

500 WORDS ABSTRACT FOR THE 14TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY NETWORK, 18-19 OCTOBER 2019 IN SPAIN

BURSARY: I WOULD NEED BURSARY TO ATTEND THE MEETING IN SPAIN

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TITLE OF PAPER: ENDING CHILD LABOUR? THE PAST AND PRESENT OF CHILD LABOUR IN GHANA'S COCOA EXPORTS, 1912-2016

From the period of the abolition of domestic slavery in Ghana in 1874, when there was short supply of labour, up until now children have been used in cocoa exports. The debate surrounding child labour is centred on the reasons for exploiting the labour of children with poverty at the centre of the discussion. There has been debate about the attempt to replicate the decline of child labour in Britain in the late nineteenth century globally (Cunningham 2000, 409-428; Nardinelli 1980, 739-755). The use of colonialism as a tool for exploiting children's labour, the place of cultural relativism and negotiation by children in addressing child labour have been extensively discussed (Grier1994, 27-52; Myers 2001, 38-55; Howard 2014, 124-140). However, there is lack of literature on children in historical studies. This paper sought to address the prevalence of child labour in Ghana by examining the economic factors that led to the use of children in cocoa exports in the early colonial period from 1912 when Ghana was the principal producer of cocoa in contrast to the recent practice of child labour in Ghana up to 2016 based on the International Labour Organisation's directive to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The paper examined archival documents on the early colonial period on economic factors that influenced the use of children in cocoa exports such as insufficient road and rail transport, the high demand

of cocoa by European agents (thus creating competition among farmers to supply cocoa), the need to sell cocoa before they rotted, children as cheap source of labour, the loyalty of children compared to adults and the use of children considered as training or vocation (Colonial Secretary in Accra to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 1912). The oral interviews conducted demonstrated that the inability of cocoa producers to make profit because of the land tenure system, the obligation to share farm produce with the land owners, the fact that children would readily work as a result of societal norms, education was considered expensive, unavailable credit and determinant of cocoa prices by the purchaser led to the use of child labour in recent times. In order to end child labour the paper emphasise the need to implement poverty alleviation strategies to support cocoa farmers in rural communities, provision of flexible credit facilities to small scale cocoa farmers, the role of the media in using Ghanaian languages to encourage parents to educate their children, the provision of learning materials to children by philanthropic groups and intermittent visits to cocoa producing areas by appointees of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection. The paper contributes to the discourse on child labour.