

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)

INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: HOW INSTITUTIONAL ATTITUDES AND

PROCESSES WITHIN MDAS AND NGOS SHAPE CHILD LABOUR

COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS IN GHANA'S FISHERIES SECTOR

MIRACLE EBENEZER KOFI HAGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

NOVEMBER, 2025

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PROCESSES WITHIN MDAS AND NGOS SHAPE CHILD LABOUR
COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS IN GHANA'S FISHERIES SECTOR**

BY

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(MADC24052)

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AND RESEARCH (SoGS) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA)
IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

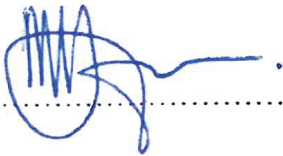
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NOVEMBER 2025

DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Miracle Ebenezer Kofi Hagan, declare that this thesis, except quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere. Therefore, I bear the responsibility for any shortcomings.



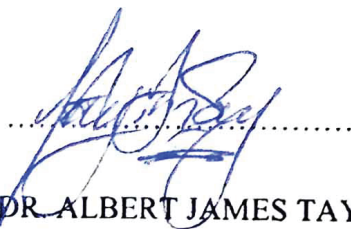
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SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisor, declare that I supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of MA theses as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).



DATE: 10/12/25

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(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all social workers and persons effectively working toward the elimination of child labour in Ghana especially in the fisheries sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express sincere gratitude to God for the wisdom, strength and resources to complete this work.

I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Albert James Tayman of the University of Media, Arts and Communication whose counsel, guidance and constructive feedback made the completion of this work possible. I am especially grateful to Mr. Emmanuel Kwame Mensah for his strategic support in connecting me to relevant stakeholders in the fisheries sector.

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ABSTRACT

Child labour in Ghana's fisheries sector, notably in Lake Volta communities, remains a critical socio-economic and rights challenge despite numerous Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) campaigns by government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This research investigates how internal institutional processes – specifically ideation, design and decision-making – shape the development and implementation of child labour communication campaigns. Guided by Institutional Theory and Policy Implementation Theory, with design thinking as a supplementary analytical lens, the study examines how organisational norms and community engagement influence campaign strategies. It employs a qualitative case study approach, utilising ethnographic methods (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis) with key informants from selected MDAs and NGOs. The study addresses questions of how campaign ideas are generated and finalised, how community input is integrated, and the alignment of existing practices with human-centred design principles. Findings are expected to reveal the role of participatory ideation and community alignment in campaign effectiveness. The study aims to provide theoretical insights for development communication and practical guidance for policymakers and campaign designers seeking to reduce child labour in Ghana.

Key words: Child Labour, Ghana Fisheries Sector, Development Communication, Institutional Theory, Human-Centred Design, Participatory Communication, Behaviour Change Campaigns

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BCC	-	Behaviour Change Communication
C188	-	Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)
C4D	-	Communication for Development
CAQDAS	-	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CBOs	-	Community-Based Organisations
CCPCs	-	Community Child Protection Committees
CLaT	-	Child Labour and Trafficking
CLU	-	Child Labour Unit
DACF	-	District Assembly Common Fund
EU	-	European Union
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
GACA	-	Ghanaians Against Child Abuse
GAWU	-	General Agricultural Workers' Union
Gem	-	A custom AI environment
GFRA	-	Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity
HAF	-	Hazardous Child Labour Activity Framework
HCD	-	Human-Centred Design
iDE	-	International Development Enterprises
IDEO	-	IDEO.org (Non-profit design studio)
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
MDAs	-	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MELR	-	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
MoGCSP	-	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NDPC	-	National Development Planning Commission

NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
Norad	-	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPA	-	National Plan of Action (National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labour)
NVivo	-	A qualitative data analysis software
ODI	-	Overseas Development Institute
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
QSR	-	Qualitative Solutions and Research (Developers of NVivo)
RQ	-	Research Question
SBCC	-	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SECRIFISE	-	Securing Child Rights in the Fisheries
SOPs	-	Standard Operating Procedures
SSWM	-	Sustainable Sanitation and Water Management
SWIMS	-	Social Welfare Information Management System
UniMAC	-	University of Media, Arts and Culture
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Child labour remains a significant socio-economic and rights challenge in Ghana's fisheries sector. Recent data indicates that about 28% of Ghanaian children aged 5–17 are engaged in child labour, with roughly one-fifth of them (approximately 1.2 million children) working in hazardous conditions. The situation is particularly severe around Lake Volta, where approximately one in six children aged 6–14 work in abusive conditions and are often victims of forced labour or trafficking. Such high prevalence of hazardous child labour constitutes a serious violation of children's rights and imposes broader social and economic costs.

In recognition of this problem, Ghana has implemented measures such as ratifying ILO Convention No. 188 on labour conditions in the fisheries sector and developing national action plans to eliminate child labour. Over the past two decades, selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have launched various BCC campaigns to address these challenges by targeting harmful social norms and encouraging community action. However, these campaigns have produced uneven results, and many have failed to achieve sustainable behaviour change.

While external factors such as funding and policy frameworks attract considerable attention in existing literature, the internal mechanisms within implementing institutions remain understudied. There is limited understanding of how campaign ideas are generated, how decisions are made internally, and how (if at all) community perspectives are integrated during the design phase. This suggests that institutional processes of ideation, negotiation and community engagement are central to shaping campaign outcomes and merit focused inquiry.

Design thinking – a human-centred, iterative approach to innovation – offers a useful analytical framework for examining these processes. It emphasises empathy, ideation and prototyping and has been used effectively in development settings to enhance the relevance and community ownership of interventions. When coupled with Institutional Theory and Policy Implementation Theory, this perspective enables a multidimensional examination of how internal practices and participatory approaches interact to shape campaign outcomes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite substantial financial and technical investment in child labour interventions, communities in Ghana's fisheries sector continue to experience high levels of child exploitation. Although some studies have evaluated the impacts of communication campaigns in these communities, they focus largely on campaign outcomes or audience reception rather than on upstream institutional processes. As a result, little is known about how campaign ideas are conceptualised, how decision-making occurs within implementing organisations, or how community inputs are integrated during campaign design. This lack of insight means many interventions remain top-down and risk failing to resonate with local realities, making it difficult to explain the persistent misalignment between campaign design and field-level outcomes. The core problem this study addresses is the limited understanding of internal institutional attitudes and processes – including ideation, negotiation and finalisation – that shape the framing and execution of child labour communication campaigns in Ghana's fisheries communities.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine how institutional attitudes and decision-making processes within MDAs and NGOs influence the ideation, design, and implementation of child labour communication

campaigns in Ghana's fisheries sector, with emphasis on participatory approaches and community integration.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To document how communication campaign ideas are generated, negotiated, and finalized within selected MDAs and NGOs.
2. To examine the extent and nature of community involvement in shaping the content and structure of child labour communication campaigns.
3. To analyse how institutional processes facilitate or constrain the incorporation of community needs during the campaign design phase.
4. To assess the applicability of design thinking principles (empathy, ideation, iteration) as an analytical framework for understanding and improving existing campaign design practices.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How are campaign ideas generated, deliberated, and approved within MDAs and NGOs?
2. In what ways are community perspectives solicited and integrated into the design of child labour communication campaigns?
3. What organizational mechanisms support or inhibit participatory ideation and design within MDAs and NGOs?
4. How do the existing campaign design practices align with, or diverge from, human-centred design thinking principles?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to academic theory, development policy and campaign practice. Theoretically, it integrates insights from Institutional Theory and Policy Implementation Theory with participatory design approaches, illuminating how internal organisational processes shape public communication strategies. It extends development communication literature by foregrounding the ideation and organisational dynamics behind campaign formulation. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for MDAs and NGOs seeking to enhance the relevance and impact of their child labour communication campaigns. By identifying process bottlenecks and recommending participatory innovations, the research informs the development of more context-sensitive and sustainable campaign models. From a policy perspective, the findings can guide capacity-building efforts aimed at institutionalising community-engaged design within government and civil society institutions.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

1. The qualitative case study approach and purposive sampling limit the generalisability of the findings. The study examines a selected group of MDAs and NGOs, so results may not reflect all organisations or contexts.
2. Access to internal meetings or sensitive decision-making processes may be restricted, potentially constraining ethnographic depth.
3. Responses from participants may be subject to social desirability bias, especially when discussing organisational challenges.
4. The research focuses exclusively on the communication aspects of child labour interventions and does not assess broader systemic or structural responses.
5. The study focuses on institutional dynamics and communication processes but does not directly measure campaign outcomes (such as reductions in child labour).

Conclusions about effectiveness are based on organisational analysis rather than independent outcome data.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

- The study is confined to child labour communication campaigns in Ghana's fisheries sector. It does not address child labour in other sectors (e.g., agriculture or mining) or other aspects of fisheries (e.g., industry regulation).
- It focuses on MDAs and NGOs as implementing bodies, excluding other stakeholders such as donors, community leaders, parents, or the children themselves. This scope was chosen to isolate organisational factors.
- The analysis is limited to communication campaigns (awareness-raising and behaviour-change initiatives) and does not cover other types of interventions (e.g., direct economic support or schooling programs).
- The analysis centres on the ideation and design phases of campaigns, excluding long-term outcome evaluation.
- The geographical scope is Ghanaian fisheries communities (including Lake Volta and coastal areas); findings may not apply to contexts outside Ghana or beyond fisheries.
- Design thinking is used analytically rather than as a methodology guiding the research process itself.
- The study examines contemporary campaign efforts; historical trends and future projections beyond the study period are outside its scope.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the contextual foundation, conceptual framework, and research direction of the study. By focusing on campaign ideation and institutional processes within

MDAs and NGOs, the research advances a more grounded understanding of how internal organisational dynamics affect communication outcomes. Through its theoretical and practical contributions, the study aims to inform more participatory and context-aware interventions in the fight against child labour in Ghana's fisheries communities.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Efforts to eliminate child labour within Ghana's fisheries sector have long centred on communication campaigns as strategic tools for public awareness, behaviour change, and policy advocacy. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are key actors in conceptualising and implementing these campaigns. However, the processes and institutional attitudes underpinning their development—how campaigns are conceived, approved, and delivered often remain under-examined. This literature review interrogates how institutional logics, bureaucratic norms, and design methodologies shape the participatory (or non-participatory) nature of these campaigns, with particular focus on the tensions between policy ideals and operational realities.

Prior scholarship in communication for development (C4D) frequently critiques the gap between participatory rhetoric and actual practice, particularly within donor-funded and state-led interventions. In Ghana and similar global South contexts, participatory ideals are regularly cited in strategy documents, yet the campaign development process is typically governed by rigid institutional hierarchies, donor timelines, and procedural orthodoxy. As a researcher situated in this context, I find it crucial to not merely describe these institutional processes but to critically engage with their underlying assumptions and implications—especially where they constrain meaningful community involvement in shaping messages intended to serve them.

Guided by this aim, this review examines relevant scholarly, institutional, and policy-based literature (2020–2025) through five thematic lenses: institutional hierarchies, the rhetoric-practice divide in participation, community engagement models, organisational support

structures, and alignment with human-centred design (HCD) thinking. The literature spans peer-reviewed communication studies, public policy analyses, and child labour intervention reports, primarily in Ghana but also drawing on broader African or global South experiences where instructive parallels exist.

In doing so, this review advances three core objectives:

- To synthesise current academic thinking around participatory campaign development;
- To critically evaluate contrasting perspectives, noting empirical gaps and conceptual tensions;
- To justify the research focus on Ghana’s fisheries sector by identifying context-specific limitations in the design and institutionalisation of anti-child labour campaigns.

The subsequent sections provide a structured and critical interrogation of how communication campaign processes are both enabled and constrained by institutional logic—setting the stage for a more grounded, participatory, and culturally embedded approach to intervention design.

2.2 Institutional Frameworks and the Hierarchies of Decision-Making

Campaign development within Ghana’s MDAs and NGOs is heavily shaped by institutional hierarchies and bureaucratic structures that prioritise top-down planning over bottom-up innovation. National development policy frameworks such as the Ghana Budget Operations Manual (Ministry of Finance, 2024) and the Public Policy Formulation Guidelines (NDPC, 2020) illustrate how campaign concepts are required to align with pre-approved national priorities. This bureaucratic rigidity often reduces the scope for community-led ideation or context-responsive innovation. Ideas are typically generated within central policy teams or ministerial working groups—frequently in urban Accra—far removed from the rural coastal communities most affected by child labour in the fisheries sector.

These institutional routines reveal what could be referred to as technocratic imagination: one that views campaign messages as outputs of expert planning rather than co-created artefacts of local experience. In practice, this means that campaigns addressing child labour are often designed to fit within national development targets or donor-approved indicators rather than organically responding to community-defined needs or narratives.

Waisbord's (2008) influential work remains strikingly relevant in this context. He argues that within most development institutions, "standardised procedures favour informational approaches to communication," where success is measured by reach and message clarity rather than dialogue or social change. I find his insight particularly resonant: institutions often elevate the appearance of communication while neglecting the inherently complex, iterative, and relational work required for participatory practice.

His argument that "pressures to move money and meet deadlines clash with the uncertainty of participative processes" (Waisbord, 2008, p. 505) particularly relevant in Ghana's fisheries context. Campaign timelines are often dictated by fiscal calendars, donor reporting cycles, or political priorities—not by the rhythm of local dialogue or the pace of community trust-building. This produces a structural tension in which the institutional demand for predictability directly undermines the adaptability required for participatory communication.

Even when participation is formally embedded in planning guidelines, its implementation is constrained. The PRSP Institutionalisation Report (ODI, 2021) highlights how Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy, while promoting "national ownership," operated with a narrow base of participation dominated by elites and policy insiders. Public awareness remained low—even among local officials—and participatory workshops were often perfunctory.

The gap between rhetoric and reality is particularly problematic when dealing with child labour. By treating affected communities as targets rather than co-architects of campaigns, institutions risk reproducing the very hierarchies they aim to dismantle.

Few institutional documents on fisheries child labour prevention in Ghana detail the campaign ideation process. The GFRA Policy Brief (Fisheries Commission, 2023) outlines key policy goals but does not explain how communication strategies are formulated or by whom. This lack of transparency is telling—it suggests a de facto exclusion of frontline communities from the campaign conception stage. Moreover, NGOs working in this space often adopt pre-packaged behaviour change models provided by donors, which may not reflect the specific socio-economic dynamics of artisanal fishing communities.

2.3 Critical Reflection and Gap Identification

There is a clear disparity between institutional norms and participatory ideals. While documents and donor frameworks may invoke community engagement, the operational logic of MDAs and NGOs often counter it. What is striking and troubling is how institutions continually frame participation as something that can be slotted into bureaucratic cycles, rather than something that requires a fundamental reshaping of those cycles themselves.

There remains little empirical research on the micro-processes through which campaign decisions are made within Ghana's MDAs and NGOs. Who has influence at the table? How are dissenting perspectives handled? How do institutional cultures reinforce top-down logic even in "participatory" projects? These are questions this dissertation seeks to confront head-on.

2.4. The Rhetoric and Reality of Participatory Communication

Participatory communication has become something of a development orthodoxy—a necessary box to tick in programme proposals and campaign documents. Frameworks from global institutions, including the FAO's Participatory Communication Strategy Design Handbook (FAO, 2005), and the UNICEF Human-Centred Design Guidance (UNICEF, 2023), frame participation as indispensable for effective, contextually grounded interventions.

However, a growing body of literature reveals, participation is often more performative than practical.

It is particularly troubling that despite widespread endorsement of the principle of “community engagement,” its actual implementation frequently amounts to tokenistic consultation. Multiple studies suggest that participatory spaces are often engineered by project officers and facilitators who control both agenda and outcomes. For example, Taye et al (2025) indicate that while participatory approaches are promoted, they often limit the full and equal participation of stakeholders like women and children.

Leino et al (2021) similarly acknowledge that tokenistic participation remains a common dilemma in practice. Stakeholder meetings are commonly reported in campaign documents, they tend to prioritise visibility over inclusion, serving more to legitimise external decisions than to empower local voices. This dissonance underscores what I consider one of the most pressing contradictions in development communication today: participation has become a normative imperative lacking operational depth. In effect, everyone agrees participation is important, but it is carried out in a way that is only symbolic and procedural, rather than sustained and genuinely influential.

2.5 Consultation vs. Co-Design: A False Equivalence

There is a critical distinction between being heard and being heeded. Too often, communication campaigns solicit local input without integrating it meaningfully into campaign logic or message design. A study by Alagbela et al (2025) on the challenges of the Free Senior High School Policy in Savelugu, Northern Ghana revealed that because the community was treated as passive beneficiaries rather than co- creators, there was a gap in local support.

This aligns with what Waisbord (2008) describes as the dominance of informational models—communication as message delivery, not dialogue. The idea that “participation” can be engineered into projects through workshops and surveys ignores the power asymmetries that shape whose voice matters, and when. Participation in this framing becomes a procedural illusion: well-documented, poorly practised.

In the case of child labour campaigns in fisheries communities, this has severe implications. A Challenging Heights (2022) report noted that many youths and parents felt alienated by campaign materials that “spoke down” to them or framed child labour solely as parental failure, without considering the structural drivers—poverty, access to education, seasonal migration—that underpin it.

2.6 Ghana-Specific Studies: The Evidence Gap

While the rhetoric of participation is widely echoed in Ghana’s policy landscape—including in the *National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework (2022–2025)* (NDPC, 2021)—there remains limited empirical documentation on how community voices are actually integrated into campaign content. Some exceptions exist: research by Hammond and Dowuona-Hammond (2024) points to isolated efforts in the cocoa sector where child labour survivors were engaged as peer educators in campaign design. Yet even these are sporadic and donor-dependent.

Importantly, the *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative* (2022) also identifies a lack of documentation on participatory methods in child labour interventions across sub-Saharan Africa, noting that “few studies provided sufficient evidence of their participatory approach” (p. 12). This methodological gap reflects an epistemological one: participation is valued rhetorically, but not institutionally measured or incentivised.

2.6.1 Contextual Misalignment and Missed Resonance

Another recurring issue is the disconnection between campaign messages and community realities. Campaigns often carry externally derived narratives that may clash with local worldviews. For instance, in Ghana's fishing communities, child labour is sometimes culturally linked to apprenticeship or rites of passage—interpretations that dominant campaign frames rarely acknowledge (Bening & Frempong, 2023). Consequently, messages grounded in legal or moral condemnation may inadvertently alienate the very communities they aim to mobilise.

This disconnect illustrates the risks of using generic messaging templates, often inherited from global frameworks, without adapting them to local cultural economies of meaning. In my view, this further reinforces the idea that participation must extend beyond form—it must influence how meaning is created and communicated (semiotic), the stories and messages that are told (narrative), and the way relationships are built and maintained (relational architecture) throughout campaign work.

2.6.2 Critical Synthesis and Justification for Further Research

The literature across both Ghana-specific and wider global South contexts reveals a troubling pattern: the instrumentalisation of participation. Community perspectives are acknowledged but rarely embedded; alluded to but not institutionalised. This gap between rhetoric and practice reveals a development logic that prioritises control over co-creation, efficiency over empathy, and visibility over vulnerability.

This dissertation seeks to confront this logic by examining the micro-level processes through which campaign participation is claimed, structured, and constrained within MDAs and NGOs working on child labour in Ghana's fisheries sector. Understanding how and why participation

is stifled—despite its popularity as a normative goal—remains a critical step toward designing more equitable communication systems.

2.7 Community Engagement: Consultation vs. Co-Creation

2.7.1 From “Target Audience” to Co-Producers?

Community engagement remains one of the most cited but least scrutinised dimensions of campaign work in development contexts. In the child labour prevention space, particularly in Ghana’s coastal and lake-based fishing communities, institutional actors frequently frame engagement as essential—but practice it within narrow, pre-defined boundaries. I find this not only inconsistent but deeply problematic. To treat communities as mere recipients of communication is to misunderstand the very nature of effective behavioural change: it is not delivered—it is negotiated, embedded, and performed through shared meaning.

Research from UNICEF (2023) suggests that participatory communication should involve communities “in identifying problems, exploring solutions, and taking action.” However, evidence from both NGO and MDA-led interventions in Ghana indicates that engagement is more frequently consultative than collaborative (Hammond & Dowuona-Hammond, 2025).

In other words, communities are asked to give feedback on pre-determined ideas but rarely invited to co-create solutions. This distinction—between consultation and co-creation—is not semantic. It reflects radically different orientations to power.

2.7.2 When Participation Becomes Spectacle

Consultative models often take the form of community durbars, focus group discussions, or sensitisation meetings. While these spaces are valuable in theory, in practice they frequently function as performative engagements, orchestrated more for donor reporting than genuine influence.

In the context of fisheries child labour, this means that campaign messages are typically finalised before reaching communities, who are then “informed” through drama, jingles, posters, and radio messages. While these outputs may raise awareness, they do little to enable communities to reshape the narrative around child labour in their own terms.

The GFRA Vulnerability Assessment Report (2023) notes this challenge explicitly: despite high campaign visibility, local community members reported feeling “talked at” rather than engaged and expressed scepticism about the relevance of some messages to their lived economic realities. This reflects what I see as a credibility gap—a failure to treat communities as knowledge-holders, not just beneficiaries.

2.7.3 Understanding the Cultural Terrain

Effective community engagement demands more than translation or cultural sensitivity; it demands deep contextual alignment. As highlighted by Molale (2024), meaningful participation involves understanding “the cultural, social, and environmental factors to create solutions tailored to specific contexts.” This is especially true in the fisheries sector, where notions of work, childhood, and livelihood often diverge from Western legal frameworks.

Many campaigns employ universalised child labour definitions that clash with local perceptions of responsibility, skill-building, or household contribution (Abdullah et al., 2022). For instance, a twelve-year-old boy helping his fisher-father mend nets may not be seen as exploited, but rather as learning essential life skills. When campaigns frame such practices as inherently abusive without acknowledging cultural dynamics and local economic pressures, they risk being dismissed as tone-deaf or foreign-imposed.

This is not to excuse exploitative labour but to suggest that the messaging must grapple with complexity, not flatten it. Participation, then, is not only about method, but also about epistemology. It asks: whose understanding of the problem are we working with?

2.7.4 Gendered Dimensions of Exclusion

Another critical gap in community engagement practices is the underrepresentation of women and children's voices, despite their centrality to the issue. Studies such as Ameyaw et al. (2020) show that while women are often involved in fish processing and market activities, they are rarely included in campaign design consultations, even though their economic pressures significantly shape child labour decisions. The ActionAid Ghana report (Parditey 2025) explicitly states that women, though vital in fish processing and marketing, lack access to decision-making spaces.

Children's perspectives are even more marginalised. Recent participatory studies (e.g., Baah-Ennumh & Ababio, 2023) have shown that child workers themselves can offer nuanced insights into the motivations, risks, and aspirations behind their work. Ignoring these voices means campaigns often miss the opportunity to address why child labour persists—not just that it exists.

2.7.5 Critical Reflection and Research Imperative

Community engagement in Ghana's child labour communication campaigns remains largely instrumental rather than transformative. The tendency to consult rather than co-create, inform rather than collaborate, and extract stories rather than share narrative agency reflects a persistent power asymmetry that undermines the very spirit of participatory development.

If campaigns are to resonate—and more importantly, work—they must begin by shifting the status of community members from “target audiences” to co-authors of change. This involves rethinking not just communication strategies but the institutional architectures that shape who gets to speak, and whose knowledge counts.

This research, therefore, seeks to critically examine the specific practices through which MDAs and NGOs engage (or fail to engage) communities in campaign design—paying

particular attention to how gender, childhood, and local economic norms are negotiated or side-lined in the process.

2.8 Organisational Barriers and Enablers of Participatory Design

2.8.1 Participation as an Institutional Afterthought

Across the development communication literature, one of the most persistent insights is that participation struggles to find institutional legitimacy. While policies may include it as an aspirational goal, actual organisational processes rarely prioritise it. Waisbord (2008) puts this succinctly: participatory approaches are often treated as “optional extras”—subordinate to technical outputs, donor metrics, and programme deliverables.

In my view, this is one of the most under-acknowledged barriers to participatory campaign work. Within many Ghanaian MDAs and NGOs, participation is seen as a luxury—valuable only if time, funding, and programme stability allow. This attitude is reinforced by institutional cultures that prize efficiency and control, and by bureaucratic systems that are not designed to accommodate the iterative, unpredictable nature of co-creation.

These findings are transferable to the communication sector, where the absence of institutionalised participation pathways leads to ad hoc, inconsistent practices at best.

Another systemic barrier lies in how communication is positioned within organisations. More recently, Tufue-Dolgoy (2022) argue, communication is often seen as technical support, not a strategic or programmatic priority. This marginal status limits the influence of communication teams in shaping upstream campaign decisions.

In Ghana, this is evident in the way many communication officers are brought into programme design after the main ideas have been approved—tasked with “packaging” or “translating” rather than participating in ideation. This siloed structure reinforces the dominance of informational models, where the goal is clarity of delivery, not engagement in design.

The Systematic Review of Participatory Methods (Freire et al. (2022) confirms that only a fraction of studies evaluated participatory intentions against actual implementation, with most failing to report how internal mechanisms supported participation. This suggests a broader institutional pattern: participatory rhetoric is common, but internal systems to support it are either weak or non-existent.

Donor-funded programmes often operate under strict timelines, budget cycles, and log frame requirements that reward rapid output rather than slow, relational processes. Waisbord’s insight that “pressures to move money” undermine participatory depth is particularly salient here (2008, p. 505). In practice, the need for scalability and standardisation frequently clashes with the contextual nuance required for authentic community design.

I would argue that in Ghana’s fisheries campaigns—many of which are funded by multi-lateral partners—this dynamic creates a structural incentive to shortcut participation. Community engagement becomes a one-off activity early in the campaign cycle, often pre-scripted to demonstrate inclusion, but rarely revisited in design revisions or monitoring processes.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (2022) identifies this problem explicitly in its evaluation of community-based child labour campaigns: “Institutional actors recognised the value of participation but cited lack of time, staff, and inter-agency coordination as key impediments to implementation” (p. 14). This suggests that participation is less an issue of will, and more a function of how organisations are set up to operate.

2.8.2 NGOs vs. MDAs: Organisational Differences That Matter

It is also important to differentiate between NGOs and MDAs. NGOs may be more flexible in certain respects, especially smaller ones with local roots. For example, Challenging Heights has piloted youth-led campaign workshops that offer more collaborative design models (Challenging Heights, 2022). However, many NGOs still operate under the same donor-

imposed constraints, and their own internal governance may mirror the hierarchical logic of larger institutions.

MDAs, on the other hand, are often more rigid due to civil service structures, national policy alignment obligations, and political risk-aversion. As the Ghana Politics-Administration Relations Study (2021) notes, technocrats within MDAs frequently defer to ministerial directives, making bottom-up innovation difficult unless politically sanctioned.

This variation suggests that organisational change strategies must be tailored. Encouraging participatory communication in NGOs may involve capacity-building and community trust-building. In MDAs, however, it may require policy reform, decentralisation of decision-making, and cultural shifts in how authority and expertise are defined.

2.8.3 Critical Reflection and Emerging Gaps

If participation is institutionally inconvenient, how can it be made routine? This is a central tension that the literature surfaces but does not resolve. What is missing, in my view, is a deeper understanding of the internal politics of communication within development organisations—who decides when, where, and how participation happens?

This study therefore aims to go beyond abstract calls for participation by investigating the practical, structural, and cultural mechanisms that enable or inhibit participatory design inside MDAs and NGOs.

2.9. Human-Centred Design

Human-centred design (HCD) represents a meaningful departure from traditional informational models of campaign development. Rooted in principles of empathy, iteration, contextual sensitivity, and user co-creation, HCD reframes communication not as message dissemination but as problem-solving with—rather than for—target populations (UNICEF, 2023; Design Council, 2023). In theory, this orientation aligns strongly with the participatory

ideals already discussed, offering both a philosophical and methodological alternative to top-down communication logics.

What draws me to HCD is its capacity to centre daily lived experience in the design of interventions. Unlike tokenistic consultation, HCD insists on deep, iterative engagement with users—not merely as informants but as design collaborators. In contexts like Ghana’s fisheries sector, where structural inequalities, cultural logics, and local economic realities shape child labour practices in complex ways, HCD offers a way to embed campaigns in the real lives of their audiences.

Despite its promise, HCD remains underutilised in Ghanaian development communication practice—particularly in campaign design. While UNICEF Ghana has begun piloting HCD in its Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategy (UNICEF Ghana, 2024), evidence suggests that implementation remains patchy, largely confined to donor-funded pilot projects rather than institutionalised practice.

The synergy between HCD and participatory development is often acknowledged in theory but rarely realised in execution. In the GFRA Policy Brief on Child Labour and Trafficking (2023), for instance, communication strategies are discussed largely in terms of “raising awareness” and “sensitisation,” without explicit mention of how end-users are involved in message development, iteration, or contextual adaptation.

This illustrates a broader pattern: organisations allude to human-centred or user-informed principles, but default to behavioural nudging models that prioritise simplicity and scalability over empathy and complexity (IDEO.org, 2022). The pressure to produce high-visibility, high-efficiency campaigns often results in HCD being appropriated as rhetoric rather than operationalised as practice.

2.9.1 Institutional disconnect and Structural Tensions

The institutional demands identified by Waisbord (2008)—especially the dominance of technical mindsets and short-term deliverables—are fundamentally at odds with the slow, iterative nature of HCD. Where HCD requires time to build trust, test assumptions, and reframe problems, development institutions often require results within quarterly reporting periods. This tension plays out vividly in campaign work: prototyping and iteration are seen as costly or unnecessary, rather than integral.

A 2022 case study by iDE Ghana, however, offers a glimpse of what is possible. Their water and sanitation campaign in rural communities integrated HCD principles throughout: conducting immersion sessions, co-developing messaging, and using feedback loops to refine interventions. Crucially, they reported not only increased campaign resonance but also higher levels of trust and ownership among community participants.

This shows that when institutional space is made for HCD, it can bridge some of the critical divides this literature review has identified—between technocracy and participation, between message and meaning, between planning and lived reality.

2.9.2 Content, Medium and Cultural Relevance

An often-overlooked strength of HCD is its capacity to shape not just the content but the form and delivery of communication campaigns. In the fisheries sector, for instance, oral storytelling, visual symbols, and communal gatherings may be more culturally congruent than posters or jingles—yet these modes are often excluded due to donor or organisational preference for measurable media outputs (Asare & Boateng, 2022).

An HCD-informed process would prioritise such culturally embedded modes of communication—selecting not just *what* to say but *how* and *where* to say it, based on co-discovery with community members. The *Breakthrough ACTION Project* (2021) underscores

this point, arguing that HCD can better account for the “intersecting social norms, beliefs, and power structures” that influence behaviour, especially around sensitive issues like child labour, gender roles, and migration.

2.9.3 Critical Synthesis and Forward View

HCD holds potential to resolve many of the gaps discussed across this review: the tokenism of participation, the rigidity of institutional structures, the disconnect between message and meaning. But for this potential to be realised in Ghana’s fisheries child labour campaigns, institutional will, structural flexibility, and capacity investment are required.

More critically, adopting HCD cannot be reduced to hiring designers or running empathy workshops. It requires a paradigm shift: from delivering interventions to cultivating relationships; from linear planning to iterative learning; from external problem-solving to internal sense-making. Without this, HCD risks becoming yet another buzzword—referenced but not embedded.

This dissertation will therefore explore how far MDAs and NGOs in Ghana’s fisheries sector have moved toward—or away from—human-centred principles, and what institutional, cultural, or strategic changes might be needed to close the gap.

2.10 Summary of Insights and Gaps

This literature review has examined the intersection of institutional processes, participatory ideals, and campaign design practices within the context of child labour communication in Ghana’s fisheries sector. Drawing on both global theoretical frameworks and Ghana-specific empirical studies, it has surfaced a persistent and troubling reality: participation is more often declared than practised.

The review began by interrogating the institutional frameworks that shape how campaign ideas are generated and approved. It became clear that despite policy commitments to

inclusion, these processes remain dominated by top-down, technocratic approaches. Institutional priorities driven by national planning cycles, bureaucratic routines, and donor imperatives rarely accommodate the unpredictability and time intensity of genuine community participation (Waisbord, 2008; NDPC, 2020).

Across literature, a consistent dissonance emerges between rhetorical commitment to participation and the reality of practice. Community engagement is frequently confined to consultative forms—durbars, focus groups, and awareness sessions rather than meaningful co-design. This disconnect not only limits the effectiveness of campaigns but also risks alienating the very communities they aim to serve. Particularly in Ghana’s artisanal fishing communities, cultural misalignment and underrepresentation of marginalised voices (especially women and children) compound the problem (Frempong & Odoom, 2023; Challenging Heights, 2022).

Organisationally, both MDAs and NGOs face structural barriers to participatory communication: the marginal status of communication units, staff capacity limitations, lack of codified participatory frameworks, and the overbearing influence of donor timelines all work against participatory ambitions (Freire et al. (2022)). While NGOs may exhibit slightly more flexibility, MDAs remain locked in rigid policy cycles and administrative inertia.

Human-centred design (HCD) offers an important conceptual and practical bridge. Its emphasis on empathy, iteration, and co-creation directly addresses many of the deficits noted above. Yet, as this review has shown, HCD is rarely operationalised in campaign development in Ghana. It remains under-theorised, under-institutionalised, and under-documented—with few examples of its use in child labour communication specifically (UNICEF Ghana, 2024).

2.10.1 Key Gaps and Justification for Research

1. *Micro-level Institutional Dynamics:* There is limited empirical understanding of the internal attitudes, negotiations, and power dynamics within MDAs and NGOs that shape how campaigns are conceived, designed, and delivered.
2. *Participatory Practices in Campaign Development:* Most literature on participation in Ghana focuses on service delivery or development projects, *not* on communication campaign processes specifically. This is a critical gap, given the persuasive and symbolic power of campaigns in shaping public discourse around child labour.
3. *Sector-Specific Analysis:* The fisheries sector despite its high child labour prevalence has received relatively little attention in participatory communication research. Sectoral nuances such as migratory livelihoods, kinship-based labour, and seasonal poverty require tailored approaches.
4. *HCD Application in Communication:* While HCD is gaining traction globally, its integration into the Ghanaian communication ecosystem remains limited, poorly documented, and insufficiently evaluated. This study can contribute both conceptual clarity and practical recommendations.

2.10.2 Research Positioning

This dissertation addresses these gaps by focusing on how institutional attitudes and processes within MDAs and NGOs in Ghana shape the development of child labour communication campaigns. Specifically, it will:

- Investigate how ideas are generated, negotiated, and approved within organisations;
- Analyse the forms, depth, and timing of community engagement;
- Examine the structural and cultural barriers to participatory design;

- Evaluate the extent to which human-centred design principles are understood, adopted, or resisted.

In doing so, the study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to reimagine communication not just as messaging, but as a relational and political process; one that must be co-owned by those it intends to serve.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study adopts a qualitative case-study methodology to explore how institutional attitudes and processes within Ghanaian MDAs and NGOs shape child labour communication campaigns in the fisheries sector. The inquiry is guided by three overarching research questions: (1) How do institutional norms and attitudes within MDAs/NGOs influence the ideation and design of child-labour communication campaigns? (2) What organizational processes (policies, decision-making, collaboration) affect the implementation of these campaigns? (3) How are community participation and design-thinking principles incorporated into campaign development? The study is framed by Institutional Theory (which emphasizes how regulative, normative and cognitive elements shape organizational behaviour), Policy Implementation Theory (examining top-down/bottom-up effects on practice), and Design Thinking (an iterative, human-centred problem-solving approach). The methodology is thus designed to capture both the real-world institutional context (a realist ontological stance) and the multiple perspectives of stakeholders (an interpretive epistemology).

Following a critical realist philosophy, we assume an objective phenomenon (campaign practices and institutional processes) exists independently yet recognize that our knowledge of it is constructed through stakeholder perspectives. Consequently, a qualitative approach – specifically an embedded case study of selected organizations – is appropriate for gaining in-depth understanding within context. Multiple data sources (interviews, observations, documents) will be used to triangulate evidence and enhance validity, consistent with case-study conventions. The ensuing sections detail the research design, population, sampling, data collection and analysis procedures, as well as ethical and practical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case study design has been chosen to investigate institutional campaign practices “within [their] real-life context”. Case studies are ideal for exploring complex social phenomena where boundaries between the phenomenon (child-labour campaigns) and context (institutional settings) are blurred. This research will examine one or more bounded cases (selected MDAs and NGOs) as social units, with a focus on their internal processes, attitudes, and interactions. In line with Yin (2018) and other scholars, the case is defined by its context – for example, a communication campaign project within the Ministry of Fisheries – rather than by methods.

This study combines ethnographic elements with the case-study approach. In practice, this means data collection includes semi-structured interviews, direct observation of meetings and activities, and document analysis. Ethnographic methods are well-established in Ghanaian field research; for instance, recent Ghana studies have used observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews to uncover how local communities understand policy issues. Here, participant observation will help capture the informal culture and interactions at planning meetings, while interviews probe actors’ meanings. The mixed qualitative methods ensure rich, contextualized insights into “how” and “why” institutional factors shape campaign design and execution.

Ontologically, this design is realist: we assume organisational processes exist and have real effects, even if we only learn about them indirectly. Epistemologically, it is interpretivist and reflexive, recognizing that participants’ accounts are subjective and partial. Thus, the researcher will iteratively analyse and interpret multiple viewpoints (e.g. different agencies) to construct an informed narrative of practice. This aligns with “multi-perspectival realism,” which holds that while an objective social reality exists, it can be understood in various valid ways.

3.3 Population

The study population consists of professionals involved in child-labour communication efforts within Ghana's fisheries sector. This includes staff in selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Key examples are: the International Labour Organization (ILO) country office, UNICEF Ghana's Child Protection Unit, the Ghana Labour Department's Child Labour Unit, labour unions such as the General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU) or other fisheries-related unions, and ministries (e.g. Ministry of Fisheries) responsible for fisheries or labour policy. These individuals – campaign designers, programme managers, frontline officers, and communications specialists – are directly involved in the ideation, design, and implementation of child-labour awareness initiatives. The population is relatively small and specialized, which justifies a qualitative case study: we are interested in information-rich cases of practitioners who have first-hand experience with campaign processes.

No general community population (e.g. fisherfolk or children) is directly targeted in this research, since the focus is on institutional perspectives. (If community feedback comes up, it will be via document review or stakeholders describing community engagement.)

3.4 Sampling and Participant Selection

Purposive sampling will be used to select participants, ensuring they are “especially knowledgeable about or experienced with [the] phenomenon of interest”. Participants will be chosen based on their roles in campaign projects: for example, officers who developed campaign concepts (ideation), communication officers who drafted materials (design), and field coordinators who managed implementation. This strategy follows Patton (1990) and others who note that qualitative samples should maximize relevance to research aims rather than statistical representativeness.

Within each selected organization, key informants will include (but not be limited to) campaign strategists, programme or project leads, and senior staff who authorize campaign funding. Additionally, a few participants from complementary organizations (e.g. a fisheries co-op or community liaison in an NGO) will be included if they played a substantial advisory or participatory role. The exact number of interviews is not predetermined; rather, sampling will be done until saturation is reached. However, as a guide, we anticipate interviewing roughly 15–25 individuals across all organizations, a range that is common in case-study research.

The sampling procedure will be as follows: first, candidate agencies will be identified in collaboration with local partners (e.g. research consultants familiar with the sector). Each agency will be approached through formal channels (e.g. introductory letters) requesting permission and suggesting potential participants. Within agencies, the initial contacts will help identify others (a snowball technique) who fit the inclusion criteria. Importantly, selection will be purposive for roles, not random. Eligibility is defined by involvement in child-labour communication campaigns (past or ongoing) in the Ghana fisheries sector. This approach increases the likelihood of deep, relevant insights and “information-rich” data.

3.5 Data Collection

Data will be collected through multiple qualitative sources:

Semi-structured Interviews: Primary data will come from one-on-one interviews with key staff. An interview guide (see Section 3.6) will cover topics such as campaign genesis, institutional mandates, stakeholder interactions, community involvement, and reflections on policy vs. practice. Interviews will typically last 45–60 minutes, conducted face-to-face in office settings (or by phone/Zoom if necessary). They will be audio-recorded (with consent)

and supplemented by field notes. Open-ended questions will be used to allow participants share detailed narratives, while probes ensure coverage of research themes.

Participant Observation: Where possible, the researcher will observe internal meetings or events related to campaign planning (for example, a strategy meeting or a community workshop). Observation protocols will note the context, interactions between staff and communities, decision-making processes, and any nonverbal cues. These field notes will capture dynamics that interviews alone may miss. Observation is justified because it provides insight into actual processes (not just recollections) and can validate or challenge interview claims. If permission to observe is denied in sensitive meetings, informal observation (e.g. during a public field activity or office routine) will be used instead.

Document Review: Secondary data include institutional documents and campaign materials. Examples are policy texts (child labour policies, fisheries regulations), internal reports, communication strategy documents, training manuals, brochures or posters used in campaigns, meeting minutes, and evaluation reports of past campaigns. Document analysis will enrich understanding of official narratives and complements primary data. By systematically examining documents, we will triangulate what interviewees say with written evidence and identify how institutions articulate child labour issues in formal texts. As Morgan (2022) notes, document analysis can reveal context and details that might not surface in interviews. All relevant documents identified through stakeholders or publicly available sources will be collected and analysed (ensuring any confidentiality restrictions are respected).

Ethical and Operational Risks in Data Collection: The fieldwork may encounter certain challenges. First, access restrictions are possible – for example, senior meetings or internal files might not be open to outsiders. To mitigate this, formal introduction letters and ethical clearance will be obtained in advance with flexible scheduling. Second, social desirability bias

is a concern: officials might present an idealized version of their work. As Bergen & Labonté (2020) discuss, participants may tend to “present reality to align with what is perceived to be socially acceptable,” which can distort findings. This will be addressed by building rapport, assuring confidentiality, and phrasing questions neutrally. Regular debriefing of early interview data (to detect biases) will also be used; if a theme seems overly polished, we will probe for exceptions. Third, time constraints or workload of participants may limit interview opportunities; this will be mitigated by being flexible (offering after-hours slots) and brief in communication. Finally, data quality risks (e.g. incomplete transcripts) will be managed by reviewing recordings promptly and taking clear notes. Despite these risks, the combination of methods and careful planning should ensure robust data capture.

3.6 Research Instrumentation

Data collection will be guided by structured instruments:

Interview Guide: A semi-structured questionnaire will be developed, organized around the study’s themes. Key sections include: (1) Campaign Ideation and Design (questions about how ideas were generated, who is involved, and design-thinking elements like prototyping or user feedback); (2) Institutional Context and Attitudes (questions on organizational mandate, attitudes toward child labour, internal support or resistance); (3) Community Participation (role of fisher communities or families in shaping campaigns, mechanisms for community input); (4) Policy and Implementation Processes (how national policy directives or donor requirements influence campaign content); and (5) Outcomes and Reflections (perceived success, lessons learned, challenges).

Each section will consist of open-ended prompts with follow-up probes. For example, under Ideation, an interviewee might be asked: “Can you describe how this campaign idea first emerged? Who contributed to shaping it?” Under Institutional Practices, a probe might be:

“How did your department’s procedures affect how quickly the campaign was rolled out?” This structure ensures coverage of ideation, community participation, and institutional factors. The guide will be written in clear, professional English (the primary working language), and will not include leading or double-barrelled questions.

Observation Checklist: For participant observation, a template will record the setting, participants present, and agenda of the event. It will include prompts to note decision-making processes (e.g., “How are points agreed?”), power dynamics (e.g., “Who dominates the discussion?”), and any community members’ input. We will also note informal observations like use of media, engagement level of attendees, and any underlying norms (e.g., deference to senior officials). This checklist will ensure consistency across different observed meetings.

Document Analysis Template: A coding framework for documents will categorize content related to institutional norms (e.g. language of mandate vs. practice), references to child labour (definitions, severity), communication strategies (audience targeting, key messages), and evidence of community engagement (e.g. mentions of participatory workshops). We will also note authorship and date to track if attitudes have evolved. This systematic template draws on qualitative document analysis principles to extract relevant information efficiently.

These instruments will be refined iteratively: initial drafts will be reviewed by the supervisors and field partners for face validity. The semi-structured nature means interviewers can adapt order based on flow, but all key domains will be covered.

3.7 Pre-testing of Instruments

Prior to field deployment, the interview guide and observation templates will undergo an expert review. Following Bhalla et al. (2023), this “pre-testing” (pilot phase) is essential to ensure qualitative rigour, validity and reliability of the instruments. Two independent Ghana-based experts have been identified for this review: Mr. Emmanuel Kwame Mensah, an

independent Development Consultant with over 20 years of experience in child-labour campaigns, and Mr. Francis Bibuski, an Assistant Chief Labour Officer with direct knowledge of labour policies. Each will be given the draft instruments and a feedback form asking them to evaluate:

Alignment with Research Objectives: Are the questions clearly linked to the research questions (institutional attitudes, processes, campaign design)? Are any key issues omitted?

Clarity and Wording: Are the questions and prompts clear, unambiguous, and using appropriate terminology? Are any terms unfamiliar or loaded?

Relevance: Do the topics cover the important aspects of ideation, community involvement, and institutional practices in communication campaigns? Are some questions irrelevant or redundant?

Comprehensiveness: Do the instruments appear complete? Should any areas be added or expanded?

Practicality: Is the estimated interview duration reasonable? Are the observation prompts feasible to capture in real time?

Cultural Appropriateness: Is the language respectful and sensitive to local norms?

Reviewers will be provided with criteria to rank each item (e.g., clear/unclear, relevant/irrelevant) and space for suggestions. Their feedback will inform revisions: unclear questions will be rephrased, missing topics added, and any overly broad questions narrowed. All changes and justifications will be documented.

A second round of review is not planned (due to time constraints), but the experts will be briefed that further refinements may occur based on initial interview experiences. In the field,

we will remain alert to any confusion in real interviews and adjust wording if needed, documenting any impromptu changes.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

All interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Field and observation notes will be expanded and typed. These qualitative data will be managed and coded using NVivo (QSR International) software, which supports multiple analysis methods. NVivo will store transcripts, observations, and documents, allowing efficient coding, retrieval, and comparison of data. As Zamawe (2015) notes, NVivo (a type of CAQDAS) is a powerful data management tool that is compatible with diverse qualitative methods including discourse analysis and ethnography. It is emphasized, however, that the software aids analysis – the researcher remains in control of coding and interpretation.

Thematic Analysis: The primary analytic approach will be thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involves iterative reading of transcripts to identify recurrent patterns (“themes”) relevant to institutional attitudes and campaign design. Initial open coding will be done inductively, creating codes for ideas like “community input,” “policy constraint,” “innovative message,” etc. Axial coding will group these into broader categories (e.g., “Drivers of Innovation,” “Institutional Barriers,” “Communication Approaches”). We will follow Braun and Clarke’s six-step process (familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, write-up) to ensure systematic rigor. NVivo’s query tools will help refine themes (e.g., finding all references to “participation”). Memoing in NVivo will capture analytic reflections. The aim is to generate themes that answer the RQs, such as “bureaucratic constraints,” “catalysts for creative ideation,” “nature of stakeholder collaboration,” etc. The themes will be supported by illustrative quotes and exemplars in the findings.

Discourse Analysis: In parallel, a discourse-analytic lens will be applied to certain data. This means examining how language constructs the reality of child labour and campaigns. For example, an analysis on whether institutional narratives frame child labour as a moral crisis, economic necessity, or public health issue, and how this influences campaign messaging. Similarly, discursive patterns in policy documents will be assessed (e.g., recurring metaphors or prescribed roles). Discourse analysis will uncover the “storylines” that organizations use, and whether these align or conflict across agencies. NVivo can assist by tracking usage of key terms (“child labour,” “fisheries,” “rights,” etc.) and by allowing side-by-side comparisons of discourse in interviews versus written policies. This complements the thematic coding by illuminating implicit assumptions and power dynamics in institutional talk.

Integration with Theory: Once themes emerge, we will interpret them through the lenses of Institutional Theory and Design Thinking. For example, if “normative expectations” surface as a theme, it will be related to institutional normative elements. Instances of iterative prototyping in campaign design will be discussed in terms of design thinking principles. The final analysis will thus weave empirical findings with the theoretical frameworks introduced in Chapter 1, making explicit how institutional attitudes and processes (e.g., regulative mandates vs. cognitive frameworks) shape campaign ideation and practice.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research will adhere to the highest ethical standards. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before data collection. Each interviewee will receive an information sheet (and verbal explanation) detailing the study’s purpose, what participation involves, and their rights. They will be informed of the voluntary nature of participation – that they can decline any question or stop at any time, and that refusal/withdrawal will have no negative consequences. Written or recorded verbal consent (as per participant preference) will be documented.

Confidentiality is paramount. We will assign codes or pseudonyms to all participants and remove any direct identifiers in transcripts and reports. Institutional affiliations may be noted but only at an aggregated level (e.g., “a national NGO representative” rather than naming the organization, unless public knowledge). As Kaiser (2010) emphasizes, maintaining confidentiality “protects the privacy of all persons, and builds trust and rapport with study participants”. Consent forms will state that publications will not include identifiable details. Digital data (audio files, transcripts) will be stored on password-protected drives.

Any potentially sensitive information (e.g., internal criticisms of policy) will be handled with care. For instance, if an official reveals a candid critique of institutional shortcomings, we will report it generically (e.g., “a senior officer”). The participants will be assured that the goal is understanding system-wide dynamics, not exposing individuals. As part of ethical practice, we will also debrief participants after their interviews, answering any questions they have and providing contacts for follow-up or to withdraw consent later if desired.

An institutional ethics clearance form will be sought from the University of Media, Arts and Culture (UniMAC). The protocol will include risk mitigation plans and data protection measures.

Any conflict of interest will be declared. Overall, the research will align with standard guidelines on voluntary participation, confidentiality, and beneficence, ensuring all data are collected and reported responsibly.

3.10 Operational Risk Assessment

Field research can face practical challenges, and we anticipate several potential issues in this study:

Access to Sites/Staff: Government and NGO offices may restrict entry or scheduling for external researchers. Mitigation: Formal letters of introduction will be obtained from the

researcher's institution. Flexibility in scheduling is key; participants may be busy, so we will allow rescheduling and offer multiple modes (in-person, phone, or video interviews).

Social Desirability/Response Bias: As noted, participants might portray their institutions positively. Mitigation: We address this in methodology by building rapport and guaranteeing confidentiality. Interviews will stress that the goal is learning, not judging. Triangulating interview data with documents and observations also helps detect discrepancies (e.g., if an NGO claims full community involvement but documents lack evidence, this signals a gap).

Time and Resource Constraints: Conducting interviews and observations in different locations can be demanding. Mitigation: We will plan realistic commute and daily schedules, possibly batching interviews per location. If budgets or travel restrictions arise, some interviews may shift to remote formats, which are acceptable for qualitative depth.

Language and Cultural Barriers: Although most staff speak English, some community-level engagements or union leaders may use local languages. Mitigation: An interpreter will be enlisted if needed for observation or informal conversations. All official interviews will be conducted in English, but with sensitivity to Ghanaian communication styles (allowing time for reflection, avoiding confrontational tone).

Researcher Safety and Well-Being: Travel to field sites is generally safe in urban areas, but precautions (timely transport, colleagues informed of itinerary) will be taken. Health guidelines will be adhered to strictly.

Data Loss or Equipment Failure: Audio recorders or storage devices could fail. Backup recorders will be used and immediate data backup after each interview. Notes will be cross-checked with recordings when possible.

By anticipating these issues and planning accordingly, the researcher aims to minimize disruptions. To provide data on the research process for future reference, a field journal will be kept logging any unexpected problems and responses.

In conclusion, careful preparation, flexibility, and ethical vigilance will help ensure that data collection proceeds smoothly and that valid, reliable insights into Ghana's child labour communication efforts are obtained.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine how institutional attitudes and processes within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) shape the development of child labour communication campaigns in Ghana's fishing communities.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How are campaign ideas generated, deliberated, and approved within MDAs and NGOs?
2. In what ways are community perspectives solicited and integrated into the design of child labour communication campaigns?
3. What organisational mechanisms support or inhibit participatory ideation and design within MDAs and NGOs?
4. How do the existing campaign design practices align with, or diverge from, human-centred design thinking principles?

4.2 Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation

The dataset consists of in-depth interviews with five key officers (representing the Labour Department of the Ministry of Labour, Jobs and Employment, Department of Children of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) of (MoGCSP) & UNICEF, ILO Ghana, and Challenging Heights NGO) and a document analysis of eight statutory and operational documents: Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour (National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labour,

2023-2027), ILO Convention 188 (Work in Fishing), Hazardous Child Labour Activity Framework for Ghana (HAF), Children's ACT, 1988 (ACT 560), Inter-Sectoral Standard Operating Procedures for Child Protection and Family Welfare, Child and Family Welfare Social Policy, Challenging Heights Impact Evaluation 2005-2016, Challenging Heights Annual Report 2023.

4.2.1 Methodological Overview: AI-Assisted Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data were processed using a Custom Google Gem environment titled "*Fisheries Child Labour Qualitative Analyst*." This tool was engineered to execute a Forensic Thematic Analysis, strictly adhering to the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006).

To ensure transparency and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the analysis followed this specific protocol:

1. *Phase 1: Familiarisation* - The custom Gem ingested the full dataset (transcripts first) and (statutory documents for triangulation) to build a closed evidentiary index.
2. *Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes* - The model was prompted to perform line-by-line "In Vivo" coding, extracting participants' exact terms (e.g., "Authentication," "Residual Input," "Ad-hoc").
3. *Phase 3: Searching for Themes* - Codes were collated into candidate themes. Initial clusters included "Funding issues," "Government control," "Protocol," and "Testing materials."
4. *Phase 4: Reviewing Themes (The Forensic Audit)*: Candidate themes were stress-tested against the statutory documents (*The Children's Act*, *NPA*, *Financial Reports*). Descriptive themes (e.g., "Lack of Funds") were collapsed into structural themes (e.g., "The Sustainability Trap") to explain *why* discrepancies existed.

5. *Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes:* The final themes were refined to capture the *latent* meaning behind the data (e.g., defining "Validation Theatre").
6. *Phase 6: Producing the Report:* The findings were synthesised into the narrative presented below.

4.2.2 RQ1: Idea Generation and Governance

The analysis identifies that campaign governance is not monolithic. It operates on a "Two-Track Model" where the degree of government control differs based on the funding source and visibility of the project.

Theme 1: The Two-Track Governance Model

Definition: A dual-governance structure where campaigns are either "Organisation-Based" (Track A: Autonomous) or "Project-Based" (Track B: Authenticated/State-Controlled).

"We have campaigns that are organisational based that reflects the work of the organisation, the mission and the vision... those that we do, whether we have funding or we don't have funding, those that we do naturally." P1 (NGO)

"Whatever any partner does, whatever UNICEF must communicate... governments must, for want of a better word, authenticate it before it goes out." P2 (Govt, CLU)

"Whatever vision ILO has... must feed into government's vision. So whatever ILO communicate is what government is communicating... ILO is there to only compliment government." P3 (ILO)

The governance of ideas is hierarchical. P3 (ILO) confirms that even international bodies must submit to the "Government Vision," reinforcing the "Authentication Regime" described by P2. However, P1 (NGO) reveals a loophole (Track A): when NGOs use their own funds ("do

naturally"), they bypass this rigid approval process. This suggests that "Governance" is actually a function of Funding Source: he who pays the piper (Donors/Govt) calls the tune (Authentication), but self-funded NGOs retain autonomy.

Triangulation:

- **Divergence:** The *National Plan of Action (NPA)* (Strategy 11) mandates "coordination" and "alignment" to the national interest. However, it is silent regarding any statutory power for the Ministry to "authenticate" or veto specific NGO communication materials. P2's claim of authentication authority appears to be a bureaucratic norm ("Authentication Regime") rather than a strict legal mandate found in the text.

4.2.3 RQ2: Community Engagement and Integration

Engagement is defined by a conflict between "Bureaucratic Protocol" and "Operational Embeddedness," resulting in what P4 describes as "Residual" rather than "Immediate" input.

Theme 2: The "Entry" vs. "Embeddedness" Paradox

Definition: The tension between the Government's definition of engagement as a formal permission-seeking event ("Entry") and the NGO's definition as a continuous state of social presence ("Embeddedness").

"Before we engage the community, we do the community entry... We need to go and see to these people and let them know that this is what we want to come and do." P5 (Govt, GACA)

*"We have what we call the Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs)... **These are people who live in the community.** Their everyday life is in the community."* P1 (NGO)

"The input from the communities is not immediate, but it is residual... They [stakeholders] might not be speaking necessarily [for the community]... but because from past experience, he knows that, oh, last year, we did something." P4 (Consultant)

The Government (P5) conceptualises the community as an external territory to be "entered" via protocol. This "Visitor Model" limits engagement to scheduled events. Conversely, the NGO (P1) operates on a "Resident Model." They do not need to "enter" because their staff and committees "live in the community." P4 (Consultant) provides the critical structural explanation for why community voice is often weak: it is "Residual." Decisions are made by experts in Accra relying on institutional memory ("last year we did this") rather than fresh, direct consultation. While P1 (NGO) claims "Embeddedness," which allows for a more organic, though informal, integration of community perspectives, the overarching national system relies on this "Residual" proxy-participation, leading to the "Consultative Containment" discussed later.

Triangulation:

- The *Inter-Sectoral SOPs for Child Protection* (p. 14) explicitly recognises NGOs/CSOs as having a "significant community level presence" via volunteers, confirming the NGO's claim to embeddedness.

4.2.4 RQ3: Organisational Mechanisms and Barriers

The analysis reveals a systemic disconnect between the legal mandate for structures and the financial reality, creating a fragile system.

Theme 3: The Sustainability Trap (The Unfunded Mandate)

A systemic failure where the State mandates a workforce (CCPCs) in policy but provides zero permanent budget, rendering the structure "ad-hoc" and donor-dependent.

"The CCPC is not a statutory committee... they are ad-hoc members... essentially volunteers. So usually it is difficult to demand accountability from them." P5 (Govt, GACA)

"The whole thing is driven by reliability of funds... cost becomes a hindrance... we check whether it is okay [to continue]." P1 (NGO)

"The hand is a tool, but it's not an instrument... we need instruments, not just tools. I don't think they [robust measurement tools] exist." P4 (Consultant)

The mechanisms for participation are structurally insolvent. P5 admits the CCPCs—the primary vehicle for community voice are "ad-hoc" and "difficult to demand accountability from", because they are non-statutory and largely unpaid. This creates a Sustainability Trap: the participatory mechanism is dependent on a non-statutory group of workers who may not function without donor funding. P4 extends this fragility to the monitoring mechanisms, brilliantly distinguishing between a "Tool" (doing the work) and an "Instrument" (measuring the impact). His admission that robust instruments "don't exist," means the sector largely operates on "general impressions" rather than empirical data.

Triangulation:

- **Converges:** A forensic audit of the *Annual Report (2023)* (p. 31) confirms this trap. Under "Income Sources," the Government of Ghana has no contribution. 100% of funding comes from external donors (e.g., "Norad/Anti-Slavery," "Expertise France").

The *SOPs* (p. 4) legally classify the workforce as "volunteers," confirming the lack of state fiscal responsibility.

Theme 4: Statutory Performativity

The prioritisation of "acting like a state" (enforcing protocols, creating apps, holding workshops) over "achieving outcomes" to mask the lack of operational funds.

"We have the Child Protection toolkit, reporting app... gives me all those reports... We check and see... what have they done... We also look at the GACA website... pledges."

P5 (Govt, GACA)

"Governments must... authenticate it before it goes out." P2 (Govt, CLU)

"Those targeting knowledge has been more successful than those targeting change. Change is still ongoing." P3 (ILO)

In the absence of operational funds (Theme 3), the MDAs rely on Performativity. The "Authentication Seal" and the "Reporting App" serve as rituals of sovereignty. They generate data ("pledges," "reports") that simulate control and success for the National Plan of Action, effectively masking the "ad-hoc" reality of the workforce on the ground. However, P3 (ILO) provides the honest assessment of this performativity: while "Knowledge" campaigns (posters/jingles) have been successful, "Change" (behavioural impact) is rarely achieved. The system is efficient at output (knowledge transfer) but ineffective at outcome (behaviour change).

4.2.5 RQ4: Alignment with Design Thinking (HCD)

The analysis indicates a profound divergence from Human-Centred Design principles. The sector uses HCD terminology ("participatory") to describe what is essentially a Top-Down "Waterfall" process.

Theme 5: Validation Theatre (Extraction vs. Empathy)

The use of community engagement tools (Flashcards, Town Halls) to validate pre-determined expert solutions (Extraction) rather than to uncover latent needs or co-create solutions (Empathy).

"We have the child protection tool kits... come in the form of flash cards... you are to display the cards to them and ask for what they see." P5 (Govt, GACA)

"When we design any tool, we take it to the community to test it... to see how they understand it." P2 (Govt, CLU)

"We come back to the drawing board [in the office]... redesign some of the flash cards." P1 (NGO)

"The ILO doesn't come to check that okay... how many communities did you have meetings with when you were designing... It is not at that micro level." P4 (Consultant)

The design practice aligns with a Waterfall Model (Design, Validate, Launch), not HCD. Participation has a "Hard Stop" at the ideation phase. The community is treated as a Tester (Quality Assurance) to verify ("Do you understand the activity in the picture?"), not as a Co-Creator. The "Flashcards" are used as prompting devices to collect information. P4 confirms that the donor (ILO) does not audit the quality of community participation ("not at that micro level"), effectively allowing "Validation Theatre" to persist unchecked.

4.3 Interpretive Synthesis

The qualitative results indicate a "Consultative" rather than "Participatory" ecosystem. While mechanisms like the GACA Toolkit and NGO linguistic strategies demonstrate deep empathy (HCD), the "Statutory-Top-Down" nature of the Tripartite system constrains true co-creation. The "Sustainability Trap," where the primary feedback loop (CCPCs) is ad hoc and relies on unstable donor funding further inhibits continuous participation. P4's revelation that community input is "Residual" rather than immediate confirms that the system relies on institutional memory rather than active listening at the community level. Consequently, the sector has achieved high "Knowledge and awareness" but low levels of "Behaviour Change," as evidenced by the explicit calls in statutory documents for a pivot "from awareness to action."

4.4 Reflexivity and Limitations

The findings are based on a limited sample of high-level stakeholders (N=5). While the sample includes diverse perspectives (Govt, NGO, UN), it relies on self-reported success and may not fully capture the perspectives of district and community-level officers. However, the inclusion of P4 (Consultant) provided a critical "Insider-Outsider" perspective (e.g., the "Tool vs Instrument" distinction) that counter-balanced the optimism of the Government officials. The triangulation with financial and legal documents also mitigates bias, confirming structural weaknesses (e.g., lack of funding) that participants admitted. Coding was conducted using a rigorous deductive-inductive approach, validating themes like "Sustainability Trap" across multiple data sources.

4.5 Discussion of Findings vs. Theory and Literature

This section critically interrogates the empirical findings through the theoretical lenses established in Chapter 2: Institutional Theory, Policy Implementation Theory, and Design

Thinking. The analysis reveals how the unique institutional architecture of the Ghanaian labour sector characterised by the “Government Seal” of authority and the “Sustainability Trap” complicates standard theoretical assumptions.

4.6 Institutional Theory: The Façade of Coherence

Consistent with DiMaggio and Powell’s concept of coercive isomorphism, the data confirms that MDAs and NGOs in Ghana operate under pressure to conform to a standardised structure. The “Mandate of Alignment” identified in RQ1 serves as the primary mechanism for this isomorphism. P5’s assertion that international partners “cannot speak anything apart from what government is speaking” illustrates how the state ensures a monolithic narrative structure. This aligns with the literature’s prediction that organisations will homogenise their practices to gain legitimacy and access resources, in this case, the legal authority to operate within the National Plan of Action (NPA).

However, the findings problematise the assumption that this isomorphism results in functional integration. Instead, the data reveals a profound case of decoupling; a separation between policy intent and operational reality. While the NPA (policy intent) positions Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) as the “foundation” of the system, the operational reality revealed by the “Sustainability Trap” (RQ3) is that these bodies are “ad-hoc,” non-statutory, and largely unfunded (P5). P4’s admission that robust measurement “instruments don’t exist” further confirms that the system is designed for legitimacy (looking like it works) rather than scrutiny (proving it works).

Institutional Theory would suggest this structure exists to signal compliance to international standards (e.g., ILO Convention 188). Yet, the “Sustainability Trap” reveals that the adoption of participatory language (such as “community ownership”) functions as a ceremonial myth. The “Government Seal” creates a façade of coherence for donors and statutory reporting,

obscuring the fact that the actual work of child protection is performed by an informal volunteer workforce (CCPCs) that often collapses in the absence of donor funding.

4.7 Policy Implementation Theory: The Paradox of Discretion

This theory, particularly Lipsky's "Street-Level Bureaucracy," focuses on how frontline workers exercise discretion to cope with resource constraints.

The findings initially support traditional Top-Down implementation models, where policy is formed at the centre (ILO/Tripartite) and transmitted to the periphery. P4's description of community input as "Residual" aligns with Sabatier's view of clear policy directives flowing from a central authority. The reliance on "residual input" from representatives in Accra (P2) during policy formulation rather than direct field engagement exemplifies the classic top-down preference for bureaucratic efficiency over local complexity.

The data significantly complicates the "Street-Level Bureaucracy" perspective (Lipsky, 1980). This theory posits that frontline workers exercise discretion to manage workloads. In this study, however, the "street-level" actors (NGOs and GACA officers) face a paradox of discretion: they are strictly constrained by the "Statutory Alignment" protocols (P5) yet are forced to exercise extreme discretion to make the policy acceptable on the ground.

The "Pivot" identified in RQ2 where P1 and Consultant P4 shifted language from "Child Rights" to "Family Responsibilities" to avoid community backlash demonstrates that successful implementation in Ghana requires the subversion of the official "Rights-based" narrative found in the NPA. The "implementation gap" here is not just a failure of compliance, but a structural necessity; without this unauthorised "cultural adaptation" of core messaging by NGOs, top-down policy directives may not be accepted by traditional authorities and locals.

This points to a mechanism of “Authorised Subversion.” The central authority (Labour Dept) maintains a rigid grip on the legal definitions (to satisfy ILO C188), but implicitly tolerates or relies on the operational re-definition of terms (e.g., classifying “light work” as “socialisation”) by NGOs to secure community buy-in. The implementation gap is bridged not by enforcement, but by the “cultural brokerage” of NGOs who trade statutory compliance for local legitimacy.

4.8 Design Thinking (Human-Centred Design)

HCD is a problem-solving approach starting with empathy, followed by co-creation, prototyping, and iterative testing.

The study confirms that the sector has adopted the methods of Human-Centred Design (HCD). The strong “Empathy” phase identified in RQ4, particularly P5’s use of Visual Prompting (Flashcards) and P1’s Linguistic Triangulation, aligns with the HCD principle of immersing in the user’s context. The transition from generic messaging to targeted visual tools represents a maturation in the sector’s design capability.

Crucially, however, the findings suggest the sector has adopted the aesthetics of Design Thinking (empathy, tools, visuals) while relegating its politics (power-sharing and co-creation). True HCD involves “Ideation” and “Prototyping” where the solution is open-ended.

In this context, the “Statutory-Top-Down” nature of the Tripartite system makes true prototyping illegal. As P2 noted, partners “cannot speak anything apart from what government is speaking.” If a community wanted to prototype a solution that redefined child labour in a way that is more culturally acceptable but challenges the *Children’s Act*, it would be unacceptable. Therefore, the “Consultative Gap” reveals that design tools are used for diagnosis (confirming the problem exists) rather than co-creation (brainstorming the solution).

This results in “Consultative Containment” rather than Participatory Design. The sector uses HCD tools to extract “local knowledge” (Flashcards) to refine the delivery of the message, but the content of the message remains hermetically sealed within the statutory frameworks. This explains the persistent “Knowledge-Behaviour Gap” (P3, P5): communities participate in the process of the campaign but have no ownership of the policy behind it, rendering the intervention “educational” rather than transformative.

4.9 Answer to Research Questions

RQ	Evidence Summary	Conclusion	Rationale
RQ1 (Governance)	Two-Track Model (P1/P2); “Residual Input: (P4)	Supported	Campaigns are deliberated via a top-down hierarchy (Track B) unless they are low-profile/internal (Track A). Community input is “Residual.”
RQ2 (Engagement)	Entry vs. Embeddedness (P5/P1). Broken Feedback Loop.	Partially Supported	Perspectives are solicited for validation (testing messages), not for ideation. The "Pivot" to "Responsibilities" shows engagement happens despite protocol, not because of it.
RQ3 (Barriers)	Ad-hoc volunteers (P5); Unfunded Mandate; “Tool not instrument” (P4)	Supported	The primary inhibitors are the Sustainability Trap and the lack of empirical (robust) measurement instruments.
RQ4 (Design vs HCD)	Flashcards as testing tools (P5); Validation Theatre.	Diverges	Current practice uses HCD tools for "Consultative Containment" (Extraction) rather than true co-creation (Politics of Participation).

Table 1.1 Matrix of research questions mapped to findings

4.10 Additional Insights and Unexpected Findings

4.10.1 The “Rights vs. Responsibilities” Backlash (Cultural Rejection)

An unexpected finding was the active hostility communities demonstrated toward the concept of “Child Rights,” which they viewed as a threat to parental authority and traditional

socialisation. Contrary to the assumption that communities merely lacked awareness of rights, the data suggests they actively rejected the framing of them.

"They have this perception... You are the people who are spoiling our children that they have their rights ... So now some of the children don't even want to help their parents... So it doesn't go well with some of the parents." P5 (Govt, GACA)

This finding identifies a specific failure of the "Universal Rights" discourse (promoted by international conventions) when applied to the Ghanaian fishing communities context. The resistance forced a strategic pivot by implementers: GACA and NGOs had to stop speaking exclusively about "Rights" and begin emphasising "Responsibilities" (e.g., a child's duty to respect elders/assist the family) to regain entry into communities. This creates a divergence between the formal "Rights-Based Approach" mandated by the UN and the operational "Responsibilities-Based Approach" required for acceptance and adoption on the ground.

This operational pivot is textually codified in the *Child and Family Welfare Policy (2015)*, which explicitly deviates from standard "Rights" language to prioritise "positive traditional values," validating P5's account of the backlash.

4.10.2 The "Tool vs. Instrument" Gap (Measurement Void)

P4 (Consultant) introduced a critical distinction between a Tool (mechanism for delivery, e.g., a T-shirt) and an Instrument (mechanism for measurement, e.g., a thermometer).

"The hand is a tool, but it's not an instrument... We need instruments, not just tools."

P4 (Consultant)

This finding explains why the sector is rich in activity but poor in data. The sector mistakes output (distributing 500 T-shirts) for impact (changing behaviour of 500 people), leading to the "Comfortable Lead" paradox.

4.11 Strengths, Limitations, and Trustworthiness

Findings were strengthened by Methodological Triangulation, cross-referencing interview claims against statutory documents (e.g., NPA, Financials). The inclusion of P4 (Consultant) and P3 (ILO) ensured that the "Expert/International" perspective was weighed against the "local/Implementer" perspective.

A detailed audit trail of the coding process and Thematic analysis was maintained via the Custom Gem (See Appendix A). The use of the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase framework ensures the process is replicable.

While the sample size (N=5) represents key institutions, findings may not be generalisable to all NGOs in the sector. The absence of direct observation of a "Community Entry" session limits the analysis to reported behaviour.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the child labour communication ecosystem in Ghana is characterised by Performative Compliance. The combination of high-level institutional pressures and low-level resource scarcity has created a system that is performatively robust but operationally fragile.

The Two-Track Governance Model allows for some NGO autonomy, but the "Project-Based" track is constrained by Coercive Isomorphism and Validation Theatre. The sector uses HCD language to mask a rigid, top-down hierarchy. While empathy tools like flashcards are used effectively, the statutory rigidity prevents true co-creation, leaving the sector stuck in an

"Awareness" phase with limited "Behaviour Change". Ultimately, as P4 noted, the sector possesses many "Tools" but lacks the "Instruments" to prove its success. Chapter 5 will discuss recommendations for bridging these gaps.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study, synthesised from the data and analysis detailed in Chapter Four. The primary aim of this dissertation was to examine how institutional attitudes and decision-making processes within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) influence the ideation, design, and implementation of child labour communication campaigns in Ghana's fisheries sector. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How are campaign ideas generated, deliberated, and approved within MDAs and NGOs?
2. In what ways are community perspectives solicited and integrated into the design of child labour communication campaigns?
3. What organisational mechanisms support or inhibit participatory ideation and design within MDAs and NGOs?
4. How do the existing campaign design practices align with, or diverge from, human-centred design thinking principles?

To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative research design, utilising in-depth interviews with key officers from the Labour Department, Department of Children/GACA, ILO, and Challenging Heights (NGO), triangulated with a rigorous document analysis of statutory frameworks (e.g., National Plan of Action, Children's Act) and operational tools (e.g., SOPs, Campaign Reports). The analysis was conducted using a Custom Google Gem environment engineered to execute a Forensic Thematic Analysis, strictly adhering to the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006).. This chapter first

summarises the key findings per research question, then draws interpretive conclusions regarding their theoretical and practical significance. Finally, it offers actionable recommendations for policy and practice, identifies study limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This section summarises the key empirical findings derived from the thematic analysis in Chapter Four.

5.1.1 How campaign ideas are generated, deliberated, and approved within MDAs and NGOs

The study identified a bifurcated yet convergent system of idea generation. MDAs operate on a "Statutory-Top-Down" pathway, where campaigns are triggered by international calendars (e.g., World Day Against Child Labour) and deliberate consensus among Tripartite constituents (Government, Workers, Employers). Conversely, NGOs utilise an "Organic-Bottom-Up" pathway, where campaign themes are triggered by immediate rescue data and seasonal trends. Crucially, these distinct pathways converge under a "Mandate of Alignment," where all actors must align their messaging with the National Plan of Action (NPA) to gain the "Government Seal" of legitimacy (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2). While NGOs possess operational autonomy to pivot strategies (e.g., reclassifying "light work"), this autonomy is bounded by the necessity to align with state-sanctioned definitions.

5.1.2 How community perspectives are solicited and integrated into the design of child labour communication campaigns

Community integration spans a spectrum from high-fidelity diagnosis to low-fidelity representation. The study found strong evidence of "Diagnostic Integration" through tools like Visual Prompting (Flashcards), which allow communities to validate whether an issue exists

before a campaign launches. However, statutory deliberations often rely on "Proxy Representation," where institutional figures (e.g., Union leaders) speak on behalf of communities based on "residual knowledge" rather than fresh input (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.3). Furthermore, successful integration often requires a "Cultural Pivot," where implementers subvert official "Child Rights" narratives which face community backlash in favour of "Family Welfare" and "Responsibilities" frames to secure acceptance.

5.1.3 Organisational mechanisms that support or inhibit participatory ideation and design within MDAs and NGOs

The primary inhibitor identified is the "Sustainability Trap." The entire community feedback loop relies on Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), which the Children's Act and SOPs reveal to be non-statutory, ad-hoc, and unpaid (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4). This creates a structural fragility where participation collapses in the absence of donor funding. Additionally, a "Data Black Hole" exists at the national level, forcing policy to run on assumptions while NGOs hold fragmented pockets of longitudinal data. On the support side, the SWIMS App represents a promising mechanism for "Digital Centralisation," attempting to unify fragmented data across the sector, though adherence remains inconsistent due to a lag in compliance culture.

5.1.4 Alignment or divergence of existing campaign design practices from human-centred design thinking principles

The sector demonstrates a "Consultative" rather than "Participatory" design maturity. Practices align strongly with the Empathy phase of Human-Centred Design (HCD) through the use of linguistic triangulation (local dialects) and visual diagnosis. However, practices diverge significantly in the Ideation and Prototyping phases. The statutory requirements of the Tripartite system effectively constrain true co-creation (ideation), limiting community

input to needs assessment rather than strategic content. As P4 (Consultant) revealed, community input is "Residual" rather than immediate. Consequently, the sector remains stuck in an "Awareness" phase, failing to prototype and iterate solutions for measurable "Behaviour Change" (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.5).

5.1.5 The Paradox of Statutory Performativity

This study concludes that the Ghanaian child labour communication sector operates through a mechanism of Statutory Performativity. The state "performs" competence, stability, and control through the rigorous enactment of high-level legal frameworks (e.g., NPA, Children's Act) and ratification of international treaties (e.g., ILO C188). However, this performativity masks a deliberate "hollowing out" of the operational infrastructure. By maintaining the critical street-level machinery (CCPCs) as "ad-hoc," "voluntary," and donor-dependent, the state maintains the appearance of a robust child protection system without bearing the financial burden of one.

This finding extends Institutional Theory by suggesting that "Decoupling" in resource-constrained states is not merely an accidental failure of implementation or a result of resistance, but a functional survival strategy. The "Government Seal" serves as a theatrical prop to satisfy international donors and maintain legitimacy, while the actual labour of protection is outsourced to precarious volunteerism. This challenges the assumption that policy alignment equates to operational capacity.

The study also finds that Isomorphism in Ghana is not just about "looking like a state," but performing the rituals of a state (apps, durbars, committees) to compensate for the inability to perform the functions of a state (funding, enforcement). The "App" mentioned by (P5) is not used as a management tool; it currently functions largely as a repository—a performative artefact used to signal competence to donors.

5.3.2 The Necessity of Authorised Subversion

The study concludes that effective implementation in the fisheries sector relies on Authorised Subversion. The official policy (NPA) and international conventions (C188) mandate a strict "Child Rights" discourse that the data reveals is culturally incompatible with traditional fishing communities (causing backlash). The system functions only because "street-level" actors (NGOs and GACA officers) tacitly undermine these official narratives pivoting to "Family Welfare" and reclassifying "Light Work" as "Socialisation" to secure community buy-in.

Challenging Lipsky (1980), the study finds that "Street-Level Bureaucrats" in this sector do not just exercise discretion to manage workload; they exercise it to manage ideological incompatibility. This finding refines Policy Implementation Theory, particularly Lipsky's concept of street-level bureaucracy. In this context, discretion is not just a coping mechanism for individuals but a systemic requirement for policy acceptance and adoption. "Policy Fidelity" (sticking rigidly to the script) is a barrier to success, while "Adaptive Discretion" (cultural translation) is the engine of adoption and acceptance. The study demonstrates that the "implementation gap" is bridged not by enforcement, but by the "cultural brokerage" of actors who trade the strict applications of written policies for acceptance and trust of people in fishing communities. The "Authorised Subversion" of rights language is a necessary mechanism to bridge the gap between International and national policy intent and the Ghanaian cultural reality.

5.3.3 Consultative Containment of Design

Finally, the research concludes that the adoption of Human-Centred Design (HCD) tools in the public sector has resulted in Consultative Containment. While the sector has successfully adopted the aesthetics of design (flashcards, visual aids, empathy interviews), it has relegated

the politics of design (power-sharing and co-creation). Communities are invited to participate in the diagnosis of their problems (validating the issue) but are structurally excluded from the ideation of solutions, as the solutions are pre-determined by international statute and national policy.

This finding contributes to the Design Thinking literature by highlighting the limitations of applying HCD in highly regulated, statutory environments. It explains the persistent "Knowledge-Behaviour Gap" identified in the study: communities are educated about the policy but do not own the policy. Without the power to co-create solutions (e.g., defining their own by-laws), the intervention remains purely educational rather than transformative, limiting its ability to drive sustainable behaviour change.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Policy Recommendations (High Priority)

5.4.1.1 Statutory Integration of CCPCs

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) should work with Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) to amend the Children's Act (Act 560) or Local Governance Act to grant Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) statutory status equivalent to Unit Committees, backed by a dedicated budget line.

This will tackle the "Sustainability Trap" by shifting the resource base from volatile donor funds to stable state revenue (District Assembly Common Fund), ensuring continuous protection of children's rights within communities. A success indicator for this recommendation will be accessible data showing a percentage of CCPCs receiving quarterly operational funds from DACF; Passage of legislative amendment.

5.4.1.2 Establish a Unified National Data Clearinghouse

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) in collaboration with the Labour Department (Child Labour Unit) should mandate the SWIMS App as the exclusive reporting portal for all child labour interventions and make NGO license renewal contingent upon quarterly data uploads.

This will eliminate the "Data Black Hole" and "Sector Fragmentation" by integrating rich NGO data into the national repository, enabling evidence-based decision-making. A success indicator will be the number of active NGOs reporting on SWIMS; Publication of an Annual National Child Labour Statistics Report based on verifiable SWIMS data.

5.4.2 Organisational/Practice Recommendations (Medium Priority)

5.4.2.1 Formalise the "Cultural Pivot" in Communication Guides

GACA Secretariat; Communications Officers in MDAs/NGOs should collaborate to develop national communication strategies and update toolkits to explicitly endorse "Family Welfare" and "Responsibility" frames over "Rights-based" language where appropriate.

This will legitimise the effective "Authorised Subversion" currently practiced by street-level bureaucrats and reduce friction/backlash in traditional communities. A success indicator will be to produce, publish and distribute standardised national communication guidelines for behaviour change campaigns and interventions.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Future Researchers (Low Priority)

5.4.3.1 Conduct Longitudinal Impact Studies

Academic Researchers; Monitoring & Evaluation specialists should prioritise longitudinal studies that track specific families over 5 years to measure sustained behaviour change, rather than pre/post campaign surveys.

This effort will help to address the "Data Black Hole" and provide empirical evidence on the long-term efficacy of interventions beyond immediate output metrics. A success indicator will be the publication of longitudinal datasets.

5.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

5.5.1 Limitations

This study acknowledges two main limitations. First, the sample size (5 key informants) was small, though purposeful and elite, representing the apex of the institutional hierarchy. This limits the generalisability of findings to smaller, grassroots CBOs that may operate differently. Second, the study focused on the production of communication (institutional side) rather than its reception (community side), relying on officers' accounts of community feedback.

5.5.2 Directions for Future Research

To address these limitations and extend the findings, the following research projects are proposed:

- *Ethnographic Reception Study*: A study situated within fishing communities (e.g., 6 months in Elmina or Yeji) to investigate how "pivoted" messages (Rights vs. Responsibilities) are actually decoded, negotiated, and enacted by parents and children in daily life. This would address the "Reception" gap.
- *Quantitative Analysis of CCPC Sustainability*: A survey of 100+ CCPCs across different districts to quantify the correlation between funding source (Donor vs. State) and operational longevity/activity levels. This would empirically test the "Sustainability Trap."
- *Comparative Institutional Analysis*: A comparative study of the fisheries sector vs. the cocoa sector to examine if the "Statutory Performativity" and "Tripartite" rigidities are sector-specific or systemic to the Ghanaian public sector.

5.6 Conclusion

This dissertation has provided a critical examination of the "black box" of child labour communication campaigns in Ghana's fisheries sector. It reveals a system that is theoretically coherent but operationally fragile. The study identifies a "Statutory-Top-Down" architecture that prioritises "Authentication" and "Alignment" over true participation, resulting in a "Sustainability Trap" where the burden of protection falls on unfunded volunteers.

The study's principal contribution lies in identifying the mechanism of Statutory Performativity where the state performs competence through policies while hollowing out implementation; and the counter-mechanism of Authorized Subversion where street-level actors pivot narratives to make policy work. Practically, the research challenges the sector to move beyond the "Consultative Containment" of Design Thinking and embrace true co-creation and structural reform.

As Ghana moves towards the 2025 deadlines for eliminating child labour, the sector must confront the reality that "Awareness" is not enough. The future of effective communication lies not in more toolkits, posters or awareness campaigns, but in the structural empowerment of communities to define, own, and sustain the solutions to their own challenges.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Title: How Institutional Attitudes and Processes Within MDAs and NGOs Shape Child Labour Communication Campaigns in Ghana's Fisheries Sector

Introduction and Consent

Thank you for taking time to speak with me today. This research explores how campaign ideas are generated, how decisions are made, and how community input is integrated within organisations like yours. I'm interested in your experiences with specific child labour behaviour change campaigns or general child labour campaign work.

Your responses will help provide a deeper understanding of how campaign ideas are generated, how decisions are made, and how community input is integrated. When I say 'campaign,' I mean any organised effort involving communication about child labour in fisheries communities—this could include a series of activities or focused interventions. When I say, 'how decisions are made', I mean political and financial decisions at leadership level and how they affect technical decisions.

This interview should take about 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, I will record our conversation for transcription and accuracy. Your confidentiality is assured, and your participation is voluntary. You can skip questions or request to stop at any time.

Name of Person:

Role in Organisation:

Name of Organisation:

Section 1: Campaign Ideation, Negotiation, and Finalisation (RO 1)

Time Allotment: 15 minutes **Objective:** To document how communication campaign ideas are generated, negotiated, and finalised within selected MDAs and NGOs.

Q No.	Interview Question
1.1	Can you walk me through the typical life cycle of a major child labour communication campaign (e.g., within SECRISE)? Specifically, what triggers the initial campaign idea, and which key personnel or teams are involved in its initial formulation?
1.2	Describe the internal process for negotiating and deliberating on campaign strategy, messaging, and budget. At what point does the leadership/board approve the campaign?
1.3	Once a campaign strategy is approved, what formal or informal mechanisms are used to finalize the specific materials and content? (e.g., materials testing, legal review, partner feedback)

Section 2: Institutional Attitudes and Organisational Mechanisms (RO 3)

Time Allotment: 12 minutes **Objective:** To analyse how institutional processes facilitate or constrain the incorporation of community needs during the campaign design phase.

Q No.	Interview Question
2.1	How is the fight against child labour and trafficking (CLaT) in the fisheries sector viewed and prioritised across different levels of Challenging Heights (e.g., Field Staff vs. Executive Leadership)?
2.2	Beyond general support, what formal organisational mechanisms (e.g., specialised teams, budget lines, approval checkpoints) exist within your institution to facilitate participatory ideation and the integration of community feedback?
2.3	What institutional or organizational factors (e.g., bureaucracy, high staff turnover, lack of internal expertise) have you found to be the biggest inhibitors or constraints to designing campaigns in a highly participatory manner?
2.4	Can you describe the role of any internal champion(s) (individuals or teams) who strongly advocate for human-centred or participatory campaign design? What specific political or institutional influence did they exert to ensure community needs were addressed?

Section 3: Community Empathy and Participation (RO 2 & RO 4)

Time Allotment: 12 minutes **Objective:** To examine the extent and nature of community involvement in shaping the content and structure of child labour communication campaigns, and link this to the Empathy principle.

Q No.	Interview Question
3.1	Before campaign ideation begins, how does your team formally try to achieve deep empathy and understand the psycho-social barriers and lived experiences of the fishing communities or vulnerable families?
3.2	Regarding community involvement, describe the nature and extent of participation you aim for: Is it primarily <i>consultation</i> (gathering opinions), <i>collaboration</i> (working together to design), or <i>co-creation</i> (handing over design authority)?
3.3	Can you provide a specific, critical example where community feedback led to a significant change in the campaign's content, structure, or tone?
3.4	What practical challenges arose in obtaining and utilising community input (e.g., trust, literacy, time limitations)? How did you ensure the campaign reflected local language, culture, and context while maintaining the fidelity of the core BCC message?

Section 4: External Requirements, Constraints, and Trade-offs (RO 3 & RO 1)

Time Allotment: 10 minutes **Objective:** To analyse how external requirements facilitate or constrain design and finalisation.

Q No.	Interview Question
4.1	How did donor requirements (e.g., specific indicators, branding guidelines, thematic focus) or national policies (e.g., the National Plan of Action) specifically mandate or restrict your campaign design choices?
4.2	What practical constraints related to budget, timelines, or partner approvals affected your ability to fully implement a participatory or iterative design process?
4.3	When a direct conflict arose between external requirements (e.g., donor/policy mandate) and the identified needs/preferences of the fishing community, how were the trade-offs decided?

Section 5: Design Thinking Alignment and Lessons (RO 4)

Time Allotment: 10 minutes **Objective:** To assess the applicability of design thinking principles (empathy, ideation, iteration) as an analytical framework for understanding and improving existing campaign design practices.

Q No.	Interview Question
5.1	In retrospect, how well do you feel your organization's approach to campaign design aligns with human-centred design principles (Empathy, Ideation, Iteration)? Where were the strongest points of alignment, and where did it diverge?
5.2	What are the three most critical lessons learned from this campaign experience (e.g. SECRISE BCC work) that you would institutionalise for future anti-CLaT communication efforts?
5.3	Has this campaign experience, and the subsequent reflection, led to any fundamental change in your understanding of either the core child labour problem in fisheries or the most effective way to communicate with those communities?

APPENDIX B: CUSTOM GOOGLE GEM PROMPT LOG

Large Language Model: Google Gemini Pro

Gem Identity: "Fisheries Child Labour Qualitative Analyst"

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Data

Prompt 1.1 (Data Ingestion):

I am uploading a number of files. Index these files. Based on the dataset provided, categorise the source materials into Primary Interview Data and Statutory, Policy, and Organisational Documentation.

Identify interview participants by role: P1 (NGO Lead), P2 (Govt – CLU), P3 (ILO), P4 (Consultant), P5 (Govt – GACA)."

Prompt 1.2 (Structural Scan):

Scan the Interview Transcripts for all mentions of the following structural terms: Budget, Funding, Statutory, Committee, Design, and Community Entry. List the page numbers where these terms appear."

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes (In Vivo Coding)

Prompt 2.1 (Governance Codes):

Read the interview transcripts for line-by-line and extract In Vivo codes.

Based on the initial codes and the provided Research Questions, organise the data into a Hierarchical Node Structure (Parent, Child Nodes and sub-themes).

Phase 3: Searching for Themes (Clustering & Pattern Matching)

Structure it under these 4 Categories (Parent Nodes):

- Idea Generation & Approval (RQ1)
- Community Engagement Methods (RQ2)
- Organizational Barriers/Enablers (RQ3)
- Design Thinking Elements (RQ4)

Assign specific sub-themes (Child Nodes) under each Parent. Define each Child Node clearly.

Prompt 3.2 (Structural Disconnects):

Run a comparative analysis. Compare the codes used by Government Participants (P2, P5) versus the NGO Participant (P1) regarding 'Community Entry' and 'Decision Making'.

Create a Matrix:

Row 1: NGO Perspective on Autonomy.

Row 2: Government Perspective on Control/Alignment.

Question: Where do their narratives diverge? Where do their priorities conflict? Use verbatim quotes to show the contrast.

Where is the gap between the Formal Structure (what the NPA/SOPs say) and the Work Activity (what P1 and P4 actually do)? Does the state maintain the myth of a child protection system (on paper) while relying on ad-hoc volunteerism (in reality) to save money?

Prompt 3.3:

How does the reliance on external donors (ILO/EU) distort the implementation priorities?

Does the data show campaigns happening only when funding is available (seasonal project logic) rather than when problems spike (seasonal fishing logic)?”

Prompt 3.4 (The Limits of Participation)

According to the data, where does community participation stop? Do communities get to Ideate (participate in creating the solution) or only Test (approve the solution)?”

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes (Forensic Triangulation & Refinement)

Prompt 4.1

I disagree with the 'Government seal' theme suggesting Government is the central authority. I think what P2 was seeking to put across was in the context of the tripartite system as far as project-based campaigns that involved the government are concerned. Where NGOs are running organisation-based campaigns, they only rely on the National Plan of Action (NPA) as a guiding document to ensure coherence. Does the data reveal any other proof supporting this theme?

Prompt 4.2

Does the data reveal the Statutory-Top-Down nature of the ILO/Government stifling the Organic-Bottom-Up signals? When communities give feedback (via Flashcards), does that feedback travel up to feed into the National Strategy (NPA), or does it die at the district level?

Prompt 4.3 (Verification of Named Themes):

Is there any proof of the Sustainability Trap and Statutory Performativity in the transcripts or statutory financial documents?"

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes (Theoretical Application)

Prompt 5.1 (Institutional Theory)

Does the data suggest that Tripartite Consultation is a functional necessity for the campaign, or a ceremonial ritual performed to gain legitimacy? Look for evidence where participants describe meetings as routine or protocols rather than active debates. Does the National Plan of Action mandate meetings that participants describe as rubber-stamping?

Prompt 5.2 (Institutional Theory)

The NGO (P1) uses the exact same statutory language as the Government (P5)? Is this Coercive Isomorphism (forced by the Government Seal) or Mimetic Isomorphism (copying to look professional to donors)?

Prompt 5.3 (Implementation Theory)

What does the data reveal about field officers acting merely as messengers delivering a message? Look at the Rights vs. Responsibilities pivot.

Prompt 5.4 (Design Thinking – Empathy vs. Extraction)

Are the Flashcards and Community Entry techniques used to build genuine Empathy (understanding the user s world), or are they used for Data Extraction (validating the donor s assumptions).

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS USED IN ANALYSIS

1. Interview Transcripts (Primary Data)
2. Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour - National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour, 2023-2027
3. CHILDREN'S ACT, 1998 (ACT 560)
4. Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for Ghana (HAF), 2022
5. Inter-Sectoral SOPs for Child Protection and Family Welfare, 2020
6. Child and Family Welfare Policy, 2015
7. Challenging Heights Annual Report, 2023
8. ILO Communication Strategies on Child Labour, 2021: From Awareness raising to action
- A desk review with preliminary design ideas for campaigns in Africa and Europe.