | 43         | 9.8                     |              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b>            |              |

<sup>1</sup> This sub-total has been rounded.

Most of the respondents who claimed they were not youth cited their married status as the reason (53.5 per cent). This was followed by those who claimed that they were too old (18.6 per cent), while 27.9 per cent did not know why they thought that they were not youth (see table 3).

**Table 3: Responses to the questionnaire question 'If no [i.e. if they did not consider themselves to be youth], why?'**

|                  | Frequency  | %                 | Valid %      |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Married          | 23         | 5.3               | 53.5         |
| Too old          | 8          | 1.8               | 18.6         |
| Don't know       | 12         | 2.7               | 27.9         |
| <b>Sub-total</b> | <b>43</b>  | <b>9.8</b>        | <b>100.0</b> |
| Not applicable   | 394        | 90.2 <sup>1</sup> |              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b>      |              |

<sup>1</sup> This figure has been rounded.

At first hand, this definition seems to be an enlightened piece of policy that adequately responds to the challenges inherent in using age as the sole criterion to define youth. This is because it takes other factors such as the marital status, culture and other indicators into consideration. The above definition also has an additional credence by clearly indicating that those who are acknowledged by deeds (not words or rhetoric) as identifying with and committed to the development of the youth may be seen as such.

In addition to this encouraging definition, the NYP also states in clear terms the need for the youth to be involved in all programmes and decision-making processes that affect their lives, because they are the future of the state. The NYP was put in place under the NDC government in power at the time.

However, the picture given above does not fully cover the complexity surrounding youth-hood. Many respondents also added other factors (besides

age) to support why they considered themselves as youth. Responses from some respondents will better clarify this complexity. The study also revealed that increasingly youth (as represented by the respondents) use age as a major indicator of why they regard themselves as youth, but not as the only criterion. The views of some respondents are captured below to show the complexities of youth-hood.

Maame Tsetse, a 26-year-old tertiary graduate, was clear about why she regarded herself as a youth:

*I am a youth because of my age. However, I also perform the duties and roles of an adult. I took care of my two younger siblings when my parents were away. I played the role of a father and a mother. I also live alone and totally fend for myself. While my parents were away and I played both roles, I was still regarded in my community as an enterprising young lady who was a youth.*

Another respondent, a 28-year-old graduate from a polytechnic, stated as follows:

*I consider myself as a youth because I am still nurturing a vision and hope to realize it in due course. I do not use age as the criterion of being a youth. There are adults who are not mature. I also take care of my siblings financially and socially. I provide some sort of leadership and mentoring for them. They look up to me to listen to their challenges and more importantly to solve them. Yet, despite these adult roles and duties that I perform, I consider myself to be a youth and my community perceives me as such. I am also very religious and attend church very often. I am not a member of the youth club known as young adults. This is because it is predominantly made up of students of tertiary institutions and their programmes and desires are a bit childish for my liking.*

The above captures in real terms how complex the term 'youth' is. Thus, although the respondent Tsetse was performing most of the dual roles of her parents, she was regarded within her community as a youth. Interestingly, the respondent herself considers herself as a youth only to the extent that the term means she is not old. However, the second respondent objects strongly to any definition of youth that connotes a person who is not mature enough to take a major decision.

But, all too often, the youth are regarded as immature and need to be directed. True as it may be that experience is a virtue, the youth also require a bit more space to articulate their views and concerns, which may be at variance with what others think they need.

Other criteria are used to measure youth-hood among some ethnic groups in Ghana. For instance, within the Akan ethnic group (which constitutes a little over 53 per cent of all heads of households in Ghana), age is not the determinant for measuring who falls within this category of society. The Asafo companies are the traditional youth groups of some Akan societies and in pre-colonial times they were the warrior groups of such societies. Age was not

(and is still not) used as the sole criterion for measuring 'youth' in these companies, e.g. the heads of the Asafo companies are way above the age of 35 years, and in most instances are people in their late 50s. Without a doubt, these leaders do not qualify to meet the strict age limit of 15–35 years as stipulated by Ghanaian law.

Educational status was another criterion that indicated youth-hood. Those with secondary and in particular tertiary education often cited the UN definition, although they could not cite the particular age range given in that definition. Respondents who were not too educated or who were illiterate also used age and physical appearance as the yardsticks to determine youth. In some of the study areas, such as Madina, Nima, Kpandai, Tamale, Bawku and Yendi, most respondents used age as the criterion to identify youth.

One other interesting dimension is how party politics redefines the concept of youth as seen in Ghanaian law. In the run-up to major elections, politicians take on multiple identities that straddle ethnicity, religion and age, including identifying with youth. This attitude of some politicians is more strategic than the willingness to actually identify with and support the youth. The strategy is a way to get the vibrant and energetic youth to undertake the very taxing duty of running errands for politicians, but once the elections are over, these politicians tend to avoid the youth under the pretence that they are busy with very important constituency and national assignments.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the degree of exclusion and vulnerability of the youth is also shaped by the political calendar of the state.

The youth have responded to their exclusion, marginalization and vulnerability in a number of ways. Firstly, some respondents claimed that some youth have decided to withdraw from politics, and this tends to deny the state future politicians with rich backgrounds. Secondly, the exclusion of youth has undermined their trust and confidence in politicians in general and the state in particular. This has, in turn, fractured the relationship between some youth, on the one hand, and politicians and the state, on the other.

In most of the study locations, namely, Nima, Kpandai, Yendi, Bawku and Tamale, many respondents (irrespective of their age) stated that they did not trust politicians at all. According to these youth, they are only given some recognition and offered some minimal space during elections. Consequently, most of the respondents asserted that they trusted NGOs and civil society organizations in general much more than politicians and the state.

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<sup>25</sup> In numerous in-depth interviews and focus group discussions across the study locations, a number of respondents asserted that the degree to which politicians associated themselves with the youth varies substantially between election and non-election seasons. They argued that during elections, many politicians openly associated themselves with the youth because they (the youth) are the foot soldiers of political parties. As a result, they are mostly the ones who undertake the job of running various errands and are also the vibrant face of the various political parties. But once the elections are over, the respondents stated, the importance of youth has tended to recede.



An additional finding as far as the notion of youth-hood is concerned is its evolving nature. This changing conception of youth-hood can broadly be viewed from both positive and the negative perspectives. On the positive side, in their quest to challenge their exclusion and vulnerability, a number of youth have resorted to the opportunities presented by the liberalization of the airwaves. One major avenue is call-in programmes to the numerous radio stations. Currently, Ghana has over 100 radio stations spread across the length and breadth of the country that broadcast in various local dialects and English. This liberalization of the airwaves has created an avenue for all strata of society, irrespective of age, gender, creed or geographic location, to express their opinions on various matters.

Because of the way in which some youth have been contributing to discussions on the radio, some respondents claimed that some adults now appreciated the abilities of the youth. They asserted that the youth are now being regarded by such moderate adults as people who have a passion for leadership and useful suggestions to offer for the country's development. The view that the youth have some useful suggestions is more prominent during election years (such as in 2008). During this period, a lot of youthful callers into radio discussions on politics put forward insightful arguments and sound analysis. Thus, the opportunity offered by the liberalization of the airwaves has created a space for the youth to change some aspects of their identity and importance in society through their contributions and arguments, most especially during electioneering seasons.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the use youth make of radio to express their views, the media generally can be used as a tool to reduce the exclusion and vulnerability of the youth. They can serve as a platform for the youth to express their views without the intimidating presence of adult males, as observed in the fieldwork (see above).

Youth wings of political parties are also asserting themselves more in the decision-making process of the various parties and are in a way resuscitating the major role that youth played in the immediate aftermath of independence. For example, the former president of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, was a minister of state at the age of 28. This picture is also readily recognizable in other West African states like Nigeria and Liberia, where people in their 30s held high political positions soon after independence.

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26 In-depth interviews with a number of respondents revealed this; among them were the following: (1) interviews with Abass, president of the Polytechnic Students Associations of Ghana and also president of over 120 youth associations in the northern region of Ghana, Tamale, 20 March 2008; (2) interview with John, student at the University for Development Studies, Tamale, 20 March 2008; (3) interview with Sammy Y., programme manager of a local radio station, 18 May 2008; and (4) interview with Shelly Haizel Ferguson, newscaster and presenter, Sky FM, Takoradi, 20 June 2008.

What is more prominent about the changing perception of the youth, however, is its negative aspect. They are increasingly regarded as less respectful and more deviant than the older generation. In some focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, some of the respondents claimed that most of the older generation are too steeped in stereotypes that hold that the youth have little to offer society at their age. If we assume that this assertion is true, nonetheless, very few programmes are in place to support and mentor youth within political parties and/or state institutions. The youth wings of most political parties are very often regarded as the people with the brawn and energy, but not the brains.

## Chapter 4

### The context of youth exclusion and vulnerability

*We want jobs, but not any kind of jobs. We also want education that will equip us with the requisite skills for the job market. If the government consults us, they will put in place programmes for the youth that will satisfy us. We hardly feature in the design process of youth programmes.*

Aluizah Amasaba, respondent

The above statement captures succinctly the views of most youth in relation to certain government youth programmes. This view supports one of the six propositions of YOVEX II, which is that such youth programmes are supply driven and unresponsive to the youth that they are supposed to assist. And since the buy-in of any target group, one may argue, is key to the success of such programmes, all too often, as the propositions of this project rightly show, these programmes tend to be short lived.

#### 4.1 Youth and politics

A key indicator of youth inclusiveness in any democratic state is their role and position in the hierarchies of political parties and institutions of state.

One prominent feature of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana is the age-based eligibility criterion for any candidate aspiring to become either a member of parliament or president of the country. Among other things, Article 94 (1a) states that 'a person shall not be qualified to be a member of parliament unless: (a) he is a citizen of Ghana and has attained the age of twenty-one years and is a registered voter'. For the office of president, the age limit is 40 years. Article 62 (1b) states that 'A person shall not be qualified for election as the President of Ghana unless he has attained the age of forty years'. In its strict sense, this age-based criterion discriminates against the youth. However, there are many voters between the ages of 18 and 21 who voted in the last elections and will be voting in subsequent ones. These age-

based criteria are a paradox, because, on the one hand, they constrain the youth from running for certain positions, yet, on the other hand, the fact that people can vote at the age of 18 means that young people are assumed to have the ability to make rational choices and vote for the right leaders at that age.

Also, although all the political parties have their youth wings, these wings do not have the leverage needed to reflect their importance. If one uses age as the sole criterion for determining youth-hood, then the NDC government has only one minister under 35 years of age out of the almost 75 ministers and deputy ministers in government. However, if one uses other criteria (such as culture) to determine youth-hood, then there are a number of ministers who would be considered as youth in the current NDC government.

At best, youth are seen and made visible and important during elections and quickly go into oblivion after that. In focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, respondents claimed that politicians only create a space for them during elections. When offered the space to make inputs into decision-making, it seems that the youth are heard up to a point, but their contributions hardly matter. There was a consensus among the overwhelming majority of respondents across the various study locations that the youth were excluded from the major decision-making processes of political parties. In an in-depth interview in Tamale, a respondent said that the actions of most political party leaders suggest that the youth may have a space to speak, but the leaders will have their way in the end.

This phenomenon of ‘have your say, but not your way’ raises a critical question: If the contributions of youth do not matter, what are the future prospects of these parties; i.e. what space is available for these parties to mentor the next generation to take up the reins of the parties’ leadership?

Since Ghana has decided to follow a democratic course, bad mentoring processes may well undermine the quality of the politicians that will be turned out in future. This trend may also affect the quality of governance of the security sector – a key sector that is crucial to strengthening and consolidating Ghana’s security and development.

It came out in focus group discussions in the northern and central parts of the country that the youth strategize to respond to their exclusion and vulnerability. Firstly, some of them have decided to ‘milk’ politicians as a way of compensating for the long gap between elections when youth’s voices are not heard (since elections are held every four years). As one respondent stated, ‘the politicians think that we are fools and come here only during elections’. The youth have also strategized to get the best out of politicians financially, and this is easy during electioneering campaigns. As one youth leader noted: ‘Some youth have decided to milk the politicians dry during electioneering campaign, since those are the times they [politicians] need the youth the

most.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, some youth are also withdrawing from active party politics because they perceive politicians as liars. This is certainly not good for Ghana's fledgling democracy.

In response to specific queries, the vast majority of questionnaire respondents and participants in the focus group discussions pointed to employment and education as their central expectations from the central government. To respondents, the high rate of unemployment and the lack of access to education were key indicators of their exclusion and vulnerability.

What is striking as far as the relationship between security and development is concerned is that the areas with high unemployment and illiteracy rates continue to witness frequent conflicts with different degrees of intensity. Respondents from areas experiencing generally low levels of security argued that the high unemployment and illiteracy rates are major causes of conflict in these areas. They stressed that unemployment makes the youth poor and idle. Consequently, they are easily recruited for some kind of violence. Such youth also resort to violence because they think others are the cause of their impoverishment. Respondents in particular claimed that politicians recruit unemployed youth to do their dirty work for them, such as intimidating their competitors.

As noted earlier in the section on methodology, the presence of an adult male in the focus group discussions was in itself indicative of how the exclusion of youth was made easy by 'culture'.<sup>28</sup> Youth were often intimidated by the presence of such adults, and seldom challenged them.

## 4.2 Employment

As noted, although there were a number of youth initiatives by the NPP when it was in power such as the NYEP and its earlier version, the STEP programme, the party was not able to tackle the huge unemployment and underemployment of the youth. In this direction, the YOVEX study indicated that the vast majority of respondents (96.6 per cent) said that the government had responsibility towards the youth, and the first was the creation of jobs (as represented by the 51.5 per cent of respondents who said jobs were a major

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27 Interview with a youth leader, Tamale, 5 May 2008. His arguments were widely repeated in various forms by other respondents in other study localities. They observed that most politicians only seem to visit and listen to the youth during elections and abandoned them immediately afterwards. The youth have therefore also decided to acquire a voice, influence and money during elections when the politicians become vulnerable and the youth gain more power.

28 Some aspects of such 'culture' can be seen as invented when viewed in light of the fact that in a number of ethnic groups, such as the Akan and the Dagombas, the youth (and in particular the youth chiefs) were key components of the socio-economic and political life of these pre-colonial states and featured prominently in the decision-making process of these states and their economic development. The Asafo companies of some Akan states are still indicative of this influence and power of the youth.

concern); i.e. they expected the government to provide them with jobs. The provision of jobs was in the form of direct employment and/or the provisions of micro-credit facilities to enable the youth to create jobs for themselves. The responses along these lines are discussed below.

Almost all the respondents (96.6 per cent) claimed that the government has a responsibility towards the youth (see table 4).

**Table 4: Responses to the questionnaire question 'Do you think the government has a responsibility to the youth?'**

|              | Frequency  | %            | Valid %      |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 422        | 96.6         | 96.6         |
| No           | 15         | 3.4          | 3.4          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

In response to the next question, 'If so, what should this be?', 51.5 per cent of respondents stated that they wanted jobs, 36.5 per cent wanted a proper youth policy, 5.7 per cent of them wanted their basic needs provided for, 2.8 per cent of wanted social amenities to be provided, and the rest (1.7 per cent) wanted loans.

In response to the next question, 'What do you think needs to be done?', most respondents (57.2 per cent) said that they should be provided with more jobs, 33.4 per cent claimed they wanted education, 5.5 per cent wanted counselling, 2.7 per cent wanted a proper youth policy, and the rest (1.1 per cent) wanted loans (see table 5).

**Table 5: Responses to the questionnaire question 'What do you think needs to be done [for youth]?'**

|                    | Frequency  | % <sup>1</sup> | Valid % <sup>1</sup> |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Youth policy       | 12         | 2.7            | 2.7                  |
| Career counselling | 24         | 5.5            | 5.5                  |
| Education          | 146        | 33.4           | 33.4                 |
| More jobs          | 250        | 57.2           | 57.2                 |
| Provide loans      | 5          | 1.1            | 1.1                  |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b>   | <b>100.0</b>         |

<sup>1</sup> The figures given in the various categories do not total exactly 100.0 due to rounding.

Despite the official rhetoric about creating more jobs for the youth by both the NDC and the NPP when in power, this seems not to have happened. It is all the more worrying when the NYP, put in place almost a decade ago (1999), pointed to a youth employment problem that was partly attributed to a badly designed educational system that fails to equip young people for the formal job market or the informal employment sector.

### 4.3 Education

GLSS 4 notes that 50 per cent of Ghanaian adults are literate in English or a local language. An adult, in the view of GLSS 4, is someone above the age of 15 years. This definition is interesting, since the study is carried out by the Ghana Statistical Service, a state body, and the definition is at variance with those of the NYC, which is also a state institution. The above figure (of a 50 per cent adult literacy rate) does not show the serious differences between the sexes and geographic locations. GLSS 4 states that a little over six out of every ten males, but fewer than four out of every ten women are literate. It further indicates that 66 per cent of adults in urban areas are literate, but only about 41 per cent of that constituency are literate in the rural areas.

In addition to the above, the YOVEX II-Ghana study also revealed that the vast majority respondents understood and appreciated the importance of education to society and their livelihoods, clearly indicating that it was a very high priority. In this regard, most respondents stated that the things that affected them most were educational issues, followed by conflicts. In particular, most respondents (25.7 per cent) claimed they were mainly affected by education or academic issues. Specific factors given included the change in the length of second cycle education from three to four years (19.1 per cent), chieftaincy issues (19.1 per cent), government policies (9.8 per cent), and conflicts and disunity in society (6.6 per cent), among others (see table 6 for details).

**Table 6: Responses to the questionnaire question ‘What change or things affect you most?’**

|   | Frequency  | % <sup>1</sup> | Valid % <sup>1</sup> |
|---|------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Environment                                     | 2          | 0.5            | 0.5                  |
| Government policies                             | 37         | 8.5            | 9.8                  |
| Conflicts/disunity in the society               | 25         | 5.7            | 6.6                  |
| Education/academic issues                       | 97         | 22.2           | 25.7                 |
| Poverty   | 42         | 9.6            | 11.1                 |
| Change in 2nd cycle education from 3 to 4 years | 72         | 16.5           | 19.1                 |
| Teenage pregnancy                               | 30         | 6.9            | 8.0                  |
| Chieftaincy issues                              | 72         | 16.5           | 19.1                 |
| <b>Sub-total</b>                                | <b>377</b> | <b>86.3</b>    | <b>100.0</b>         |
| No response                                     | 60         | 13.7           |                      |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |                      |

<sup>1</sup> The figures given in the various categories do not total exactly 100.0 due to rounding.

This mindset/orientation of the youth has critical implication for policies geared towards the development of the country and in particular the youth. It also means that once the government crafts well-informed policies and puts in place the necessary structures, the youth will avail themselves of educational opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of access to education, although there has been an increase in the number of private educational institutions (particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels), most youth cannot afford the cost of these institutions.<sup>30</sup> There are virtually no scholarship schemes for needy students. The state-owned institutions, most notably the universities, admit only a fraction of qualified applicants because of resource constraints. This leaves the vast majority of the youth, mostly from poor families, unable to further their education because they cannot afford the cost of private institutions. The high cost of education is part of the conditionalities of the Bretton Woods institutions (i.e. the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), which require cost sharing.

For instance, in his speech delivered at the congregation of the University of Ghana in 2006, the vice chancellor of the university noted the following:

*The University received 21,999 applications for admissions to under-graduate programmes for the 2005/2006 academic year. Due to the obvious constraints, such as lack of adequate Faculty, space, and other academic facilities, the university was able to offer admissions to only 10,629 of the applicants to the main and city campuses.*<sup>31</sup>

In the following year, 2007, the vice chancellor again noted in his congregation speech his concern about young people's access to education. His concern was for youth exclusion from education, which is a key tool of a successful life:

*For the academic year under review, our records indicate that a total number of 16,000 undergraduate applications were received. The University offered admission to a little over 7,500 of these applicants out which some 5,600 registered for the 2006/2007 academic year.*<sup>32</sup>

In relation to the enrolment of females into the university, the vice chancellor indicated that

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29 There is currently a policy of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education and free feeding programmes (which are laudable ideas), which aim to get more children to school. These have been faced with a number of challenges that are not the focus of this study

30 See Appendix 3 for a list of Ghana's tertiary institutions.

31 University of Ghana (2006).

32 University of Ghana (2007).



42% of the registered students are female. ... this figure indicates that we are drawing closer to obtaining a 50:50 female to male enrolment ratio: for now, we continue to use affirmative action to boost female admission to our undergraduate programmes.<sup>33</sup>

He quickly added, however:

... but I make a passionate appeal to government to put in place more measures to ensure that all Students, both male and female, at the Primary and secondary school levels reach their highest potential, and are encouraged to excel in their academic work, and stay in school.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 7: First-year admissions to the University of Ghana, 2004**

| Area of study      | Applied       | Admitted      | Enrolled     |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Humanities</b>  | <b>15,857</b> | <b>8,659</b>  | <b>6,369</b> |
| Male               | 9,610         | 5,237         | 3,743        |
| Female             | 6,247         | 3,422         | 2,626        |
| <b>Science</b>     | <b>3,210</b>  | <b>1,602</b>  | <b>903</b>   |
| Male               | 2,203         | 1,087         | 608          |
| Female             | 1,007         | 515           | 295          |
| <b>Agriculture</b> | <b>1,307</b>  | <b>414</b>    | <b>314</b>   |
| Male               | 948           | 290           | 215          |
| Female             | 359           | 124           | 99           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>20,374</b> | <b>10,675</b> | <b>7,586</b> |
| Male               | 12,761        | 6,614         | 4,566        |
| Female             | 7,613         | 4,061         | 3,020        |

Source: University of Ghana (2004)

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

**Table 8: First-year admissions to the University of Ghana, 2003**

| Area of study      | Applied       | Admitted      | Enrolled     |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Humanities</b>  | <b>14,774</b> | <b>8,360</b>  | <b>6,213</b> |
| Male               | 9,058         | 5,097         | 3,769        |
| Female             | 5,716         | 3,263         | 2,444        |
| <b>Science</b>     | <b>6,396</b>  | <b>2,599</b>  | <b>1,743</b> |
| Male               | 4,343         | 1,704         | 1,109        |
| Female             | 2,053         | 895           | 634          |
| <b>Agriculture</b> | <b>614</b>    | <b>406</b>    | <b>333</b>   |
| Male               | 426           | 286           | 234          |
| Female             | 188           | 120           | 99           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>21,784</b> | <b>11,365</b> | <b>8,289</b> |
| Male               | 13,827        | 7,087         | 5,112        |
| Female             | 7,957         | 4,278         | 3,177        |

Source: University of Ghana (2003)

**Table 9: First-year admissions to the University of Ghana, 2002**

| Area of study     | Applied       | Admitted     | Enrolled     |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Humanities</b> | <b>13,266</b> | <b>5,947</b> | <b>4,830</b> |
| Male              | 7,969         | 3,782        | 3,061        |
| Female            | 5,297         | 2,165        | 1,769        |
| <b>Science</b>    | <b>4,810</b>  | <b>1,789</b> | <b>1,042</b> |
| Male              | 3,225         | 1,248        | 711          |
| Female            | 1,585         | 541          | 331          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>18,076</b> | <b>7,736</b> | <b>5,872</b> |
| Male              | 11,194        | 5,030        | 3,772        |
| Female            | 6,882         | 2,706        | 2,100        |

Source: University of Ghana (2002)

**Table 10: First-year admissions to the University of Ghana, 1999/2000**

| Area of study     | Applied       | Admitted     | Enrolled     |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Humanities</b> | <b>11,239</b> | <b>4,789</b> | <b>3,912</b> |
| Male              | 7,902         | 3,291        | 2,633        |
| Female            | 3,337         | 1,498        | 1,279        |
| <b>Science</b>    | <b>3,080</b>  | <b>908</b>   | <b>730</b>   |
| Male              | 2,191         | 655          | 554          |
| Female            | 889           | 253          | 213          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>14,319</b> | <b>5,697</b> | <b>4,679</b> |
| Male              | 10,093        | 3,946        | 3,187        |
| Female            | 4,226         | 1,751        | 1,492        |

Source: University of Ghana (2000)

The challenge of the youth in terms of access to education was noted by the NYP over a decade ago, yet the problem is still rife. The NYP noted the vulnerability this creates for the youth with regard to their future status. The YOVEX II-Ghana survey results confirm the exclusion of youth from education and the inability of many of them to fulfil their educational ambitions.

One other major issue that contributes to and affects the vulnerability and exclusion of some youth is conflict, which was regarded by respondents as the next major issue that affected the youth after education. Various types of conflict were mentioned, including chieftaincy issues (mentioned by 19.1 per cent of respondents) and other conflicts (6.6 per cent). Respondents also recounted the numerous impacts of conflicts. These include: (1) the disruption of education; (2) the destruction of infrastructure; (3) the displacement of people; (4) the proliferation of small arms; (5) the creation of mistrust in society; (6) the disruption of trade and commerce; and (7) the disruption of agricultural activities. And since most farming activities are rain fed, when conflicts coincide with the rainy season, it means that farmers cannot farm and this affected their income and their ability to pay for the educational and health needs of themselves and their dependents. In a word, conflicts affect the human security of people in many ways.

# Chapter 5

## Youth coping mechanisms

How have the youth responded to their vulnerability and exclusion in Ghana? Their response mechanisms varied along a number of lines. Generally, these mechanisms reflected respondents' educational status, geographic location and, to an extent, gender. The mechanisms will be discussed in detail, since they directly respond to the core aim of the study, which is to observe and listen to African youth in order to discover promising entry points for public, private and voluntary initiatives. In this light, this section also hopes to identify ground-breaking avenues as a means of mobilizing the scattered energies and resources of youth in order to improve both security and development.

With slight alterations, the coping mechanisms of the youth as a response to their exclusion and vulnerability will be discussed within four key thematic areas. These themes largely conform with those suggested by the Conflict, Security & Development Group of King's College London, which were:

1. sport and media entertainment;
2. politics (including violence);
3. informal economic activities (both legal and illegal);
4. religion (religious movements/associations); and
5. youth associations.

The following sections discuss sport, informal economic activities and migration, religious activities, and youth associations as being important in Ghana.

### 5.1 Sport

Sport has been one of the main coping mechanisms of the youth, and therefore it is not surprising that it is one of their most important activities. The largest

group of respondents (26.0 per cent) prefer sports to all other activities (see table 11).

**Table 11: Responses to the questionnaire question ‘Which activities, organization or group is most important to you?’**

|                            | Frequency  | % <sup>1</sup> | Valid % <sup>1</sup> |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Peer education             | 13         | 3.0            | 3.1                  |
| Church                     | 72         | 16.5           | 17.3                 |
| AYPA <sup>2</sup>          | 3          | 0.7            | 0.7                  |
| Civil society organization | 9          | 2.1            | 2.2                  |
| Selling                    | 3          | 0.7            | 0.7                  |
| My occupation              | 3          | 0.7            | 0.7                  |
| Academic associations      | 31         | 7.1            | 7.5                  |
| Ministry of Health         | 8          | 1.8            | 1.9                  |
| Sports                     | 108        | 24.7           | 26.0                 |
| Government                 | 75         | 17.2           | 18.1                 |
| Farming                    | 10         | 2.3            | 2.4                  |
| Red Cross                  | 37         | 8.5            | 8.9                  |
| NGOs (in general)          | 43         | 9.8            | 10.4                 |
| <b>Sub-total</b>           | <b>415</b> | <b>95.0</b>    | <b>100.0</b>         |
| No response                | 22         | 5.0            |                      |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |                      |

<sup>1</sup> The figures given in the various categories do not total exactly 100.0 due to rounding.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of this abbreviation is not known.

In Nima, one of the study locations, sports serve as an avenue for social cohesion and bonding among the youth, who are mainly unemployed and hardly educated. For this constituency of youth, football in particular has a number of significance for their socio-economic well-being. Primarily, it gives them an avenue that they think may help them to achieve their future aspirations, the key one of which is to break out of the poverty cycle, particularly since the state, in their estimation, has not shown much interest in their development.

In this light, respondents said that most of the players have nicknames that serve as an inspiration for their future ambitions to play in big soccer clubs in Europe. For them, therefore, the main source of escape from poverty is not the various state policies such as the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II or the NYEP, but soccer.<sup>35</sup> In soccer fields around Nima, Madina and elsewhere, names of national stars such as Stephen Appiah, Michael Essien and Sule Muntari, and of other international stars such as Ronaldo, Pelé, Kanu and

<sup>35</sup> Although the NYEP covers a number of disciplines geared to address the high unemployment rate, there is no place for soccer in it.

Samuel Eto'o, are common nicknames for aspirant youth, and these players have in a way become the 'mentors' of these youth.

In various focus group discussions, it also came up that soccer serves as an avenue for social cohesion among the youth. Respondents indicated that when a teammate is going to marry, or is injured or bereaved, the others would contribute money to show solidarity with their colleague. With the frequent injuries associated with soccer (partly as a result of the lack of money to acquire protective gear), this esprit de corps also meets some of the health needs of these players. (Although Ghana has just started the National Health Insurance Scheme, which is very laudable, access to this free medical care scheme is yet to be widely provided.) Put differently, in the face of failing state institutions, being part of a soccer team is a strategic response to meet young people's socio-economic needs.

In addition, soccer also helps the youth to be disciplined. According to some of the respondents (who were soccer coaches and fans in Nima), soccer places the youth under certain forms of guidance and control. This is because Nima, according to older respondents, has a large number of youth without adequate parental care, and soccer coaches in part fill the position of parents. Such monitoring includes making sure that the young players do not turn to drugs and criminal activities. Soccer therefore takes a lot of children off the streets and gives them hope and, in a way, reduces the level of potential criminals on the streets. Of course, it is in the interests of these coaches to have successful international players as part of their achievements. Hence, soccer can serve as an entry point for private, public and voluntary initiatives interested in security and development in Ghana.

Sadly, there was consensus from respondents in Nima that the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the state do not seem to be aware of these important linkages between soccer, on the one hand, and security and development, on the other. As a result, they have not offered any meaningful support to soccer teams in Nima. The soccer teams are self-financing and some state that their players struggle to contribute USD 5 a month to support the clubs.

The respondents argued that in their opinion, government and state institutions only pay lip service to youth issues. In Nima, respondents cited examples to buttress these accusations against the state. They pointed out that a number of their soccer fields have been converted into buildings, without replacements being provided. This means a reduction in recreational grounds and limited space for more soccer players who could have been taken off the streets.

The existing fields are now few and far between. The worry of some of the coaches and other respondents is that, since the devil finds work for idle hands, some of the youth who may have turned to soccer for recreation and hope may now resort to criminal activities. Although there is no scientific basis

for this belief, it should not be totally ignored. The NYP confirms the link between sports and security and notes the following:

*Sports and recreation promote positive and healthy life styles. Further, sport is now identified as an important means of developing human potential, particularly the youth. Inadequate recreational facilities for use by young people has exacerbated their susceptibility to crime, and jeopardized their holistic development.*<sup>36</sup>

## 5.2 Informal economic activities and migration

Another coping mechanism comprises informal economic activities, which are either criminal or legal. In Ghana, the government sector employs only 6.2 per cent of the workforce, while about 7.5 per cent are employed by the formal private sector. In places like Kpandai, Yendi and Bawku, farming is the main source of employment. This employment pattern confirms the findings of GLSS 4, which reveals that the agricultural sector employs over half of the country's workforce.<sup>37</sup>

In Bawku, a border town, smuggling is another way in which the youth are coping with their exclusion and vulnerability. During in-depth interviews in the area, it became apparent that the main economic of some youth was the smuggling of motorbikes to Wa (a town in Ghana about 300 kilometres away). The cost of smuggling a motorbike over that distance was about USD 20, and the smuggler could make USD 12 in profit. On average, it takes a rider about four hours to cover this distance.

In the view of most of these smugglers, their activity is not a crime, but a coping mechanism to eke out a living for themselves. They challenge the grounds for defining their trade as illegal more so when the state seldom caters for them or creates avenues for them to achieve their ambitions for the future.

Another coping mechanism is the massive rural–urban migration that has characterized the demographic landscape of Ghana. A result of this trend is what is popularly known in Ghana as the *kayayei* phenomenon. *Kayayei* is a term used to describe female migrants from the mostly impoverished and underdeveloped north who migrate to urban centres.<sup>38</sup> The striking feature of this migration is how females (some as young as 15 years) migrate to the relatively developed south in search for non-existent jobs. This has resulted in a pattern where a lot of these girls live on the streets, with its attendant dangers. Some of these females are raped by men who claim to be their protectors in the hostile street life. The health and other implications are obvious in the era of the HIV/AIDS threat. Although generally the youth suffer from exclusion and are vulnerable, this affects males and females differently.

36 MYS (1999), 3; emphasis added.

37 Ghana Statistical Service (2000).

38 The term *kayayei* is a Ga word that means head porters. The singular is *kayayo*.

In the case of women in particular, the vulnerable become more vulnerable through exploitation as they seek to escape from exclusion and marginalization.

### 5.3 Religious activities

Most of the respondents (38.2 per cent) thought that religious associations (churches/mosques) help youth the most, as indicated in table 12.

**Table 12: Responses to the questionnaire question ‘What association or organization do you think is helping the youth the most?’**

|                                      | Frequency  | %            | Valid % <sup>1</sup> |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|
| NYC                                  | 20         | 4.6          | 4.8                  |
| Red Cross                            | 51         | 11.7         | 12.2                 |
| Church/mosque                        | 160        | 36.6         | 38.2                 |
| Government (e.g. Ministry of Health) | 66         | 15.1         | 15.8                 |
| Friends of the Earth                 | 46         | 10.5         | 11.0                 |
| Keep-fit clubs                       | 16         | 3.7          | 3.8                  |
| Action AID Ghana                     | 31         | 7.1          | 7.4                  |
| SEND Foundation                      | 6          | 1.4          | 1.4                  |
| NGOs (in general)                    | 23         | 5.3          | 5.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>419</b> | <b>96.0</b>  | <b>100.0</b>         |
| No response                          | 18         | 4.0          |                      |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>437</b> | <b>100.0</b> |                      |

<sup>1</sup> The figures given in the various categories do not total exactly 100.0 due to rounding.

The prominence of religion in the life of young people was expressed by a university graduate who is a member of a charismatic church in Accra and who stressed the importance of his church to his life. He noted:

*Church activities shape my life and give me a vision and a hope. Without church activities I will not be where I am today as a university graduate. It is the church that has made God bless me. The church gives a vision and a hope to most youth. Most of my networks in life were established in church; I know a professional who I could have hardly known outside of church owing to the different circles we find ourselves in.*

The main ideas in the above statement were recounted in various forms by various respondents, who were very clear about the role of religion in their lives. Religious activities provided a good platform for coping with their marginalization and vulnerability, giving them hope, vision and a sense of belonging. A male youth leader in a charismatic church indicated the following:

The young adults club in church gives a vision and guidance to the numerous youth in the church. The club creates a platform for the youth in the



church to have a space where they can exhibit their God-given skills under the guiding principles encouraged by the Bible.

The above narrations are reinforced by the survey results.

A female youth leader from another church reinforced the argument put forward by the previously quoted youth leader regarding the role and impact of church activities on the youth:

*The church keeps the youth busy and it also gives them a sense of purpose and self-fulfilment. I am a leader in the theatre department of my church. This group offers the youth an opportunity to do something that they feel will be appreciated by the church.*

One thing that became clear was that church activities also give the youth a form of recognition. Anecdotal evidence suggests that one reason that some youth join the choir is to gain some recognition and visibility. This recognition is all the more prominent when the wider society restricts the visibility and prominence of youth through an invented culture that denies them any meaningful role in society.

The role of religion is not only prominent in the lives of those who have tertiary education. People with little education and virtually no potential for the future are also given hope by religion. The charismatic churches are seen as youth based, and other more established church groups like the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists are now also creating room for youth activities, partly as a way of discouraging the youth from moving to the charismatic churches, because the latter appeal more to the youth. A visit to a typical church service on Sunday will highlight the impact and role of the youth in charismatic churches.

#### **5.4 Youth associations**

By far, the most fascinating and perhaps innovative finding of this research is the resilience with which the youth in the central zone of the country have responded to their vulnerability and exclusion.

In Kpandai, one of the towns in this zone, the youth have formed associations to create a platform to harness their resources in order to achieve their goals in life. For these respondents, their main aspiration is to escape from the poverty trap and gain some kind of personal recognition for themselves. In their view, the state does not show much interest in their well-being and as a result they believe that their visions can only be realized in Europe of the United States.

Against this background of an El Dorado in the developed world, the associations are often named after towns in the developed world and end with the word 'Base', e.g. London Base, German Base, Chicago Base, California Base, etc. Others are not necessarily names of geographical places, e.g. Mandela Base, Top Radio Base, Millennium Base, White Base, Future Base, etc.

The wider community sees these associations as both positive and negative. Whereas most community members regard them as a positive, others (mostly adults and some youth) regard them as bodies that promote promiscuity and immoral activities.

According to members of the associations, the positive side is that they create a unique platform for the youth to share their future ambitions and also gain recognition. For example, the California, Millennium and Top Radio Bases said that they create a platform where their members meet to share their visions and to also support one another in times of need.

If someone wants to join these associations, the members claimed they check the background of a prospective member to make sure that he/she will not damage the image of the association after he/she has been recruited. Members are also expected to support one another in times of need. Millennium Base members claimed that they had paid the school fees of about five students who did not have money to further their secondary education. Although almost all of these associations have not been registered,<sup>39</sup> they have their own constitutions and also expect members to pay monthly dues.

In Bawku, the youth associations or bases have gone through a number of phases that have tended to reflect the broader socio-economic and political conditions of the town. Generally, the identities of these bases are not static, but fluid. At the turn of the century, the bases started as a place where young people (over 98 per cent of them male) gathered during the course of the day to discuss various issues that affected them, their communities and the state. They also used these bases to 'relax'. Then, with the reintroduction of party politics, some politicians realized that these bases could be a rich ground for recruiting the youth for their political endeavours. Consequently, some politicians started providing resources for these bases such as chairs, benches and other items. The political identity of these bases is often indicated by the display of party colours and paraphernalia. One interesting (but not surprising) thing about these bases is that some members claimed that they would not necessarily vote for politicians just because they had provided resources for their bases. They argued that they would vote for those who have demonstrated that they have the welfare of youth at heart.

In areas where inter-ethnic conflict is taking place, the bases have effectively become ethnic associations, losing the multi-ethnic character they had before the conflict started.

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39 Registration is with the Registrar-General's Department and the Department of Social Welfare. The Registrar-General gives a certificate of incorporation and commencement and applies the regulations that govern the activities of a company if the youth association wants to operate like an NGO. The Social Welfare Department gives a certificate to confirm that an organization is an NGO operating in Ghana and is recognized as such by the Ghanaian government. Government recognition means that any international organization can deal with an NGO.

One interesting thing about the bases is how they are gendered. The overwhelming proportion (98–99 per cent) of members are male. The reason, according to some respondent, is that most women are involved in trading during the day, and during the evening are involved in cooking, drawing water and other domestic chores. These times coincide with the period that the males gather at the bases. Beyond that, there is also the issue of females responding to perceptions and socially defined gender roles generated by bases. For instance, females seen at these bases are often regarded as abandoning their traditional gender roles, which carries some stigma. Generally, bases are seen as spaces for males and not females. The issue is one of power and authority, both of which are traditionally the spheres of males. Interestingly, Kpandai seems to have a different structure, and females are part of some bases, even though Bawku and Kpandai are both patrilineal societies. Females found in bases in Bawku are often the girlfriends of members of these bases, and their presence is very much tied to their relationship with the male members of the base. Generally, despite their role as a venue for youth programmes, bases are all too often regarded as a platform for promiscuity. One of the reasons for this is that since these bases contribute money to support members during child-naming ceremonies, some youth decided to get pregnant as a way of getting some capital through donations at such social events. The view that these bases are sources of promiscuity was recounted by various respondents in other study locations such as Kpandai, Yendi, Tamale and Bawku.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the challenges associated with bases, they can be another important entry point to harness the youth for security, peace and development programmes.

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40 It is recommended that further study be carried out to examine these bases in terms of factors such as gender composition, geographic location, political/ethnic orientation, etc.

## Chapter 6

### **'In their own words': Some youth survival strategies and coping mechanisms**

The ability of the youth to cope with their marginalization and vulnerability and the ingenuity they display in this regard were clearly brought to the fore in numerous life stories and focus group discussions during the fieldwork. Central to understanding these coping mechanisms is how various respondents from under-resourced homes straddled the gap between education and work to earn money to support their needs, most notably to pay for their education. The desire of the respondents to have some kind of bright future played out in the way in which they were determined to find alternative ways to develop a career or business outside the state's formal institutions. In this light, the vast majority of respondents said that the state did not really care for the youth, although they admitted that the NYEP could be improved to address their concerns and needs.

The stories given below illuminate the ability of the youth to negotiate the rough waters of life for a better future. For instance, whereas the story of Ernest Obeng Antwi depicts how some youth play the dual roles of student and worker to support their single parents (in female-headed households), that of Angela Love Aseidu shows an even more complex pattern. She is a single mother, a student at a tertiary institution and a worker as well. Her story shows how young women struggle to get a handle on the often competing 'productive' and 'reproductive' roles of females.<sup>41</sup>

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41 The term 'reproductive role' as used here does not only refer to bearing and breastfeeding a baby, but also includes domestic chores and other chores that have to do with the keeping of the home. On the other hand, the term 'productive role' includes activities that are often performed outside the home, usually income-generating activities. In most cases, these activities are gendered, with the reproductive role usually regarded as the sphere of females and the productive one the province of males.

## 6.1 Ernest Obeng Antwi, 24, shopkeeper and student

### 6.1.1 Background

My name is Ernest Obeng Antwi. I am 20 years old and a past student of Presbyterian Secondary School [in Osu, a suburb of Accra]. I live at Labone, Accra. I lost my dad at the age of seven and was looked after by my mother, a petty trader whose meagre income could not support my three other siblings and me. In 2005, when my mother was financially strained and there was no help, I dropped out of school for one term. During this period, I played football with my friends and neighbours on the streets or in parks in my leisure hours. I helped my mother with trading as well. I am still interested in continuing my education at the tertiary level. However, I still have some grades that did not turn out well in my Senior High School Certificate examination, which I have registered for re-sitting.

### 6.1.2 Coping strategies

#### *Survival*

In the period that my mother became financially strained, I went through my senior high education partly with the aid of sponsorship from an NGO and my mother's meagre earnings. The times were often difficult. On some days I had to drop out of school to assist my mother at her shop, since she is a trader who specializes in the sale of provisions. She has her own provisions shop.

#### *Social networks*

I do have a lot of uncles and aunts both in Ghana and abroad, but none has so far offered help. My mother did well to insist on living an independent life so that for many years I did not look to anyone outside my nuclear family for help.

#### *Institutional support*

I was profiled by an NGO for sponsorship to enable me to finish my secondary education. With the exception of the NGO, from which I received some assistance, I did not receive any help from any other organization or group. Although my church has a scholarship scheme from which I could have benefitted, I did not satisfy the criteria upon which its selection was based.

### 6.1.3 Outlook

#### *Identity*

In every sense, I consider myself to be a role model for other young people in my community and church. Despite my humble beginnings, I foresee a bright future for myself.

*My future*

I want to be an engineer in the future. I want to set up my own construction company, which would specialize in building technology. Later I will switch on to real estate development. I think that the experience that I will gain in the construction business will equip me with knowledge to manage the real estate development business.

**6.2 Vida Oye Koranteng, 26, fashion designer***6.2.1 Background*

My name is Vida Oye Koranteng. I am 26 years old and a past student of Nungua Secondary School. My father, Samuel Koranteng is an itinerant tailor who does not have many customers and my mother is a petty trader. I have five sisters and brothers. The money my parents make was not enough to cater for the needs of six growing children.

I sometimes sold iced water on the streets of Accra during my JSS days just to make money for transportation to school. I read or sing in the little spare time I have.

When I was in JSS form 2, the headmistress of my school asked permission from my parents to let me come and live with her to enable her to monitor my performance at school. With her help, I was able to pass my BECE<sup>42</sup> and got admission to the senior secondary school (SSS). After school, I decided to go and study fashion design, so I enrolled for admission at Lafayette. After three years I graduated and set up my own shop at Awoshie, where I now design clothes. I named my shop 'La Vida's Fabrics'.

*6.2.2 Coping strategies**Survival*

The period of my upbringing was not smooth. Although my parents lived together, they were not rich enough to afford my five siblings and me any luxury. At SSS I survived on the little financial support offered by my parents. They could not afford to enrol me for extra classes during the vacations. I completed school with only five (weak) passes in my SSSCE.<sup>43</sup> Since I have a talent with which I can work to survive, I consider it a waste of time and money trying to register for a re-sit of my poor performance in the SSSCE.

*Social networks*

I did not have a lot of relatives who were in a position to help me. I have one uncle, however, who offered to help on condition that I come to live with him

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42 Basic Education Certificate Examination, the JSS graduation certificate in Ghana.

43 Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination, the SSS graduation certificate in Ghana.

at Asamankese, but my parents refused the offer. This must have been due to the fact that he was unemployed and was at the same time a divorcee. On the basis of that, they could not trust him to take care of me.

#### *Institutional support*

The only instance when I remember receiving some form of financial help was when the bishop of my church at the St Barnabas Catholic Church paid my fees for just one term when I was in SSS form 2. Apart from this, I have never received help from any institution or body.

### 6.2.3 Outlook

#### *Identity*

I think that I have the basic level of aptitude to enable me to progress in my education. Although I could not further my education to the desired level, I am convinced that I can channel that same ability in another direction such as the sewing business that I am currently engaged in.

#### *My future*

I am very positive about the future of my work as a designer. Designing has become a very lucrative business now. I have designer friends who design clothing for people living overseas and then charge them in dollars and pounds. I hope to get to that level where I can also design clothes for rich and famous people, as well those living abroad. Now, whenever I sew one pair of 'Kaba & Slit', I charge GHS 8–10.

### 6.2.4 My typical day

When I wake up every morning, the first thing I do is to say my prayers. On Tuesdays I go to early mass at church. From there, I come home to sweep and do some household chores. Then I prepare breakfast and carry it to my shop to eat on arrival. On some days, I rush to the shop early to beat the traffic. I close work at 7:00 p.m. During the Christmas season, when I have a huge pile of work to do, I stay at work up to about 11:00 p.m.

## **6.3 Sarah Owusua, student, Accra Polytechnic**

### *6.3.1 Background*

My name is Sarah Owusua. I am 28 years old. I live at North Kaneshie. My father, George Simpson, is unemployed and has been suffering from strokes for the past seven years. Stella Wellington, my mother, is a petty trader. Even though I do not have any brothers and sisters, my parents found it hard to see me through school. When I was in JSS form 2, I went to live at Abokobi with my aunt, who looked after me until I got admission to SSS. When I was in my

final year I met a young man called Ritchie who had just returned from Spain. He promised to marry me, so we began a relationship. While waiting for my results after school, I discovered that I was pregnant. I was compelled to leave for my parents' home where I remained until I gave birth to my son. After my delivery I stayed at home for two years, after which I got admission to the Accra Polytechnic, where I am at the moment doing a course in catering.

### 6.3.2 *Coping strategies*

#### *Survival*

In the period of my basic education, I used to help my mother sell just to make money to pay for my fees. At secondary school, my aunt too helped with my upkeep. Besides, I got some help occasionally from Ritchie for the period that he was in the country, until he left again for Spain near the time of my delivery. My mother took a loan and rented a shop at Makola market, where we used to sell cooking utensils. It is from this business that we acquired most of the funds for our daily upkeep. At the moment, sales have gone down; however, we still make some income, which sustains us. At present, I still live with my mother and bedridden father and one distant cousin who keeps the home in our absence. And even though I am in school I manage the shop with my mother on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which are the days when I do not have any lectures.

#### *Social networks*

I consider myself to be a person with strong family attachments. As a single parent, I keep an eye on my child in the hope of giving him the best protection and care possible. I am also a member of the Young People's Guild of the Presbyterian church that I attend.

### 6.3.3 *Outlook*

#### *Identity*

Being a single parent, a worker and a student at the same time is very challenging for me. To avoid repeating the mistake of having a child while unmarried, I have decided to focus on my course at the polytechnic so that I can get gainful employment to sustain my son and me.

#### *My future*

The future is bright for a student of catering and home economics. I am aspiring to graduate with an HND<sup>44</sup> and then set up a catering institute to train young people who are interested in the catering business. I also plan to set up an ultra-modern restaurant in the city of Accra and then, if God makes a way, I

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44 High National Diploma, the certificate awarded by the polytechnic institutions in Ghana.



will open branches nationwide. I have plans to get married someday to a very responsible man who can take care of me.

#### *6.3.4 My typical day*

I do not have a strict routine that I follow when I wake up. Usually, my first priority every day is to ensure that my son is bathed, fed, dressed and sent to the nursery school. From there, I either go to my lectures or rush to the shop first, depending on the nature of my timetable for the day. After lectures every day, I rush to the shop to help my mother take stock of the day's sales before I come home. If I am tired, I quickly go to sleep and if I am not tired, I will stay up to watch TV a little. My bedtime is usually between 10 and 10:30 p.m.

### **6.4 Ishmael Teiko, 30, carpenter**

#### *6.4.1 Background*

My name is Ishmael Teiko. I am 30 years of age. I had my JSS education at Twifo-Praso. While I was at JSS, my mum, Mrs Margaret Teiko, looked after me. My father is deceased and my mother is a clerk at Ghana Post. She is a low-income earner. I have one brother.

I sometimes sold newspapers just to make money for transportation to school. After a while, I abandoned the sale of newspapers and sold iced water for some time. When I completed school, I went to learn carpentry for three years.

#### *6.4.2 Coping strategies*

##### *Survival*

When I finished learning carpentry, I bought my own tools and equipment to set up my own workshop. I wanted to earn a lot of money, but I discovered that I could not support myself when living independently, so I remained with my parents for a while. During that time, I helped to sustain the family's upkeep. On average I donate about GHS 50 a month towards the upkeep of the family.

##### *Social networks*

I have only two uncles. Both are businessmen. In the course of my education, they offered some financial help, which could not be relied on a permanent basis. They also had some family responsibilities to maintain, but they showed no serious interest in my welfare.

*Institutional support*

With the exception of my family members, I have had no form of help from any organization. I am not a member of any national association for artisans, like carpenters, which would have required me to pay welfare and membership dues. As a result, I don't get any benefits from any professional group.

*6.4.3 Outlook**Identity*

I come from a poor family, and while growing up, my mother constantly reminded me not to compare myself with other children, but rather to work hard and improve my abilities in any field I find myself. I therefore work very hard. The fact that my parents are poor does not automatically make me a failure.

*My future*

I aspire to have a big furniture-making company like Agorwu and Akuaba. If I am given some financial boost, I can expand my business and employ more hands. Moreover, I can export furniture abroad and earn some dollars too.

*6.4.4 My typical day*

I wake up at 5:00 a.m. every day and quickly say my prayers. After that, I take my bath and quickly take a 'tro-tro' (mini-bus taxi) to my shop at Darkuman. I am usually in the shop all day, either working on a piece for a contract that I have begun the day before or starting a new project.

**6.5 Emmanuel Asare Ayeh, 26, salesperson***6.5.1 Background*

My name is Emmanuel Asare Ayeh. I sell spare parts at Abossey Okai. I grew up in Mamfe with my father, a stepmother and two sisters. After I completed my JSS education, I left for Kumasi to live with an uncle for a while. He lost his job only six months after my arrival. Being unable to find any means to subsist for myself, I came back to Mamfe. There, two friends in Accra asked me to come and help them sell automobile spare parts, so I migrated to Accra. Initially, we didn't have any money to rent a house, so we kept our baggage and stuff in a kiosk in Mallam, where we slept at night until we were able to rent a single room. The spare parts business is very competitive. Our shop owner has three shops in Accra alone and so we often have to work in all three shops. At the moment, he pays me GHS 90, and sometimes I get tips from customers. Sometimes he adds a little to the pay as pocket money.

### 6.5.2 Coping strategies

#### *Survival*

Life in Accra is very difficult for me. The cost of living is high. I survive mainly through the sales that I do for my shop owner, as well as the tips that customers sometimes offer me. There are other forms of 'connections' that I do for a living. I eat twice a day and whenever I do make some extra income, I send some to my father at Mamfe. Life in Kumasi is relatively better than that in Accra in the sense that goods are cheaper in Kumasi. During the period of my stay in Kumasi, I got seriously sick for almost a year. The illness took a lot of my uncle's finances. This was partly the reason why when he lost his job, I had to return to Mamfe.

#### *Social networks*

I don't have any family member in Accra. Here, I live with my two friends. We do everything together as brothers. We go to the Church of Pentecost on Sundays. My boss is a married man with a family, but he often invites us on Sundays to come and eat at his house in Dansoman.

#### *Institutional support*

I don't receive any support from anyone apart from the job that I do.

### 6.5.3 Outlook

#### *Identity*

I am a very honest person. In this job that we do, there is the temptation to steal some of the money we record from sales, but I prefer to keep this job until I am able to set up my own shop in the future. My boss is very good and generous and trusts me. I therefore strive to keep my reputation intact.

#### *My future*

I am aiming at establishing my own spare parts business with a string of shops throughout the country. Life is hard, but my uncle once told me that with determination and hard work, I can make it to the top. With God's help, all things are possible. People often ask me why I'm not married at age 30 and I tell them that God's time is the best. If I'm able to raise some money, I'll certainly find a woman to marry.

### 6.5.4 My typical day

I wake up every day at 6:00 a.m. The first thing I do is take my bath and find some porridge to eat and then rush to fetch the shop keys from my boss's house. From there, I rush over to open the shop, and if there's anything to put in order, I do it. On some days, sales can be very slow. On the days that customer turn-out happens to be very slow, the day becomes very long and I close at 7:00 p.m. and go to sleep at 10:00 p.m.

## 6.6 Yaw Apraku Amponsah, 32, unemployed

### 6.6.1 Background

My name is Yaw Apraku Amponsah. I live at Amasaman. I had my basic education at Bechem S.D.A. primary and JSS. Upon completion of my education I went to Kumasi to live with my brother following the divorce of my parents. I have two older siblings and two younger ones. At Kumasi, I studied plumbing and masonry and worked with a construction company for a while. The owner of the company was not paying me so I left and came to Accra, hoping to find some job to do. Soon after my arrival, I met a young girl who is a hairdresser. We got married and had two children. After four years of marriage I got fed up with the girl, because she was troubling me, so I left her and entrusted the upkeep of my children to my mother at Bechem. At the moment I am unemployed. However, occasionally I do get some part-time construction jobs if any contract comes up.

### 6.6.2 Coping strategies

#### *Social networks*

I have a few friends in Accra. Two of my best friends live at Awoshie. I don't go to church. I used to, but I stopped, because the church that I was attending liked collecting money too much. So now I'm alone. All my relatives are in Bechem. I have nobody in Accra. Sometimes when some of my friends get some contracts and they call me to assist them with something small, I do it.

#### *Institutional support*

I don't receive any support from anywhere. Whenever I get a job, I do it and whenever I don't, I just relax in my room at Amasaman. My neighbours too are not friendly at all.

### 6.6.3 Outlook

#### *Identity*

Well, I believe there is a future for everybody. Everybody has his own destiny. Some people have more witches in their homes than others. There are a lot of witches in my family who are responsible for all the misfortunes that have befallen me. But all shall be well.

#### *My future*

Like I said before, all shall be well. Sometimes I say my own prayers at night. Right now, I am planning to go to Germany. I have an uncle who lives there. If I get his number, I'll call him and ask him to send me the necessary documents that can help me get there.

#### *6.6.4 My typical day*

When I used to work, I woke up at 5:30 a.m. every morning, but now that I don't work, I wake up at 9:00 a.m. or sometimes 10:00 a.m.

### **6.7 Angela Love Asiedu, 24, hairdresser**

#### *6.7.1 Background*

I am called Angela Love Asiedu. I am 24 years old. I had my JSS education at All Saints Anglican Basic Junior High School. Although my father is a plumber, he does not have a permanent job. He is called in occasionally to fix pipes. My mother is a seamstress. I have three sisters and brothers. The general upkeep of my siblings and me is very difficult for my parents, as the burden is mostly on my mother, who cannot charge much because of the area in which we live. On several occasions, I was expelled from school because of my debts in fees.

I am very active with athletics as my favourite pastime. While in school, I excelled in sports, but could not continue at the SSS level. After my basic school education, I was asked to go and learn hairdressing. My employer wrongly accused me and three other apprentices of theft and we were expelled after only seven months. I went to stay at Adabraka with a cousin, who took me to her friend to continue studying hairdressing. After one year I left to set up my own shop. An aunt from Kumasi bought me a dryer, and with some personal savings I bought another one in addition to beginning my own business. Today I have three apprentices studying under me.

#### *6.7.2 Coping strategies*

##### *Survival*

I see my inability to continue my education at the SSS level as due mainly to the poor financial support that I was beset with. The most embarrassing aspect of my JSS education was the numerous times that I was sent away from school to go home and collect the fees. My mother's sewing business was not lucrative. On many occasions she had to borrow money from friends to enable her to pay my fees. Notwithstanding our poor circumstances, my father remarried and left me and my three siblings and mother to take care of ourselves. It was often hard. Through it all, our survival remains a wonder, if I look back to reflect on it.

##### *Social networks*

I am a staunch member of my church, Redeemer Assemblies of God. I grew up knowing only two uncles and one aunt, but none was helpful, especially when my father left us for his new wife.

*Institutional support*

My family received a lot of support through prayer from my church, but little help in terms of financial or material support. I did not belong to any other group or organization from which I could receive some form of support in times of hardship.

*6.7.3 Outlook**Identity*

I am a very determined person and I try very hard to improve my work. I do not find the hair-dressing profession to be very rewarding these days and so sometimes I think of switching to other professions such as sewing. I am trying to give myself some more time to see if I can improve.

*My future*

With God on my side, I see a very bright future. What I need most at the moment is to be able to expand my business. Luckily, I have a fiancée who has promised to expand my business when we get married very soon, possibly before the year comes to an end. I am praying that I can relocate my shop to Accra Central, where business is active, so that I can have more customers. Besides, I hope to increase my knowledge of new hairstyles and designs.

*6.7.4 My typical day*

I work every day of the week except on Sundays, when I go to church. When I wake up in the morning, I dress, eat my breakfast and quickly rush to work. When the customers turn-out is high, especially in peak seasons like Christmas, weekends and Easter, I stay up working until 10:00 p.m.

**6.8 Senanu Kofi, 29, unemployed refrigerator technician***6.8.1 Background*

My name is Senanu Kofi. I am 29 years of age. My father was a soldier and my mother died when I was six years old. I stayed with my grandfather at Keta for five years. I attended school from kindergarten up to class 6, before going to my father at Tamale. My father remarried and had other children by my stepmother.

I went to Anloga Technical School, but because of financial problems I stopped. I went to study painting and decoration for two years. Afterwards, I came to Accra to find a job. I learnt how to mend refrigerators for three years. My father paid for the cost of my apprenticeship. I completed JSS in 1994 and wanted to go to Bishop Hermann School. I did not go to Bishop Hermann

School, but a friend told me that he had seen my name on the admission list on the school's notice board.

### *6.8.2 Coping strategies*

#### *Survival*

My father did not tell me about the death of my mother. I only heard of it through a woman who came one day looking for me at school. When I went to Anloga Technical School in 1995, my main source of support was my father. There were times that he was often annoyed when faced with the responsibility of buying me the necessary books and supplies. His remarriage and the burden of looking after the other children was the cause of this.

#### *Social networks*

I got some help from some of my uncles from overseas, but during vacations I did some construction jobs to get some money to finance myself. I earned a meagre monthly sum of GHC 20,000 in those days. I was then only 12 years old.

#### *Institutional support*

Church has helped me, because God hears my prayers, but I struggled to get money to go to church. Without the spiritual influence of the church, I would have become a bad person and ended up following bad people. In my life, I don't do bad things.

### *6.8.3 Outlook*

#### *Identity*

My life is getting worse. There is no one to help me. I used to collect money from the church administrator. I stopped because I was not happy with that situation.

#### *My future*

I wish to marry and raise children, if things get better. I want to establish my own shop to enable me to repair fridges. These days I don't get jobs to do because life is hard.

### *6.8.4 My typical day*

From bed, I pray to God each day to protect me. I follow this with house chores. I leave at 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. for church. During times of fasting and prayer, I attend a church service every day. I go to church from Thursdays to Friday. I believe that we all need help and protection from the Lord. If my mum were alive, I would further my education.

# Chapter 7

## Social outcomes

The social outcomes of the youth's coping mechanisms will be identified along three major lines. These are lives that are progressing, those that are stagnant and, lastly, those that are retrogressing. The reasons for this categorization are twofold: firstly to conform to the guidelines of the YOVEX II study and, secondly, to show how respondent's lives can be compared with others.

One thing is clear from all the life stories. The vast majority of respondents exhibited a great sense of ingenuity and a strong vision for their future. Even in cases where their stories seem to show stagnation, they still found various ways to eke out a living and also had a sense of hope for the future. There were certain peculiarities among these groups; e.g. those whose lives were progressing had certain common traits, including (1) strong family support; (2) good parental guidance; and (3) a high sense of personal drive and the ability to identify opportunities and take them. Interestingly, the respondents in all three categories all had some form of education. Education was therefore not an added advantage among the respondents in the study. Vocational skills gave the respondents some form of leverage in terms of employment, but this alone was not sufficient to allow them to progress, and a number of mutually reinforcing factors affected their progression in life.

Generally, those whose lives were stagnating did not have very strong parental support and guidance. Some of them had acquired some form of vocation (e.g. hairdressing and shoemaking) and were self-employed, but what they seemed to lack was the ingenuity exhibited by those who were progressing to identify and take advantage of opportunities when they appeared.

Those whose lives were retrogressing clearly suffered from a serious lack of parental guidance, which often translated into violent acts in their teen years, even while they were in school, often resulting in their being expelled from school. It seems their earlier years without guidance affected a vital part of their lives where they needed guidance to shape and develop their future.



These people also did not have other forms of strong family support and a good social network from which to draw inspiration and direction.

## 7.1 Progressing lives

### 7.1.1 *John Rockson Awudu, 26, mechanic*

John Rockson Awudu is a 26-year-old mechanic. He hails from Wale Wale in the Northern Region of Ghana. He started his primary school in Wale Wale and continued at Abilba No.1 JSS at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. When he was 14 his father divorced his mother and remarried. Being an only child, he left Tamale following his parents' divorce and went to live with his cousin at Asawase in Kumasi. His cousin, a mechanic, took Awudu as an apprentice and trained him until he became skilled enough to be able to survive on his own. He left Asawase and came to Accra, believing that he could earn a better living on his own in Accra. He survived the first year of his life in Accra solely on the streets, sometimes carrying head loads for a fee and sleeping in rented kiosks at night. He then met an old school mate from Tamale who offered to share his single room with him at Nima. He has remained there to this day, living with him and working at a mechanic's shop.

The lives of Awudu and his mate cannot be described as one of dependency, because in spite of their cohabitation, each fends for himself. By dint of their co-existence they have learnt to bear mutual responsibility, sharing the payment of utility bills such as those for water and electricity.

Awudu is not a member of any group or association. However, he counts his neighbourhood friends among his closest pals. With such friends, aged between 20 and 27, he plays football at the nearest park on Sunday afternoons. Awudu prefers to work with his hands because he believes that such talents provide speedy employment and ready cash. The corporate system of being paid monthly is not good for him. He delights in 'quick and ready' payments for jobs he has done.

Awudu hopes for a brighter future. He wants to set up his own workshop at some time in the future and specialize in the repair of Mercedes-Benz engines. He considers himself an expert mechanic who can repair the engines of any vehicles.

He believes that prosperity comes as a result of hard work and not through any government initiatives. For this reason, he does not believe in politics. Coming from a community noted for widespread criminal activities and habits that are generally considered as vices in society, Awudu is not free from such influences. He admitted to having once been a member of a neighbourhood gang that looted provision shops at night, but now he no longer participates in such acts. 'The future is bright', he says.

### 7.1.2 Razak Sumanu, 26, tailor

Razak Sumanu is a 26-year-old tailor who specializes in unisex clothing. He was born in Nima. After his basic education, he was sent by his parents to learn the art of sewing.

Sumanu was born the second of four children. Both parents are still alive. His father is a security worker, or what in modern Ghanaian parlance is known as a 'watchman', and his mother is a seller of plasticware at the Mallam Atta market. Sumanu's interest in sewing began when he dropped out of school for three years as a result of an automobile accident. His injuries took seven months to heal. He was in JSS form 1 at that time. As a convalescent at home, he decided to spend his idle hours in some useful, creative enterprise, so he tried his hand at sewing. Soon after his recovery, he lost interest in school and decided to drop out of school and learn sewing full time.

He underwent three years of apprenticeship, bought his own sewing machine and began to work as a tailor. In the course of time he decided to increase his marketability with the inclusion of female customers, so he acquire a little training in the sewing of female dresses under a leading seamstress. With time, he established 'Raz Costumes' as a fashion house.

Sumanu sees himself as a tailor with a difference. He considers himself a specialist in clothing for both men and women and has on numerous occasions participated in fashion competitions nationwide. He considers his progress from designing clothing for men to that of women as an improvement to his craft. He is a very positive person, forward looking, with a keen interest in personal achievement and excellence. He believes that the future is bright for the fashion industry and so he aims to become a big name in this industry in the near future.

The interviewer noted that the potential for violence in the community where Sumanu grew up is great. His in-depth interview with Sumanu, however, revealed that despite the widespread prevalence of anti-social behaviour, he had managed to stay clear of these influences. This may have been a result of the fact that when he dropped out of school, he found a creative enterprise to engage him. His accident did not disable him, but proved to be a very useful step on the path of self-discovery.

### 7.1.3 Baba Osman, 24, record shopkeeper

Baba Osman is a 24-year-old shopkeeper who owns his own record shop where he specializes in the sale of CDs and DVDs. He completed SSS in 2003 at Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Kumasi. He graduated with only four passes and decided to go into business instead of going back to rewrite the papers that he had failed. As the eldest of four children, the responsibility for the upkeep of the family fell on him, as his parents' meagre income could not support the family adequately. His father is a newspaper, vendor while his

mother sells 'koko' (porridge). As a youth growing up in the slums of Nima, he used to sell car stickers on the streets of Nima junction near the Kanda overpass during school vacations.

After school, however, he considered joining the military, but he did not satisfy the basic entry requirements, so he decided to start selling CDs. With time, he decided to include the sale of DVDs. He travels to Togo to acquire the bulk of these goods and brings them back to resell in his shop.

Through his business, he has been able to earn enough income to open a savings account at the Ghana Commercial Bank. His life experience is an indication of how enterprising some young men can be in the face of what appears to be academic failure.

He sees himself as a successful young entrepreneur, considering the fact that even in his secondary school days he used to earn some income through the sale of car stickers. He sees his present business as an improvement to his trade. He aims at setting up a record-manufacturing and video production business across the country. By dint of personal industry, he has excelled at making money and living a life of contentment. This choice of vocation and gainful employment has rid him of the tendency to while his days away in useless ventures. His is a typical instance of a life spent in commercial ventures, instead of the potentially alluring activities of crime, drug taking and violence.

## 7.2 Stagnating lives

### 7.2.1 Kofi Adamu, 22, shoemaker

Kofi Adamu is a 22-year-old shoemaker. He grew up in the slums of Nima and attended school up to primary level 4. He dropped out to join a band of young boys in the neighbourhood where he lives. Adamu was born the fourth of six children. His father, a noted alcoholic, lived in the same neighbourhood, but neglected the care of his children. When Adamu's long absence from home was once reported to his father, the latter severely beat him up.

This marked the beginning of his exit from home. He lived away from home with a band of peers and would often survive through doing menial jobs. His drunken, abusive father was in the constant habit of beating up his children and their mother. Adamu found his talent in the mending of shoes, and so he began to do this on a commercial basis. He built a kiosk on his own and started mending shoes for his customers. Adamu still lives together with his siblings and mother, but spends most of his daily hours outside home. He recounted his dislike for his father, whom he described as 'a wicked man'. It is true to some extent that victims of paternal abuse grow up with pent up feelings of bitterness that may inspire violent anti-social behaviour.

### 7.2.2 *Rafiatu Abdulai, 31, hairdresser*

Rafiatu Abdulai is a 31-year-old hairdresser, and the eldest of two siblings. She lost her mother at the age of 17, and was brought up by an aunt at Tafo in the Eastern Region. Her father, with whom she was living, left for Nigeria. Before his departure, he worked as a tailor. The aunt who took care of her gave her the option to choose between learning either sewing or hairdressing. She chose the latter and was enrolled as an apprentice with a hairdresser at Makola. After three years, she graduated and came to reside at Nima, where she met an Alhaji who was a building contractor. They got married, and so far she has given birth to two children. They divorced when she was pregnant with her second child. She has had an active, independent working life as a hairdresser for the past ten years, taking care of her two children, and has worked with a number of apprentices up to the present time. She is a single parent with sole responsibility for the care of her two children.

She believes that, given the opportunity either through getting a loan or some other financial assistance, she can expand her salon and make larger profits. She thinks that the current state of the nation's economy does not contribute to the growth of businesses and that until there is a better economy, businesses like hers cannot prosper. Her hairdressing business is at a stagnant level and earns her little profit.

To this extent, her earnings suffice for only her needs and those of her children. Her two children are in school now and the burden of their school fees looms every time school is about to reopen. Abdulai is a member of the women's wing of the political party that she supports. She decries violence, but believes in the use of force if necessary to outdo one's opponents in the contest for political power.

### 7.2.3 *Hajara Assibi, 27, porridge seller*

Hajara Assibi is a 27 year old who sells porridge ('*koko*' and '*koose*') at Nima and Mallam Atta market. She is not married and has no desire for marriage. When asked why, she refused to give any answer. Her reaction may suggest that she was once a victim of abuse at the hands of men. She considers herself to be a hardworking woman. She was born the third of four girls. Two are married and living with their husbands overseas, while she and her other unmarried sister are living together with their parents at Nima. Her porridge business is not very profitable.

However, she considers it a better option than doing nothing. She claimed that she only earns a pittance from her trade, but it is just enough for her subsistence. She has no solid record of having been in school continuously for over a period of five years. She dropped out of school intermittently as a result of poverty and could not even reach primary level 6. The Nima

community she lives in is a place where most criminal activities in Accra are bred. Women like Assibi are noted for their tough masculine outlook and aggressive behaviour: young women like her need to be tough and aggressive in a male-oriented community like Nima. This tough physical outlook is a form of self-defence in a community where violence is rife. For many young women of Assibi's social class, personal industry is a thing to cherish and pursue if they are to be free from the abuse of their male counterparts in society. Heavy dependency on men for their personal needs leads to the danger of being made pregnant or being gang raped in a community like Nima.

#### *7.2.4 Musah Rasheed, 29, welder*

Musah Rasheed is a 29-year-old welder living at Nima. He lost his mother in a lorry accident when he was only 12 years old. He was raised by his father at Koforidua, and at the age of 14 he was sent to go and live at Kintampo with an aunt who sells foodstuffs. While there, he became a driver's mate and often spent several days on the road, frequently returning very late from these trips. After four years as a driver's mate, he decided to stop doing this job, so he settled at Amakom in Kumasi with a friend.

There, while jobless, he started assisting some acquaintances who owned a welding shop near his house. In the course of time he developed an interest in this profession and worked with them for some time while gaining the needed experience. He travelled to Accra to visit the parents of a girl he met and was interested in. The girl's parents offered him a single room at their family house at Nima, where, together with the girl, he currently lives. The girl, whom he named as Zenaab, operates a small kiosk where she sells provisions. Rasheed admits that they are not married at the moment, but that he is preparing himself for a customary marriage in December 2008. At the moment, he works in a welding shop at Nima.

His present job as a welder earns him just enough for survival; however, he hopes to acquire a better source of livelihood in the near future. Rasheed's upbringing offered him very little or no opportunity to engage in violent, anti-social behaviour. He credits his non-violent outlook to the not-so-rich but steady years of being kept busy fending for himself through menial jobs from his teenage days up to the present. To the extent that his work as a welder provides just enough for the daily survival of him and his future wife, he sees his life as a stagnant one with little hope for the future.

### 7.3 Retrogressing lives

#### 7.3.1 *Michael Adam, 25, electrician*

Michael Adam is a 25-year-old electrician who has his own shop at Nima, where he repairs faulty TV sets, CD players and radios. After completing JSS, he discovered his talent in the repair of electrical gadgets, so he went straight into an apprenticeship and soon set up his own business.

He was born the second of six children. They all live together at Nima in their own family house. Although he seems to have done well in learning a trade and opening up a shop to repair faulty gadgets, the current state of his shop strongly suggests that his life may be retrogressing. This is because the shop and some things in it are in dire need of repair and/or replacement. He recounted that in his JSS days he used to play soccer with a community team, and very often whenever the score in any match did not favour one side, a fight would erupt. He admitted to being personally involved in assaulting his team's opponents in such fights. He personally showed a scar on his left wrist that he earned through an injury during such a fight. He considered violence as a daily feature of the community he grew up in. He cited Nima as an example of a community where whenever one is caught for stealing, instant justice is administered through beatings and, eventually, lynching.

When asked whether he himself had ever been part of a gang that lynched a suspected criminal, Adam admitted that for young boys of his age, being part of a mob justice group was normal. When asked why he preferred lynching suspects to having them arrested by the police, he said that the police could be easily bribed to release suspects known to have actually committed crimes. In short, he doubted the effectiveness of the justice system. To this extent, he supported this merciless approach to handling criminal justice, forgetting, as is characteristic of most young men his age, that the human rights of suspects are denied them whenever there is mob justice of this sort.

#### 7.3.2 *Waleed Issifu, 27, unemployed*

Waleed Issifu grew up in Kumasi, where he started his basic education and continued it at Nima, where he finally completed JSS. His parents live at Taifa. He is the youngest of the three male children of his parents, and has two other siblings from a different mother. After JSS, he was admitted to Osei Kyeretwie Secondary School at Kumasi, but was expelled when in his second year there for causing damage to school property.

He claims that during an entertainment programme at school one day, a group of friends from town came to perform at the event. A fight broke out between them and some male students over an alleged interaction with some female students. A whole set of instruments (microphones and public address

systems) belonging to the school were destroyed in the scuffle. Issifu was singled out as the one who brought those hooligans onto the campus.

He was tried by a disciplinary committee, which expelled him. He admitted that he believed that the influence of his background had a lot to do with his outlook on life. Growing up in the Zongos in Kumasi, he saw and personally participated in violent acts such as robbery and looting of shops at night. Although he would not personally attribute poverty to be the main cause of his behaviour, he admitted that it did have an influence. For him, his behaviour was partly born of the desire for pure adventure, but he admitted that now that he is settled in Accra on his own, he has refrained from such acts of violence. Although he is unemployed, he relies on the usual 'connections' to get his daily bread.

### *7.3.3 Mahmoud Assok, 34, lottery operator*

Mahmoud Assok is the father of three children and is divorced, but lives with only one of his children in his rented house at Nima. He is a lottery operator and has been in the lottery business for the past six years. His ex-wife lives at Alajo with their other two children.

He recounted that he dropped out of secondary school in form 3 to work in the mines at Obuasi. After four years, he resigned to work with a construction company. He described the mining job as a 'dangerous' activity, as the chances of being buried underground were high. After resigning, he worked as a mason with a building construction company for only two years and finally decided to set up on his own by selling lottery tickets in a small kiosk at Nima.

He recounted that he spent his three years in secondary school in all kinds of nefarious activities. He often smoked and drank, and changed girlfriends as often as he could. He frequently got involved in gang fights during interschool athletic and sporting activities. He was twice suspended for fighting with other students during an interschool sports competition. He still believes that he is a tough person whom it would not be easy to cross.

The lottery business, he claimed, has not been very fruitful, although he is still engaged in it. When the interviewer asked him to state his monthly earnings, he refused, but hinted that his income had steadily reduced since his resignation from his mining job. It was evident that having dropped out of school without any professional qualification, he has been left with no other option but to engage in menial tasks for survival. The downward descent in monthly income following his change from one job to another has not augured well for a divorcee with an extra mouth to feed.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions and recommendations

This section seeks to make practical and achievable recommendations for action by various actors interested in reversing youth vulnerability and exclusion in Ghana. These recommendations are made to respond to both the general and the particular issues of youth vulnerability in the various locations of the study. The recommendations provide a framework for public, private and voluntary initiatives to deal with youth vulnerability and exclusion.

In places such as Madina and Nima, there is the need for public and private actors to:

- initiate consultations with soccer teams and youth associations with the view to building the youth's trust and confidence in state institutions;
- provide the appropriate policy framework to promote collaborations among youth groups and state institutions. Here, the role of the media and the Ministry for Information and National Orientation will play a key role;
- review existing MMYE programmes with the aim of bridging the gap between, on the one hand, sports associations and soccer teams and, on the other hand, the ministry. The review should bear in mind the linkages among sports, security and development. In this light, there is the need for collaboration among public, private and voluntary actors in this direction; and
- involve the soccer teams and youth associations in the design and implementation of all programmes that directly affect them and their communities.

In the central sector (namely Kpandai, Yendi and Tamale), there should be initiatives to:

- identify and collate the names of all youth associations in the area with the aim of involving them in the decision-making processes of their communities;



- publicize the achievements of youth elsewhere to provide an example for local youth and also condemn youth exclusion and marginalization;
- encourage the youth to take bold initiatives in spite of the existing stereotypes;
- simplify and make available laws and programmes on youth to help inform them of existing laws and opportunities available for them to explore; and
- create more facilities and avenues for the youth to acquire vocations or further their education. This will equip them with the skills needed for personal and societal development, and will also reduce the illiteracy rates in these areas, which some respondents claim are major causes of manipulation and violence.

In the conflict zones of the study (Bawku and Yendi), action should be taken to:

- initiate exchange programmes for the youth to learn about one another as a way of breaking stereotypes that sometimes contribute to conflicts;
- strengthen and expand the NYEP to be better positioned to train and employ more youth; and
- use the media as a key actor in stressing the progress made by non-conflict zones as a way of re-emphasizing the negative impact of conflict on society and people's livelihoods.

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# Appendix 1

## Youth groups and their initiatives

| Name            | Location       | Year of foundation | Registration status  | Objectives, activities and number of members  |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Millennium Club | Kpandai        | 2000               | Not registered (NR) with the Registrar-General's Department and the Department of Social Welfare <sup>45</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide socio-economic support to members</li> <li>▪ To create awareness about the menace of the HIV epidemic among members and the youth in their communities</li> </ul> |
| California Base | Kpandai        | Not available      | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To carry out socio-economic activities</li> <li>▪ To support one another socially and financially</li> <li>▪ Membership: 25 males and 15 females</li> </ul>                  |
| Morocco Base    | Kpandai        | 2000               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To educate members to pursue their education, particularly, young mothers</li> </ul>   |
| German Base     | Kpandai        | 1999               | NR   |   |
| Top Radio Base  | Kpandai        | 2004               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide a platform for members of the community (which is predominantly Muslim) to support one another in all aspects of life</li> </ul>                                  |
| Shaba Rastas    | Yendi (Balogu) | 2008               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To help solve one another's problems</li> </ul>  |

<sup>45</sup> See note 39.

| Name  | Location           | Year of foundation | Registration status | Objectives, activities and number of members  |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
|   |                    |                    |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise funds to support one another during weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>   |
| Horror Boys   | Yendi (Nayilifung) | 1990               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise funds to support the socio-economic needs of members</li> </ul>   |
| Mandela Base  | Yendi (Nayilifung) | 2005               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise funds to support and improve members' small-scale businesses</li> <li>To help one another financially and socially in other aspects of the lives of members</li> </ul>  |
| San Francisco Base  | Yendi (Nayilifung) | 2004               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide communal labour on members' farms</li> <li>To source funds from organizations that provide micro-credit facilities to farmers</li> <li>To provide social and financial support to members during weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>                                  |
| Bunki Yard  | Yendi (Gagbbini)   | 2005               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support one another during social activities such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> <li>To save money to prepare members (who are all females) for marriage. (This may be a strategy by the members to empower themselves financially in a mostly polygamous area.)</li> </ul> |
| Power of Love   | Yendi (Naylifung)  | 2005               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To mobilize funds to support members during social events</li> <li>To support members' farming activities</li> </ul>   |
| City Crackers (the name may reflect the quest of members to get into or 'crack' the | Yendi (Balogu)     | 2003               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To seek job opportunities in mostly urban areas</li> <li>To support members during weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>   |

| Name                                | Location           | Year of foundation | Registration status | Objectives, activities and number of members  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| difficult job market in the cities) |                    |                    |                     |   |
| G Unit                              | Yendi (Balogu)     | 2003               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To live in unity</li> <li>▪ To support members during social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>  |
| 24 Brothers                         | Yendi (Nayilifung) | 2005               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To hold monthly meetings to discuss ways to have a brighter future</li> <li>▪ To help members during social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>   |
| Area Singers                        | Yendi (Balogu)     | 2002               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure peace and unity among members</li> <li>▪ To support members during social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul>   |
| Chicago Base                        | Yendi (Nayilifung) | 2000               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To generate a small-scale loan scheme that members can access for their needs and business development</li> <li>▪ To provide voluntary labour and some financial assistance during social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> </ul> |
| Try and See                         | Yendi (Kumfong)    | 2004               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support members during social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies</li> <li>▪ To attend members' social events and provide some form of splendour to them</li> </ul>   |
| Masibu Dealers                      | Yendi (Kumfong)    | 2005               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To source funds to improve the farming and small-scale business activities of members</li> <li>▪ To provide financial assistance to</li> </ul>   |

| Name   | Location            | Year of foundation | Registration status  | Objectives, activities and number of members  |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|--|---|
|  |                     |                    |  | members   |
| Masibu Dealers   | Yendi (Kumfong)     | 2005               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To source funds to improve the farming and small-scale business activities of members</li> <li>▪ To provide financial to members during emergencies</li> </ul>   |
| Big Six  | Yendi (market area) | Not available      | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To hold meetings to share ideas and visions for the future</li> <li>▪ To provide financial support to members mainly through contributions from members</li> </ul>   |
| Little Flowers   | Yendi (Nayilifung)  | 2005               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To source funds to improve the farming and small-scale business activities of members</li> <li>▪ To provide financial support to members during emergencies</li> </ul>   |
| Propaganda   | Yendi (Balogu)      | 2004               | NR   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To solicit support for members' education</li> <li>▪ To provide financial and moral support during social events</li> </ul>  |
| Nima West Development, Counselling, Rehabilitation and Neighbourhood Watch     | Accra (Nima West)   | 2007               | Registered with the Registrar-General's Department and the Department of Social Welfare first as a neighbourhood watch and currently as an NGO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To inculcate into the youth good moral behaviour as good citizens</li> <li>▪ To own and contribute to any socio-economic development programmes in Nima</li> <li>▪ To make Nima residents safe from criminal activities, most notably the vulnerable such as women, children and the aged</li> </ul> |
| League of Youth Associations (an umbrella body of over 120 associations in the | Tamale              | 1998               | Registered with the Registrar-General's Department and the Department of Social Welfare  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To promote peace and unity in the northern sector of the country</li> <li>▪ To provide a platform for the youth to discuss their visions for the future</li> </ul>   |

| Name   | Location         | Year of foundation | Registration status | Objectives, activities and number of members   |
|--|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| northern area of Ghana)                      |                  |                    |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To create awareness about the dangers of the HIV pandemic</li> <li>▪ To contribute blood to hospitals</li> <li>▪ To provide assistance to the needy irrespective of age, gender or ethnicity</li> </ul>   |
| Age of Vision-Africa                         | Kumasi, Ashanti  | 2006               | Registered, 2006    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To promote peace and stability for development, including the quest to contribute towards peaceful elections</li> </ul>   |
| Action on Youth and Community Development    | Tamale and Accra | 2006               | Registered          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To build local efforts to confront illiteracy and ignorance as a means to promote personal, community and the country's development</li> <li>▪ To promote peace and development with the prime focus on the youth</li> </ul>  |
| Strait Gate Communications Limited           | Accra            | 2008               | Registered          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Events management</li> <li>▪ Concept developments</li> <li>▪ Video production. The aim is to start a vibrant company formed by young university graduates.</li> </ul>   |
| Equatorial Consult Company Limited           | Accra            | 2007               | Registered          |  |
| Voice and Aid Foundation                     | Accra            | 2008               | Registered          |  |
| Coalition of Peace Groups for Elections 2008 | Accra            | 2008               | NR                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To promote peace before, during and after the 2008 elections. This is a unique initiative by six youth groups who readily merged their individual proposals, as recommended by the head of research of the National Peace Council, Emmanuel Addo Sowatey).</li> </ul> |
| Africa Peace                                 | Bawku            | 2003               | Registered          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To build peace for</li> </ul>   |

| Name  | Location | Year of foundation | Registration status | Objectives, activities and number of members  |
|---|----------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| Building Club. This club is located in Bawku, a municipality that has seen the highest intensity of conflict in Ghana since the turn of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century. |          |                    |                     | unity and development in Ghana  |
| Ghana Must Win Foundation   | Accra    | 2008               | Registered          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To promote national development through attitudinal change. It is envisioned that the youth are going to be both drivers and ambassadors of change.</li> </ul>   |
| League of Youth Associations  | Tamale   |                    |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To advance the role of the youth in promoting sustainable peace for national development. This youth initiative is a response of the youth to the numerous conflicts that have characterized this part of the country, which is also one of the least developed areas in Ghana.</li> </ul> |



## Appendix 2

### Country fact sheet: Ghana

Ghana, formally known as the Gold Coast, gained independence from British colonial rule on 6 March 1957. It has a population of about 20 million and covers a land area of about 238,539 square kilometres. The climate is tropical and the temperature becomes higher as one moves inland from the coast.

Ghana operates a hybrid of the typical presidential and parliamentary system of governance, but has an elected president who can hold office for a maximum of two four-year terms. Since 1992, the country has embarked on its fourth republic, with five successful presidential and parliamentary elections.

Currently (2008), Ghana is earning international recognition as a country with very good prospects for democratic consolidation, the rule of law, and development in a sub-region characterized by conflicts.

With the ongoing discoveries of oil in the country, Ghana is being watched closely in the context of what oil discoveries have done to most Africa states. Most notably, the resource curse theory, which argues that there seems to be a correlation among oil discovery, the marginalization of people who have no access to the wealth generated by the oil, and conflicts, informs this anxiety.

Although Ghana is widely viewed as a stable country, it has numerous security challenges epitomized by various conflicts simmering at different levels of intensity. Conflicts around chieftaincy are apparent in almost every part of the country. These conflicts have taken various forms. At the turn of the century, a number of high-intensity conflicts broke out in certain parts of the country, and these continue to wax and wane. Particularly, conflicts in Dagon and Bawku have had serious repercussions for the state in terms of the cost of peacekeeping and other mediation efforts in these areas. The conflicts seriously threaten Ghana's image as a haven of peace; and peace is a minimum prerequisite for attracting local and foreign investment and carrying out socio-economic development.

These conflicts have placed an enormous financial burden on the state, with large amounts being spent on peacekeeping efforts in these conflict theatres. Also, a number of people have lost their lives, and economic, educational and other services have been disrupted as a consequence. These conflicts have further widened the already existing poverty gap between the more peaceful south and the north, where these conflicts have been frequent.

Other security threats include, but are not limited to, an increased spate of armed robberies on highways and in urban centres, the country becoming a transit point for drug trafficking into Europe and North America, the proliferation of small arms, Internet scams and other variants of transnational organized crime, and conflicts over natural resources such as land and mining rights.

Very closely tied to the above are soft insecurity issues such as lack of access to education, health care and employment, all of which make the more youth vulnerable.

Various governments have responded to the challenges faced by the youth in a number of ways. A number of policy guidelines are in place and various strategies have been instituted by different regimes to respond to the issues of the youth. One thing is clear: various governments have stated that the youth are a key constituency in terms of Ghana's development and have therefore tended to put in place various strategies and policy guidelines to deal with youth issues.

One of these policy guidelines is the 1999 NYP. This policy was put in place under the NDC government to serve as a guiding policy on the youth. It seems to have an enlightened definition of youth-hood for a number of reasons, two of which are key. Firstly, it clearly sets out to address the vulnerability of youth in a number of ways and also identifies the security challenges presented by vulnerable youth to the country's development. Secondly, it avoids using age as the sole yardstick to determine who falls within this constituency.

But as been indicated in a number of studies, West Africa in general and Ghana in particular do not lack for good policies. What they lack is the concrete realization of the aims and objectives of various policy documents and vital pieces of legislation. This situation has made some argue that government policies should be seen as what governments have done and *not what they set out to do or say they will do*.<sup>46</sup>

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the NPP government instituted a number of schemes to tackle the problems of the youth, particularly unemployment. The flagships of these efforts were the Ghana Youth Job Corps Programme,

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46 A key proponent of this theory is Rocky Williams of the South African Defence Force and founding member of the African Security Sector Network. The author had the privilege of having various discussions with him at the African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR), an Accra think-tank, between 2003 and 2004. The author worked with ASDR for over five years.

also known as the NYEP, and its precursor, the STEP programme. These initiatives seek 'to give readily employable skills to the youth and also to provide them with employment opportunities'.<sup>47</sup> These included talks about the NYEP, the STEP programme and the National Service Scheme, all of which link security with development.

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47 MMYE (2006); foreword by John Agyekum Kuffour, president of the Republic of Ghana.