

Gender and Informality in the Construction Industry in Ghana's Oil City Takoradi



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Dedication

To Mr. and Mrs. Ashigbie

For your love and care.

Acknowledgement

Glory is to God almighty. His name is praised forever.

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Abbreviations

ADF:	The African Development Fund
CMI:	Chr Michelsen Institute
EIU:	The Economist Intelligence Unit
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GSS:	Ghana Statistical Service
IDA:	The International Development Agency
ILO:	The International Labour Organization
IMF:	The International Monetary Fund
JHS:	Junior High School
KNUST:	The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
NAI:	The Nordic African Institute
PNDC:	The Provisional National Defence Council
RRMP:	Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project
SAP:	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCC:	State Construction Corporation
SHS:	Senior High School
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSNIT:	Social Security and National Insurance Trust.
STMA:	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly

Abstract

The informal labour is a major source of income for many Ghanaians. Though the informal economy has been an important part of the country's economic activities for a long time, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the early 1980s increased it considerably as the government needed to cut down its spending. As a result people in the formal labour market lost their jobs and had to find new jobs in the informal labour market to survive. SAP increased a process of informalization and casualization in the country. This has increased the flexibilities in the labour market in Ghana. The informalization process also transpired into the construction industry of Ghana. In the wake of the country's new oil discovery, and the construction of many new buildings in the oil city Takoradi, this study examines the activities of eight construction companies in Takoradi to know the degree of informality in this industry. It also looks into the activities of a self-builder¹ and some suppliers. The study also examines the different types of work that men and women do in the construction industry and gender relations in the industry. It looks into the gendered barriers and working conditions that men and women face.

The concepts of informality, gender ideologies and work are used to explain the causes of informality and the consequences for the activities of construction workers and the gendered nature of the industry. The main findings of the study are that there is gender discrimination and exploitation of workers in the construction industry. This is because many of the construction workers in the companies were employed on a short-term basis. Many of these workers were informally employed and thus they are denied worker benefits and protection from the companies they work for. Men are also in a clear majority in the workforce for these construction companies because construction work is seen as men's work in Ghana. The few women who are able to enter into this occupation face challenges from the society, the workplace, from family members and friends because of their gender.

¹ Self-Builder in Ghanaian context is a person without a registered construction company, who build homes for people.

Chapter One

Introduction

When Ghana discovered oil in commercial quantities in 2007, expectations grew rapidly as many citizens hoped for employment opportunities, income creation (increases) and subsequent improved living conditions. The general expectation of Ghanaians was that there was going to be remarkable development of the country. Though many Ghanaians are optimistic about the new oil industry, it is in Takoradi, the oil city where the expectations are highest.

Since the discovery of oil, the Government of Ghana had come out with different projects and plans to develop the oil industry. Some of the projects have been commissioned while others are still yet to start. The projects cover the whole of Ghana but most importantly the oil city. Currently in Takoradi the projects are in the form of construction of buildings, roads, housing accommodation for workers, and logistics for oil companies and so on. Media reports show that the Ghana government is going to expand the Takoradi harbour, upgrade the Takoradi airport to international standards, and set up a fertilizer factory in Takoradi. Foreign governments from China, India, South Korea and governments of other countries are supporting the Ghana government in the preparation of the new oil industry. For example media reports show that the Chinese government in collaboration with the Ghana government has also proposed to construct a brand new modern city near the Takoradi. A BBC's report by Walker in 2011 shows where and how this brand new city of Takoradi is going to be (Walker, 2011). The Ghana government is expected to spend a lot of money in construction work in the next five years.

The private sector including both Ghanaians and foreign investors are also building the relevant infrastructure in Takoradi in order to position them for business. These private companies are investing in the building of schools, shopping malls, offices, ware houses, banks and houses to enjoy the advantages that the oil industry bring. Both Ghanaian and international construction companies have been given project contracts to build the needed structures in Takoradi. Real estate companies are building houses to accommodate the migrants and expatriate population in the city. The Ghana media also reported that there is a commissioning of a housing estate at the Essipong, a suburb of Takoradi by Devtraco Limited, a real estate company. Other domestic

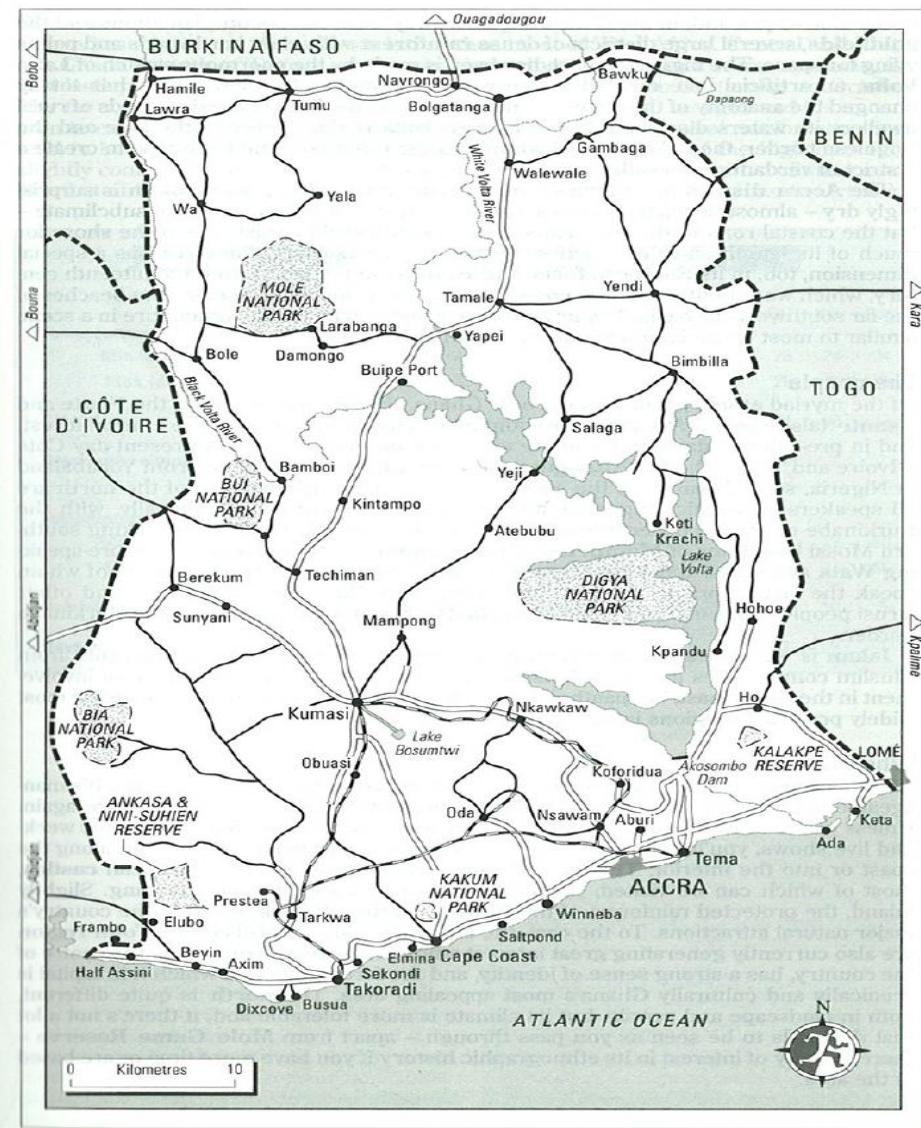
construction opportunities have started; individuals are building houses for rental to migrants while some families have converted free accommodation space into rooms for rental purposes.

These projects have increased construction activity in Takoradi and this has provided new employment opportunities. Employment opportunities range from direct administration functions, such as project management, accounting, public relations, logistics, procurement, finance, mechanical engineering, to direct operational functions such as civil engineering, architecture, welding and fabrication, quantity surveying, supervising, driving, and so on. These are technical jobs and require high levels of skills, training and experience, and the holders of these positions in the construction companies are usually formal employees.

There is also semi-formal and informal employment in the industry. This has become possible because of the nature of construction work in Ghana more generally. In Takoradi the semi-formal and informal activities include masonry, carpentry, steel bending, tiling, carrying water, carrying sand, and so on. These activities are predominantly informal and the workers who do these jobs are mostly day labourers, part-time and temporary workers. Unlike the formal employees, the informal workers are usually not registered members of the construction companies. Other job opportunities exist in the form of support services given by other firms to the construction companies. These include supplying of building materials, catering, housing (rent to accommodate migrant construction workers), communication, education, religious services and so forth. All these support services are growing partly as a result of construction activities that have been made possible by the new oil sector.

This study examined the types of activities that men and women perform in the construction industry and the degree of formality of the activities. Gender roles and relations in this male-dominated industry have also been examined. The working conditions of the workers have also been investigated. In Ghana, the blurred borderlines between formal and informal economy makes it difficult to compare them directly. Nevertheless, some identified differences between them have been analysed. Below is the map of Ghana showing Takoradi at the south-western part at the coast.

Map 1: Map of Ghana



Source: Hudgens and Trillo (1999)

The study brings out clearly the roles of men and women in the construction industry and gives an account of informal workers in the industry. It provides knowledge about the problems the workers (of both genders) are confronted with from the point of entry into the workplace (construction sites) including working conditions. It also examines an understudied area, which is informal work in the construction industry. Takoradi is booming with construction activities so to study working conditions and women participation in the industry is more important than ever.

There is pressure on the construction companies to finish projects as fast as possible at the expense of following the labour laws. Studying the construction industry is important because apart from providing direct employment for its workers, the industry also aids the other economic sectors like agriculture to grow as it provides the needed structures for their activities (Mlinga and Wells 2002: 270). It additionally generates additional employment for other economic activities which provide support services to the industry (*ibid.*).

In relation to the informal activities in Ghana, I will explain how the labour market has become very flexible and its effects on the degree of formality in economic activities in the country. I will also explain the increase in casual work and its effects on the workers. I further explain briefly gender ideology and work in Ghana which has had effect on women representation in the construction industry. This is important because men and women representation in the construction industry have been considered in this study.

1.1 Labour Market Flexibility in Ghana

Ghana's labour market has become more flexible with the introduction of SAP in the early 1980s. Ghana opened the door for SAP implementation in Africa as it became the first African country to introduce it in 1983 (Darkwah, 2007: 66). SAP intended to stabilise the economy through less government spending (Standing 1999: 257). However, Ghanaians have been doing informal jobs before the introduction of SAP. Hart employed the term 'informal sector' already in 1973 to refer to some economic activities in Ghana which were not under the regulations of the state. However, the emergence of SAP in Ghana worsens the situation by promoting numerous changes in the labour market and the economy in general. Some of the conditions of SAP included the removal of subsidies for farmers, the 'cash and carry system' (pay before service) in the hospitals among others. In order to make a living, people were forced to work in the informal economy and many people became self-employed. This expanded the informal economy in Ghana. The African Development Fund (ADF), (2008) categorised 70.4 percent of Ghana's working population as self employed.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 72 percent of non-agricultural workers are informally employed (ILO, 2002). As for developing countries on the whole, the informal sector contributes 45 to 60 percent

to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Chen, 2001) and thus cannot be overlooked. Statistics by the ADF (2008: 11), states that 52 percent of Ghana's economically active people are self-employed in agriculture with "34.3 percent in informal non-agricultural activities and 13.7 percent in the formal public and private sectors". The construction industry is an important contributor to informal employment in Ghana. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2008: 17), the industry provides about 30 percent to the total industrial productivity and eight percent to the country's GDP. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2010) shows that the construction industry and real estate services together in 2009 contributed 3,809 million Ghana cedi (2,265m USD) to the country's GDP.

According to Birdsall (2007: 580), the institutions² in many sub-Saharan African countries are weak. The governments in these countries often do not care much about the 'property rights' of people (*ibid.*). The weak institutional arrangements in Ghana have also contributed to the flexibility of many economic activities. In the construction industry the institutional arrangement that affect the workers the most, are the Ghana Labour Laws. Though the Ghana Labour Laws make clear the duties and rights of workers, there is little effort on the part of the state to enforce these laws where as some part of the law also gives employees and employers some level of freedom in the employment process. This aspect is relevant in the terms and conditions of the informal workers in the construction industry.

Labour market flexibility has had an impact on the degree of formality in the construction industry in Takoradi. It has enabled construction companies to have few permanent workers and employ many casual workers during a project. Subcontracting is very important and has become an embodiment of the construction industry. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2001), construction companies subcontract because it makes employment flexible and it also avoids direct labour employment with legal contracts which enable construction companies to cut down cost. The permanent workers of construction companies, called the 'core workers', have therefore decreased considerably over the years (*ibid:* 17).

² Formal government and private institutional arrangements.

The construction industries in many countries in the world have witnessed an increased in informal forms of employment (see ILO, 2001, Wells, 2007, Mlinga and Wells 2002). Both before and after Ghana's independence in 1957, the country's construction industry was in the hands of foreign companies such as the Taylor Woodrow Company, the A. Lang Company (Assibey-Mensah's, 2009: 975). In 1961, Ghana established the State Construction Corporation (SCC) as a "public-sector construction agency" and entrusted it with roads construction (*ibid.*). In 1981, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government took over power, by that time; the country was facing economic recession and the country lacked fundamental infrastructure like roads (*ibid.*). The government initiated an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) under the auspice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (*ibid.*). Following this, the World Bank's International Development Agency (IDA) and the Ghana government worked together in Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project (RRMP) to provide better roads throughout the country (*ibid.*). However, SCC was not administered well and the government allowed foreign construction companies from Europe and Asia to help (*ibid.*). In 1998-1999, SCC was 'divested' and it soon became clear that Ghanaian construction companies were unable to compete with "large, well-equipped, and well-managed foreign construction businesses" (*ibid:* 977). Private and foreign construction companies emerged in Ghana in the period between 2000 and 2008 (Gyadu-Asiedu, 2009). Currently the bigger construction projects in Ghana are predominantly in the hands of foreign construction companies (EIU, 2011).

The degree of formality in construction activities at the time when the industry was mostly operated by the Ghana government is not well known in the literature. But what is clear is that the degree of formality was much higher. The industry has become more liberalised with the introduction of SAP and the degree of informality is higher. The implementation of SAP in Africa enhanced informality in the construction industry. In Zambia, less government participation in the economy increased informality in the construction industry (Well, 2007: 89). Some urban settlements in Africa have about 90 percent of their houses constructed informally due to lack of authorization (Hansen and Vaa 2004: 7). In Ghana, there are construction activities which are entirely informal and their activities are not approved by the state. About 80 percent of houses in the country are probably built informally (Arku, 2009: 263). According to Arku (*ibid.*), the middle and upper class groups use the formal public and private construction sectors

respectively whereas the low-income group utilizes the informal economy. The construction activities whose work is purely informal in Ghana are called self-builders.

In the light of informal work, some authors have come out with terms like informalization, casualisation, labour market flexibilities and so on (see Standing, 1997, 1999, 2008; Virtanen et al, 2005). According to Standing (2008), labour flexibility has sparked processes of informalization and casualization. Casualization is the process where people are employed on a temporary basis rather than on permanent basis (*ibid*: 23). According to Booth et al. (2002), labour market flexibilities have caused the increase in temporary jobs. The labour markets in general “include both formal and informal self-employment and wage labour” (Schrover, van der Leun and Quispel, 2007: 530). Temporary work has increased in many countries because many companies are avoiding full time employment and replacing it with temporary workers (Standing, 1997: 19). It is therefore important to know the extent to which people are contracted to work on a temporary basis in the construction industry in Takoradi.

The concept of informality is very important in many countries. The ILO (2002: 1) emphasise that “contrary to earlier predictions, the informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the globe, including industrialized countries – it can no longer be considered a temporary or residual phenomenon”. To add to the growing importance of informal economic activities in many countries, Meagher (2010: 15) states that “far from eroding the relevance of the informality concept, economic reforms, faltering states and the flourishing of non-state forms of organization have put the informal economy at the heart of contemporary issues of economic governance and restructuring”. Studying informal economy is thus very important especially in Ghana where many people make a living from this economy.

1.1.1 Casual Work and Insecurity

Though not all temporary workers are vulnerable, the challenges of temporary workers have been summarised as “erosion of income, job insecurity, deficient benefits and on-the-job-training, lack of prospects for promotion, and exposure to hazardous work conditions” (Virtanen et al., 2005: 610). Casual work is usually seen as an aspect of informal work because casual

workers seldom enjoy worker benefits (Barrientos and Kritzinger, 2004). Informal work is a general term while casual work has a specific meaning. What is common with casual and short-term workers in the construction industry is that they do not have a stable job and their employment ends when a project is completed leading to periods of unemployment (ILO, 2001). According to Booth et al. (2002: 189), “temporary workers can be laid off without incurring statutory redundancy payments or restrictions imposed by employment rights legislations”. According to the ILO (2001: 43), there are four areas of where the construction industry is ‘found wanting’. The areas are: right at work, social protection, social dialogue and employment. These are explained below.

The construction industry has put a blind eye to ‘basic labour rights’ (which is in the ‘core labour standard’) of the workers (*ibid.*). A core labour standard is the primary rights that every worker must enjoy (Bazillier, 2004). The temporary workers are not allowed to join trade unions (ILO, 2001). Also, there are differences in “men and women, local and foreign workers, and temporary and permanent workers in their terms and conditions of employment” (*ibid*: 43).

The temporary workers have very poor social protection coupled with poor working environment (*ibid.*). According to Kabeer (2008: 88-91), there is much health risk in informal work. Subcontracting has affected the health and safety of temporal workers in the construction industry because employers mostly care about the workers employed by them directly and this is even a bigger problem in developing countries (ILO, 2001: 36). For example, in Malaysia, workers have become used to accidents at the construction sites (*ibid.*). According to Kabeer (2008: 90), people who work in the open such as on the “sidewalks, construction sites, market places” faces problems that includes “pollution, noise, inclement weather and harassments of various kinds”. Construction workers are at risks of having “back injuries from carrying heavy loads, respiratory disease from inhaling dust, musculoskeletal disorders, noise-induced hearing loss and skin problems” (ILO, 2001: 37). To verify this, question regarding the risk (in terms of health) among the construction workers in Takoradi were asked.

According to the ILO (*ibid*: 43), the breakup of the industry and poor coordination between workers and employers has contributed to the poor social dialogue in the industry. Casual

workers lack collective bargaining in many countries, as a result, permanent workers enjoy a ‘two-tier wage structure’ that is their salaries as well as other benefits which is far more than that of the casual workers (*ibid.*). In Brazil for example, the salaries of permanent workers are higher than the wages of the temporary worker (*ibid.*). These differences in wages between the permanent and casual workers are much bigger in many African countries (*ibid.*).

The construction industry uses more human strength because “most jobs are unskilled and physically demanding” (Fellini, Ferro and Fullin, 2007: 279). Also, the industry “absorb the excluded” (de Souza, 2000 in ILO, 2001: 12), and employs poorer people with less skills and education (*ibid.*). Though the industry employ poorer people in the society and has the potential of employing more people in developing countries, the industry lack qualified skilled workers causing poor work quality (*ibid.*). This is because in the construction industry in many developing countries, workers gain skills usually through an ‘informal training’ (‘learning by doing’) system, however, this informal training system in Africa is poorly developed because the expertise of the trainers may not be enough (*ibid*: 38). In Takoradi, the strategies put in place by casual workers to gain skills have been looked into. As part of the objective on this study, the vulnerability of the workers in the construction industries have been examined with particular interest on earnings, working environment and working conditions.

1.2 Gender Ideology and Work in Ghana

In Ghana, the various communities tend to have different gender ideologies due to “differences in terms of language, kinship systems, marriage practices and the socio-economic organisation of production systems” (Overå, 2003: 49). The matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems impact on gender and development perspectives in the country (ADF, 2008). Culturally, some economic undertakings in Ghana have been related to masculinity or femininity.

In Ghana, men and women are divided in terms of the undertaking of economic activities (Awumbila, 2001: 50). This means that the labour market represent distinctly different challenges to men and women (*ibid.*). In other words, work in Ghana is gendered. Women who are in non-agricultural sectors are mostly found in the trading businesses whereas men’s non-agricultural jobs are usually in the areas of “public administration, trade, several kinds of

manufacturing, construction, transport, forestry, fishing and mining" (Kabeer, 2008: 76). Trading has been a major economic activity for Ghanaian women many years ago (Darkwah, 2007). In the middle of the 19th century, Cruickshank (1853) and Daniell (1856) documented the importance of trade to Ghanaian women (*ibid.*). During the colonial period in Ghana, formal jobs were given to men and women continued to be the major players in market trade (*ibid:* 66).

A great numbers of women are involved in informal activities in developing countries. An ILO (2002) report shows that it is only in the North African countries that men do more informal work than women. Here, women in non-agricultural informal workers constitute 43 percent (*ibid.*). In the rest of the developing countries, 60 percent or more of the non-agricultural informal workers are women; sub-Saharan Africa had the highest representation of 84 percent (*ibid.*). Most women join the informal sector in Ghana because of lack of opportunities in the formal sector, their limited education and also the sexual division of labour (Awumbila, 2001: 50).

The informal economy employs the majority of people in Ghana, especially women who do petty trading to support the household. In Ghana, the many occupations found in the informal economy such as market trade in food stuffs are defined as women's work. But men are increasingly becoming part of this sector since the 1980's when the introduction of SAP made many formal employees lost their jobs (Overå, 2007: 541). Nevertheless, women still play the leading role in the informal economic activities in the country, but they are nonetheless underrepresented in the construction industry. This is basically due to culturally specific ideas about appropriate work for men and women. There have been a number of empirical studies on informality and gender in Ghana (see Overå, 2007, Clark, 1994, Ninsin, 1991). Much of the work is on marketplace trade which in Ghana is seen as women's work. It is therefore interesting to take a closer look at the informal activities that is male-dominated in the construction industry and to investigate women's contributions in this male-dominated domain. The study will therefore add to the available empirical knowledge on gender and informality in the construction industry in Ghana, and on current and changing gender roles in Ghana more generally.

Overå (2007) observed that in Ghana it is easy for men to cross gender barriers by doing what is often regarded as women's work than the other way around. Men who find jobs in female-dominated domains as a result of employment usually "redefine their masculinity within the norms of the local gender ideology" (ibid: 559). Women on the other hand seldom cross gender barriers to do what is seen as men's work because male jobs are usually seen as unsafe and not fitting for women (ibid.). Only few women are able to work in male-dominated activities "like carrying cement and water on construction sites" (ibid: 557). These women are sometimes called *macho* (manly) (ibid.). In Ghana, women's limited control and ownership of resources combined with women's high representation in the informal low paid economic activities have made women poorer than men (Wrigley-Asante 2008:161-162).

In Ghana, women's basic education has been on the increase in recent years due to some government policies (ADF, 2008). However, there is a significant gender gap at the secondary and tertiary levels of which boys are 64.5 percent and girls are 35.5 percent (ibid). According to Abankwa (1995: 44), men's advantage over women in education is somewhat due to the belief that they will eventually become breadwinners for their families. The reality in Ghana however is that women do support the family needs often as single mothers. In the construction sector, the common task of women with low levels of education and skills include the collection of "sand, water, gravel and concrete" (Abankwa 1995: 44). Meanwhile the few women who would want to enter these construction-related courses at the tertiary levels are constrained by the society because the nature of construction work is seen as not appropriate for women.

1.2.1 The Effects of Gender Ideologies on Gender Participation in the Construction Industry in Ghana

The belief that the construction industry is for men only has resulted in a negative impact on employment opportunities of women in the industry. In Ghana, 'the gender stereotypes' in construction work makes women shy away from the industry (Abankwa 1995: 36). The ADF (2008: 12) reports on Ghana's employment profile by gender in the various sectors of the economy indicates that in the year 2000, 4.9 percent of the working population in urban areas were men working in the construction industry and that of women were 0.1 percent. In the rural

areas, 1.9 percent of the men and 0.2 percent of the women worked in the construction industry. At the national level, the industry employs 1.4 percent of the working population of which men are 2.8 percent and women are 0.2 percent. The statistics demonstrate clearly that the sector is male-dominated in Ghana.

According to the ILO (2001: 13), the construction industry is basically men's job in most countries. However, women's unskilled roles and low wages are significant in the construction industry in South Asian countries (*ibid.*). In India for example, women constitute about 30 percent of construction workers though they are at the bottom of the industry with limited access to training (*ibid.*). In Ghana, the few women who work in the construction industry are mostly found in the informal and low paid end. Thus, it is important to examine why the women find it difficult to advance in the industry.

1.3 The Study Area –Takoradi

The Western Region located at the south-western part of Ghana is one of the ten (10) regions in Ghana with Sekondi as the administrative capital. The region has the birth place of Ghana's first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and as the saying goes in Ghana, 'the best comes from the west'. The region is rich in mineral and natural resources such as gold, diamond, manganese, rubber, timber and now oil.

Takoradi is located at the south-eastern part of the region. Takoradi is the biggest city in the region and it shares a close boundary with Sekondi. Sekondi is located 10 km east of Takoradi (Hudgens and Trillo 1999: 726). Due to this, the two cities are called the *Twin-city*. The metropolitan assembly is called Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) with Sekondi as the administrative capital. The land area of the two cities are 49 km² (Cooperative Housing Foundation International, 2010) and average temperature of about 22 degrees Celsius (Ghana District.com, 2006). Like many coastal towns of Ghana, the two cities had a long association with Europeans from the 15th century onwards. There is a fort called Fort Orange in Sekondi and this shows the city's contacts with Europeans years ago. Takoradi has become the centre of the oil exploration, production and transportation activities. Takoradi has now been

christened ‘the oil city’ by most people in Ghana. Takoradi has and is still expected to expand with population growth, economic development and infrastructural development.

The Akan ethnic group in southern Ghana practise the matrilineal kinship system where children inherit from their mother (Clark, 1994). This ethnic group is divided into sub-groups based on the widely spoken Akan dialects. Some of these sub-groups are Asante, Fante, Bono, Nzema and others. Takoradi is Akan dominated and the majority of the people speak *Fante Twi* and practice the matrilineal kinship system as well. The rest of the ethnic groups practice the patrilineal kinship system where a child takes his/her fathers’ lineage.

Takoradi is famous for its central market which is located at the core of the city. The central business district is usually known as the Market Circle and locations in the city are given with reference to the Market Circle. As a result of the oil find, many people have migrated to the city to look for work in the oil companies and oil-related jobs, some people to expand their business there and others to do any work. The high demands for higher residence standard by the upper class people are causing higher rents. The real estate developer and foreign investor are investing in these residential buildings. The estimated population figure of Takoradi in the year 2010 is 274,000 (EIU, 2011). The highest educational institution in the city is the Takoradi Polytechnic.

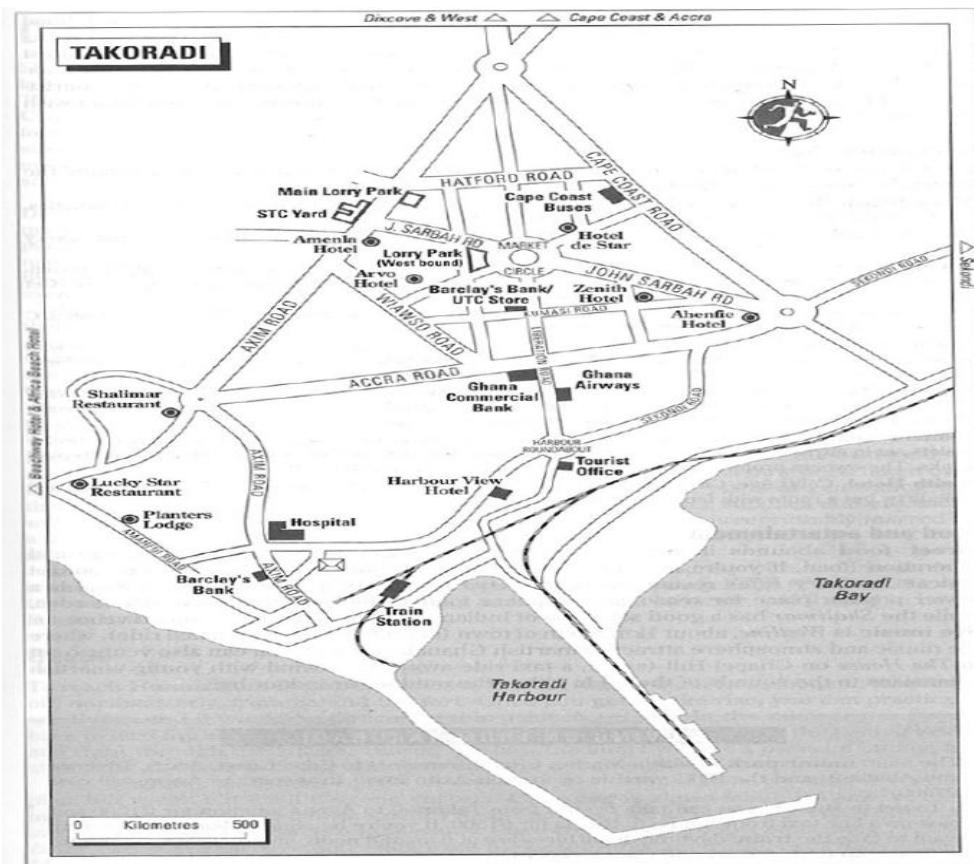
The main economic activities in the metropolis are commerce (trading) (STMA, 2006), which is now on the increase due to population increase. Different types of informal economic activities are taking place such as food vending, shoe making, selling of second hand garments and the like on the ascendancy. Takoradi is one of the industrial cities in Ghana. It comes fourth in the industrialised cities in the country following Tema, Accra and Kumasi. The major industries are food processing, and manufacturing of wood items (STMA, 2006). There is also a major harbour in the city which caters mainly for exports from Ghana. Such exports include raw materials such as cocoa beans, timber, gold, manganese and other cash crops which are brought from inland mostly via a railway linking the western resource rich regions to the Takoradi harbour. As a coastal city, fishing is also an important economic activity for its people and the fish landing site in the city makes Takoradi a vital fish market.

Banking and Insurance have emerged strongly in the wake of the city’s growing business prospects. Most of the major players in the Banking and Insurance companies are establishing

their branches and agencies in the city. These banking and insurance institutions are set to provide capital and insurance products not only for the oil projects but also provide liquidity for the many small scale and informal businesses that are emerging in the city.

The study area is interesting because it is a new area of economic activity and people have high hopes and are in anticipation of an economic boom. I selected Takoradi because the city is undergoing profound changes due to the new oil industry and the construction business is in high demand. It is also an empirical study on how labour is organised and practiced in the construction activities at the local level. According to the Registrar General's Department in Sekondi, Sekondi-Takoradi has 250 registered construction companies (interviewed on 20/07/2011). Below is the map of Takoradi, locate the market circle at the heart of the city. Most of the studied projects are located within this map of Takoradi.

Map 2: Map of Takoradi



Source: Hudgens and Trillo 1999

1.4 Research Questions

In context of the increasing employment opportunities available within the construction industry in Takoradi, I ask how is work in the construction industry gendered and what are the gendered constraints in getting formal and well-paid work in this industry?

The specific research questions are as follows:

- What types of work do men and women do in the construction industry?
- What are the causes of gender barriers in the construction industry?
- In which ways do working conditions and labour rights vary according to gender and the degree of informality?

In order to answer these questions, I have used the concept of informality and theories about gender ideologies and work. The concept of informality is employed to answer the third sub-question; the examination of the marginalization of some workers in the labour market. These are workers who lack workers benefits. Theories on gender ideology and work which talks about gender appropriate work are used to answer the first and the second sub-questions. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to find answers to the research questions.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This study is divided into seven chapters, *Chapter one* introduces the background and the research objectives. In *Chapter two*, I introduce my theoretical and analytical framework. I explain the concept of informality and how it operates in the construction industry. I furthermore describe the problems informal workers face. In addition I will explore theories on gender ideologies which have had effect on gender appropriateness of work. In *Chapter three*, I discussed my fieldwork methodology. The techniques used and the problems that I faced during my fieldwork. *Chapter four* elaborates on the empirical findings on the first and second sub-questions which are on gender division of labour and reasons for gender barriers in the construction industry. I discuss the third sub-question which is on the working conditions and labour rights of construction workers in the *Chapter five*. I discussed the empirical finding using concepts and theories in the *Chapter six*. Finally, I will conclude in the *Chapter seven*.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Tools

The first part of the chapter examines the concept of informality. It looks into informal activities in the construction industry. The second part examines day labourers as ‘entrepreneurs’. The third part looks into gender ideologies and work and the impact of gender ideologies on women’s representation in the construction industry in Ghana. These concepts are the tools that will be adopted in the analysis of my data. They explain the changes or why the social and the economic world look like they do.

2.1 The Concept of Informality

Informal economic activities have been part of many African countries since the 1960s (Potts 2008). Its existence dates back to the ‘pre-capitalist cities’ (*ibid*: 154). However, the term ‘informal sector’ was first coined by a British anthropologist, Keith Hart, in the early 1970s in the studies of urban economy in Ghana. The term was used to explain the economic activities of the low-income sector of the labour force in Accra. According to Hart (1973: 61), many members of the urban working class were informally employed due to “price inflation, inadequate wages, and an increasing surplus to the requirements of the urban labour market”. Following this, the ILO in 1972 used the term informal sector to mean low waged workers and low-income self-employed whose activities are not documented and they lack worker benefits (ILO 2002: 1). Similarly, Hart (2000 in Overå 2007: 543) defined the informal economy as “the mass of economic transactions that takes place beyond effective state control”. This makes some authors refer to the informal economy as a ‘tertiary refuge sector’ (see Potter et al., 2008: 391). According to Misati (2010: 222), the informal economy in sub-Saharan Africa “can be seen on the streets, sidewalks and back alleys of cities including petty traders, street vendors, small scale artisans and shoe shiners”. The people are making a living out of these jobs.

The term informal sector has been used in many academic writings. However, due to the variations in the activities involved and the blurred borderline between formal and informal economic activities some writers prefer to use the term ‘informal economy’. This study uses the

term informal economy instead of informal sector. According to (Wells 2007: 88), the term ‘informal economy’ should examine the “conceptual whole of informality”, taking into consideration the “production relationships and employment relationships”.

The concept is broadened as it emphasises is on the ‘unregulated’ nature of economic activities where labour laws are not really followed (*ibid*: 87). So informal work is not only attributed to the activities of poorer people in the society who are just trying to survive by doing any work (Hansen and Vaa 2004: 10-11) but any economic activity which lack some form of formal regulation is also considered informal. According to Wells (2007: 88), “a job is regarded as informal if it falls outside of the framework of labour regulation and therefore the holder doesn’t enjoy any legal protection or entitlement to certain social benefits (annual leave, sick leave, etc.)”. The definition provides more explanation to the informal concept discussed. Workers who fall under these categories, whether fully or partially will be used in my demarcation line between formal and informal economy in the construction industry. The reasons for using this definition have been based on worker benefits and social protection in the construction industry.

Standing (2011) calls some categories of informal workers as ‘precariats’. The precariats can be distinguished from the ‘survivalist’ informal workers like petty traders. People who also do not identify themselves with a particular type of job also fall under the precariats (*ibid*: 9). The precariat has much more to offer such as qualification, skills and experience in the labour market than the survivalist informal worker, but just as the survivalist informal worker, the precariat also lack labour rights and worker benefits (*ibid*: 10). This term can be used to describe the casual workers in the construction industry. The term ‘precariat’ is a refinement of the conceptualisation of informality. In the past, some of the precariats would have had formal jobs in the construction industry, but because of informalization process they now have to rely on the contracts.

In Ghana, there are contradictions in what are formal and informal jobs (Overå, 2007: 543). Some registered companies are able to avoid paying tax, but market traders who are not registered could pay higher tax while other economic activities are controlled by the government and thus are able to avoid paying tax (*ibid*.). This is vital in examining the unclear nature of formality and informality in the construction industry in Takoradi.

2.1.1 Informality in the Construction Industry

There has been an increase of informality in construction activities over the last two decades (Wells, 2007). According to the CIB Task group 29 (Construction in Developing Countries) (in Mlinga and Wells 2002: 271), the informal construction economy “comprises unregistered and unprotected individuals and small enterprises that supply labour and contribute in various other ways to the output of the construction sector”. This definition factor in “both enterprises and individual workers” and the differentiation between the formally and the informally employed depends on who enjoys worker benefits (Wells 2007: 91). In this study, informal construction workers are men and women doing construction work who do not have secured contracts as Mlinga and Well (2002) stated, and they also lack worker benefits and social protection as the ILO (2002) put across.

In this study the term ‘casual workers’ is used to refer to construction workers whose employment arrangements are very informal in nature. This term refers to many of the workers employed on a temporary basis in the industry. Studies in India show that many of the workers in the construction industry are informally employed (Wells, 2007). According to Wells (*ibid*: 91), “the absence of written contracts and of regulation of the employment terms and conditions of these workers in India would certainly justify their inclusion in the ‘informal economy’”. Many workers in the construction industry in Takoradi can be said to belong to the informal economy. In order to examine the formality of the activities of the worker in the industry in Takoradi, questions were asked to know if workers were permanent employees or not and their benefits during the fieldwork. I have examined day labour work below.

2.2 Day Labourers as Entrepreneurs

Workers in some of the construction companies in Takoradi are day labourers because they are paid daily in cash. According to Valenzuela (2001: 346), people become day labourers because of lack of alternative jobs and are unable to compete in the labour market. Other people also do so because it gives them some level of freedom: it is flexible, workers are able to choose between wages and they have different types of jobs to choose from (*ibid*.). Their daily pay which is also tax-free even makes it more beneficial (*ibid*.). Similar to the daily payment nature of day

labourer work, Theodore et al. (2006: 408) observed that, some construction firms in New York are employing people (“off the books”) and paying them in cash in order to cut down cost. This also means that many construction companies not only in Ghana try to avoid legal employment which comes with certain benefits to the worker.

In Valenzuela’s view, day labourers can be considered as ‘survivalist entrepreneurs’, because they have small option in the labour market, they make a living by becoming day labourers (2001: 349). This is because day labourers manage themselves by finding jobs themselves. According to Valenzuela (2000), employers are the beneficiaries of the day labour market due to the simplistic and cheap nature of the hiring processes. It is also important to know how the day labourers manage themselves in the construction industry in Takoradi.

The majority of day labourers are informal workers because they lack rights and benefits of workers. Some day labourers could also belong to the precariats group. Though some of them have some form of skills and qualifications, they are less competitive in the labour market. In Takoradi some of these people take up self-employment in the construction industry as day labourers and manage themselves.

2.3 Gender Ideologies and Work

Gender has been defined as the “perceived differences between women and men and signifies unequal power relations that are based in these perceived differences” (Hanson, 2009: 248-249). Gender extends beyond differences between men and women as gender intersect with “age, ethnicity, race, or class” (ibid: 249) and other principle of differentiation that are crucial for the nature of power relations by people. Jolly and Reeves (2005: 6) also defined gender as “the differences and commonalities between women and men which are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces”. The above quoted definitions of gender means that gender can be understood as ideas by which men and women are situated in the society. According to Alcoff (1996: 20), Gender ideology is defined as “that set of practices which organizes, regulates and defines relations between men and women, including sexual activity, reproductive activity and gender-based roles of all types”. Thus what is perceived as appropriate behaviour of men and women are the reflections of how men and women are and how their

actions ought to be like (MacDowell 1999: 7). According to Hanson (2009: 249), opinions and beliefs about gender are shaped through daily practices, and processes and are place specific. This means that the concept of gender is not static; it changes over time. Gender has different distinctions; some of them are discussed below.

Dixon and Jones (2006) divided gender into three categories: the first is *gender as difference*, the second is *gender as social relation* and the third is *gender as social construction*. *Gender as difference* evaluates the experiences of men and women spatially (*ibid.*). Men and women in the construction industry have different experience. This is relevant to my study but I have chosen to concentrate on gender as social relation and gender as social construction.

‘Patriarchy’ has been associated with *gender as social relation* and concerns unequal relations between men and women (*ibid.*). This is issue relating to power. In Ghana, there are unequal power relations between men women. Women are usually less powerful, and are sometimes suppressed. In many families in Ghana, fathers determine which type of economic activities their daughters must engage in, thus influencing their choices of education. So at the household level, fathers’ authorities often affect the careers of their daughters. The traditional gender relations at home could be transpired into the work places of construction companies otherwise the two sexes could be equally empowered in the industry.

Gender as social construction is about how the activities of men and women have created certain types of occupations and behaviours that are seen as appropriate for both men and women and talks about the framing of terms such as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ which usually “establish spaces of exclusion and inclusion” (*ibid:* 49). Gender as social construction is important to understand women’s fewer representation in the construction industry in Takoradi.

Social constructionist framework sees gender as what men and women ‘do’ and not what they ‘posses’ (West and Zimmerman 1991 in Denissen 2006: 5). This reinforces Butler’s (1990, 2004 in Alvesson and Billing 2009) ideas which view gender as performance, that is the efficiency of both men and women at work. This means that gender is sometimes linked to responsibility and not the physical body of men and women. According to Denissen (2006: 6), gender “is a situated and processual accomplishment, an activity rather than a “thing””. This also means that both men

and women in any business are held accountable for their activities according to mainstream gender ideology in their society.

In Ghana, construction work is socially constructed as men's work. Gender as social construction demonstrates the different sexes and their abilities to perform a particular task. Applying this to the construction industry in Ghana is the notion that the women do not have much strength to do construction work. Although many countries including Ghana wants to have equal representation of men and women in the various occupations, the notion of gender appropriateness of work is still functioning and this has reinforce the unequal representation of men and women in some economic activities in the country.

Labour market barriers are different for men and women in Ghana. The labour market barriers in this context mean having difficulties in entering a particular type of occupation. It could be because of lack of qualification, experience, and gender and so on. The labour market barriers can also be seen in the construction work. The industry is mostly seen as masculine in nature, which definitely limits women's working positions. Generally, male-dominated occupations with low status normally employ women to some extent, (McDowell, 1999). These differences shows that the distinguishing qualities of jobs cannot be ascribed to the physical attributes of either men or women "but rather it seems that 'who does a job' depends on how it is socially constructed, valued and concomitantly rewarding" (ibid: 127). What the construction work pays might be among the reasons why the industry is male-dominated.

2.3.1 The Concept of Occupational Sex-segregation

Ideas about gender appropriateness of work affect the jobs that men and women do and also influence employers and workers as who is best fit for the various activities (Padavic and Reskin, 2002: 9). Occupational sex-segregation happens when "the type of work performed by men and women tends to be defined by their sex" (Shuto, 2009: 22). According to Anker (1998: 3), this is one of the most 'important and enduring' characteristic of the labour markets in the world. Construction work is regarded as a 'man's world' (Denissen, 2006: 140), and usually have the major part of its workforce being males. One explanatory factor for sex-segregation is that the work should be "unequally distributed between the sexes, affect the probability of entry into

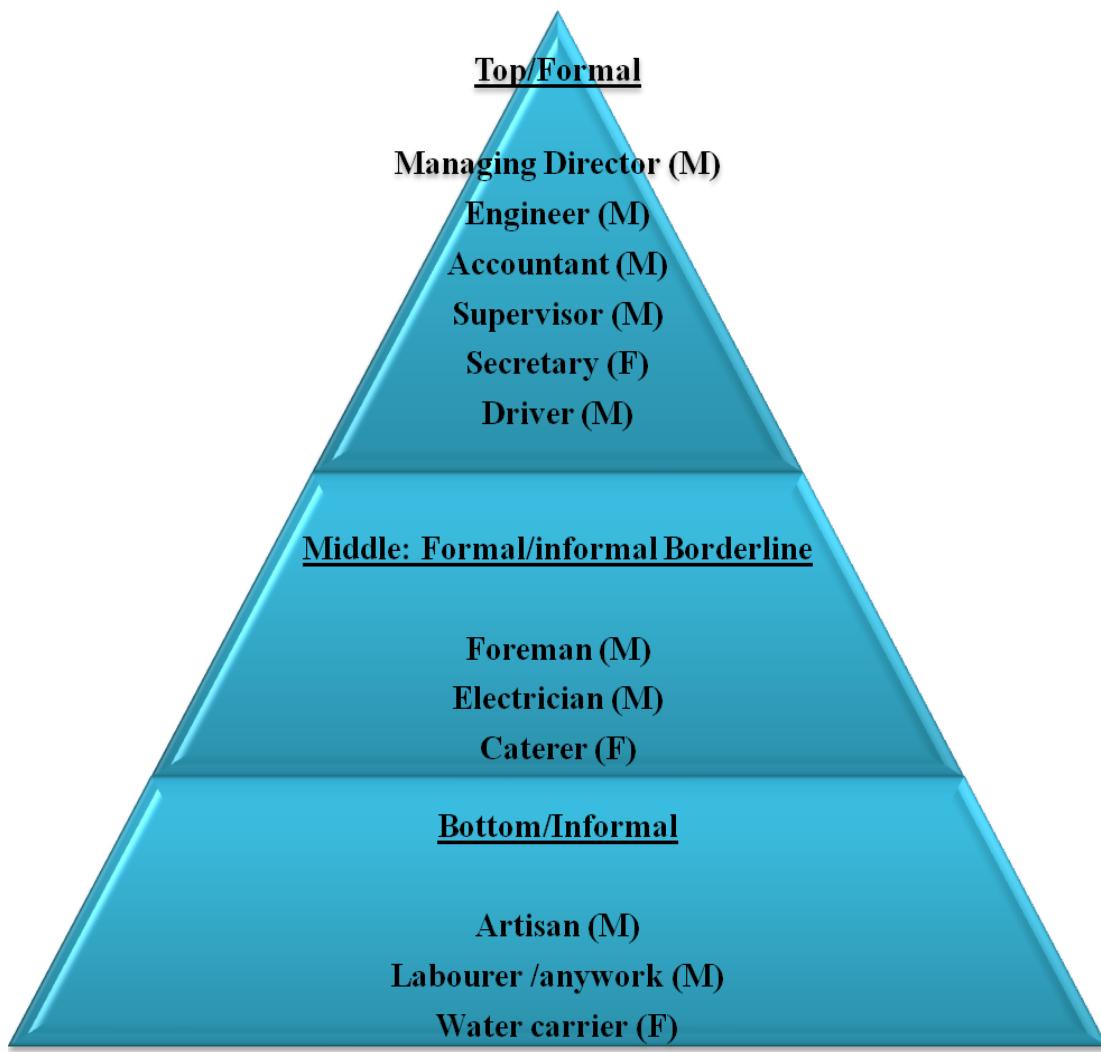
different occupations and affect occupational remuneration” (Shauman, 2006: 579). This is important for this study because the participation of men and women in the construction industry in Ghana will be examined. The study also examines the different types of activities men and women do and how men and women are rewarded. According to Alvesson and Billing (2009), in considering the effects of gender on work, employers see what a job entails in order to verify whether such a job is suitable for a man or a woman. Acker (1990: 150) disputes the notion that there are gender neutral organisations because the concepts of ““a job” and real workers are deeply gendered and “bodied””. Men and their associated masculine worth are being preferred by organisations making gender division of labour to benefit men than women (Williams, 1995).

Practices at work places also help to entrench occupational sex-segregation (*ibid*: 15). Occupational sex-segregation also incorporates “sexist practices and gender stereotypes in work places that restrict women’s access to male-dominated occupations” (England and Lawson, 2005: 81). One form of the harassment in the workplace is “associated with unequal authority, intimidation and threats” (Aryeetey, 2004: 35). This is important in the construction industry in Ghana. Women face harassments in many different ways either because of their body or the work that they do.

2.4 The Construction Hierarchy

The model of what I call the ‘Construction Hierarchy’ (fig. 1 below) is largely based on the concepts of formal and informal economy in the construction industry explained in this chapter. It depicts the occupational categories of work in the construction industry in Takoradi. Conceptualising economic activities into hierarchies is not new in Ghana. Robertson (1984: 120-122), describe the trading activities and incomes levels among Ga women in Accra between the period of 1950-1960 to 1970 in a hierarchical order. The construction hierarchy represents people with a direct employment in the studied construction companies. From the top to the bottom it shows the degree of formality and also the gendering of work tasks. This hierarchy is seen as a chain of occupations and the gender of those who perform these occupations in the construction business is indicated in parentheses. The hierarchy is also used to show power relations between those on top and those at middle and the bottom positions.

Figure 1: A Construction Hierarchy based on data from eight Construction Companies in Takoradi



In the pyramid, ‘M’ stands for male and ‘F’ stands for female. The gender attached to each of the working categories means that the activity is either male or female-dominated. Formal positions are the workers at the top of the pyramid. Most of these workers are highly specialised in skills.

The middle positions are workers who are usually on contract³ to help finished a particular project. A larger extent of informality in the industry begins from the middle position. Not all the

³ Non-permanent workers employed by construction companies within a particular period with higher pay than casual workers. I called them contract workers not the casual workers in this study. Casual workers are contracted in many ways but using contract workers to refer to the two separate groups could be confusing.

working categories at the top and in the middle were mentioned in the above figure. Quantity surveyors, project managers, architects and other technical activities can be found either at the top or at the middle, depending on the company. Supplier in order ways supply building materials to the construction companies but they are not directly employed by the construction companies.

At the bottom of the hierarchy shows the informal workers whose activities are on temporary basis. They are usually called casual workers. Like the suppliers, food sellers at the construction site are not directly employed by the construction companies although they provide direct services to the construction workers that is why I did not add them to the hierarchy. The middle position shares some similarities with the workers here in terms of employment arrangement and working conditions.

The small tip at the top and the broad bottom of the hierarchy show that there are very few permanent workers and many informal workers in the construction industry. The middle position shows the blurred borderline between formal and informal work in the construction industry. The closer one is to the top, the more formal the person's activities. The entre points are more at the top and at the bottom but less in the middle. The pyramid also demonstrates that the men are doing the main construction work while the women are mostly in the service sector. The openings for women are very small.

In summary, the chapter has presented the theories that will be used to discuss the findings in this study. The concept of informality which appears to be highly relevant in the construction industry has been examined. Lack of good working conditions on the part of the informal workers in the construction industry has also been analyzed. Gender ideologies which appropriate certain types of work to either men or women have been examined because the construction industry in Takoradi is male-dominated. I finally constructed a hierarchy to show the degree of formality in the construction industry. The hierarchy will also be used to analyse the relationships between the workers of the various work categories in the construction industry.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter elaborates on my fieldwork in Takoradi from May 2011 to August 2011 (three months) and the challenges encountered, the methods used, and the reliability of the data. I employed both qualitative and quantitative methods which include semi-structured interviews, group discussions, participant observation and observation and photo elicitation. The qualitative methods aimed at describing and explaining the construction work, the workers and the gendered nature of participation in the construction industry in Takoradi. The quantitative methods provided descriptive data about the informants, their incomes, age, and so on and statistics about the construction companies that I studied. My sampling strategies have also been discussed. My status as a female student researcher and ethical issues are also discussed. I further explain the criteria for choosing individuals with outstanding stories as case studies.

3.1 Methods of Data Collection

Social science research aim to comprehend the intricacies of human actions and practices (Morse 2003: 189). Particular research technique help us to know more about the intricacies of life in various ways, however, the methods used in getting answers to particular types of questions are different (*ibid.*). Winchester and Rofe (2010: 5) define ‘method’ as “the investigative technique employed” in research.

I employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Berg (2004: 7) explains that “qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhibit these settings”. It helps in knowing the world more by studying people’s life activities (Silverman 2006: 113). The methods that I used included semi-structured interviews, group discussions and informal conversations. Visual method was achieved through photography. I did participant observation as well. I supported the qualitative method with a quantitative survey to systematically collect information about companies and respondents. England (2006: 294), noted that the two methods (both qualitative and quantitative) complement each other. The different methods gave me different perspectives and revealed different aspects

in construction activities. According to Morse (2003), human actions and practices are better understood by using mixed methods because it helps in acquiring additional information that enriches one's research.

I also obtained secondary data about the construction industry from the Registrar General's Department. Information on labour laws and safety regulations were obtained from the Ghana Labour Office to know the laws that the construction companies must follow. Books, articles, journals, dissertations and web pages have also been utilized in this study.

3.1.1 Reconnaissance Visit

It has always been my dream to visit Takoradi because of the city's important history in Ghana as a harbour city. Before I arrived in Takoradi, I had contacted two construction companies in Takoradi that I had found on the internet. Their fictive names are Waindo Construction Company and Nkonim Construction Company. They were my first contacts before going to Takoradi. Pseudonyms are used in representing the companies and respondents, but the actual names of some key informants who are not construction workers are mentioned because they have provided official information. My respondents together with the construction companies do not have a problem having their real names published but because of certain issues discussed I still use pseudonyms to protect them and not reveal their identity. In Ghana, each person has a name based on the day in the week a person was born and these names vary from each of the ethnic groups. For Example, any Akan woman born on a Sunday is called Akosua. I have used the Ghanaian names of the week to refer to respondents whose names were mentioned in this study but a different week day than the real one.

On my first day in Takoradi, the manager of Waindo took me to the construction site where I was introduced to the quantity surveyor. He immediately gave me a helmet and advised me to change from wearing a skirt to wearing trousers and also to buy safety boots to protect my feet. He showed me around the site and responded to my questions. Later that afternoon, I met a Ghanaian businessman Mr. Hanson, to whom I had been introduced by my research supervisor in Norway before I arrived in Ghana. I began using snowballing strategy at this stage in order to get the needed number of companies and informants. Snowballing is a research strategy where the

researcher utilises his/her relationship with one informant to gain access to another person (Valentine 2005: 117). Researchers are thus able to get more access to informants and also win their reliance (*ibid.*). After talking to Mr. Hanson about my research, he told me he had seen a female supervisor⁴ in a construction project near his office. He talked to the manager on a telephone, the manager directed us to his office the next day.

The next day, Mr. Hanson and I went to the office of the female supervisor only to realise that this was another construction company than the one we sought. I took the opportunity and introduced myself and my intentions to the manager, who agreed for his company to be part of my studies. Therefore, it was ‘good luck’ that we lost our way because this added another company to my study. In this study, this company is called Nhyira Construction Company. The manager of Nhyira Company then directed us to the company we were actually looking for; whose manager introduced me to the female supervisor. She became the main informant of that company and the only woman supervisor in my sample. The Company is called Adom Construction Company; she showed me around their sites in the city centre and answered all my questions.

The following day, I went back to Nhyira Company, and the manager, who became the main informant, also showed me around in his project site. On the last day of my reconnaissance survey, the engineer at Nkonim Company drove to take me to his company’s site and introduced me to their projects. He later sent me to the office where I met the manager.

After four days in Takoradi, I had four construction companies to study. During this period, the key persons were very helpful for giving me information about their companies, projects and workers. Perhaps they were forthcoming because they perceived me as an outsider from outside Takoradi who was not very threatening because of the calm manner in which I behaved.

I made two important observations during the first visit. First, all the four construction companies thought I was looking for only women employees in their companies. When I asked why they thought so they all pointed to the word ‘gender’ in my study title. This demonstrated to

⁴ Supervisor is a person who oversees the whole construction activities at the construction site.

me that the word ‘gender’ had been misunderstood and associated with issues relating to only women. According to Jenkins (2004: 9), gender does not refer to only women and any analysis that involves contributions in the labour market should focus on both men and women. Zelinsky et al. (1982 in ibid: 9-10), noted that researchers “must view reality stereoscopically, so to speak, through the eyes of both men and women, since to do otherwise is to remain more than half-blind”. Secondly, though I introduced myself as a Geography student, they thought I was studying Building and Construction. I explained to them that gender and informal economy are common topics in feminist geography and economic geography respectively. I had to explain that my research is centred on the workers of their companies and not building and construction as a study area. I also made them aware that I was new to construction activities. As a result, the key persons took time to explain in greater details the nature of their projects at each site, the purpose of each project, materials needed for the projects, the schedules of the projects and the challenges they faced regarding their projects.

3.1.2 Interviews

Conducting interviews in research help in knowing the meanings that people give to their ‘lives’ as well as their ‘experiences’ (Valentine, 2005: 111). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 3) define interview as “a conversation that has a structure and a purpose”. The interaction is well defined between the researcher and the researched with the aim of acquiring empirical knowledge (ibid.). I interviewed both formal and informal workers in the construction companies. I also interviewed food sellers at the construction sites, formal and informal workers of a quarrying company, and some suppliers and workers of a self-builder.

I used different types of semi-structured interviews and interview guides in collecting the data. Table 1 below shows the different forms of semi-structured interviews and the interview guides in getting information from my informants as well as the number of informants. I had different samples, one sample for each interview technique. Semi-structured interviews were used for the formal and informal construction workers and it helped in getting the same types of information which facilitated some comparison between the two groups of workers. The managers were interviewed with different forms of semi-structured interviews about the companies.

Table 1: Interview Strategies used in getting Data from Informants

Interview Strategies	Informant Category	Number of Informants
Semi-structured interview (1)	Managers	6
Semi-structured interview (2)	Construction and quarrying workers and food sellers	69
Group discussion with interview guide (3)	Construction and quarrying workers	8
Interview guide (4)	Individual suppliers	3
Total		86

I also had Informal field conversations with many construction workers, food sellers and a self-builder. See appendix for the different interview strategies stated in the table.

The semi-structured interviews allowed for free expression of my respondents in answering the questions as well as discussing new issues that arose in the course of the interview. I had informal conversations with many construction workers including food sellers. For example, I did not include all the food sellers in the sample population because I lack the needed information about them. After introducing myself and my research objective to them, the food sellers (seven women) were not interested in the research but rather in telling about how they can be employed as cleaners or caterers after the hotel has been completed. However, the information I got from them is important in understanding gender ideologies in the construction industry. I also carried out some informal interviews at the market to know about public perceptions of construction work, but these conversations are also not included in the sample population since I did not use them much in this study.

I conducted the interviews with the managers and individual suppliers in their offices. I conducted the interviews with two construction workers who were unemployed at the time (laid off) in their homes. The rest of the interviews with the construction workers were conducted at the construction sites usually during lunch time. During each of the interviews, the interviewee and I distanced ourselves from the rest of the workers so that our interactions are not influenced by the presence of other workers. The quarrying workers interviews were done at the quarrying site. Each interview usually took 30 to 45 minutes. I interviewed 65 people using the local

dialects *Asante Twi* because they could express themselves better in *Twi* than in English. Some of the informants spoke *Asante Twi* while others spoke *Fante Twi*, but both are Akan dialects and are thus mutually intelligible. I asked the questions in *Twi*, got the answers in *Twi*, and then I translated the answers into English as I wrote them down in the interview paper or in my field notebook. Some of these informants mixed English and *Twi* languages together as they talked. For the six foreigners and for 15 of the Ghanaian permanent workers, English was the medium of communication. When I asked the 15 Ghanaian permanent workers about which language they preferred for the interview, they chose English. Besides the group interviews, I used the recorder only with four informants because many of them preferred not to be recorded. I transcribed the interviews immediately after I got back to the room I rented. I conducted all the interviews without an interpreter because I could speak *Twi* and English fluently.

3.1.3 Group Interviews

I conducted two group interviews with men and women separately with four persons in each group. I separated the men from the women because the women were not construction workers. Due to the limited number of women in the construction companies, I conducted a group interview with women casual quarry workers at the quarrying site on a Sunday when they were not at work. The activities of the casual quarry workers were fascinating. They use human power to break bigger stones into smaller pieces (chips) for construction purposes, suppliers have to come and buy these stones before they can get money. The group interview with the male workers was also done at the construction site after they finished the day's work. The issues that came out of these interviews were interesting, but somehow disturbing. Members of each group gave similar answers to the questions; for example, question on the nature of their work they said similar things concerning the difficulties in the work, question on payment issues they said similar things that their pay is small and so on. This was because they have similar experiences in the industry. They always talk and discuss similar issues confronting them in their companies.

I used a tape recorder for the group interviews and took notes on some important issues. According to Longhurst (2010), recordings in research allow the researcher to have full attention on the discussion rather than trying to write down everything the respondents say. I transcribed the group interviews as soon as I got home.



Plate 1: Group interview with women.

Plate 2: Group interview with men.

3.1.4 Participant Observation and Observation

Aase (2007: 1) points out that, “the goal for any field researcher is to go behind the scene and get access to study processes that are hidden to the casual observer”. Participant observation can be one of the tools in achieving this. I participated extensively in the activities of the informants, especially among casual workers, carrying concrete, blocks, sand and water. I began my participation in the above activities because they required little or no skills but human strength. When I started trying the skilled work such as surveying and other measurements, I learnt easily without many challenges because I had already established a good relationship with the workers. I did participant observation with four construction companies namely Waindo, Nhyira, Adom and Faybour and one self-builder. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), there are different levels of participation; non-participation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation. I did active participation. This is where the researcher gets involved in most of the activities of the informants (*ibid.*). Except in the Adom Company, that had a female supervisor and the self-builder that had women workers, I was the only woman at the sites of the other three companies. My participation provided me with detailed understanding about gender ideologies (because of my own gender), informal construction work and construction work in general.

I established a good relationship with the informants which provided me with information which were otherwise inaccessible. As we worked together we had conversations together. I took notes of what they said among themselves and to me in my field notebook. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (ibid: 120), in participant observation, the researcher usually gets information through informal conversation with the people he or she is studying. Participation helps the researcher to examine occurrences in their natural settings and it enriches one's knowledge about a phenomenon (ibid.). Below are some photos about my participation in construction work.



Plate 3: Carrying sand into a concrete mixer machine. Plate 4: Pouring water into a water container.

It was a new experience for me as I became a construction worker. From the beginning, it was difficult getting the chance to work with the men because they said it is difficult and that I would not be able to do it. But when they let me try and realised that I was capable, they allowed me. As time elapsed, I became used to them and we became friends working together. I scheduled my days between the companies. It was a bit difficult for me as the only woman in three different companies and the men were all around me telling me one thing and another. At some point I was praised by those I was working with, like '*you are very hard working woman, you are not like the Takoradi women who only think of fashion and don't want to work*'. At other points I was discouraged by their 'words' like '*my sister don't do this work and go home and die o*'.

According to Winchester and Rofe (2010: 14), "a fruitful area of study in human geography focuses on the body and on our embodied experiences". Gender issues are important in the construction industry in Ghana. During participant observation, I had to battle with issues concerning my gender. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002: 83) explain that "being a man or a woman

may be the most significant social fact concerning an individual and obviously will have an impact on participant observation". The people that I worked with reminded me many times that I am a woman. Sometimes it was as if I had lost my sense of identity because in many ways I had to behave like a man so that they could have more confidence in me. When I first told one of the managers that I wanted to participate in the work, he said then he had to get me a smaller head pan. I said no I can use the same type of head pan that the men are using. He continually said no to me until I raised my arms and showed him my muscles then he laughed and said 'okay'.

At another company site, the manager took my camera and said he wanted to take a photo of me. As I posed for the photo, this is what he said to me, '*every woman is a woman, look at how you are posing, you are a woman*'. At the same company's site, a worker told me in the beginning that I need to keep my body soft because they (men) are the people who will use it so they don't want it to become 'hard'. In order words, he meant that he does not want me to develop muscles. At another company site, a man who was not around when I was introduced to the workers by the manager immediately asked me when he came back, '*you a woman what are you doing here*'? The other men and I explained the reason why I was there to him. Then he said '*I thought you are our new cook*'. The male workers initially found it difficult accepting me because they felt that I did not have enough strength as a woman to work with them due to the nature of their work. These beliefs are due to the gendered perceptions of tasks in the construction work. As the work progressed, their trust in my abilities grew stronger.

Through participant observation I experienced that many of the men said that they want to work with women, but that they want them to only fetch water or cook for them. In the beginning when I was carrying concrete at the site, the men were always conscious when they were fetching concrete into my head pan. At one point I heard (undertone), '*don't make it full, she is a woman*'. At other times '*please take some out she can't carry it*'. Sometimes, if the one who is fetching the concrete into my head pan did not realise I was the one, usually tries to take some of the concrete off from the head pan when he raises the head and sees me. I then said no, I can carry it. From the beginning also, they did not want me to carry the head pan unto my head myself as they always tried to help me. They saw me as a person who could do the work, but is less positioned in terms of strength than them. However, as time elapsed, I carried the head pan full of concrete myself.

I had some challenges during my participant observation. I got a ‘cut’ from an iron rod the first day that I did participant observation when I was climbing to the first floor of a building on a ladder. I went for tetanus injection that evening. My palms began scratching and I was also afraid of climbing and descending on the ladder. Some comments from the men I was working with made the participant observation more disturbing. At one site, one man told me whiles we were working, *‘you will work and you will be aroused sexually’*. I pretended and made it look as if I was not disturbed by what he said so I also laughed and continued with the work. He said that because I am a woman doing construction work and not because construction work stimulates people sexually. One of the sites is near the city centre on a major road so anytime I was working there, everyone that happened to either pass by or in moving cars starred at me.

The boots that I wore to the site even posed a major challenge for me. I used to wear them from the house to the site but people watched it too much on the road so I decided to carry it in a polythene bag to the site before I wore it. It was really difficult for me hearing all these comments and people watching me all over the city but I was determined to complete my research. Knowing also that all these happened to me because of gender dominant ideologies in Ghana made me stay focused. I experienced severe body pains regularly.



Plate 5: Cut in my Palm.

Plate 6: Descending to the floor on a ladder.

In addition to participation, I also observed the workers as they carried out their duties. I did observation at some point because the situation at that time called for that. I observed their relationship with each other as well as their supervisors. As a new person in the industry, I came to understand construction work. My involvement in their activities also helped me because

during our conversation I got to know certain pertinent issues that revolved around the workers, their employment conditions as well as legal matters that affect their work. I then followed up with questions that sought to explain these matters further.

3.1.5 Visual Methodology (Photo Elicitation)

Aitken and Craine (2005: 250) envisage that “what we see is important, perhaps more important than what we hear, smell or read”. Taking photos in the field helped me to explain my findings. The photos helped me in getting more insight into the nature of construction work. Although informants explained the construction work and processes to me at the various sites, sometimes I look at the photos to get more meaning. I also show some of the photos to informants to seek for further explanations. Using photos could potentially destroy my objective of keeping information confidential. However, I have considered that the use of the photos will not harm anybody and the informants and construction companies have given their informed consent that pictures of themselves can be used. I took photos mostly during observation. Below are some of the photos.



Plate 7: Supporting concrete with wood.

Plate 8: Painting wood with dirty oil.

3.1.6 Case Studies

I got approval from many people (both men and women) that I could use them as case studies, but not all have been used. I have eight individual case studies of three women and five men. These are individual stories about their job as construction workers. It has provided an in-depth

understanding of construction workers, gender barriers as well as the working conditions. Stake (2000 in Silverman 2010: 139-140) classified case studies into three different types. These are *the intrinsic case study*, *the instrumental case study* and *the collective case study*. The intrinsic case study is based on one particular case; the instrumental case study gives a good understanding of the issue under study. In the collective case study, different cases are selected for a study (*ibid.*). I employed the instrumental case study because it provided more details about the construction workers. The criteria for selection of the case studies were gender, achievements and constraints so as to understand the different experiences of construction workers.

3.2 Sampling

Rice (2010: 230) defines sampling as “the acquisition of information about a relatively small part of a larger group or population, usually with the aim of making inferential generalizations about the larger group”. The sampling was stratified as well as purposeful. In line with this, I used the stratified purposeful sampling technique. This research technique is used where there are different cases that need different criteria for selection (Sandelowski, 2000: 250). Stratified sampling technique is used when the population under study can be categorised into identical sub-groups and each of the sub-groups can be classified based on certain features (Rice, 2010: 241). I used stratified sampling because the studied population consisted of many different categories based on gender, type of work and position in the construction hierarchy.

I used the purposeful sampling technique; I purposely selected women because women are few in the industry so I looked for them. I did not have problems with men’s selection because they are there but I purposely selected them based on the type of work. I wanted to have representations of all the working categories in the hierarchy. According to Silverman (2010: 141), “purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested”. I also used the snowball method during the reconnaissance survey and that became important for further snowballing. Apart from the first two construction companies that I contacted through the internet, I got access to six other construction companies through managers, workers and other people I got to know. I also used snowballing to find a

quarrying company, a self-builder and two construction workers who were unemployed at the time.

I studied eight construction companies, five are Ghanaian companies and three are foreign companies in partnership with Ghanaians. Except Acatlas Company, which was from Accra having a project in Takoradi, the other seven companies were based in Takoradi. The managers of the companies assigned a person to guide and help me with all the information that I needed, these persons later became key informants together with other key informants such as the regional labour officer. Table 2 indicates the companies' names, partners, the projects, number of people in each company and their gender at the time of field work.

Table 2: Construction Companies, Projects, Partners, Number of Workers and Gender

Construction companies	Projects	Partners	Number of workers*	Number of men	Number of women
Waindo	Ware house and indoor slip-way	Ghanaian	65	64	1
Nkonom	School Hall	Ghanaian	35	29	6
Nhyira	Offices, banks and shops	Ghanaian	25	25	0
Adom	Offices and shops	Ghanaian	20	19	1
Welfa	Welding and Fabrication	Foreign Ghanaian	23	18	5
Faybour	Offices, residential buildings	Foreign Ghanaian	75	75	0
Justen	Wharf making, swimming pool	Foreign Ghanaian	120	119	1
Acatlas	Hotel	Ghanaian	123	120	3
Total			486	469	17

*Number of workers at the time of field work. These numbers varies according to types of project.

From the Registrar's General's Department, a foreign company cannot register in Takoradi without having a Ghanaian partner (interviewed on 20/07/2011). However, some of the foreign companies have Ghanaian partners on paper but in reality they are run as foreign companies. In this regard, Faybour and Welfa companies are run as foreign companies because everyone including the managers told me they are international companies. Welfa is the biggest construction company in my study and also one of the biggest construction companies in

Takoradi. It is Justen Company that is clearly owned as a joint venture between a Ghanaian and a foreigner because the informants told me that. The number of workers in each company depends on the projects undertaken at the time of field work because some projects demand more workers and others demand few workers. Most of the workers are employed based on a project basis. Their job ends after the projects have been completed. For example, Nkonim Company could have up to 40 workers and Welfa could have up to 600 workers. Thus the size of the companies is not determined by their number of people represented in this study.

I also studied one quarrying company in a suburb of Takoradi, three other supplying companies, and one self-builder. From the beginning of my research, I did not intend to study a self-builder, but due to the limited number of women in the construction companies in Takoradi, I studied the workers of a self-builder as well. Self-builders normally contract women to fetch water for construction projects. This helped me to know more about women's experiences doing construction work. The quarrying company and the three other supplying companies supply building materials to both construction companies and the general public. I interviewed the suppliers to know how they coordinate with the construction companies and hence whether they should be included in the construction hierarchy. They provide support services to the industry. Also what I found in the quarrying company was intriguing so I have talked a little about them in the findings chapters. I also went to a rural area called Nsein in the Western region with Nkonim Company because that was where I could find women in that company. The rural area provided an understanding of urban and rural differences in gender roles whereas the self-builder provided information about gender differences between construction companies and individual builders. Even though adding a self-builder, quarrying workers and going to a rural area has broadened the scope of this research, the research main focus is on the construction companies in Takoradi.

The total sample size was 86 (63 men and 23 women). 73 (this figure includes workers from construction companies, three self-builder workers and two laid offs) out of the 86 respondents are construction workers. Out of the 73 construction workers, 49 are casual workers (41 men and eight women). Nineteen are permanent (15 men and four women). The number of permanent workers also includes general managers of companies. Five are contract workers (four men and one woman). The number of women represented in the above figures reflects their limited participation in the industry. Out of the 13 others informants, three are owners of supplying

companies, seven are from the quarry company and three are food sellers. Some key informants are not included in this survey because I lack some personal information about them. It must be emphasised here that much of the analysis on the findings chapters are based on the 73 (60 men and 13 women) construction workers. Table 3 indicates the origin of the respondents, gender differences and age range.

Table 3: Origin of Informants, Gender and Age Range.

Ghanaians				Foreign					
Region	Number	Gender and Number		Age Range	Country	Gender (all men)	Age Range		
Central	29	Men	22	18-51	Nigeria	2	25-37		
		Women	7	18-63					
Western	27	Men	13	18-42	Australia	1	50		
		Women	14	21-53					
Ashanti	10	Men	9	21-55	India	1	29		
		Women	1	30					
Volta	9	Men	7	21-38	Lebanon	1	51		
		Women	2	30-44					
Greater-Accra	3	Men	3	54-63	Togo	1	21		
		Women	0						
Eastern	2	Men	2	39-45	Total	6			
		Women	0						
Northern	1	Man	1	29					
		Women	0						
Total	80			80					

The majority of the informants were Ghanaians, with few foreigners. The Central Region of Ghana had the highest representation of 33%. However, 17 (20%) of the people from the Central Region were born and grew up in Takoradi. Together, 23% of Ghanaians from outside the

Western Region were born in Takoradi. Table 4 explains the areas of work of informants' construction workers.

Table 4: Areas of Work, Gender and Age Range of Construction Workers

	Activity	Number of Informants	Number of Men	Age Range	Number of Women	Age Range
Construction Permanent Workers	General Manager	6	6	39-53	0	
	Secretary	2	0		2	26-35
	Quantity Surveyor	1	1	39	0	
	Supervisor	5	4	25-63	1	30
	Engineer	2	2	36-39	0	
	Human Resource	1	0		1	30
	Machine Operator	1	1	51	0	
	Accountant	1	1	38	0	
Construction Contract Workers	Foremen	2	2	36-40	0	
	Site Manager	1	1	29	0	
	Electrician	1	1	45	0	
	Caterer	1	0		1	42
Construction Casual workers	Mason	5	5	23-30	0	
	Labourers (any work)	28	28	18-40	0	
	Carpentry	5	5	30-38	0	
	Fabrication	3	2	24-34	1	24
	Steel bending	1	1	34	0	
	Water carries	7	0		7	24-44
Total		73	60		13	

The construction workers were sampled from workers who were permanently employed, those on a contracts basis and those who were informally employed or self-employed performing different tasks in the companies. The three categories include informants from the interviews and group discussions. The construction workers are people who do construction work, work in the offices of construction companies, construction site workers, as well as caterers for construction companies. The three sections of the table 4 show the hierarchy in the industry. The upper section depicts the highest paid and the least paid in the third section showing the degree of formality. The major part of the workforce is casual workers.

3.3 Status and Roles during Field Work: Insider and Outsider Perspectives

Statuses are attached to every social person. The concept of status has been defined as how individuals are situated in the society (Linton, 1936: 113). It is associated with rights and duties (*ibid.*). In the field, I had several statuses; they varied based on whom I related to and the issues under discussion. My statuses were a woman, student, researcher, a potential employer and a company advisor. Mullings' (1999) concept of 'positional spaces' became important for me to explore because of the different statuses I assumed. Positional spaces are defined as "areas where the situated knowledges of both parties in the interview encounter, engender a level of trust and co-operation" (*ibid:* 340). I was a female student researcher to informants during interviews. However, what matters most to the men during participant observation was my status as a woman. Also the casual workers intermittently discussed their problems and problems in Ghana in general, so during such moment I also assumed the position of a friend and a concerned Ghanaian citizen. Food sellers at one site were more interested in getting employment as cleaners and caterers after the hotel have been completed. Though I introduced myself to them, I did not talk about my study, but listened and talked about what they were interested in. The women thought I could help them get employment after the hotel has been completed so they told me to talk to the management but I said I had no say in that. Also, some men looking for casual work at one other site asked me to help them get job, and again I said that I was conducting research.

Being an unmarried woman in these male-dominated companies also made my status more versatile. To some of the male construction workers, my status as a woman was the most

important. Getting to the end of the field work, I felt some sexual advances from an engineer, so I started using the telephone as a medium of communication rather than going physically to the site. The driver of the same company also proposed his sexual affections for me several times. Perhaps he thought I did not like him because he did not have a better job and in fact he later called to tell me that he had gotten a new job at one of the oil companies. Three of the casual workers also showed an interest in having sexual affair with me. I utilised their interest in me to get important information from them. This type of role dilemma compelled some women researchers in the field to say “they were married when they were not” (see Wolf, 1996: 11).

My status as a female (researcher) also came with roles and expectations. I realised this when I wanted to do participant observation. My respondents did not want me to participate in the work that they were doing because I was a student and most importantly a woman. They only wanted me to come, watch and talk to them during their lunch break. After long persistence from me they usually said ‘*let her do for us to see*’. When they realised that I could work somehow like them my role changed in one way or another. After a while this even gave me some form of an insider status. In research, an insider is a member of the studying group while an outsider is not a member of the group and lacks information about the group (see Mullings, 1999). At one time, I was working with the supervisor at one site and all I was hearing for about two minutes was ‘*supervisor air is blowing on you that is why today the work is moving on smoothly*’. In other words, the supervisor is having a nice time working because there is a woman working with him. At the same site one afternoon, someone also said ‘*because there is a woman working with us, it has made us confused about the work*’. Meaning their concentration is low. On one hand my gender makes them to work effectively, on another hand it takes their minds out of their work.

Being a Ghanaian and an Akan gave me a feeling of an insider status because I speak the same local language as many of my respondents. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009: 227) explained that “language is the medium in which we conduct our social lives and create our symbolic existence”. The informants and I were able to freely express ourselves during interviews and other interactions so individuals who were not fluent in English were not left out because we could talk in the local dialect (*Twi*). Eighty out of the 86 informants could speak and understand the *Twi* fluently. According to Mullings (1999: 340), “no individual can consistently remain an insider and few ever remain complete outsiders”. Though the language as well as my

participation gave me some insider status, this insider status was not maintained throughout the fieldwork. The main factor depended on whether I did participant observation in the company or not and also in relation to whom. In the four construction companies where I did not participate in their activities, it was only the language that gave me some form of insider status because the workers and I did not interact much aside interviews and observation. In three of the four companies in which I did participant observation my insider status at some point was not clear because the workers knew I was a researcher. At Adom Company, beside the formal employees, the casual workers did not accept me for some time until I later devised a means of buying them water to drink each time I was there, and they began accepting me. Though their acceptance did not necessarily give me an insider status, I became more comfortable working with them.

In order to maintain a good relationship with my respondents, I reflected on my own behaviour. I knew that how I presented myself would either positively or negatively affect how my respondents perceived me. Reflexivity in research is defined as researchers' self examination in the research process (England, 2006: 289). The feeling of "empathy, mutuality and respect" (ibid: 288), ensured me a good relationship with the respondents. As a Ghanaian woman, I know how it feels when a woman is in the midst of many men whom are not her very close friends. I was expecting all sorts of comments and behaviours from them so when I began experiencing these things, I decided to behave in a calm and tolerant way because I wanted to get access to data. Obtaining information in the field thus depends on how the researcher represents him/herself in the field (Mullings, 1999). It was important to behave well all the time and in all situations so that the relationships that were gradually established between me and the informants could be maintained.

3.4 Fieldwork Ethics

The three major ethical issues in fieldwork discussed by Bailey (2007) are informed consent, deception and confidentiality. With informed consent, the participants must be aware that they are taking part in a research as well as their rights in the research process (ibid: 17). I introduced myself and disclosed the objectives of my study to managers of the various companies. I also gave each company a letter from my research supervisor indicating my student status before I was permitted to conduct the research with these companies. The managers also introduced me

to their workers and asked if anyone was interested in taking part. I further introduced myself to all the people I interviewed and the purpose of the interview and got their approval.

Closely linked to informed consent is deception, which happens when the participants of the research are not aware of their involvements, lack the correct information about the research, and are misinformed about the researcher's true identity (ibid: 20). My respondents knew that they were participating in research because I informed them about the research objective, my student identity and the purpose of the research and they accepted to be part of it.

The third ethical issue is confidentiality. Bailey (ibid: 24) noted that if the researcher is in the position of recognizing his respondents, the research must be treated confidentially. I have treated the information given to me in a confidential way. I have not disclosed the real names of respondents and companies in this study. Instead I have used pseudonyms to represent the companies and the informants. I did get their approval to use their photos in the study.

It was also ethical that I did not become annoyed with some of the comments from the men because they might have felt that I was arrogant or even ridiculing them. It was also in my own interest because I needed information from them.

3.5 Trustworthy and Validity of Data

In many ways the information presented in this study can be trusted because of the different techniques that I used in getting the data as well as my own roles in the field. It is important to know whether the informants gave me correct information or they lied to me. What makes me consider the information in many ways as correct is that the different respondents (especially casual workers) from the different construction companies almost said similar things to many of the questions I asked them. Some of the managers did not even mind telling me that they were not following the rules and regulations that governed their industries, and rather told me what they as companies were doing with regards to (il)legal conditions of work. On the part of the casual workers, they were very pleased that for the first time, someone had come to see what is happening to them in the industry. Most of them were always willing to talk especially during lunch time when we were having informal conversations; they told me so many other things about the construction companies and what goes around it. What makes it more trustworthy is

that many of casual workers move from one construction company to the other, so they had many experiences with each one.

In a few cases some permanent workers lied to me at the beginning. For example, an Engineer of Justen Company refused to tell me how much he earns a month but told me that the casual worker's monthly wage is higher than his salary. But another permanent worker in the same company told me their salaries are higher than the casual workers wages. Also looking at the daily wage of the casual workers in that company, they cannot earn more than the permanent workers because some permanent workers in that company told me their monthly salaries. Maybe he lied to me because of the way I behaved or how he perceived me.

I had to select stratified purposeful sampling technique because the respondents needed to be taken from different categories of work as well as gender. This is in accordance with the research questions. Aside the interviews and informal conversations, I also observed and participated in the activities of the informants. The informants in many ways understood the questions I asked because in most of the time we spoke in the local language. Language also helped, because I understood the language in which 80 of my respondents speak very well. I understood their responses to my questions and I was able to interpret their views on issues. I also interpreted situations and conversation. The questions that I asked in the field were also relevant in answering the research questions.

Qualitative data can be validated when the researcher devise ways to checks accuracy, and at the same time, the qualitative data should be consistent with what other researchers have done (Creswell, 2009: 190). The qualitative aspect also helped me to use some direct quotes from informants so that we can interpret them using connotations. Different techniques were used in collecting the data. In research, triangulation is the means of validating research findings by using different methods (Silverman, 2010: 277). This study employed different methods and techniques in getting the data. The study has also been compared with empirical studies from other researchers.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data is analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative described the activities and working conditions of the construction workers. I used connotations in the analyses to interpret what people have told me and what I have observed. In the field I gradually learnt more about the construction work so that I could interpret acts and statements in a more valid manner. The statistics about the companies, the workers were analyzed quantitatively. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in coding the figures such as age, educational back ground, places of origin, number of men and women in the industry and so on to generate tables.

In summary, this chapter looked into the methods used for this study. The mixed method has helped in addressing different issues and problems. Being more qualitative offered me the chance to describe more about the construction workers, gender barriers and conditions of work. The quantitative also helped in given statistical figures about the companies and respondents.

Besides getting data through the interview, I also did participant observation; I actively participated in the activities of four construction companies and one self-builder. I also observed them as they do their work. By so doing, I understood how it is to be an informal construction worker and gender ideologies at the workplace. This enhanced both reliability and validity. I also had many informal conversations with informants and other construction workers. It was also important to have some photos about the workers and their activities because of the physical nature of the construction work in Takoradi.

Chapter Four

Gender Division of Labour and Causes of Gender Barriers in the Construction Industry

The construction industry in Ghana is gendered in terms of the representation of men and women, the roles they perform as well as the ways in which workers carry out their tasks. There are very few women in the industry and they perform different roles than the men. The men see their work as ‘real construction’ while they see the women’s work as ‘supportive work’. The limited number of women in the industry is seen as normal in Ghana since women are not integrated into doing construction work because it is seen as not appropriate for them.

For any person to advance in the industry the person needs to have a good education. Education is important for the type of work one can get. Many people are casual workers because of lack of higher education. There is a gender barrier in the industry but it affects only women. Men only have problems of rising in the industry. This chapter describes the types of work done by women and men in the construction industry and it examines gender barriers in the industry in Takoradi.

4.1 Educational Background and Employment Status

Education plays a key role in getting permanent employment in the studied construction companies and is thus the main determinant of formal and informal work in construction work in the studied companies in Takoradi. The reason is that the companies do not have many permanent positions. According to one of the managers, this is to help avoid challenges in paying workers when there is no project. So for both men and women to be employed as permanent workers in construction companies, their level of education must be high. Educational institutions which provide courses in building and construction and other related courses are prioritised. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the polytechnics and other technical institutes in Ghana have such courses. The 19 permanent workers in my sample have 17 Ghanaians and two foreigners. Seventeen (two foreigners and 15 Ghanaians) out of the 19 formal workers have at least finished their tertiary education (see table 5 on the next page).

Table 5: Educational Levels of Construction Workers in my Sample

Educational Level	Permanent Workers		Contract Workers		Casual Workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No education	–	–	–	–	–	2
Primary	–	–	–	–	7	2
Junior High School (JHS)	1	–	1	–	14	1
Middle School	1	–	1	–	3	1
Senior High School (SHS)		–		–	12	1
Vocational	–	–	1	1	3	–
Tertiary	12	4	1	–	2	1
Masters	1	–	–	–	–	–
Total	15 (20.5%)	4 (5.5%)	4 (5.5%)	1 (1.4%)	41 (56.2%)	8 (11%) → 73 (100%)

Women usually do not take education in construction courses because of the general perception that construction work is difficult for them to engage in. They might not also get employment even if they have education because of their gender. Their educational backgrounds in table 5 do not only explain why there are few women but it also plays a role for them to be employed.

We can see from table 5 that there is a positive relationship between the level of education and permanent employment status of informants. While the permanent workers are concentrated around the tertiary level the casual workers are concentrated around no education to the Senior High School (SHS) level. One of the two permanent workers with the least educational background told me that his friend who is also a friend to the manager of the company helped him to get the job. The three casual workers who have tertiary education are in the Welding and Fabrication Company and their wages are even better than some permanent workers in some construction companies. Table 6 provides the total number of workers in each construction company, permanent and casual workers as well as men and women in each group.

Table 6: Construction Companies, their Permanent Workers, Casual Workers and Gender

Construction Companies*	Number of Workers	Permanent Workers	Gender		Contract Workers	Gender		Casual workers	Gender	
			Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women
Waindo	65	20	20	—	1	—	1	44	44	—
Nkonim	35	15	15	—	—	—	—	20	14	6
Nhyira	25	2	2	—	3	3	—	20	20	—
Adom	20	9	8	1	—	—	—	11	11	—
Welfa	23	15	12	3	—	—	—	8	6	2
Faybour	75	25	25	—	—	—	—	50	50	—
Justen	120	20	19	1	—	—	—	100	100	—
Acatlas	123	32	29	3	1	1	—	90	90	—
Total	486	138	130	8	5	4	1	343	335	8
Men	469									
Women	17									

Source: Interviews with company managers and key persons. *The names of the companies are fictive ('pseudonyms' made by the author)

Based on their numbers in table 6, women had a higher percentage of permanent workers than men. At the time of the fieldwork, out of the total 17 women employed in the eight construction companies, eight (47%) were formal workers while out of the total 469 men in the studied companies 130 (28%) were formal workers. Permanent and contract workers were employed in their specialised areas of construction work. Some of the casual workers have certificate of completed apprenticeship and are called artisans but they lack formal education which has become the standard for permanent employment. The male casual workers with skills have learnt trade as masons, carpenters, steel benders, steel erectors, mechanics, and so on. Sometimes, depending on the type of work available, they are employed as labourers rather than as artisans. 43% of the casual workers informants have learnt one of the above trades' but only few of them were working in their field of speciality. The rest of the male casual workers informants worked as general labourers, three of them are students on vacation and seven women water carriers. Below is a story by a supervisor about the importance of education in formal employment.

Case study 1: Kwame, 63 years old and a father of two. In his middle school education, he studied craftwork, bricks work and carpentry. After that he went to sixth form and studied building and geometrical drawing. From there, he went to Takoradi Polytechnic and did construction technician courses. After graduating from the polytechnic he worked in three different construction companies including this company and has been a permanent worker in all the three. He has spent 11 years in his current company. His advice to the casual workers as well as young people who wish to do construction is that they should further their education. According to him, the casual workers have either learnt a trade, usually on the job, and so they do not have enough certificates to apply for permanent work. He recognised that the plight of most casual workers is that they lack the financial support that will enable them to continue their formal education. He therefore advised them to save some money from what they are earning now so that they can further their education after some years.

This case study tells us that Kwame's permanent achievement of employment was based on his level of education. His advice to the casual workers to get formal education shows that it is difficult to get permanent work in the construction industry without the required educational qualification. The different types of work done by men and women are discussed below.

4.2 Different Types of Work in the Construction Industry

The construction industry is diverse with different areas of work. In Takoradi, construction companies have to employ (or contract) different people for the different tasks of a project as they do not have permanent employees for all the different types of work. The different tasks are gendered. Refer to table 4 (in chapter three) for the different activities of the informants in the studied construction companies and the people who occupy these positions.

4.2.1 Men's Work

In the studied companies, men have more diverse roles to perform than women. From administration to casual work, men dominate in all aspects. Their work ranges from highly specialised work to casual labourers. The highly specialised tasks are engineering, surveying, supervising, electrical work, finance and administrative management and so on. The companies usually have permanent employees for these positions. If companies lack a person in any of the

above areas of work, they contract someone (not as a casual worker) when there is a project which demands the service of that person.

Generally, male casual workers are the majority in the industry. Many of their activities require human power because many construction companies have limited or no machines for construction work. They work as carpenters, masons, steel benders, they dig, carry water, blocks, cement, sand, stones, and so on. Below are some photos of casual workers at work.



Plate 9: Casual workers carrying concrete.

Plate 10: Casual workers building.

Male casual workers have strategies for remaining employed in the industry. Because of the difficulties in getting formal employment, they try to learn different areas of construction such as masonry, carpentry and so on, so that at each stage of a project they can be called to work. With this strategy they try to avoid periods of unemployment. A casual worker said; '*as we work we learn from the experienced people*'. Through on the job training, some 'casual labourers' become 'casual artisans'. Two people who had just been laid off but immediately got employed in another company told me that they can do five different types of work in construction. Male casual workers make friends with foremen and supervisors who could help them get work.

4.2.2 Women's Work

Women play a minor role in the construction industry in Takoradi. Their role in the construction projects that I studied can in many ways be said to be insignificant. Nevertheless, women do perform vital tasks in the industry. In the eight construction companies, women's work can be

categorised into three main areas. These are administrative work, construction site work, and service provision to construction workers.

In the administration, women work as secretaries, accountants and human resource persons. Secretarial and human resources are often regarded as typical women's work in Ghana. These women because of their education have become permanent employees. In some of the companies, some activities usually regarded as women's work were performed by men. For example, two men were secretaries in two of the construction companies.

In most construction projects, women's main work at the construction site is to fetch water. However, this role is gradually declining because many construction sites in Takoradi have water facilities. Fetching water usually takes place during the casting of concrete. Occasionally, women who fetch water carry blocks and sand at the site but I never witnessed this during the fieldwork. The women at Nkonim Company (in Nsein) said they do carry blocks and sand sometimes if there is pressure on the work to be completed early and/or there are limited numbers of men at the site on a particular day. In some companies also the male casual workers fetch water because women have not been employed to fetch water. This has also reduced the number of women in the industry because even their traditional work is now performed by men. This shows that there are changes of gendering of female occupations than male occupations. It is more acceptable for men to work in occupations defined as female than women to work in occupations defined as male because men are able to defend their areas of work more than women.

The only female supervisor in my sample is the only woman who has gone beyond the usual women's task of fetching water at the construction site to become a supervisor in construction. She is the only female whose work is similar to the male supervisors in the eight construction companies. However, her employment was not only based on her qualification but also because of her relation to the manager of the company. She stays with the managers children and perform motherly role for the children in the manager house. The question then is would she have had the job if she had not had an affair with the manager? This shows that women can achieve certain things sometimes based on the different types of roles they are able to perform, including their sexuality.

The service provision to construction workers includes food and water sellers as well as suppliers of building and other construction materials. One among the eight construction companies had a female caterer who cooks for all the workers (not a free lunch, money is deducted from workers wages). Some of the women who come to sell food to the workers at the sites are given permission to do that. They usually erect a shade near the site to stay and sell under. They sell food to the workers at the site as long as the project last. They attached themselves to the construction companies through an informal contract. Suppliers of building materials usually do not go to the sites to sell their products; rather the construction companies go to them and buy.

4.3 Causes of Gender Barriers in the Industry

One of the most visible characteristics of the construction industry is the differences in the extent to which men and women are able to advance in the industry. Men's major challenge is to be employed on a permanent basis while women's major challenge is to get a job in the industry in the first place. There are not really any gender barriers for men in the studied construction companies. The eight companies had a total of 486 construction workers (refer to table 6) at the time of the fieldwork. Out of the 469 (97%) male workers in the sample, 335 (71%) were casual workers. Becoming a permanent employee is thus a major challenge for the men in the industry.

The 97% male workers clearly show that the industry is male-dominated. As long as the person is a man with good health he can work even if he does not have education, does not belong to the ethnic group, not a Ghanaian, or do not have a relation with the manager. The only problem is that they cannot rise without education. With good education, men are better placed in becoming formal employees in construction companies than women. Though education is the main factor for employing permanent workers, more men are employed in construction work as long as they are physically strong. The difference is being employed as permanent or casual worker.

4.3.1 Barriers for Women

Construction work is seen as masculine in nature and most of those who work in the industry are men. The eight construction companies had a total of 17 (3%) women. No woman work as a mason, a carpenter, a steel bender among other activities in these companies. In Takoradi in

general, it is in the areas of welding, fabrication and electrical works that few women can be found. Women have more education in these professions because they are not seen as very physically demanding. However, women in such jobs often hear complaints from the men that they do not climb poles and are always on the ground. Such comments and attitudes from men are among the reasons why few women are working in the industry.

There are many related factors to explain women's minimal participation in the studied construction companies but the major factor is the gender ideology regarding appropriateness of work which emanate from cultural and social norms in Ghana. Using human power in carrying cement, concrete, and so on are seen as difficult for women to do, so why some men prevent women from doing construction work, many women also withdraw from it. This perception has been entrenched not only by the society, managers and male workers of construction companies but also by women themselves. Are women 'not strong enough' as is the most common male perspective? This is dependent on individuals. It is also a question about power-relations; where men keep women away from a lucrative industry/source of employment and promote each other. The basis of this power is ideological. Though it is gradually changing, in Ghana men still have upper hand in many decisions that affect women. Based on my findings there are four factors/levels of gender barriers in the studied construction companies. These are the educational system, the workplace; employer/co-worker relationship, household duties and women's own perceptions of construction work. These are all built into the cultural norms and what is considered to be a good work for women.

Culturally in Ghana, women are seen as having less physical strength. It is also seen as inappropriate and unfeminine for a woman to develop muscles. The physical aspects of the construction activities in Ghana do make individuals to develop muscles. Women who develop muscles are nicknamed 'macho' by friends, family and other people known or unknown to them. It also makes women 'unattractive to men' because most men in Ghana say that women with muscles are not attractive to them physically and sexually. Though there were total of 17 women working in the eight companies, only eight were working on construction sites. The rest were doing administrative or catering work. The eight women who were working directly in construction work were one supervisor, six water carriers and one welder. Thus the physically

demanding nature of the construction work is the foremost justification for women's limited representation in the construction industry in the studied companies.

4.3.2 The Educational System

The educational system in Ghana has for a long time been focused on office work, rather than technical and professional work. The trend is changing with the establishment of the KNUST, the polytechnics and other recent educational institutes. The professional courses such as building and construction usually started with only male students. Women therefore do not feel comfortable in these courses not only because of the perception that they are going to be the only woman in the course but also because of the profession they will engage in after the course. So the women with education in construction usually work in the office than in the practical construction work. For example, the female supervisor in my sample had challenges in school because she was the only woman in the building and construction course. Women also do not want to go into fields which are seen as inappropriate for them. Parents also do not encourage their daughters to go into such courses even if they want to.

4.3.3 The Workplace; Employer/co-worker Relationship

Gender barriers in the construction industry have also been entrenched by the industry itself, as was evident in some of the comments and behaviours heard and observed among managers, as well as among both permanent and casual male workers. Because of the physical nature of construction work some of the construction company managers and male workers think that women cannot do the work. While some managers see the employment of women in their companies as a burden and do not want to have any female employees especially at the construction site others see it as a good thing. Below are three comments out of the six managers I interviewed about the women's employment in their companies;

The manager of Nhyira: '*women do not have the strength, it is not like counting money at the bank and they pay you. By their nature they can't do the work. They apply for jobs here but the job is a bit difficult for them. Menstruation, pregnancy and menopause, so the inconveniences when working with women are high*'.

He is the owner of the company and does not like to employ women. There is no woman in this company. Women do apply for work but he does not employ them because he says the work is difficult for them. His view is limited to women's physical strength. His last statement reflects the reproduction cycle which in some ways affect women doing such jobs especially pregnancy and child care.

Manager of Adom: '*there are few women but they do perform, so if there were more women in construction it will be good. When I go with a woman [the female supervisor] to look for contracts [projects] I get it early. I am praying that by 5-10 years, there will be more women in construction*'.

His company only has one woman who is the supervisor. The manager also pointed out on performance which plays a key role in employing people for any economic activity. The woman in this company's work has more than only a supervisory role because her presence also helps the company in getting contracts (projects).

The manager of Nkonim: "*because women in the construction field help to bridge the gap between the number of men and women in the industry*". This company can employ up to 15 women for a site work when the project is big. It is the site engineer who employs people in the company and this is what he said about employing women in the company.

'Men are associated with a psychological symptom, when they see women; they want to be with them. Women are very good partners in construction and they are very good at carrying. Carrying water is a woman's job, even sometimes they carry concrete'.

The associated psychological symptom of men wanting to be with women could be associated with sexual affairs, but it also refers to the variety of roles women can perform. The biggest project for this company was in the rural area. At the site, the women that day were not on duty because they were not casting concrete but after the women have finished talking to me, they picked brooms and swept the whole site for free. The engineer said:

'You see what I told you, women are naturally gifted doing such things like sweeping for free. Men will not do that, come to site when they are not on duty and work for free. That is why I like taking women', (see plate 11 below).

This also point to another fact that when women are in the companies they perform extra duties (which are not paid for) which to a large extent benefits the companies. Men construction workers have different opinions towards women's employment in the industry. Some of them



Plate 11: Woman sweeping construction site.

think that they will have to do double work when women are employed for the site work because they (the men) would have to do most of what women are supposed to do. Some of the men informants had either worked with women at a site before or were working with women at the time of field work. Some had never worked with women before but wished there were women at the site working with them. In total, 41 (68%) of the male construction workers (informants) wished to work with

women at the site for different reasons;

Respondent 1: '*Some women are hard like men, so they can perform*'.

Respondent 2: '*They reduce our work load; if they are not here we have to combine fetching water with our work. I wish women were here with us so that if there is a water shortage they can go and fetch for us*'.

Respondent 3: '*Working with the women boost the morale of the men to work harder. They follow carefully instructions given them. They carefully and craftily perform task assigned them*'.

The first respondent talked about performance, if women can work up to expectation like the men they will not have problems while respondent two talked about women's main work in the construction industry as water carriers. The last respondent shows another extra duty of women because apart from their work they also help the men to carry out their duties more effectively. One respondent held women responsible for not doing the site construction work as he said;

'The women think the site work is too difficult so those who have gone to school normally divert to consultancy firms' (Engineer, age 35).

As few as 18 men informants had never worked with women before and did not wish to work with them. One man had worked with women before but he does not wish to work with them again. Together 19 (32%) male workers do not want to work with women at the site. These are some of their reasons:

Respondent 1: '*Construction work is not for women*'.

Respondent 2: '*They look like women footballers when they are laying blocks. A woman should only be a foreperson but not do the heavy work*'.

The first respondent sees construction work as a purely masculine work. The statement of the second respondent means that women do lay blocks sometimes. He is therefore against the physical work which is also the main gender barrier in the industry. However, the female supervisor apart from overseeing the site activities was also doing some of the manual works of the casual workers and none of the male workers told her to stop because it is difficult for her to do. See the plates 12 and 13 below, the photos showing women construction workers at work.



Plate 12: female supervisor climbing ladder with concrete. Plate 13: Female welder and fabricator at work.

Construction work seen as hard work for women is paradoxical because in Ghana some women, especially market women and women who work on farms do heavy work. They carry baskets and sacks full of foodstuffs to and from the market places as well as from the farms including

carrying firewood. They later go home and cook, fetch water and do other chores, but this is not frowned upon as too physical and hard.

Women's sexuality poses another challenge to them at the site. Some women have problems with the male workers at the site just because of their gender and not because they cannot perform their task well. All sorts of words are said to them at the site because they are women. The case study below talks about the experiences of the female supervisor from the time she was in school to the construction site.

Case study 2: *Afia, a 30 year old mother of one was a hairdresser and decided to go back to school so that she could do construction work. She first went to Tema Technical School and studied building and construction. Afterwards she went to Accra Polytechnic where she continued with the building and construction course. She was the only woman in the class. Both men and women students who were not pursuing her course used to watch her through the classroom window. She said to me 'sometimes too when we go out to the field, both the men and the women [not class mates] who were well dressed have been looking at me. They were surprised to see a woman carrying blocks and cements'. I asked her how she felt during those times and she said 'I wanted it, I meant it and I focused, that this thing I must do and I must get it [the diploma]'. Before she finished school she contacted one construction company in Takoradi and she was employed by that company after school. She has worked as a supervisor for two years now. The major problem that she faces is because of her gender. Some of the men especially the casual workers that she supervises sometimes see her as incapable and not fitting for the job. This is what she told me; 'When I am there with them, the stubborn ones [referring to some male workers], because they think I am a woman with a small body, they take me to be a small girl. When they do something and I say it is wrong they say 'stop what you are saying, what do you know'. When it happens like that I make them know that what I know they don't know and what I can do they cannot do it. Though they have done construction they learnt it from [qualified] people, I went to different levels in school [her competence] and is different from theirs'. So when the manager comes to the site, then she tells him how the male workers behaved with regards to her advices then the manager will instruct the workers to abide by her advice because that is the right way. She loves her work but her family (both her nuclear and extended*

families) pose problems for her as she put it; ‘if left to me, I would continue but my family don’t like it’.

Her story shows that gender often is given more attention than a competence. The male workers sometimes refuse to take her advices partly because she is a woman. Her family also do not like her kind of work because of her gender. This shows who an ideal daughter is and the type of carrier she must have. This had led to many parents and family members directing (sometimes dictating to) their daughters the type of courses and schools they must attend.

4.3.4 Household Duties

Household activities are another major challenge to women who are or want to engage in the site construction work. Women in Ghana are still the prime carers of the house so it becomes difficult to combine the two since the two jobs are difficult. This is what one of the managers told me when I asked him why he does not employ women;

‘I can’t employ women because that will be child labour, with the baby at the back’ (Age 39).

This statement could be interpreted in different ways. First, employing women is as immoral as employing a child. Second, women are being looked upon as weak as children. Third, it is not proper to expose women to high risks. Fourth, a woman could be working with her baby at her back and both the child and the mother might suffer because of the nature of the work. This above mentioned manager’s statement was almost repeated by a woman who sells food to the construction workers when I asked her if she can do construction work. She said;

I can do the construction work but my baby. I can’t put her at my back and work, (Ama, age: 32)

It is the last interpretation of the manager’s comment that is most likely. This is also an important reason for women not to do the physical construction work because they have other difficult duties. They could not pretend that they could work as the men when they have small children at their back. In fact a woman was working with the baby at the back at a self-builders site, (see plate 14 below). I asked the woman welder if she has plans of getting married soon, she said she

has to choose one of them, marriage or work because the two tasks are tedious and she cannot combine them. These statements and feelings show that women's duties at home also makes it difficult for them to do construction work because this type of work is already seen as tedious and time consuming. Two other women who had been fetching water at a construction site as casual workers told me that they were no more employed by the company because the company was then working in another town outside Takoradi. And because they have children, they



Plate 14: Woman with baby at the back carrying water at a construction site.

cannot leave them at home in Takoradi and go. The women said that their husbands cannot give proper care to their children if they leave the children to their care. This is another gender ideology in Ghana about who takes care of children better. In Ghana, it is not common to give the child in the care of a husband but very common to leave children in care of maternal relative. This could be a solution.

Below are two case studies of women casual workers. It reflects their strategies and challenges to continue working in the industry.

Case study 3: *Adwoa, a 30 year old mother of two. She usually works for construction companies where she carries water. She gets her jobs through friends. In her last job she was earning approximately six US Dollars per day. She was not working at the time when I interviewed her. According to this woman, her children were the main reason why she was not working with any construction company at that time because she could not travel with the company to work outside Takoradi. She likes to do construction work and does not bother about what the men say to her because the construction work pays better. She had learnt a trade as a hairdresser and occasionally makes peoples hair at home. She also sells oranges and water melon in front of her house.*

Case Study 4: Akua is 44 years old and has two children. She has worked as a construction worker for 10 years. She carries water at the site. She mostly moves from one site to the other looking for work. Recently she established a relationship with one foreman⁵ who calls her to work anytime there was the need. Her family does not like what she does because they say it is tiresome but there is no alternative for her she says. When she began doing this work 10 years ago she was given 0.4 US dollars a day. She said in some construction work she gets about 12 US dollars daily. In her current work she was earning approximately six US dollars. She usually washes people's clothes for money when unemployed.

The above cases studies tell us that the construction work means much to these women. They earn much more in the construction work as compared to their other informal jobs such as washing people's clothes and even doing hairdressing. But Adwoa is constrained by her numerous house duties and she had to turn down offers to work at the site while Akua carries her daughter and work. If the norms regarding household duties remain the same, then many women who would want to enter into construction might find it difficult combining the two. The women also have friends who help them to get construction work. Their strategy similar to many casual workers is through making friends in the industry so that they can be called to work when the need arise.

4.3.5 Women's Own Perceptions of Construction Work

Some women's perceptions of construction work also show that they have little interest in the physically hardest work rather they want to do the traditional work of fetching water, cleaning the buildings and the sites after construction work is completed or work in the office of a construction company. Though these works (especially the first two) are also hard they are not seen as too physical. These women tend to share the view of the some men that they have limited place in the construction industry. This is perpetuating gender inequality in the construction industry. These women however do not apparently choose to stay away from construction work but it is because they have other choices for income generation in the city.

⁵ A person who oversees a particular category of work like in the masonry and carpentry section in the construction companies.

Women food sellers described the work of the men as ‘tedious and tiresome’. The women said the men’s work makes them very hungry and when they buy food, they add more *gari*⁶ which make the food more filling. They said that the amount of food that a worker can eat looks like food for two people. One woman said; ‘*When you see someone’s food, it looks like the market circle*’ [linking the size of a person’s food to the size of the Takoradi market]. Meanwhile the women do not like their work as food sellers either because they had to wake up at dawn everyday and prepare the food. Even in some days their food does not get finish at the site. They therefore wished they could fetch water at the construction site instead but that position was not available. They want be get employed as cleaners, caterers and waitresses when the hotel is completed. They lamented if they could be employed in those areas without the management looking for some sexual favours. Photos of some women food sellers at the site are shown on the below.



Plate 15: Food seller selling at the site.



Plate 16: Lunch time.

The female welder has challenges with the job because the men say that she is afraid of climbing so she mostly does the ground work as well as doing other part of the work. In fact she admitted that not all the things the men do that she is able to do. This is what her work mate (a man) told me concerning women working with him; ‘*women cannot do everything that men can do*’. The women who fetched water at a self-builder site said that the reason why they only fetch water is that they cannot do the work of the men.

⁶ Type of food made from cassava

4.4 Rural-Urban Differences in Women's Participation in Construction Work

Foreign Ghanaian partnership companies and the Ghanaian companies do not have differences in women employment into their companies. The company with the highest number of women (six women) was a Ghanaian owned company – Nkonim. The second highest is Welfa - foreign Ghanaian partnership (five women). One Ghanaian company Nhyira has no woman whiles Faybour with foreign Ghana partners also had no woman.

The differences in the employment of women can rather be seen between the cities and rural areas, and also between companies and self-builders. More women work in construction in the rural areas than in the cities like Takoradi. In the beginning of my fieldwork, some informants told me that if I want to have women in my study I should go to the nearby rural areas. There are reasons that account for women's lower representation in the city of Takoradi and their relatively higher representation in the rural areas such as Nsein. First, there are more economic opportunities for women in the cities than in the rural areas. Women in the city do all kinds of informal work but these alternatives can only be occupied by few people in the rural areas as there is a limited market. Second, there are more water facilities such as pipes and bore holes in the cities than in the rural areas so the companies do not have to employ women for the purpose of fetching water because many of the construction sites have water facilities. Except one company and the self-builder site all the other construction sites in Takoradi that I went had water facilities. The site in the rural area did not have water facilities. Also, more women are



Plate 17: Well at a construction site.

being educated in the cities than in the rural areas. Self-builders employ more women to fetch water at the site than construction companies because their projects are not big and could work without a water facility like a bore hole or tank connected to a pipe line.

In summary, the construction industry poses different challenges to both men and women in terms of employment and work tasks. The industry is male-dominated and almost all the aspects in construction in Takoradi are dominated by men. While men's biggest challenge is to become employed as a permanent worker in a company, women are faced with the problem of entry. Women's own perceptions about the construction work also do not allow many of them to go into it. The women who are able to go into construction mainly work as water carries and other administrative works. There are four related factors to women limited opportunities in the industry; these revolve around the physical nature of the job and cultural norms regarding gender appropriateness of work. Companies with Ghanaian foreign partners and purely Ghanaian companies have little or no difference in women employment opportunities. The only differences are that individual self-builders employ more women than companies. Also rural areas have more women in construction work than in the cities.

Chapter Five

The Construction Work, Working Conditions and Labour Rights

The activities of construction workers in Takoradi are difficult, physically demanding and risky, so one might have thought that the working conditions at work could favour workers. In the eyes of most construction workers, they are not well rewarded for the risk and diligence they apply in their work. Poor safety measures by some construction companies and the absence of compliance and enforcement of safety standards make the workers unsafe. This dangerous working environment affects the casual workers more than any other worker in the construction employment hierarchy. This chapter describes the nature of work of construction workers, the working conditions they endure, the labour rights they enjoy or do not enjoy and the extent to which construction companies abide by the laws that govern their industry.

5.1 Nature of Construction Work

Most construction work in Takoradi is done manually and the demands of work are physical. The more difficult work is mostly done by the casual workers. The most physical aspects are digging trenches and foundations, mixing concrete, carrying concrete, carrying blocks, fetching and carrying sand, gravel and water. The carrying tasks are usually done using head pans, wheelbarrows or buckets. Though fetching water from a distance to the construction site is now rare in the industry since there are water facilities at many of the construction sites, many workers still fetch water from bore holes or water tanks near or at the construction site for the mixing of concrete and other purposes. Four of the seven studied companies (this is not applicable to the welding and fabrication company) had a concrete mixing machine. However, none of the companies had a lift machine to lift heavy equipment, concrete and so on, from the ground floor to an upper floor. Workers thus have to carry these things between the floors. In the construction of tall buildings, workers at some sites develop ‘human lifts’ by passing concrete, and other construction materials such as sand, water and stones and others on a scaffold from the mixing point on the ground floor to the top by arranging themselves on the stairways of the building up to the top. At other sites where there is less ingenuity, workers climb the stairs to deliver materials to a higher floor of the building. Women who fetch water seldom climb up with the water because mixing of concrete are usually done on the ground floor but if a worker needs

water at any stage of the building and if a woman is at the site she is called to bring water. In a welding and fabricating company, workers work on the ground as well as in heights or on poles. Below are some of the photos and activities of casual workers. All the people in the four photos are casual workers except the man on the phone in the last photo, who is a foreman.



Plate 18: Working, concrete mixing machine in the background.



Plate 19: Carrying concrete to the next floor.

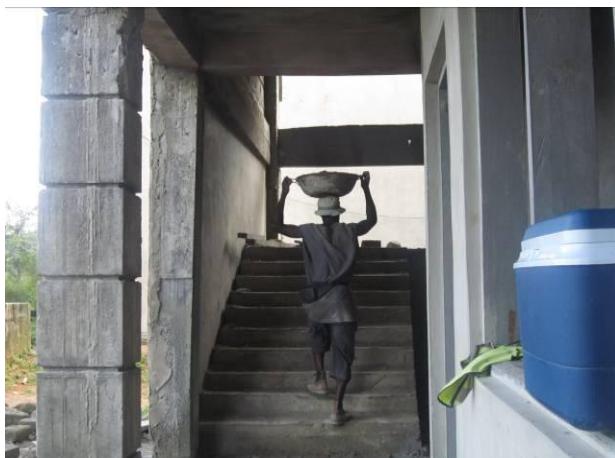


Plate 20: Carrying concrete to the next floor.

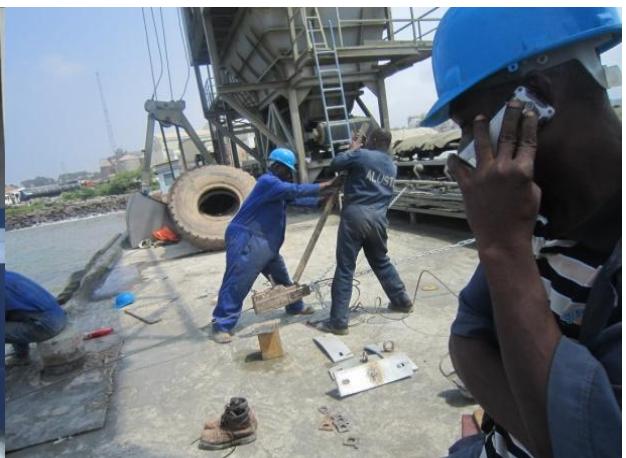


Plate 21: Wharf making at the port, foreman on phone.

Casual workers are very important to the construction industry in Takoradi, and they are in majority in the construction workforce of seven out of the eight studied companies (the welding and fabrication company had more permanent workers than casual at the time of fieldwork). Because of the physical nature of the casual work, any casual worker who is not fit enough for the job will either be sacked from the work or will not be called again when there is/are another project(s). Some casual workers even work all day without eating lunch even if the work is difficult and demands energy. Workers of some companies do not go for lunch during break

because they say they cannot afford three meals a day so they eat heavily in the morning and drink a lot of water while working. A casual worker said;

'We should have been given food in the afternoon. Construction work is difficult so I need to eat heavy but I work throughout without afternoon food', (Kofi, age: 37).

The casual workers in particular become very tired after each day's work. They develop back, waste and other body pains, scratching palms. According to some casual workers, their wives, other family members and friends have to step at their back as a way of massaging them when they go home. Some said they could not even take their bath; they just get home, eat and get to bed straight away. Some married men said they are already asleep before their wives have the evening meal ready. Others have expressions such as; '*Ghana work, before one gets money he will have to suffer*'. As one man put it; '*I am becoming an old man*'. They always have the feeling that they are looking older because of their work.

Because of the exhaustion in the work, many of the male casual workers who are not married, not staying with a fiancée or a relative usually eat from outside. They do little housework. They usually wash their clothes and the few who cook themselves prepare soups and stews on Sundays and put them down so that they have little house work to do after work. Most of the married men do not do any house chores and to some of them it is the main reason why they got married as one casual worker told me: '*housework is the reason why we men get married*'. Meanwhile the women casual workers, after work go home and do all the housework. During my informal interview at the market place, I came across a phone seller who had been a casual construction worker for two year and he narrated his story from construction work to me;

Case study 5 by Kwadwo: '*Construction is a very difficult work with little pay. The reason is that the contractors get all the money and the casual workers get only small. I was carrying concrete, digging, etc. It is a work that makes younger people look older. By the time I got home, I am very tired and having body pains. One thing is that hard and difficult works does not give more money than soft work. People who are professionals [like engineer, etc] in the industry do not suffer as much as the labourers. I used the money that I got from it to learn another trade (electrical welding). Now I will not do that work again but I will continue with the welding if I get the chance. Construction work is hard, if I did not stop it, I might have been dead by now*'.

Similar to the complaints of the other casual workers, he did not have a good experience in the industry. However, he was able to save some money and learnt another trade (electrical welding) in construction which will make him become more professional in case he should continue in construction.

5.2 Economic Situation of Workers

A constant worry among the workers, especially the casual workers, is that their pay is small. The companies have different ways of paying the casual workers. While all the formal workers are on monthly salaries in the eight companies, some of the casual workers are not. However some casual workers in some companies can earn as much as some permanent workers in another company. Three companies pay casual workers on a daily basis (workers are day labourers) and one company pays weekly. In these companies, the managers give the daily or weekly wages for the casual workers of each of the working categories to the respective foreman or the supervisors. The foremen or supervisors give the money to the workers at the end of the day or week. These casual workers do not pay tax because their wages are handed over to them in cash. The four other companies pay casual workers monthly (accumulation of worker's daily wage). Taxes are deducted from those workers who receive monthly wages. The forms of payment: daily, weekly or monthly as well as the degree of tax payment of casual workers depend on the size of the company. Casual workers of bigger construction companies are on monthly wage and they pay tax while those in smaller companies are on daily and weekly wages and did not pay taxes. See the wage range of the informants in table 7 below. The workers are paid in Ghana Cedis but I have converted the sums into approximate US dollars.

Table 7: Wages and Salaries of Workers

Categories of workers	Daily Wages (USDollars)	Monthly salary after tax (USDollars)
Casual Artisan	6-27	-
Casual Labourer	4-12	-
Permanent	-	186-434

Note: The stated amounts reflect that of the informants but the managers and the contract workers informants are not included.

Table 7 explains the wages and salaries of both the casual and permanent workers. The terms ‘artisan’ and ‘labourer’ are used to distinguish between a skilled and unskilled casual worker respectively. Artisans are being paid higher than those working as labourers. The welding and fabrication company has the highest wage for casual workers among the eight companies. Each casual worker gets three USD an hour and usually they work for nine hour each day which together gives a worker 27USD a day before tax.

It is quite common that the workers work overtime. The workers work for eight to nine hours per a day. Work hours beyond that and working on weekends, are considered overtime. The workers in these companies both casual and permanent earn extra when they work overtime. The amount depends on the company. Some of the companies pay well for overtime while others do not. For example, casual workers at one company get double payment of their daily wage for overtime per day and it is also tax free. Casual workers at another company get 0.61USD for each hourly work during overtime. After tax deductions, the monthly wage of a casual worker at one of the companies including extra working hours during overtime is 155USD.

Three companies have fixed activities to be completed per day whether weekdays or weekends and so do not have overtime. The working hours for the workers vary, depending on how fast they work daily. The workers in these three companies mostly work very fast because they want to finish the days’ work early. The least time that they spent in a day that I witnessed was seven hours. Many of the permanent workers within the above salary range also enjoy certain working conditions that give them extra money.

There are gender differences in the payment in some companies. In one of the companies, male and female casual workers are paid differently, because of the specific jobs they do. The women fetch water and the men help with the main construction. The men received six USD daily while the women are marked four USD daily. The accountant of this company told me that the men see the women’s work as less difficult and so they do not accept similar wages as the women. The women on the other hand complain that they want equal wages as the men. The self-builder, who pays the workers daily, gives 12USD to male casual workers who are building and six USD to women who fetch water. In the welding and fabrication company, the men and the women casual workers do the same type of job and so they receive the same amount of pay.

The casual workers see their wages as small. But some of them, their daily wage is higher than many jobs in Ghana. Those who do not pay tax (day labourers) even earn extra money because of that. However, people with the smallest wage (four USD per day) are many in the industry. And so they always complain about their wages and the fact that the companies are not being fair to them considering the nature of the work. One supervisor said to me;

'The work the casual workers are doing is very tedious and difficult but the money they are being paid for a day is too small', (Supervisor, age: 27).

Thus he is of the opinion that the causal workers are being exploited by his company. The manager of that company however had a different view of the casual workers' wages. He thinks that his company is paying the casual workers quite well as he said;

'This job is better than the people who sell on the street and sometimes run at a loss. The workers [his workers] just have to come and work and take their money', (Manager, age: 39).

In Ghana, people who think that they are being exploited by the type of work they do usually comfort themselves with a popular African adage that says that '*a bad job [work with less pay] is better than stealing*'. The workers both permanent and casual used to refer to this adage in reference to their wages and usually conclude somehow differently; '*it is better than staying at home and not doing anything*'. However, the daily pay of all the construction worker categories far exceeds the Ghana's daily minimum wage (in 2011 time of research) of 3.73GHS (2.3USD), (Ghanaweb, 2011). Every year the daily minimum wage increase, in this regard, the companies also increase the wages of the workers. In responds to this, a casual worker told me:

'Four years ago, I was given five Ghana cedis a day but now I am given eight Ghana cedis a day', (Kwame, age: 28).

Like many of the casual workers who are doing this job because there is no better job, their families do not also like their kind of work because of the nature of the job and their small pay. Some casual workers even hide their kind of work from their families and friends because they said it is not a good work. They tell them they have been contracted to work in a company and do not give the details of the work. But other casual workers said their friends and some family

members even wish to have this job. The casual workers who like this work also do not like the amount of money pay to them.

The casual workers sometimes revolt against their companies, complaining about their wages and delay of payments. One day after work, when the workers in one of the companies received their wages, the 18 casual workers in the masonry section were complaining and demanded additional payment because they worked more than expected (they had finished working with 96 bags of cement instead of the required 80 bags). They did not get the extra money they demanded, so the next day, 10 out of the 18 workers did not show up for work. However, the company did not lack workers as people always come to the site looking for work, so they filled new people in the positions early in the morning. The workers, who left, got work in another company that paid more and they never returned. One other company has had several riots from the casual workers in the last four years. The workers here say they are paid too little and too late. Instead of getting paid at the end of the month, payments can delay for up to two months. One of the foremen in this company said, '*the contractors get enough money but they fail to treat the workers well*'. Clearly, the casual workers are exploited by their companies. They lament so much about their wages because in their opinion, when a company gets a contract (project) the sum of money involved are very high so they should receive better wages than they get. However, there are some people who are further down the line of the casual workers in the construction companies. These are workers in the quarrying company.

5.3 The Quarrying Company

The quarrying company had gender preferences for their casual workers. Everyone can work there if the person has the ability to cut the bigger stones into smaller pieces, and get 30% of the money when the stones he or she has cut is been sold. One of the heaps of chips in plate 23 is sold six USD and workers get 30% of each heap. This money is very small. Some make one heap, others two and few especially the men are able to get three heaps a day. Students and children make a heap in between three days and one week. See the photos on the next page.



Plate 22: Bigger stones yet to be broken into chips. Plate 23: Heaps of cut stones ready to be sold, workers in the background.

Plate 22 and 23 depict the production process of getting the chips of stones to be used for construction purposes. One of the female workers here said to me:

'The money is too small but what can I do? My husband too does not work. He is having eye problem, so anytime he comes to do this work it worries him so he stopped. If cars are not coming after sometime I buy on credit', (Yaa, age: 40).

She is the breadwinner of the family because her husband is not working. The statement shows that she does not like this type of work, but have no alternative. The quarrying company have people aged between 7 (helping their parents) and 70 years working at the informal section.

5.4 Contribution to Households

The family systems in Ghana means that a person usually has many different family responsibilities: to their own nuclear family and the extended family. Therefore, anyone who is working, whether married with children or not, has other responsibilities than just to take care of him or herself. See table 8 about the marital status and family responsibilities of the informants. Table 8 below shows that there is a high family responsibility on the part of the workers both permanent and casual.

Table 8: Showing Marital Status and Family Responsibilities of Construction Workers

Marital status	Gender		Number	Percentage of 73 construction informants
	Male	Female		
Married/Cohabitation with children	38	7	45	62
Unmarried with children	5	1	6	8
Total			51	70

Seventy percent of the total constructions workers informants married or not married have children. 30 (61%) of the 49 casual workers informants married or not married had children. The men take care of their wives and children as well as some members of the extended family. For some of them, their wives also work and thus contribute to the family needs. The women construction workers also use their money to support the family needs. Some of men who are not married or cohabiting look after their parents and their younger siblings in school. The only people among the workers with less family responsibilities were the three students. They were working to have additional money for school.

In addition to contributing to the upkeep of their families, many of the casual workers want to save money so that they can either open shops or get into other economic activities. They want to enter into other economic ventures not only because they have little chance of becoming permanent workers but also because of the small amount they earn and the physical exertions on the job. Others try to save in order to continue their education, either to become professionals in the industry, or go into other professions. However, most of the casual workers are unable to save much for education.

Among the 49 casual workers in my sample, 31 (63%) of them are able to save. Those who save do save occasionally. Only the three students are able to save consistently from their earnings due to less family responsibilities. Some of the day labourers and weekly waged workers who are able to save do not save in any financial institution. They put whatever that is left down in their

rooms. Most of the casual workers normally spend the little that they have saved during periods of unemployment. If they get jobs consistently for a longer time they are able to save more. Only few people with families are unable to save. This shows that many of casual workers are able to save despite their worries on their wages. But perhaps some forfeit certain responsibilities so that they can save. Others might also have lesser responsibilities. The student has comments such as: '*I am saving much of this money for my future engineering work*'. Another student from Togo,

'For the past five years I have been doing this work both in Ghana and in Togo to cater for myself in school', (Yaw, age: 21).

Similar to the formal casual worker who was selling phones in the market, some casual workers do continue their education with what they earn in the industry. The comments from the workers indicated that their economic situations are poor but some people are able to save from this type of work. In Ghana a poor worker is someone whose daily wage is below the national daily minimum wage. The workers however receive wages higher than that. The desires of the casual workers using the industry now as a stepping stone for better economic conditions in the future is attainable with good management of their money and limited family responsibilities.

Some of the casual workers are able to earn extra money or get financial help from someone. Fifty five percent of the casual workers in my sample sometimes get extra money to supplement what they earn in their companies and/or get financial help from some family members and friends when they do not have money, especially during the time when they are no more working and are waiting for another job. The artisans such as masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and so on get other private construction work to do in people's homes and offices when something needs to be repaired. Some of the non-artisans do small businesses sometimes such as selling credits (use for mobile phones), drive friends' taxi's during weekends and sometimes at night, one worker work as a driver's mate⁷ sometimes, another one polishes peoples' shoes and so on. One woman casual worker sells water and another one sells biscuit. Another woman sells tea at night. Yet another one when unemployed washes peoples' clothes for money and so on.

⁷ Someone who helps private drivers as a conductor for the passengers. In Ghana they work in the medium sized busses called "trotro"

The most successful casual worker among my respondents is a man who has his own barbering shop, had built a house in Accra on his mother's land which he has rented out. The casual workers who do not have additional jobs and do not also get help from anyone are 45%. Many of the permanent workers save, some of them also earn extra money aside their companies. They also get additional jobs to do in people's homes and offices. All the five workers on 'contract' save and two of them earn additional money from other jobs.

Many of the casual workers are not covered by social security and are therefore not secured of pension in their old age. A casual worker responding to my question on pension said: '*there is no pension in construction*'. In Ghana, every worker is obliged to contribute 5.5% and the employer 13% of the monthly salary as insurance towards pension. The companies that pay their casual workers monthly request for the social security number of the workers and pay the money to Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) accordingly. Though it is a policy for these companies to pay social security for their workers, they often allow the casual workers to decide whether they should make social security deductions from their wages or not. Instead of letting the workers know about the companies' contribution to social security, the workers only hear from their friends that some part of their pay will be taken for social security. Though this is true, it does not however reflect the true picture of social security payment in which companies are supposed to do. So many casual workers in these companies are not registered with the SSNIT to contribute social security. The four companies that pay wages on daily and weekly basis do not have any arrangement for social security for their workers. The irony is that, many of the monthly waged casual workers who pay tax are not on social security. 45 (92%) of the casual workers informants are not secured with pension while four out of the 19 formal worker are not secured with pension. Two out of the five contract workers are secured with pension.

5.5 Safety, Risks and Injuries

Safety perhaps should be the first thing to be considered before entering a construction site. The nature of the work is such that workers need to be protected at all times. Another urgent worry of the casual workers is safety. Construction companies with good safety regulations are few in Takoradi. Two out of the eight studied companies, had either provided safety equipments or see to it that the workers both casual and permanent are in the right safety conditions at the site. In

these companies, no worker or a person is allowed to enter the construction site without at least a safety boot. One of these two companies is the welding and fabrication and because of the nature of their work, protect the workers with working attire (overall), goggles and a good working environment but workers buy their own working boots which is also the company's requirement. The other company provide attire (but not a protective cloth) and helmet but also makes sure the workers are in a protective boot before entering the site. One other company only provides safety equipments such as protective cloths and life jacket for workers who work at dangerous places such as harbour, but casual workers building houses, and so on are not part of this protection. However, the permanent workers in this particular company enjoy safety equipments all the time. A foreman in this company said;

'The contractors when taken a contract take into consideration safety equipments but the company do not buy most of them for the workers. The work is difficult and dangerous and so the workers need proper attention', (Kwasi, age: 51).

One thing that I realised was that the supervisors and the foremen of the various companies complained a lot about the safety and the wages of the casual workers, but they are not able to tell their managers about that because of the fear of losing their jobs. The photos below show companies with some level of safety mechanisms.



Plate 24: Casual workers.



Plate 25: Both casual and permanent workers.

Safety equipments are non-existent in five of the studied companies. There are no gloves, boots, attires, helmets, and goggles for the workers. Workers have to think of their own safety

equipments but many of them do not provide any for themselves either, because they say they do not have the means of getting them. Many of the casual workers with little safety step on nails, get cuts from iron rods, blocks fall on them, cuts from hammer, sight problems and so on. Takoradi with the hot temperatures throughout the year might be a factor for not wearing overall especially people who do the physically hardest work because they might feel uncomfortable. But safety boot, gloves and other equipments should have been checked by the companies. The photos below also show some of the workers without safety equipments at the site.



Plate 26: Standing on iron rod in bathroom slippers. Plate 27: Standing on wooding scaffold; only one person had a helmet on, another person extreme left had a hat on.

There are no differences in the safety equipments for men and women and very little differences in safety equipments for permanent and casual workers. Usually, if the company provides, then all of them enjoy it the same and if not, they face the same challenges. However, some permanent workers are usually checking their safety by having at least a protective boot and a helmet. Only in one company the permanent workers have safety equipments and the casual workers do not. Ghanaian companies and foreign companies do not have any difference in terms of safety mechanisms. Two companies have a relatively good safety mechanism, one is a Ghanaian and the other is a joint venture involving a Ghanaian and a foreign partner.

When there is an injury, whether the person will be catered for by the company depends on the degree of the injury. What is seen as major and minor injuries varies among the companies. Some companies take care of some of the workers (both permanent and casual) with major injuries until they recover fully but other companies take care of the worker up to point and if the person is a casual worker then he or she is left alone within a short time to continue taking care

of him or herself. Permanent workers and to a lesser extent casual workers at four of the companies (the biggest companies) are secured when any of them gets a major injury because the companies take care of them especially the hospital bill. The four other companies did not have any room for injuries because in these companies, injuries are seen as the ‘workers’ fault’ and if the person is a causal worker, then there is no hope for that person getting any assistance. In these companies, if there is a collapse of blocks on a worker, then the company would help that person. Workers are the sole carers of themselves in the case of minor injuries. Below is what a worker said concerning safety;

‘Anybody who gets injuries here, the company says that he was careless so no money to cater for the injuries’, (Kwasi, age: 33).

There is no first aid box in all the eight companies. I even experienced this myself. When I got injured at a site, I was given no first aid; I had to visit the clinic for treatment. The manager of that company told me that the cut was too small for tetanus injection meanwhile the decayed iron rod cut deep into my palm and blood was coming out. According to the Regional Labour Officer, the core labour standard must be in operation so that the salient terms and conditions can be applied, it does not matter whether a contract is one month or more. A permanent worker in the company where the formal employees have more safety told me his conditions at work:

‘I am happy with this work. This is what I decided to do even though the money is not as expected. The company pays the hospital expenses of my family and me. With outstation, accommodation and other expenses are taken care of and I get two months’ salary for free. When I travel to see my wife the company pays my transport. Every morning a car picks me to work. I also get credit [use to make calls] free from the company. I am provided with safety equipments too’, (Kwadwo, age: 36).

His experience with the company is very different from that of the casual workers. I have described two incidents that occurred at two sites during my fieldwork. Their stories are below.

Case study 6: *I was present at the time when a wall fell on one of the casual workers who was resting during lunch break, he collapsed instantly. He is in the taxi in plate 28 below with a cut in the head and a co-worker trying to give him (the collapsed person) water as a first aid. The*

company had no car at the site for emergency such as this one; the worker was rushed to the hospital in a taxi. He gained consciousness the following day and continued with the recovery at the hospital. This worker chest ribs were severely injured, meanwhile only the hospital bill would be paid for by the company. He got no risk allowance and no compensation whatsoever from his employers. His co-workers told me that his bills will be paid for by the company in maximum of two months then he would have to look elsewhere for help and other means of survival for the rest of his life. The supervisor of the same company told me that he had been advising the casual workers to take good care of themselves because when things like this happen to them, they (the workers) will suffer because the company will leave them shortly afterwards.



Plate 28: An injured man with a cut in the head.

Plate 29: The man in the red shirt catching the head pan.

Case study 7: *The second incident happened to the worker in the red shirt trying to catch the head pan in the plate 29. This worker developed sores on his whole stomach and chest because the cement dripped onto his body. But he worked with the sores which he covered with a polythene bag. He told me that he did not have enough money to go to the hospital and could not remain at home either because he has to eat.*

In Ghana there is no welfare package in terms of financial help from the government for informal casual workers who are not able to work for a living due to injuries and sickness so people who are not formally employed mostly rely on the goodwill of their family and friends.

5.6 Workers Working Conditions and the Labour Law of Ghana

One of the nine core Ghana labour standards is that health and safety of the workers are to be assured in any company. It says;

“Without prejudice to the provisions of this Act and any other enactment for the time being in force, in any contract of employment or collective agreement, the duties of an employer include the duty to take all practicable steps to ensure that the worker is free from risk of personal injury or damage to his or her health during and in the course of the worker's employment or while lawfully on the employer's premises” (Labour Act, 2003; section 9c).

The Ghana Labour office uses the Workmen's Compensation Law 1987 (PNDC Law 187) to regulate injuries of workers by companies. The act says that employers should pay compensations to any worker who “sustains personal injury by accident arising out of, and in the course of his or her employment” (Section 2(1)). Every employee is a beneficiary to the workmen's compensation. The only exceptions are when the worker sustains an injury while he or she is under alcohol or drug influence, or as a result of self inflicted injury (Section 2(5, 7)). However, such is not the case in some construction companies as they do not provide safe working environment as well as not taken care of some injuries of the workers.

Apart from poor safety, the casual workers also faced problems associated with their employment conditions. Though they are not permanent workers, the Labour Acts (2003) says:

“The employment of a worker by an employer for a period of six months or more or for a number of working days equivalent to six months or more within a year shall be secured by a written contract of employment” (section 12 (1)).

The Law recognises those workers who are with a particular company up to six months or more as permanent workers (Section 75(1)). In this regard, some of the casual workers should have been regarded as permanent workers. Section 74 (1) of the Law stated that “*a contract of employment of a casual worker need not be in writing*”. This means a causal worker working for a company after six months; the worker should be given a proper writing contract of employment which includes the working conditions, terms and benefits. But as they are working as casual and temporary workers, they must enjoy “hours of work, rest period, paid public holidays, night work and sick leave” (section 75 (2)) even when they do not have a written contract. However, many

of these are not practically followed. The eight construction companies do not give written contracts to the casual workers if the working period is up to six months or more.

Section 13 of the Act states that after two months of work by the employees, the employers should provide the employees with written contracts of work. The laws allow two months before employers and employees agree on contract details (in writing form), if the casual worker is continuously going to work in the company for more than six months. But all the workers including the managements believe that it is three months that this contract details must be agreed upon. In one company, some of the workers worked continuously with the company for two years in the absence of a secured contract. As a result of this, this company can dismiss any worker without any severance package. Another company had previously given written contracts to the workers after three months of employment, but as at the time of this study, the company had stopped. In the above two companies, usually, it is the same workers who are contracted anytime the company gets a new project. Among the casual workers in my sample, the person who had spent least time with a company when I first met him had spend two days and those with more years of employment in the companies had worked for up to 15 years though they become unemployed intermittently and recalled back. They still work as casual workers.

One of the companies assumed that workers employed after three months are made permanent workers (called ‘site permanent’). In other words they are automatically part of the project until it is completed but that is without a written contract or even written statements about the contract. When I asked the manager of the company about the casual workers at that site, he said *‘everyone is permanent here’*. This statement sounded as if all the workers have been formally employed. Some of the casual workers on the other hand said they are casual workers and are waiting to be made site permanent because they have worked for more than three months. So where as the management assumes that everyone is a permanent employee after three months, the workers on the other hand want the management to communicate this to them either verbally or in a written form but none of the casual workers could go forward to ask. Two other companies, despite knowing the law, lay off the workers after every three months and reemploy them thereafter. According to the manager of one of these two companies, this is to avoid giving

the workers written contracts. Three of the companies that I studied do not use the law in the first place so they do not lay any one off neither do they give them written contracts.

Many of the casual workers on the other hand know the law that governs the industry about their contracts and benefits. However, they are unable to challenge the management of the companies because of the fear of being sacked from their respective companies. According to the Regional Labour officer, as part of the Labour Law there should be no deliberate casualisation on the part of the employer (interviewed on 19/07/2011). Casualisation of workers according to her means exploitation of labour. It appears as if most of the casual workers are been exploited. They are not given the due contracts which come with certain benefits. They are rather laid off and re-employed or the company just assumed without any written message that they are site permanent, or do not follow the law at all. But the flexibility of the law has made this to be legal. Section 17 (2) of the labour Act 2003 states that; "*a contract of employment determinable at will by either party may be terminated at the close of any day without notice*". Section 16 (c) of the Act also states that; "*remuneration at a rate other than monthly or weekly rate, the contract is a contract determinable at will*". Many of the casual workers, especially day labourers and even those with weekly wages have their contracts determined at will and therefore terminable at will by either party in some of the studied companies. Therefore what the two companies do by terminating the workers' contracts after every three months is legal. The workers on the other hand can also leave the work anytime and any day without prior notice. This makes their work with the companies unstable. Sometimes the managers and some formal employees of the companies do not come into contact with some of the casual workers before they start working for their companies because the foremen employed to do a particular job came with their own casual workers. One 'contract' worker told me:

The manager contracted me for this project. I subcontract the other workers such as carpenters and masons. With the terms of pay, I talk to the manager first then the workers, (Kodjo, age 40).

This means that he has an agreement on the work with the casual workers. However, the names and some personal details of the workers who are on monthly wage go into the books of the companies. These companies usually through the supervisor or foremen give their casual workers notice before terminating their contracts but the casual workers of these companies can

leave the work with or without any notice just like the day and weekly waged casual workers. Usually, as the project progresses and the workload become less, some of the casual workers are laid off. But casual workers who are with the company during the whole of the project automatically know that they are going to be unemployed after the project is completed.

It is difficult for casual workers to become permanent workers. Among my respondents only one person has been able to secure a permanent contract in the company which he served as a casual worker for a long time. Despite him becoming permanent, he does not have good working conditions; he still receives almost the same pay when he was a casual worker and lack safety equipments, which every worker actually lack from that company. Some permanent and some casual workers in different companies have very little differences in their wages and salaries. The only difference between those permanent and casual workers is that permanent workers get pay whether there is a project or not, some of them also have leave, enjoy holidays and many are secured of pension pay. However, the casual workers have no leave, maternity leave, no holiday, very few people expected to have pension. Formal workers and contract workers do not have problems with their contracts because contract details are sorted out before their employment. Like many of the casual workers, some of the contract workers also do not have writing contracts of employment but at least, all of them have verbal agreement with the companies' managers.

5.6.1 Redundancy Packages

Three of the companies give end of service benefits to their casual workers when a bigger project is completed and they are going out of work. The causal workers take these benefits as their redundancy package. One man in the welding and fabrication company received 486USD as a redundancy package after working for two years. Currently after working for a year at the same company, the worker will be given one month pay as redundancy package. One other company used to do the same but now it is not doing it anymore. A worker in that company told me:

'I have been working in this company since 2002. In the beginning, the company used to give us [casual workers] some money when we are laid off but they stopped about three to four years ago', (Carpenter, age: 35).

Recently the casual workers in this other company have begun demonstrating against their company about redundancy packages which are no longer being given to them. They do that because most of the casual workers in that company had been with the company for many years and were aware of redundancy packages. Some of the studied projects could take up to five years. These companies mostly work with the same people during the project but some people go out either they are sacked or they themselves cannot continue while others join as time goes on. The least time spent by a company on the studied projects at the time of fieldwork was four months and the one with the maximum time was two years but all of them were still ongoing.

Some of the workers after they are laid off look for work in other construction companies. Some get work while others wait to be called by the construction company. These are people who have been with a particular company for a longer time. These are people with monthly wages in their companies and usually their companies promise them that projects are coming soon. However, day labourers and weekly wages workers always have to look elsewhere because the first to come to the site when there is a project get the offer unless the foreman/men subcontracted for the project is/are their friend and will call them. In that case people who come to the site looking for work will not be giving the job because the foreman/men usually come with their own workers (usually friends). In line with this a casual workers told me;

'I see myself as someone who looks for my own work. I look for the work, from one place to the other. If someone is lucky the company will look for him', (Kofi, age: 30).

Though the companies fail to comply with rules and regulations, many people with little or no educational qualification and skills are making a living through the industry. Before I conclude this chapter, I therefore provide a case study of a day labourer.

Case study 8: *Yaw, 23, lost both parents (on the same day) in a car accident when he was 16 years old. He managed to write his JHS final examination and was easier because he had already registered for the exams before his parent's death. His parents did not leave any 'will' for the children. He passed for the SHS and subsequently gained admission into a high school in Takoradi. After initial help from his uncle to pay his school fees for the first term (semester), he got no more help from any member of the family. It became very difficult for him to continue with*

school so he became a day student in the first term so that he could work and look after himself. He started working as a day labourer in construction companies from 2005, a year after his parents' death. He was able to complete his secondary education but have not been able to continue his education because he could not afford it. He still hopes one day he will be able to continue his education at the tertiary level. He earns 12 US dollars daily from his current company. Because he is a casual worker and his job is unstable, he moves from one construction company to the other looking for work. He tries to save some money for times when he is unemployed but his younger siblings sometimes ask him for money so he give them the little he has saved. Sometimes and especially during times of unemployment he had no money and he ate once in a day. His parents lived in a rented apartment in Accra prior to their death and after their death the children did not have any place to call home. Yaw does not have a place to sleep in Takoradi; he has been sleeping on the street (usually at the Jubilee Park) for three years now. He said to me that 'that is life, that is how life is so I am living in it like that'.

Though Yaw has not become wealthy and has no place to sleep, he is making his living out of this work. He was even able to complete his secondary education through this work. The other three students in my sample are also catering for themselves through this work.

In conclusion, the chapter looked into the nature of construction work, the economic situation of the workers, the workers contributions to the household needs, safety regulations for the workers, risks and injuries in the work and savings. The study find out that the activities of the many casual workers are physically demanding due to the lack of machines to do the physical work. Wages and forms of payment vary from company to company. The casual workers are paid on monthly, weekly and daily basis depending on the company. The workers in the industry use their wages to cater for themselves and their families and some are also able save some for future use and to continue their education. I also talked briefly about the workers of the quarrying company who receive lesser wages than the casual workers in the construction industry. In general, safety regulations are very poor in the studied companies putting the workers at a higher risk. The casual workers also have poor working conditions and have challenges with their employment contracts. The companies are avoiding given the casual workers proper written contracts and fail to make some casual workers permanent because they have continuously work for more than six months in the same company.

Chapter Six

Discussion of Findings

In this chapter I discuss the findings in light of the theories that were introduced to explain gender and informality in the construction industry in Takoradi. The concept of informality and gender ideologies and work has been analysed. The construction hierarchy have been examined in the industry. The study found out that 71% of workers in eight construction companies in Takoradi were informally employed and these workers are being exploited by the construction companies. The informality stemmed from the fact that the workers lack benefits and they are not protected by their construction companies. The study also found out that there is gender discrimination in the industry. There are very few women and these women have different type of work than the men. But these women's work in the industry is declining more either because there is no need for that work anymore or men are taking up the positions.

6.1 The Concept of Informality in the Construction Industry in Takoradi

Ghana, from the early 1980s onwards, in the wake of restructuring the weak economy looked for assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The conditions attached to the assistance such as privatisation of some government business, less government spending which eventually saw many government workers dismissed from work among others were believed to overturn the economic crisis in the country. This created higher rates of unemployment in the country. People were then forced into doing any type of work that could earn them a living (refers to Overå, 2007). Many of these works were not regulated by the state. Thus informal work increased in the wake of SAP in Ghana. The increase in informal activities as a result also emerged in the construction industry in Ghana because the industry went through a process of informalization and many people moved from formally regulated work to unregulated jobs.

The line of informality in the construction industry is not very clear cut. So it leaves in doubt the extent to which we should call a worker or activity in the industry as informal. What lead us is the 'unregulated' nature either partially or wholly in the employment processes (Wells, 2007)

and conditions in the industry. There are a whole range of activities, and individuals who have different activities and different employment conditions. This is how formality and informality looks like in the eight construction companies. The construction companies are registered and are having registered project(s). Some of the employees are registered and others are not registered. Some workers do not pay tax while some of those who pay tax are not registered members of the companies and also lack worker benefits. A question also comes to mind whether the tax is really going to the government coffer. But in any case, are people supposed to pay tax when they lack worker benefits? In my opinion, the construction companies are growing partly because they are ‘feeding’ on what is supposed to be benefits for their workers. Many of the workers with monthly wages have been with particular companies for long and in the Ghana Labour Acts they are qualified to be permanent workers. Many workers are on temporary basis in the construction industry. ‘Temporary contracts’ have been associated with labour market flexibilities (Booth et al., 2002). Contract work is usually seen as one type of informal work (Barrientos and Kritzinger, 2004: 83). Legal aspects in the employment of these workers from the contract to the casual workers are very weak.

The in the eight companies, 71% of the total workforce were informally employed; this figure excludes the ‘contract workers’. The casual workers have unstable job. They could be dismissed from work at any time and the workers can also leave the work at any time for better paying construction company or another job. They can also decide not to go to work since wages are dependent on working days. Some of the workers have had up to 15 years working experience, some with one particular company but were still casual workers. Beside the formal employees, the ‘contract’ workers in these companies are mostly employed by the contractors themselves though in a similar way as the casual workers, some of them also lack a legal written contract. But they usually have a verbal contract of the work with the main contractor. These are usually foremen and other people with specialised skills whom the company need in order to complete a project. These workers are not sacked and they cannot leave the work before their job is done. In some sense some of these contract workers are also informally employed. This is because no matter how long the project takes, they do not become permanent members of the company, some do not also enjoy certain benefits, and some of them are not secured with pension.

This has become possible because there is little state involvement in the affairs of the construction industry. The Ghana government from the time of SAP to now have encouraged the private sector. The construction companies in so many ways set their own rules with regards to employment and do not follow the labour laws that govern industries and companies in Ghana. The institutions in Ghana are also ‘weak’ and the ‘rights’ (Birdsall, 2007) of the people are usually not being protected by the state. But these ‘unskilled’ (Fellini, Ferro and Fullin, 2007) workers also have to make a living. Since they can make some money from construction work, they will continue to do it even if the work is considered not very good until there is a better job for them.

Academic qualification of the workers has become the main determinant of the degree of informality in the construction industry. The forms of employment in the industry range from formal to labourers. The chance of a person becoming a formal worker is higher if he or she has a good education: at least with tertiary certificate preferably in construction courses. However, the industry in reality wants to employ people with ‘less skills and education’ (ILO, 2001) so that they do not have to become permanent workers since there are very few positions for formal workers.

Many of the work in the industry are physically done and this confirms the labour intensive (Fellini, Ferro and Fullin, 2007) nature of the industry. The less physical work such as engineering, quantity surveying and so on are reserved for few permanent and to some lesser extent ‘contract’ workers. The story of Kwame (case study 1), and based on the findings discussed in chapter four; I say that the higher the educational level the higher the chances of getting permanent employment in the eight studied construction companies in Takoradi.

The formal workers are not threatened by the many casual workers because of the lack of formal training on behalf of the casual workers. Many of the causal workers on the other hand see themselves as self-employed because they are always looking for jobs. To remain employed all the time, the casual workers learn different skills relevant in the construction industry through ‘informal training’ (ILO, 2001). They also establish and cultivate relationships with foremen and supervisors of construction companies so that they will be called to work when there is a project. They therefore use social network and to have social network is important in order to survive.

6.2 Day Labourers as Entrepreneurs

Day labour work is important in the construction industry in Takoradi. Casual workers of three construction companies were day labourers. A case study of Yaw, a day labourer in chapter five made us understand that the day labour work is fit to be described as a ‘survivalist entrepreneur’ (Valenzuela, 2001) because of how they try to manage themselves to get jobs. Working as a day labourer has helped Yaw made a living for six years now. As Valenzuela (*ibid.*) observed people do this work because they have no choice. But the ‘freedom’ Valenzuela (*ibid.*) in being a day labourer helped casual day labourers to easily move between companies where the wage is better. The casual day labourers in the construction companies are more mobile than the monthly waged casual workers. Even when the project is completed the monthly waged workers usually wait till their companies call them again for another project. This however is not the case for the day labourers. They look for jobs in other construction site if there is no job.

Also food sellers at the construction sites and women water carriers are self-employed. Women food sellers at the construction site as well as women water carriers can also fit into the concept of day labourers as entrepreneurs. Instead of the food sellers sitting and selling at their usual workplace, the women see opportunities in the construction industry and take the chance and sell to the construction workers. Some of them even stopped selling other foodstuffs at the market place and are selling food to the construction workers. They could be making more money selling to the construction workers than selling at their usual place of work like the market place.

6.3 Labour Rights and Entitlements (Working Conditions)

The ILO 2001 discussed four areas where the construction industry needed an improvement. These are challenge of the workers. These are how the four challenges affect the casual workers.

6.3.1 Rights at Work

As discussed in chapter five, many of the studied construction workers are not enjoying any ‘core labour standard’ (ILO, 2001). The most negatively affected in enjoying the core labour standard are the casual workers who also form the major part in the industry. In other words, the bulk of construction workers in the companies studied lack labour rights at work. It appears like

the employers in the studied companies are free to do anything and even “put a blind eye to basic labour rights” (*ibid.*) of the workers. Because of this, the construction companies avoid giving legal contracts to casual workers and to some contract workers. The obvious difference in terms of enjoying terms and conditions in the companies is between the casual and the permanent workers. There are very few permanent workers who enjoy the rights at work and the many casual workers labour mainly for daily bread. There are not really any difference between men and women in terms of labour rights benefits. Men and women formal workers usually enjoy similar labour rights. Both men and women casual workers usually enjoy the same form of labour rights if a company provide any. However, few of the casual workers enjoy some form of labour rights such as safety equipments and redundancy packages.

6.3.2 Social Protection

As discussed in chapter five, the casual workers do almost the entire physical work usually in poor working environment. Many of them would not have any pension because their companies do not provide social security contribution for them. Also, the casual workers are very susceptible to work related accidents but which also the companies do not care much about. All the injury related problems including “back injuries from carrying heavy loads” by the ILO (2001) affect the construction workers in the studied companies.

Standing (2008) said one of the outcomes of the labour market flexibilities is ‘casualisation’- employing people on temporary basis. The Regional Labour Officer (interviewed on 19/07/2011) used casualisation to mean exploitation of labour. The two meanings virtually are the same. The workers been exploited is because they are employed temporarily. The workers know that they are being exploited and they used to say that a lot of times. The Regional Labour Officer told me that except laws for schedules⁸ on injuries, the Labour Department that set the labour law is different from the Labour Commission that set penalties for breach of the law. According to her, the two departments should have been together so that they can come together with unified activities and laws. The law is set, but there is very little to see to its implementation by the studied construction companies.

⁸ Table showing degree of injury of a worker and the type of compensation that is to be given to the worker.

6.3.3 Social Dialogue

‘Collective bargaining’ (ILO, 2001) is almost absent in the companies because the workers are ‘weak’ (*ibid.*). No one, (not even the supervisors on behalf of the casual workers) could channel their grievances to their employers because they are afraid of losing their jobs. Due to the extent to which labour has become very mobile in the construction companies there is the need for ‘collective bargaining’ by the workers so that they can be able to secure their ‘social benefits’ (*ibid.*). Whereas this is the need, it has become difficult to achieve it because of “flexible working practices and proliferation of small firms that has occurred in the industry in many countries in recent years” (*ibid:* 27).

6.3.4 Employment

The construction companies have provided opportunities for many people with low qualifications to be employed in Takoradi. But there is little on the part of the construction companies to train the workers to become professionals. And since casual workers are doing more of the construction work, the output of the work will be poor (*ibid.*) According to Standing (1997: 9), there should be “widespread opportunities to gain and retain skills, through apprenticeship, employment training, etc”. These are lacking as the more specialised jobs are reserved for the few permanent and contract workers. The casual workers learn from casual workers and it confirms observation by the ILO (2001: 38) that workers gain skills usually through an ‘informal training’ system.

There is a high degree of informality in the industry because the major parts of its workforce lack working contracts and benefits. The major part of these workers can be called the ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2011). Standing at a seminar in March 2012 said they are informal workers but different from the ‘survivalist’ informal workers. This is because the precariat group have much to offer in the labour market than the survivalist group because they are more qualified in getting employment in the labour market. In the construction industry, many of the casual workers have learnt a trade or have acquired skills through on the job training or at least have the strength to do the kind of work. This also means that all precariat are informally employed but not all informal economic activities can be called precariat. Informal work is one characteristic of the

construction industry; another feature of the industry is gender participation and the constraints that female construction workers face. This is in the next section.

6.4 Gender Ideologies and Work in the Construction Industry in Takoradi

The industry in Takoradi is male-dominated as examined in chapter four. This stems from the cultural norms in Ghana which see construction work as inappropriate for women because of the physical nature of the work. Women therefore find it difficult to do construction work. In Ghana, gender appropriateness of work has defined some limit and men and women must cross these limits in order to work in female or male dominated activities respectively. But the “socio-cultural boundaries therefore appear to be narrower and less flexible when women attempt to enter male domains than vice versa” (Overå 2007: 559). Thus it is more difficult for women to cross gender barriers into male occupations (*ibid.*). There is a strong opposition from the society, family members and friends when women want to enter the construction business. The aim is to protect women from these ‘physical’ jobs but this protection is patriarchal in nature because many young women are not able to choose for themselves the career they want. The nickname *macho* and its associated stereotypes in descriptions of women who do very physical work such as construction, has made many women not to go into construction work. That is why the few women in the industry such as the female supervisor have to fight hard to maintain her job. This confirms an observation by Overå (*ibid.*) that the few women in Ghana who are successful in men’s occupations do so as a result of ‘personal aspirations’, but then, they have to cross gender barriers to achieve this, sometimes at a high cost.

The statement by the only female supervisor in my sample about how difficult it was for her to be the only woman in building and construction course in her tertiary education in case study 2 is illustrative of this point. She had crossed several gender barriers such as the societal norm, family, school and even the workplace to become a supervisor in construction. She is still crossing the barriers every day because she has to push hard in order to convince the workers (all men) that she is capable in her position. The workers become more comfortable in taking her advice if it is backed by the manager of the company. This indicates that the men in the industry are not comfortable working with women. Having a man to back a woman in the construction

industry is crucial. Thus the masculine culture and male dominance in the industry may mean that the industry loses a lot of potential valuable expertise since women are not included.

6.4.1 Occupational Sex-segregation in the Construction Industry in Takoradi

From the findings in chapter four, men do many activities in the industry both the administration and site work. Women major work is to fetch water at the site and do secretarial work at the administration. These activities are usually seen as women domains and are usually seen as less physical. Many women view the construction activities as tedious, so they mostly wish to have the chance to fetch water at the site. Men ‘benefit’ (Williams, 1995: 11) from the gender division of labour in the industry. The three percent women total population in the eight companies show that the industry is sex-segregated. This is because gender (Shuto, 2009) is the main determinant of who is employed in particular as well as which type of work each of the sexes performs.

Some male workers are doing what is usually regarded as women’s work. They were working as secretaries and carrying water to the site. Carrying water on the head using head pan or bucket is usually done by women in Ghana. Men who fetch water usually carry with the hand but some of the male workers in one company were carrying water on their head. Women who want to carry blocks and stones at the sites are usually not giving the chance by the men but the men who want to do women’s work find it easier to do so. This confirms Overå’s (2007) findings that cultural norms create in unequal competition between men and women in the Ghana labour market.

The industry is not ‘gender neutral’ (Acker, 1990). There is a preference for men in almost every activity. Though some of the male workers wish to have women in their companies, the workplace (construction site) have not created an atmosphere for women because the behaviour and comments from some male workers lead to reinforce “gender differences and gender inequality” (Williams, 1995: 15) in the industry. The female workers constantly experience bad comments from the male workers. During my participation in the construction work, with all the bad comments and behaviours from the men, I realised how difficult and enduring it was for women construction workers to maintain their jobs. I believe many women doing construction work in Ghana are enduring similar forms of ‘intimidation’ (Aryeetey, 2004) in order to achieve their aim (make some money). Similar to ‘gender as a social relation’ (Dixon and Jones, 2006)

the women are less powerful. They could negotiate with the men on the issue of intimidation and harassment but their number is too small and they could easily be overcome by the male workers.

6.4.2 Social Constructionist Framework

The concept of gender seen as performance (Butler, 1994 in Alvesson and Billing, 2009) is a way of understanding the fewer women in the industry. Managers of some construction companies think that women cannot work in the industry as their men counterparts. The male workers do not want to have women doing the same type of work as them as it is assumed that the women would be resting many times during working hours and complain instead of working. What I observe with women water carriers was that, during lunch breaks when the male workers were resting, the women were sent to buy food and water. Some women said to me the male workers sometimes ask them to wash their clothes for them in their homes for free, and they do it. In Ghana, it is believed that women can wash clothes well than men so by washing for the men they work with, they are helping them to wear ‘a more clean clothes’. All these extra activities of women in the industry are not quantified just like all the other reproductive work women do in the households. Working for free is not a ‘valued’ (McDowell, 1999) work. However, it must mean something like creating a good image of her and having a good friendship with the men but it is not given a monetary value.

Some male casual workers receive higher pay than the women water carriers because the women’s work is seen less difficult. Construction companies which have men and women casual workers, gender is an ‘activity’ (West and Zimmerman, 1991 in Denissen, 2006: 5) in terms of wages and this activity is how physically demanding a person’s work is. Gender appropriateness of work seemed to be based on gender as performance (Butler, 1994 in Alvesson and Billing, 2009). In terms of what is seen as a ‘good work’, the construction work is not ‘rewarding’ (McDowell, 1999) to women. Women’s contribution in the industry is not ‘valued’ (*ibid.*) because their work is usually not appreciated by the men. The paradox is that when it is a paid work for women, it is regarded as physical but when women are doing other physical work in the house and even at the workplace for free it is not seen as physical work. In Ghana, agriculture is

hard work and appropriate for women while construction is hard work but inappropriate for women.

The construction work ‘is a man’s world’ (Denissen, 2006) because almost everything about the work in the companies was associated with men and their muscular advantages. Women had to behave like men so that they would be accepted to do construction work. In the field my posture and behaviour in many instances looked like that of the men. With this I was accepted as an equal worker by the male workers to some extent. Man(ly) or macho names given to women who do construction shows that to do this work a woman has to come to terms with the fact that she will be compared with men. Gender ideology and its implication on gender appropriate work have had effects on work appropriate behaviour of women.



Plate 30: Male workers construction workers and myself. Photos taken during a break.

The few women who have been able to enter the industry were sometimes constrained from work by their domestic chores. Some women casual workers never turned up for work mainly because of their domestic chores.

6.4.3 Women Strategies and other Challenges

The few women who have been able to break in into this stereotypical gender work do not accept bad comments from the men. They cared much more about the money they got for the work. The female supervisor realised that the closer (friendlier) she was to the male workers the more bad comments she got from them. As a result, she did not spend time with the men outside work. The

female casual workers on the other hand have established good relationship mostly with mason foremen so that they will be called to fetch water at a site any time there was a project.

The story of Adwoa and Akua in chapter four show that they were happy doing construction work and prefer to fetch water at the construction site rather than doing other informal jobs like selling things in the market. This is perhaps not so surprising since their daily wages from construction work was similar to some of their male counterparts. Further, their income from construction work was higher than the income they got from other kinds of informal jobs that they do when unemployed in the construction business. While the male casual workers complain about their wages, the women were content with what they earned. Many of the male casual workers were working to cater for themselves and their families while the women were working to support their husbands. All the women site construction workers in my sample were either married or cohabiting. This could have affected how content they were with their pay. If they were single mothers their situation might have been different. The construction work might also be paying better, that is why the male workers use all means to minimise women representation. The next section looks into how the construction hierarchy work in practice.

6.5 The Construction Hierarchy

The three sections of the table 4 (in chapter three, page 40) show the occupational categories of workers and it represents the construction hierarchy. There is a hierarchical order among the workers in the construction industry. The hierarchy shows the nature of work one does. The closer one is to the top of the hierarchy, the less physical one's job and also the more formal his activities. This is how the formally employed in the studied companies work. Accountants and secretaries and others mostly work in the office. Engineers, supervisors, quantity surveyors, and other specialised workers usually work at the site. Formal workers mostly do less physical work. The managers of the companies give orders to the workers on the top position. The workers on the other hand give orders to the workers below them in the hierarchy.

The workers of the middle position are the ‘contract workers’. The work of the middle position is not very physical. For example, foremen do some of the work of the casual workers but they also supervise them. In the eight companies only one foreman was a formal worker. The formality of

the activities of the workers in this middle position is very blurred. These workers are mostly men. Only one company had a caterer and is a woman. They take orders from the people at the top position.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are the informal positions which are mostly casual workers who are either artisans or labourers. Some of them looked for the job themselves while some are subcontracted by foremen. The women water carriers are farther the bottom line. The casual workers do the most physical activities of construction work in the eight companies. The casual workers take orders from the formal workers as well as the contract workers.

The borderline between these three categories of workers are not very clear. The clearest is the difference between the top position and the bottom position. According to my observation, the degree of informality begins from the middle position. Most of the workers here are not formally employed and some do not also enjoy social security benefits, but they have a better pay and are not looked down as casual workers in the industry. The bottom position is purely informal.

Permanent workers have very cordial relationships among themselves. Contract workers have also cordial relationships with the formal worker. Contract workers in many instances have good relationship with casual workers. The least cordial relations are between the permanent workers and the casual workers because some of the formal workers look down on the casual workers.

This chapter discussed the findings from the field using concepts and theories. It discussed the concept of informality in the construction industry in Takoradi. It found out that there is a high degree of informality in the eight studied construction companies. Most of the workers are employed on casual basis and lack worker benefits. Educational qualification of the workers is the major determinant of informal work in the industry while the use of human strength is a major characteristic of informal work. People with higher academic qualification are usually preferred to be employed as formal workers. I discussed how the day labour work can be referred to us ‘survivalists’ entrepreneurs’ as Valenzuala (2001) argues for. I further discussed the reasons for the limited number of women representation in the industry as well as the challenges women face in doing construction work. Occupational sex-segregation and social constructionist’s framework had been discussed. The construction hierarchy was also discussed.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study. The study set out to examine the gendered nature of the construction industry and the gendered constraints in getting formal and well paid employment in the construction industry in Takoradi. The empirical findings were examined in chapters four and five. Chapter six discussed the above two chapters using the concepts and theories that were set out to explain the findings. In light of this, two main concepts/theories were examined - the concept of informality and theories on gender ideologies and work. In this chapter, I have summarized the findings first after which I concluded the study.

7.1 Summary of Findings

7.2 Informality in the Construction Industry in Takoradi

The study was to know the degree of formality in the activities of the construction industry from the employment process to the benefits of the workers. The poor working conditions of the casual workers makes the concept of informality very important in the industry. There is a high degree of informality because the major part of the workforce lacks written contracts of work and protection. In the total employment number of the eight construction companies, casual workers (not including contract workers) were 71%. Degree of informality is higher because it is the more specialised areas that have permanent positions. So the companies subcontract or employ people as casual workers in order to complete a project. The workers who are employed as casual usually do the most difficult part of the work with the use of human strength.

Seventy percent of the construction workers informants have family responsibilities. They use the major part of their pay to look after their families. Many of them are also able to save some money out of what they earn to use in the future when they are no more employed, or to save to continue their education or to do other economic activities.

7.2.1 Conditions of Work and Labour Rights

Chapter five explores the conditions of the workers in the industry. The study found out that many of the workers are employed on temporary basis and this has affected their rights and benefits as workers. They work as day labourers, weekly waged, monthly waged or salary workers. The amount of money paid to workers depended on the company as well as whether the person was employed as a labourer, artisan, contract or formal worker. Gender difference in wages only comes if men and women are performing different tasks. Furthermore, the Labour Laws of Ghana (Labour Act of 2003) that governs the employment and benefits of workers are not applied to a large extent in the studied companies. The labour laws are formulated well enough but in some ways they are not enforced.

7.3. Gender Division of Labour in the Construction Industry in Takoradi

Gender division of labour is very visible in the industry. Men do what is regarded as the main construction work while women do what is regarded as supportive work. Men have many activities to perform in the administration and at construction site and their work ranges from highly specialised work to less specialised work. They work as engineers, supervisors, masons, carpenters, steel benders, as well as digging trenches, sand, concrete and cement carriers. Women areas of work were divided into three main categories. They work in the administration usually as secretaries, at the construction site as water carriers and a more supportive work in construction as caterers and food sellers. However, women usual activities in the industry are declining either because there is no need for that kind of work such as fetching water because there are water facilities at the site and/or men are taking those positions.

7.3.1 Gender Barriers

The study found out that, men dominate almost all the categories of work in the industry. Men have not any gender barriers. Their major challenge is to get permanent employment in construction companies. This is because many of them were employed on temporary basis. The casual workers learn different kinds of construction activities in order to be employable throughout the year.

Women on the other hand have gender barriers. Getting the chance to enter the construction industry in the first place is a major challenge for women because construction work is seen as difficult and inappropriate for women in Ghana. The study reveals four main factors or levels of women barriers in the studied companies which all have their root in the cultural perception of Ghanaians. In the first place, the educational system has had effect on women going into the industry. Most women do not take courses in building and construction which could help them get employment in the industry. The second is the workplace; employer/co-worker relationship where the comments and behaviours of some male workers prevent women from entering the industry. In the third factor, I examined women numerous household duties as having a negative effect on them becoming construction workers because combining the two jobs are difficult. Finally, I talked about women's own perception about construction work. Women as a group usually do not like to do construction work and the few who want to do it usually want to work in what is already regarded as women's work such as fetching water. I further explained that rural areas and self-builders usually have higher women representation in their activities than the cities and companies respectively. This is because the companies usually make sure there are water facilities at the site. Rural areas also have poor water facilities and women there have limited economic options than women in cities like Takoradi.

Gender ideologies play a key role in women's and men's employment. Due to the physical nature of construction work, gender ideologies in Ghana have attributed construction work to masculinity. The industry is sex-segregated with male workers dominating in almost every aspect of the construction process. Women are seen as weak in terms of strength to carry heavy things like blocks, concrete and so on. In view of this, social constructionists' framework view of gender as performance (Butler, 1994 in Alvesson and Billing, 2009) is vital in the industry. Women who have been able to do construction work have to cross several gender barriers such as the family, friend and society at large. They still endure working in the industry because they have many challenges at the workplace and even at the social level.

7.4 The Construction Hierarchy

The construction hierarchy has been used to explain the degree of formality. The deliberate casualisation of the workers in the studied companies gives the industry a low degree of

formality. There are very few people at the top of the hierarchy, few in the middle portion and many people at the bottom. In many instances, people at the middle and the bottom share similar characteristics. Women's position in the hierarchy is very limited because majority of the work categories in the industry are male-dominated.

7.5 Conclusion

This study considered two major aspects in the construction industry. The main focus was eight construction companies in Takoradi. The first part looked into the informal nature of the people who are employed to do construction work in the companies. It found out that 71% of the workforces are employed on casual basis they lack worker benefits and thus are informally employed. In order to get a permanent employment, the person should have a good education, preferably tertiary education on construction related subjects. Many of the informal workers lack the required educational certificate and this has had a negative effect on their employment. It has become difficult for the informal workers to apply for permanent employment and even if they do apply, the probability of not getting permanent employment is very high.

The casual workers work in poor working environment. Their job security is not assured as many of them are been sacked from (and even leave) work any time without prior notice. They lack written contracts of work and some workers have worked consistently for two years with the same construction company without proper working contract. The workers are exploited by the construction companies. These workers are still working in the industry either because they do not have a better alternative or because the money they get could at least look after them and their families.

To avert the high degree of informality in the construction industry, I recommend that the Labour Commission and the Labour Department of Ghana ensure that the labour laws of Ghana are followed by companies. They should make sure that the construction workers are protected from injuries and accidents and when accidents happen, the workers get the due compensation. In light of this, there must be periodic investigations by these two departments to ensure that the workers are safe at the site. The construction companies should also protect their employees.

The second consideration of the study examined the gendered nature of the construction activities. It found out that there are few women in the construction industry and the major cause for this was cultural norms in Ghana which has attributed construction work to men. The few women face many challenges as they do their work in the industry. These women have to battle with the issue of their gender from the societal level, family and friends and at the workplace. I say that the few women in the construction work represent women at large in the industry so I will say women are there doing construction work in Takoradi. I conclude that here that women are discriminated against construction work because it is believed that women cannot work up to expectation considering the physical nature of construction work in Takoradi. Therefore, there should be intentional integration of women to get education in construction and its related activities such as civil engineers, supervisors, quantity surveyors among others. This will help in creating more awareness about women's chances in the construction industry.

If I am giving the chance to bring out some new areas of research it could be on the changes in the spatial configuration of the urban space of Takoradi. Because of the new oil industry, there is construction of many new and modern buildings. The city is experiencing a high increase in population, housing problems and more new economic activities. It will also be interesting to study the women who own construction companies in Accra and Kumasi (informants told me women own construction companies in Accra and Kumasi though I cannot say that as a fact) and to see their employment process, working conditions and to know how they view women employment in their companies.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview (1) for Managers

I am a student from University of Bergen, Norway. I am undertaking a research on the topic “**Gender and Informality in the Construction Industry of Ghana’s Oil City Takoradi**”. This is an academic exercise in partial fulfilment of the award of Masters Degree. Your cooperation will be much appreciated as all information will be treated with much confidence, and will be used for analysis, explanations and research purpose only. Thank You.

No: Date:..... Location:.....

Name of company.....

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Age.....

2. Sex

(a). Male (b). Female

3. Marital Status

(a). Married (b). Single (c). Divorced (d). Widow(er)

(e). Fiancé(e) (f). Cohabitation

4. Educational Background

(a). Basic (b). JHS (c). Senior High

(d). Tertiary (e). Vocational, specify.....

(f). Others specify.....

5. Ethnicity?.....

6. If not born in Takoradi, how long have you lived here and why?

.....
.....

SECTION F: MANAGERS ONLY

7. Who owns the company?

.....
.....

8. What do you do as a manager?

.....
.....

9. How many people are in the company?

10. How many are men?

11. And how many are women?

12. How many are salary workers (number of men and women)?

.....
.....

13. How many are wage workers (number of men and women)?

.....
.....

14. How many are day labourers (number of men and women)?

.....
.....

15. Why do you employ day labourers?

.....
.....

16. What do you consider before employing;

a. (Men).....
.....

b. (Women).....
.....

17. How do you recruit them?

- (a). Through application (b). Worker(s) suggestion
(c). Friend(s) Suggestion (d). Due to personal relationship
(e). Others, specify

18. Do they undergo further training before or after employment?

- (a). Yes (b). No

19. Provide reason(s) for the answer

.....
.....

20. What activity(ies) do men and women do more in the company?

a. Men.....
.....

b. Women.....
.....

21. How do you rate the performance of both sexes?

a. Men.....
b. Women.....

22. Do men complain about the women's performance?

- (a). Yes (b). No

23. If yes, what is/are the complain(s) that you get?

a.....

b.....

c.....

24. Do women complain about the men?

(a). Yes (b). No

25. If yes, what is/are the complain(s) that you get?

a.....

b.....

c.....

26. Do you encourage women to work in this industry?

(a). Yes (b). No

27. Provide reason(s) for your answer.

a.....

b.....

28. Do any of the workers have:

a. Fixed working hours

b. Weekends off

c. Holiday

d. Maternity leave

e. Sick leave

f. Pension

g. Unions

Appendix 2. Semi-structured Interview (2): Construction and Quarrying Workers and Food Sellers

I am a student from University of Bergen, Norway. I am undertaking a research on the topic **“Gender and Informality in the Construction Industry of Ghana’s Oil City Takoradi”**. This is an academic exercise in partial fulfilment of the award of Masters Degree in Development Geography. Your cooperation will be much appreciated as all information will be treated with much confidence, and will be used for analysis, explanations and research purposes only. Thank You.

No: Date: Location:

Name of company.....

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Age.....

2. Sex

(a). Male (b). Female

3. Marital Status

(a). Married (b). Single (c). Divorced (d). Widow(er)

(e). Fiancé(e) (f). Cohabitation

4. Number of Children if any (oldest..... youngest.....)

5. Educational Background

(a). Basic (b). JHS (c). Middle School (d). Senior High (d). Tertiary

(e). Vocational, specify.....

(f). Others specify.....

6. Ethnicity?

7. If not born in Takoradi, how long have you lived here and why?

.....
.....

SECTION B: ACTIVITIES OF MEN AND WOMEN

8. In which sector of the industry are you working?

- (a). Engineer (b). Supervisor (c). Supplier (d). Mason
(e). Carry bricks/sand (f). Carry water (g). Sell food
(h). Pushing wheelbarrow (i). Others specify.....

9. How did you get the job?

- (a). Applied (b). Through the manager (c). Through a friend
(d). Others specify.....

10. Did you undergo any training on the job?

- (a). Yes (b). No

11. If yes, specify the nature of training.....

12. Did you have problem(s) in getting this job?

- (a). Yes (b). No

13. If yes, specify the problem(s)

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

SECTION C: ECONOMIC SITUATIONS OF EMPLOYEES

14. Are you a permanent employee in the company?

- (a). Yes (b). No

15. If no, were you employed only for this particular contract?

.....
.....

16. Will you be retained in the company after the construction work is completed?

- (a). Yes (b). No

17. If yes, give reasons why you will be maintained.

.....
.....

18. Are you paid monthly?

- (a). Yes (b). No

19. If no, how are you being paid?

.....

20. Are you making a better living out of this work?

- (a). Yes (b). No

21. Have you seen any change(s) in the payment since you started the working in the industry?

- (a). Yes (b). No

22. If yes, what is/are the changes?

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

23. Do you receive other items than your salary/wage?

(a). Yes (b). No

24. If yes, mention some of them.

a.
b.
c.

25. If you have a family, is your pay enough to cater for your family?

(a). Yes (b). No

26. If No, do you engage in other economic activities or get help from someone that enables you to completely cater for your family?

(a). Yes (b). No

27. If yes, specify the type of work or help.

.....

28. Are you able to make some savings?

(a). Yes (b). No

29. What are the risks involved in your work?

a.....
.....
b.....
.....

c.....
.....

SECTION D: SOCIAL RELATIONS AT WORKPLACE

30. How do you rate the performance of the opposite sex in this company?

- (a). Very good (b). Good (c). Average (d). Bad (e). Very bad

31. Provide reasons for your choice of answer.

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

32. What are the problems that you encounter with the opposite sex regarding your work?

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

33. Do you enjoy working with the opposite sex?

- (a). Yes (b). No

34. Provide reason(s) for your answer.

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

35. Do you get complain(s) from the opposite sex regarding your work?

(a). Yes (b). No

36. If yes, what type of complain(s)?

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

37. Do you hear any comment(s) from the opposite sex that you do not like?

(a). Yes (b). No

38. If yes, what were the comments?

a.....
.....

b.....
.....

39. How do you combine working with household duties?

.....
.....

40. Are any of your family members, spouse or friends against you having this type of work? (a). Yes (b). No

41. If yes, provide reason(s) why?

a.....

b.....

LABOUR CONDITIONS/RIGHTS

42. Do you enjoy the working conditions provided by the company?

- (a). Yes (b). No

43. Provide reason(s) for your answer.

.....
.....

44. Which of the following benefits do you have:

- h. Fixed working hours
- i. Weekends off
- j. Holiday
- k. Maternity leave
- l. Sick leave
- m. Pension
- n. Union

Appendix 3: Interview Guide (3) for Group Discussion

- a. Name, age, place of origin.
- b. Marital Status and number of Children if any.
- c. Educational Background.
- d. Why did you develop interest in the industry?
- e. What are the different work done by men and women and why?
- f. What are the training programmes for the Casual workers if any and which people are included?
- g. What are the specific problems or barriers in the industry that you are facing?
- h. What do you think about your pay?
- i. How do you manage your work and family?
- j. Are you able to save?
- k. How do you combine housework with your job?
- l. How does the other sex see your work and what are their comments?
- m. Have you encountered any issues of physical abuse?
- n. What are your relationships with the formal workers?
- o. What are the risks involved in your work?
- p. Which of the following benefits do you have:
 - 1. Fixed working hours
 - 2. Weekends off
 - 3. Holiday
 - 4. Maternity leave
 - 5. Sick leave
 - 6. Pension
 - 7. Union

Appendix 4: Interview Guide (4) for Individual Suppliers

- a. Name, age, Place of origin
- b. Marital Status and number of children if any.
- c. Educational Background.
- d. If not born in Takoradi, how long have you lived here and why?
- e. How are your relations with construction companies like?
- f. How many people do your company employ? (Number of men and women).