

Chapter 2

Child Labor

The participation of children in work is a universal phenomenon. It occurs in the richest countries, such as the United States, and the poorest countries, like Haiti. Children who work acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to function as adults within their families and communities. Recent European research reveals that work has a natural place in children's lives. And some scholars propose that the modern mode of production artificially separates work and learning. Others question the emphasis placed on formal schooling as the only route to learning, arguing that formal education is not the only means to acquire skills needed in adulthood (see Liebel 2004; Rodgers and Standing 1981, 1981a). But, everyone agrees that children should be protected from work that interferes with the acquisition of formal education and is detrimental to their wellbeing and development. Thus, in addition to its potential disruption of schooling, child labor can be exploitative and abusive in numerous ways. The problem is not that children may be engaged in work. It is the negative aspects of their working that makes child labor a potential form of child victimization.

From time immemorial, children have participated in the labor force in all societies and cultures (see Bass 2004; OECD 2003; Pinheiro 2006). Often, they worked side-by-side with adults. Boys joined hunting and fishing expeditions, worked with elders on the farm or in the shop. Girls gathered firewood, collected water, minded the family plot or younger siblings and the elderly, and assisted adult women in preparing the meals.

In China, for example, documents reveal that child labor has existed since the beginning of that nation's history (Tong and Lu 2004). In ancient India, children lived in their teacher's household ("gurukulam") while acquiring formal learning and while doing so shared basic chores of the family. In Africa too, there was a tradition of children participating in the common labor of the community or family (see Bekombo 1981). The medieval European custom of "apprenticing" children served a very useful purposive. In many instances guilds and master craftsmen, as well as bourgeoisie families, provided training for the child's adult roles and responsibilities. In England and Wales during 1851–1911, boys and girls as young as five

have been recorded as participating in the labor force (Cunningham and Stromquist 2005). In the industrializing United States the offspring of disenfranchised slaves and immigrants provided the labor needed in the booming industries (see Department of Labor 2000). As an investigator for the Children's Bureau during 1912–1920, the sociologist-photographer, Lewis Hine pictorially recorded immigrant and poor children engaged in a variety of jobs (Hindman 2002). Traditionally child work took place within the context of their immediate group and local community by which the child gradually learnt the fundamentals of being an adult. Particularly among working-class families, child labor was inseparable from family activities since a separate system of education had not emerged until the late nineteenth century (see Aries 1962; Montgomery 2001). Thus, if children in various areas of the globe always did participant in the labor force, one might question why does their working pose a problem today?

The issue, of course, is not that children engage in labor, either within or outside the home, but the nature of their work and the misuse of that labor in the contemporary world. Historically, as today, working children were typically poor, ignorant, illiterate, and lacking sophisticated guardians. And they were often exploited in every economic pursuit (Pieris 2004). Indeed, with the spread of trade and industrialization during the twentieth century, the exploitation of child labor was common. In the 1920s, for example, when confronted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), some colonial powers in the Gold Coast – now Ghana – reportedly resisted efforts to restrict children working in cocoa processing plants (Cullen 2005; Cunningham and Stromquist 2005).

There is a vast difference between children working in the context of traditional and pre-industrial, subsistence economies and the work many children are engaged in throughout the world today. Unlike traditional societies where children's work was part of the survival and cultural experience of the group, the transformation in work caused by industrialization and urbanization means that most children now work out of necessity due to poverty amidst plenty, and often have to survive alone while fending for themselves and other dependents. Typically poor members of a society or of marginal groups (e.g., lower castes, ethnic, racial or religious minorities, immigrants, indigenous peoples) constitute a desperate, “detached,” labor force providing many an opportunity for unscrupulous entrepreneurs (see Weiner et al. 2006). Except perhaps in remote and isolated rural sectors of some developing economies where children continue to be an integral part of family pursuits and the local economy, most contemporary child labor is isolated from traditional humanizing and protective influences. Thus, it is the change in the nature of work brought about by modern industrial economies that has made child labor in the modern world potentially harmful for children.

Everyone “knows” what is meant by the term “child labor” but finding an agreed upon definition of the term is difficult. One broad definition of “child labor” characterizes it as any activity of children that contributes to production, or frees or facilitates the work of adults, replacing the employment of adults (Kenny 2007; Schildkrout 1981). A major problem in defining child labor, much less defining any such activity as “victimizing,” is the variability in both the nature and meaning of

such activity across the globe. Is the time and effort a middle-class suburban American boy spends in straightening out his bedroom and taking out the trash equivalent work to his female Indian counterpart who helps her mother at home rolling out raw tobacco leaves into “beedi” for sale in the local market? Are the efforts of an unpaid child who minds her younger siblings all day in the favelas of Recife, Brazil equivalent to that of an American newspaper delivery boy? Is the reluctant domestic chore done by a 10-year old Iranian girl the same as the work of a 16-year old who apprentices as a plumber half the day in contemporary France? How do we standardize the time and effort spent by child workers around the world?

Resolving the question of whether or not children who work are being victimized is also confounded by a lack of agreement on such matters as how child labor is defined and measured. The International Labor Organization and UNICEF delineate among three different types of children’s work: (1) child work that does not affect their health and development, (2) child labor that is based on the minimum age as defined by the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) 1973 convention 138, and (3) the “worst forms” of child labor – work that endangers children’s immediate and long term wellbeing – as defined by ILO convention 182 in 1999 (see Pawar 2007: 52). Although under all three categories employed children could be subject to various forms of victimization, it is the “worst forms” of child labor that raise the most concern. Foremost among these is the nature of the work involved. Are the children engaged in labor in conjunction with others in their primary group, or are they burdened with intense labor all alone or in a non-familial and unfamiliar environment? Indeed, in the 1990s, the ILO tried to delineate between the concepts of “labor” and “work,” finally abandoning the idea altogether (Liebel 2004). How exactly does one standardize and measure a child’s work in a culturally diversified world? And, even within a single society, how do we calculate a young person’s labor – by the clock, by piece-meal, or contract work (see OECD 2003)?

Such issues of measurement aside, for the purpose of this chapter, child labor victimization is defined as any work (as defined by the United Nations agreements) engaged in by children that is harmful to a child – that takes place at the expense of a child’s education, or that involves a child in exploitative, hazardous, or illegal, tasks. These include being required to carry out too many or too arduous chores, activities that expose the child to toxic substances which pose a danger to a child’s health, or engaging in illegal activity such as prostitution or pornography that risk the over-all development and wellbeing of a child.

A major issue with the contemporary use of children for labor is their “commodification.” Children have become commodities to be negotiated, changed among hands, and disposed of like property (Montgomery 2001). Perhaps the most troubling example of this is the abusive and exploitative use of child labor, or using children to work in places where risky and unsafe labor practices prevail. For many employers, children have become an expendable commodity, particularly when recruited as child soldiers, trafficked as prostitutes, or bought as slaves (Bass 2004).

Frequently child workers are members of powerless, minority and marginal groups – such as the Narikurava, “gypsy,” rag-pickers in Tamil Nadu, India; the

Muslim children in the glass factories of Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh, India; or poor children in the bangle making units of Mumbai, India (c.f. BBC 2007; HRW 2006; HRW 2007; Kannan 2006; The Hindu 2006; Weiner et al. 2006). Desperately poor and illiterate parents aspiring for a better future for their offspring can be easily misled by the falsehoods of recruiters or acquaintances who promise to care for their children and part with their progeny to strangers (LaFermiere, Sharon 2006; Bass 2004). The losers in these transactions are the reluctant, isolated, unhappy children.

Children who work rather than attend school full-time face great impediment to their life chances because the evolving technologically-based world economy demands formal schooling to succeed. It is in the world's best interest to not only protect children from harsh working conditions, unfettered by dangerous or exhausting tasks for which they are ill-equipped, but to insure that they acquire the skills and education essential for living in a rapidly changing world. Children remain our best investment in the future. It is an imperative that the young be capable, competent, and healthy to deal with the unknown challenges of the globally interconnected world. Any work that interferes with a child's opportunity to prepare for the future is, therefore, a form of child victimization.

Why Children Work

Combating the victimization of working children is complicated by the diverse reasons why children enter the labor force around the world. Contemporary child labor is not motivated by one cause or condition although, undoubtedly, necessity is the major factor motivating most children to work, but there are numerous reasons why guardians allow or require that their children work. In some cases the child's parents put them to work claiming that it is an economic imperative that their children work at the family craft lest such traditions be lost. It is felt that, like themselves, their children are destined to "learn the trade." But such noble motives for hereditary occupations can be misguided. For example, children are often used in family glass-making enterprises in Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh, India with the claim that doing so is necessary to maintain the "family tradition" even though glass-making in this region is only six or seven decades old (Weiner et al. 2006). In other cases children work to save for the future. In southern India, for example, female children may work to save for their dowry (Anandharajakumar 2004). Children might also work to earn discretionary, "spending money." For example, in western industrialized societies children may work even though there is no dire necessity that they do so (Department of Labor 2000; HRW 2000). In a study of 9,022 American youths, over half held some job (Department of Labor 2000). One commentator notes that in many western societies "...child labor is a large and painful symptom of ...the glitter of a consumer culture, a culture which worships efficiency and profit and where economics dictate all actions" (Reddy 1995). And, according to some, the new emerging rapacious, consumer culture is driven by exploitative advertisement and ruthless labor practices plaguing our post-industrial,

sales- and market-driven, contemporary society. So much so that, “Children (*in developed countries*) work in fast food joints more hours than the statutory limit until they are asleep and get their fingers sliced in slicing machines. All for a pair of Nike shoes... .” (Reddy 1995: 211)

But most working children do so out of economic need. Street children everywhere, for example, are forced into the labor force for survival (Kenny 2007; Montgomery 2001; Moyo 2004; Weiner et al. 2006). In Alwar in India’s, Rajasthan, it was discovered that in about 40 villages prostitution of minor girls was conducted on a large scale by the male heads of the families who enjoyed the fruits of their young girls’ labor, some of whom – if particularly beautiful – may end up as far away as Bombay’s red light district (Gathia 1999). In war-torn Afghanistan, children beg because their widowed mothers cannot work (Sykes 2009). In a survey, many parents in India and Indonesia admitted that their children’s earnings added about a fifth to the family income (ILO 1996). In Iran too, such contributions by Afghan and Iraqi refugee children may constitute 25% of their family’s income (Jalali 2004). In spite of what the law may say, often, girls born on the tea estates of West Bengal in India pick the tender tea leaves with their nimble fingers and put them into their mothers’ baskets – thereby boosting the mothers’ earnings. When they reach age twelve, they are given their own baskets to fill and earn the prevailing low wages of adult tea-pickers (Weiner et al. 2006). And, it isn’t unusual for poor Brazilian children to work part-time in the markets to add a few coins to the family coffer (World Vision International 2007).

In other cases, poverty or conditions related to poverty necessitate that poor children work in order to gain the schooling essential for their futures. In 2003 the number of HIV/AIDs-orphans became rampant in Zimbabwe. Bourdillon (2006) found that in his small sample of 144 domestic child workers, 133 were still in secondary school, some using their wages to pay for their schooling in a country where public education is non-existent for the poor. Thus, being “fostered” in Zimbabwe – a practice common in African countries – can help a child continue schooling by leaving home, living and helping in the home of some relative or acquaintance while using the revenue from this work to pay for private schooling. Similarly, the Haitian rural and poor “restavecs” (or *rester avec*, literally staying with) children temporarily lodge with some willing host exchanging their domestic labor for a roof over the head, some leftovers, and the opportunity to go to school (Lacey 2008).

The “earn and learn” schools of Zimbabwe’s coffee and tea plantations seem like a logical alternative to the deficiencies in educational opportunities existing in many third world societies (Bass 2004). However, one wonders how well these children actually do in school after back-breaking work during the day. In rural China, “work and study” has become institutionalized. According to Human Rights Watch (2007), it is not only for personal financial benefit that children work, particularly in poorer and remote rural areas. Often their labor sustains the inadequately-funded public school system it self. Human Rights Watch (2007a: 2) notes:

Children from poor areas not only face vastly inferior resources, now they must also engage in heavy work to finance the schools they attend. The responsibility for adequately funding compulsory education should not fall on the shoulders of the children themselves.

Whatever the motivations behind their working, children who want to or are forced to work are found in all areas of the world. Whether or not children should or should not work at all, is a debatable issue. But how they are to be treated while working and, the kinds of work they are to be protected from doing are matters of international law.

Extent and Prevalence

Given that much of the work children are engaged in is out of sight, illegal, or otherwise uncountable, estimates of the numbers and locations of working children are likely to be gross underestimates (OECD 2003; Schildkrout 1981). Indeed, it is impossible to accurately count the numbers of invisible child workers laboring in diverse settings across the globe. Most official statistics often include only those workers earning wages for labor, automatically excluding much of the work in which most children are routinely engaged. For example, although more boys than girls work, the home-labor of girls, however valuable to the family, lacks any cash value and is often not counted as child labor (HRW 2003; ILO 1996). And information compiled by many governments often excludes the part-time labor of girls (or those working while attending school) from being counted in the labor force (Liebel 2004). Instances of children on their own working to support themselves and their younger siblings abound in the HIV-ravaged and conflict-prone areas of Africa, and among the deliberately abandoned children living on the streets of Asia and South America (see Bourdillon 2006; Kenny 2007; Liebel 2004). But few of them actually are counted in child-labor statistics.

A major question, of course, is who is to be counted as a ‘working’ child? Are juveniles being paid by parents or neighbors to do yard work or babysitting “for spending money” to be included in the labor data? Is only paid work to be counted and not the labor of millions of young people who share family chores without being paid? Moreover how accurately can we document the numbers, genders, and types of labor-force participation of children in areas where insurgencies, wars, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, and instability are a daily staple? To what extent can we trust the statistics provided by governments whose reputations are at stake or the estimates of NGOs and voluntary agencies that have their own agendas to promote, however well-meaning these may be?

Take the example of India. For decades, India refused to rely on sources other than its decennial census to estimate the number of children in its labor force (Pinto 2007). As a consequence, while the Indian government estimates 12 million to be the number of children at work, children’s advocates claim that the real number is closer to 60 million (Gentleman 2007). Yet others claim that almost 20% of India’s economy employs workers below 14 years of age (BBC 2007). Which number is accurate? From interviews with various people in the glass factories of Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh, India Weiner et al. (2006) estimate that 40,000 to 50,000 minors are employed. The government’s labor department’s estimates are much lower.

Regardless of the difficulty in counting them, estimates of the number of working children throughout the world are staggering. The actual size of the child labor force lies somewhere between the numbers reported in official data and what various organizations with interests in child labor insist the true figures must be (Kenny 2007). However, whatever the data source, the evidence suggests that while child labor is a worldwide phenomenon, both the numbers and worst forms of it are concentrated in certain pockets of the world.

One estimate suggests that worldwide, there are more than 320 million children below 16 years of age who work (Parker 2008; Schmitz et al. 2004). On the other hand, UNICEF estimates that the number is closer to 158 million working children. It is believed that one of every five – over a quarter of a billion – children between the ages of 5 and 14 are engaged in remunerative work (Reddy 1995). Similarly, the ILO estimates that of the 250 million children between age 5 and 14 who work in developing countries almost two-thirds live in Asia, a third are in Africa, and only 7% are located in Latin America. UNICEF (2001) has a slightly different distribution count. According to their estimates, of the 5–14 year-olds who work, 41%, 21%, and 17% respectively are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Herath (2007) suggests a somewhat different distribution with 41% of the world's working children living in Africa, 29% in Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand), 21% in Asia, 16% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and essentially 0% to be found in North America. UNICEF estimates that 69 million – one in three – sub-Saharan African children are engaged in labor while 44 million South Asian children are in the labor force (UNICEF 2008: Table 9). Of 218 million working children, 126 million are believed to be involved in hazardous work and at least 120 million are full-time laborers (HRW 1989; ILO 2006). According to some estimates, about a quarter of the 5–15 year olds work as wage earners in Latin America, where they constitute an important segment of the labor force (Carey 2004). There are 300,000 15–17 year olds employed in American agriculture alone (HRW 2000). Between 1996 and 1998, almost three million juveniles worked during the school year, while four million worked during the summer months (Herz and Kosanovich 2000). The United Farm Workers Union estimates that 800,000 children are employed on family-owned farms and as hired workers in North America (HRW 1989). And, in Germany between 36% and 46% of German children work several times a week while 6–8% are engaged in labor daily (Liebel 2004).

What accounts for the varied distribution of child labor around the world? Undoubtedly it has to do with the distribution of poverty across the globe, as well as various factors related to the types of work available. But, also more subtle economic factors may be involved. For example, in one analysis Bass (2004) argues that the percentage of children found working in a country is correlated with income disparity. When income is concentrated in the top 10%, as in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Kenya, the rate of child labor increased to over 40%. Comparatively, in Germany, Japan, Sweden, and the United States where income is distributed among more than a fifth of the population, only a negligible number of children are engaged in labor. Thus, although poverty of the families of child workers is related to the necessity of their children to work, their individual misfortune alone does not

explain the aggregates of working children in any society, nor does it necessarily account for their mistreatment in some social orders.

Even if it is close to impossible to accurately count the true number of young people engaged in work activities in countries across the globe, the evidence clearly indicates that large numbers of young people do work. For many their participation in the labor force may benefit both them and society at large. However, for millions, their labor is exploited, the work they are required to do is harmful to their immediate and long-term health, and their labor-force participation negates their acquiring the skills and education necessary for adulthood as well as robs them of the childhood most people consider to be their birthright.

Children's Work

Lewis Hine's engaging photographs of nineteenth century America recorded children working in industries as disparate as spinning and textile mills, the garment industry, tobacco products and match making, glass works, coal and other mines, oyster shucking and fishing, berry and cotton picking, dressing shop windows, setting pins in bowling alleys, and acting as golf-caddies (Hindman 2002). The same photographs could just as well be taken in the twenty-first century. Even if the occupations may have changed somewhat, today, most of the world's working children are engaged in agricultural work and, as in past centuries, they are also found working in small-scale manufacturing all over the developing world, as well as selling just about anything imaginable, and begging (ILO 1996). Throughout the world, wherever nimble-fingered, small-sized, obedient, and manageable laborers are needed, exploitable child workers are to be found. Often malnourished, they silently labor for long hours at strenuous tasks at low wages, or for no returns at all save for meager existence.

Larson (2004) claims that about 84% of rural child workers in India are involved in agricultural labor, while about 39% of urban Indian children are engaged in manufacturing and another 15% work in various trades and commerce. Tong and Lu (2004) report that in China "Children work in construction, the apparel industry, and other industrial and commercial enterprises. In the 1990s, of the 10 million construction workers in China from rural areas, one-quarter of them were male child laborers."

According to UNICEF (2001), children are increasingly used as couriers by drug traffickers in Asia and Latin America, and most working children are employed in the informal sectors such as small scale industries, contract manufacturing, and street vending. Children work in the carpet weaving industries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India; labor in textile mills in India and Portugal; and work in roadside eateries and tea-stalls all over the world. Child workers are employed also in match-stick and fire-cracker making in India, or they can be found in mining, construction, and garment manufacturing in China. They pan for gold and diamonds in West African countries, serve as soldiers in many insurgencies in African countries, and

labor in the quarries and rock piles of Uganda (Bashkaran 2007; Pownell 2008). Indonesian girls work as domestics in Malaysia and under-aged females serve as domestic laborers in El Salvador, Malaysia, Togo, and other countries (HRW 2004). Children mind untold numbers of small shops and stalls in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As recently as 2001, with the ILO's persuasion, the United Arab Emirates discontinued the practice of using boys, usually from South Asia, as camel jockeys in the Middle East (Pinheiro 2006; Wheeler 2006). Children cut flowers in Colombia and pick oranges in Brazil, cocoa in the Ivory Coast, tea in Argentina, Bangladesh, and India, and vegetables and fruits in the United States. American youngsters also flip hamburgers in fast food joints, work as golf-caddies, and baby-sitters. Similarly, in Spain children are employed in the agricultural sector. Legally entitled to only 75% of the wages received by adults, youngsters in Portugal are employed in shoe, clothing, and textile industries, while in southern Italy many under-aged workers tend to labor in industrial workshops and agriculture. In Russia, young boys and girls are exploited by criminal gangs in enterprises that often endanger their health and wellbeing (Liebel 2004). In the Dominican Republic child labor is predominantly masculine with almost 75% of the boys seeking employment (Bryson and Bryson 2004). Female children work primarily within the home but, increasingly, as they age seek outside work. Most working children are under age 14. Child labor is slightly higher in the rural zone (19.9%) compared with the urban regions (16.4%).

Although much of the labor involving children is engaged in by boys, girls make up a substantial proportion of working juveniles. In Tamil Nadu, India, for example, young girls are found rolling tobacco into beedis for smoking (Anandharajakumar 2004). And girls regularly accompany their mothers to pick tea leaves in West Bengal, India (Weiner et al. 2006). Even at the tender age of five girls may be employed in India (Anandharajakumar 2004; Subbaraman and Witzke 2007). In Chile boys may supplement the incomes of their unemployed and underemployed fathers while girls take over the domestic tasks of their mother who may be working outside the home (Luz Silva 1981). In Pakistan disproportionate numbers of rural and urban boys, compared to girls, are engaged in making a living (Munir and Mangi 2007). On the other hand, in rural China girls are more likely to be engaged in paid work compared to boys, representing close to 75% of the total child labor force in some villages (Tong and Lu 2004). In Chile, Luz Silva (1981) found that 39% of Chilean boys were engaged in farm work while 53% of the girls were engaged in service occupations.

Rodgers and Standing (1981, 1981a) categorize the work performed by children into: domestic work; non-domestic non-monetary work; tied or bonded labor; wage labor; and marginal economic activities. Based on this categorization the various types of work children do can be grouped into four major types.

One: Probably the most common form of child labor consists of the chores and unpaid work children do at home for their family's maintenance. Girls are predominant among these child-workers everywhere and in developing countries their brothers may also manage herds of cattle, goats, or work along side adults in the fields. Some of these children may be in school, but most are not.

Two: A large number of children engage in unpaid work outside the domicile on behalf of their family, such as participation in the family's small enterprises at the market or in the family shop. The basic use of this labor is to help the family's enterprise while perhaps enabling the child to pick up the skills of that enterprise for the future. These children may attend school, but more likely are not acquiring any formal schooling.

Three: Some children who, in exchange for payments to their family, are lent or contracted – if not outright sold – to others for payment of some family debt. The only rewards for the children in this transaction are the, often leftover, scraps from the tables of their “employers.” Bondage, serfdom, and slavery belong in this category. Large numbers of such children are “employed” as domestics in third world cities, towns, and working in the farms around the world.

Four: Uncounted thousands of children work as the sole breadwinners of their households due to sickness, accidents, and death in the family, or abandonment by their erstwhile caregivers. These young people, in effect, are the heads of the household often caring for younger siblings and sick adults. Typically these children are not in school and, moreover, are burdened not only with the chores of the household but also have to fend for themselves and their dependents.

Issues in Child Labor

Individuals and organizations concerned with working children of various kinds confront a number of issues in attempting to regulate, reduce, or even eliminate child labor in countries across the globe. These include: (1) whether or not the involvement of children in labor of any kind is something to be concerned about at all; (2) the role of child labor in economic development; (3) paid versus unpaid child labor; and (4) variations in child labor in rural versus urban milieus.

A Western Concept

Some people argue that objections to children being engaged in work activities stem from a Western bourgeois notion of children's rights that is not necessarily shared by many cultures in the world. Liebel (2004), for example, notes that children in some countries “... often already enjoy rights that do not figure at all in modern western views of children's rights. It is a wide-spread practice among Amerindian and African peoples to entrust to children animals and arable land which they are able to use according to their own judgment and for which they are responsible.” And Ennew et al. (2005) observe that because of their tradition and culture, in Southeast Asia's lower Mekong Delta, forbidding children's work is translated as Western cultural imperialism rather than some sincere concern for the wellbeing of children.

This view has been contested by others who contend that today droves of children are employed in risky jobs where the necessary skills are neither

traditional to some culture or of long-term benefit to the worker (Weiner et al. 2006). Indeed, rather than preparing their children for the future, the parents of Togolese girls regularly entrust their daughters to strangers in exchange for small amounts of cash (HRW 2003). In many places certain rites – associated with birth, coming of age, marriage, and death – encumber countless millions of parents in displays of conspicuous consumption. If poor, their children’s labor becomes the collateral for their debt (Rodgers and Standing 1981, 1981a). And many parents, in the expectation that their wages will be remitted back to them, even send their children to far off urban centers as domestic servants or brothel prostitutes (Bass 2004; HRW 1989). Although such activity may be acceptable according to some cultural beliefs, it is questionable if such beliefs can override the well being of the children being exploited and harmed in the process.

A similar argument contends that children have a “right” to work. This argument is quite valid. As with anyone else, children and young people should not be prohibited from working just because of their age alone. Working children help themselves and their primary groups to stay alive. They add to their societies’ wealth. And by working they can acquire a sense of self and augmented power (Gathia 1999; Kenny 2007). But this perspective ignores the often ugly side of contemporary child labor. People in nations across the globe have come to realize that “rights” also can, and in many cases should be, subject to regulation. No one would contend that children can not work at all. The issue is what kind, how long, under what conditions, and for what compensation can they work. It is not their working but the abuse of their labor that is of concern. And there is ample documentation of abusive child labor practices in contemporary societies.

One glaring example is the global cross-national transportation of children, specifically girls, for servitude by immigrants and temporary residents into the United States and other Western countries:

The trafficking of children for domestic labor in the U. S. is an extension of an illegal but common practice in Africa. Families in remote villages send their daughters to work in cities for extra money and the opportunity to escape a dead-end life. Some girls work for free on the understanding that they will at least be better fed in the home of their employer.

The custom has led to the spread of trafficking, as well-to-do Africans accustomed to employing children immigrate to the U. S. Around one-third of the estimated 10,000 forced laborers in the United States are servants trapped behind the curtains of suburban homes. According to a study by the National Human Rights Center at the University of California at Berkeley and Free the Slaves, a nonprofit group. No one can specify how many are children, especially since their work can so easily be masked as chores (MSNBC 2008).

In many instances of abusive child labor, parents pawn their children’s lives to some acquaintance or stranger while benefiting, directly or indirectly, from such arrangements. Or they may actually believe that their decision is in their child’s best interests (see: HRW 2003; Kenny 2007; Kristoff 2009). One Brazilian woman ruefully stated:

When I was eight years old I was already working in other people’s kitchens, just as my mother had done before me. Now my kids are growing up with the same routine, working to help me (Kenny 2007).

But apart from parents, who jeopardize their children's lives and future by putting them to work too early, national rulers or "wannabe" rulers motivated by the lust for power and wealth have been known to kidnap uncounted numbers of minors to forcibly work on their behalf. As discussed in Chaps. 4 and 5, captive children are readily found in war-torn third world countries, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. According to news reports, in Sudan's civil war both the government army and their supportive militia, the Janjaweed, systematically and regularly kidnapped not only non-Arabic speaking adults, but also children (BBC 2008; Winter 2007). In violation of International Labor Organisation Convention No.182 (ILO 1999), captive boys were used as forced agricultural labor; girls were raped and forced to "marry" their captors whose household chores and farming also benefited from such forced labor.

While a desire to protect children from working may, indeed, be a Western, bourgeois, concept, it is doubtful that even the most culturally-sensitive would object to intervening when the use of child labor is exploitative, abusive, dangerous and inimical to the immediate and long-term best interest of the children concerned.

Development at Any Cost

World data clearly indicates that lower rates of child labor are directly related to higher levels of economic development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) contends that open trade practices, as advocated by Western nations, also correlate highly with the lower employment of children (OECD 2003: 42). And it is also argued that the trade union movement also depresses the recruitment of children into the labor force by limiting minimum age and hours of labor, guarantee of livable wages, and secure working conditions (ILO 2006). The positive impact of citizens' education – a concomitant of development – is demonstrated in Kerala, India with its high rate of adult employment and literacy and lower incidence of child labor compared to other parts of India (Subbaraman and Witzke 2007). So, it is clear that economic development will lead to a reduction in the use of child labor in societies across the world. Paradoxically, however, it also appears that the rush to modernize and develop economically can entangle many minors in the labor force. The process of economic development, in short, may itself lead to the victimization of child labor.

An excellent example is China where the building boom propelled child slavery in the brick kilns of Shanxi Province (French 2007). In their race to finish buildings for the 2008 Olympics, many Chinese contractors employed children as young as 12 and 13 who slogged 15-hour work days on various enterprises in Beijing (BBC 2007a; b; Bristow 2007). During 1997 in Beijing alone there were 160,000 children younger than 15 working in the brick making industry. Some 66,392 were between ages 6 and 15, and an almost 14% of these children were not attending school. About a third of Chinese children worked in factories and, at least, 924,000 children below age 15 work in China, (Tong and Lu 2004).

In developing economies it is next to impossible to enlist and retain pupils in schools amidst entrepreneurs who are busy luring them away to work (see Pawar 2007). Because they are a source of inexpensive and trouble-free labor, many export-oriented sweat shops in India, Bangladesh, and China recruit child workers (Barboza 2008; BBC 2007; Rahman 2006; Tsai 2007). To meet ever-growing demand chemical plants, like naphthalene factories in China, regularly use labor from the poorer southwest, and often children are included among these workers (French 2007). By some estimates, only about 5% of the work engaged in by children is in export-oriented labor but the export industries of developing countries across the globe employ a large number of young people in diverse forms of labor (HRW 1989). For instance, with no, or inadequate, equipment children in Ilakaka, Madagascar dive for sapphire destined for foreign markets (Hogg 2007). And the world's insatiable demand for cocoa has also led to a demand for children to work in the cocoa plantations of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, often under very adverse conditions (Bass 2004; Severson 2006). Although some argue that the employment of large numbers of minors in the work-force, even in the West, is a symptom of the emergence of "want," and not "need," based economies (see Reddy 1995), it is not an exaggeration to say that what has been a blessing for people in developed countries – affluence and conspicuous consumption – has become a curse for the children of the poor worldwide. But for the demand from those with deep pockets in the developed world, young boys would not be risking their lives mining sapphires in the hot and rocky plains of Madagascar (Hogg 2007). And if the penultimate child consumer works to "buy," the poor child labors to provide the goods they buy, even if they could never even think of buying these goods themselves.

Child Labor Versus Working Children

Most critics of child labor acknowledge the distinction between helping out in the family home and children working outside the home for wages. The latter usually is a systemic problem of pervasive poverty. Often, the definition of what constitutes child labor is interpreted differently by the diverse parties involved – what the children, their parents, and their employers may define as simply "helping out" and what the law may define as illegal child labor. For example, in the Muslim community of Kano, Nigeria children often serve as the intermediaries between their economically productive, but secluded, mothers and the commercial world of the bazaar outside (Schildkrout 1981). In the Caribbean island nation of the Dominican Republic the Secretaria de Estado de Trabajo (Labor Secretariat) estimates that over 20% of adolescents do unpaid family work. The Labor Secretariat also estimates that more than 50% of working children are less than 14 years of age (Bryson and Bryson 2004). In the Dominican Republic the vast majority of minors (some 68%) attend school but also work outside the home, and work where they reside. Males make up the largest proportion of those working outside their homes (Bryson and Bryson 2004). Are children who enable their mothers to engage in income-producing

activities “child labor” or simply “helping out?” It might be asserted that as long as such activities do not interfere with the education and wellbeing of the youngsters, the activity belongs in the latter category. But, since their “helping out” is economically remunerative, it could also be seen as “labor.”

Given the lack of data and the dispersed and hidden global distribution of child labor, it is difficult to quantify the role of children in unpaid enterprises that are detached from the family and group. This unpaid labor could result in income (Bass 2004). For instance, children may be sell eggs, chilies, and tomatoes from the family garden, coconuts from the backyard trees, or the slightly narcotic khat leaves for chewing along the streets of Mogadishu and other East African countries. Or, they may be found working in roadside family-stalls, or vending commodities along city streets. It is not an unusual sight to see youngsters peddling balloons, toys, pencils, q-tips, or roasted peanuts along the avenues of San Jose, Lagos, Mexico City, Chennai, Port-au-Prince, or cities in virtually any developing country. The proceeds of their labors become part of the family’s income, not the child’s. Whether it directly or indirectly contributes to the family coffers, children’s work in domestic activities must be considered a form of child labor that may be rife with all manner of victimizing abuse and exploitation. Thus, when addressing the problem of “child labor,” the unpaid family-related work of children throughout the world should be included in any ameliorative action, and regulatory efforts must address the issue of the survival of the primary group as one of the conditions that lead to children working.

Rural Versus Urban Disadvantage

Poor rural areas of any country seem to be eternal sources of cheap child-labor simply because educational amenities are sparse and the immediate needs of the family require every pair of hands that can work. International data suggest that globally 90% of employed children work in agriculture (ILO 1996; HRW 1999; OECD 2003; Cigno et al. 2002). Much of this involves subsistence farming or marginal production. In rural Sri Lanka, children regularly share the task of peeling and bashing cinnamon barks with adults (BBC 2007c). At least a quarter of the rural children are reportedly employed in an almost endless list of African countries – from Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, and Zambia. Rural children constitute 73% of the children working in the independent kingdom of Lesotho and 20% of the working children in Gabon (Bass 2004). In Chile, just under a third of urban 12–14 year-olds are engaged in “personal service” while almost 60% of comparable rural youths hold agricultural jobs (Luz Silva 1981). According to Tsotseria (2004) the disadvantaged rural children of post Soviet Georgia are disproportionately found to be employed in contrast to those living in the capital (40% compared to 21%). Over all, 39% of the 10–14 year old and 19% of 5–9 year-old Georgian children work. In India, children make up about 23% of those working in manufacturing and trades, while children equal 55% of those

working in agriculture. About 75% of rural children are engaged in farm and related work (Subbaraman and Witzke 2007). In China, where this rural–urban disparity prevails, school children in rural and remote areas are subject to fairly heavy manual seasonal and recess-time work, often far away from home while their compatriots in Beijing and Shanghai often attend private schools in comfort (ILO 2006; HRW 2007).

Even if not directly engaged in agricultural work, rural children still seem to dominate the world of working children worldwide. For example, in rural southern Tamil Nadu, India – a region that is inundated with small fireworks and match-stick manufacturing units – much child labor exists inside the homes in rural areas and small settlements around the town of Sivakasi away from the 640 licensed factories. These workers supply the finished piecemeal product to the nearly 6,000 unlicensed cottage industries that dot the landscape (Menon 2007). And in Afghanistan there is ample evidence of child labor, particularly among traditional village-craftsmen of Istalif – renowned for pottery glazed with turquoise, ochre, and green – who divide the work based on the age and seniority of the children (BBC 2007e).

Longitudinal data from villages studied during 1996 to 1999 in Benin, West Africa also demonstrate this rural–urban divide in child labor. The practice of “fostering” in Africa almost always involves rural boys and girls being relocated, if only temporarily, to kin or to higher status households in urban areas (OECD 2003; Bass 2004). But, while children used to leave with urban relatives with whom they were placed, children increasingly are now leaving with strangers to work, increasing the chances of their being exploited and abused (Bass 2004).

An urbanizing, developing, world it is the children of the rural poor who are overwhelmingly forced to earn a living before they attain adulthood, often at the expense of formal schooling. This disparity raises the issue of where amelioration efforts should be concentrated and to what end. For example, should rural children be facilitated by bringing schools and work to them so they can continue to reside in their homes and stay in the rural settlements or should they be supported to leave for economic advantages in the cities of developing societies? If they depart from home, at what age should they be encouraged to leave, what protective measures need to be in place, and how is their long-term potential to be guaranteed?

The Victimization of Children Who Work

Few people would object to children working, as long as that labor benefited them and did not harm or exploit them or detract from their future life chances. Organizations concerned with child labor, however, object to a large number of things that, in effect, result in the victimization of children engaged in work activities. Among these concerns are the impact working may have on the child’s education, affecting future earnings and potential for development. A second concern is that of (legal and economic) equity since children are often economically exploited by being paid less, if at all, for their labor than an adult would be. A third concern

focuses on the physical and mental-health dangers that working children often face. And fourth is the pervasive issue of the use of children in illegal activities with the risk such activities pose to their lives, liberty, or their moral development.

Denial of Education

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989) is an acknowledgment that even in the least developed societies of the world, a minimal education is critical to individual children's marketable skills, and a society's future economic and social potential. The CRC requires all signatories to guarantee a child's right to education by protecting them against any work that interferes with their schooling. It is estimated that a quarter of the world's children do not complete even primary education in spite of the almost universal affirmation of this Convention by the member nations (Parker 2008). And, by one count over 80 million children do not go to school at all (Harmer 2007). As discussed more fully in Chapter 8, although there are many reasons why children do not attend school, the necessity that they work is one major impediment to their doing so. In this regard, many young people in the world face a life-defining paradox. In order to obtain a good job in adulthood, they need to acquire formal schooling. But, in order to survive into adulthood, they need immediate work – work that can greatly impede, if not totally deny, their ability to acquire formal schooling. Caught in this trap, they, and in turn the children they will one day have, are ensnared in an endless cycle of poverty and destitution (Baland and Robinson 2000; Emerson and Souza 2003; Traver 2004).

In Honduras, for example, close to 300,000 children aged 10–18 have left school to work (see Liebel 2004; Zelaya and Larson, 2004). Many of the children drop-out because of the conflict between hours of work and the school schedule, and due to the failure of their inadequate wages to cover the cost of school fees and/or other incidental expenses. Human Rights Watch (2002) reports that fewer than 40% of the children in Ecuador over age 14 attend school, primarily because they need to work. Some youths are able to attend night classes, but traveling to and from school at night involve increased risk to their safety, particularly for female children (HRW 2004). Many Brazilian children attend school until noon and then work in the market to supplement the family's income. Most report that they wished they could attend school full time (World Vision International 2007).

To rectify this problem, some countries, such as Zimbabwe, offer “earn and learn” schooling programs. But the dropout rate, even there, is as high as 20% of participants each school year (Bass 2004). Similarly, China has systematically failed to provide sufficient funding for public schools in poor, remote areas so that schools have had to find innovative ways to replenish their coffers. More than 400,000 middle and junior high schools have set up agricultural and manufacturing schemes using student labor to generate income (HRW 2007).

Relatively simple steps can be taken by governments to facilitate school attendance even if children work. One example is offered by the Indian state of Kerala. For decades, Kerala has had the highest literacy rate among the Indian states. The state also has a negligible percentage of children aged 5–14 who are the main workers of the family (Weiner et al. 2006). To avoid absenteeism, school recess has been established to coincide with the harvest time so that youths can help in the tea, pepper, nutmeg, cardamom, and ginger harvesting. Similarly, although there are almost two million working children between that ages of 9 and 18 in Iran (usually refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan), the Iranian government has forbidden children below 15 from working while encouraging children to work fewer hours and attend free schools for longer hours (Jalali 2004).

Hazardous Work

In addition to long hours, poor wages, and denied educational opportunities many child laborers face risking their immediate and long-term health. One such danger is malnutrition. Often entering the labor force malnourished children may leave home to work only to find that they are fed minuscule amounts while being required to engage in tasks that expend more calories than they consume. Or, those who remain at home while engaged in labor share their earnings to feed their family, thus reducing their own calorie consumption while they are expending more energy working to help feed the family. Because of limitations of physiological and emotional development inherent to age there is scientific reason to protect children from this exploitation. Children are also at a physiological disadvantage due to a higher chemical absorption rate, rapid skeletal growth, lower heat tolerance, and ability to assess risks (see Child Labor Education Project, ND). Thus, working children may be physically victimized by the simple fact that their labor actually detracts from their nutrition.

Among the many external dangers working children may face are toxins, carcinogens, bad and unsanitary working conditions, sexual harassment and related diseases, childhood arthritis from redundant labor. Article 19(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that all children have the right to be free of "...all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child." But many working children – especially those away from home – experience threats to their wellbeing as well as abuse and exploitation by their employers and fellow workers (HRW 2006; UN 1989: 19).

In many instances the jobs young workers are assigned involve risky enterprises and dangerous work-sites that could have both immediate and long-term negative health consequences. Weiner et al. (2006) observed that accidents and health risks shorten the number of years a child-worker may be able to be a productive worker. Many young workers, for example, labor in recycling units all around the third world in cheap dumping grounds salvaging parts from used computers and other

electronics. Invariably they labor without protective gear and are exposed to toxic chemicals and other health hazards. Some children work at extremely risky ventures, endangering their very lives such as the children sold to fisherman in Ghana, and elsewhere in West Africa, who risk losing their lives while diving to loosen trapped nets (Omaar 2007). In Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Northern Iraq children work to salvage the copper, brass, and aluminum from unexploded landmines and ammunition. Not infrequently, they set the explosives off, losing their lives and limbs (Townsend 2003; The Hindu 2009; The Nippon Foundation 2008). And under-aged matadors may bring much pride to their parents, who usually are their masters, at the risk of injury or their lives (BBC 2009).

Article 3C of the International Labour Organization's The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 prohibits work that "...by its very nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is to harm the health, safety or morals of the children" (ILO 1999: 2). Although India is an enthusiastic signatory to this international agreement, enterprises that recruit child labor in India often violate this standard (Subbaraman and Witzke 2007; Weiner et al. 2006). One such industry is fireworks manufacturing where child workers face an imminent and a constant threat of fire. According to some estimates about 45,000 children below age 15 are employed in the fireworks and match-making related cottage industries in and around the town of Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu, India (Weiner et al. 2006). Many children, along with their parents, are engaged in making small fireworks in the backyards of their homes (Menon 2007). In the United States, child agricultural workers, typically the poorest of the poor migrating wherever harvesting is in season, may be exposed to an array of dangers that arise from carcinogens in pesticides, unsanitary working and living conditions, and accidents from risky equipment (CDC 1998; HRW 2000). In China, an under-aged worker in a naphthalene factory near Najing died in an explosion while a 15-year old boy, exhausted from successive 20-hour days, died from being caught in a ginning machine (French 2007). In Guangdong, in southern China, for scant amounts girls between the ages of 13 and 15 are forced to work for 300 hours a month (Barboza 2008). In China 131 children who ingested oil were poisoned while working in a school manufacturing enterprise making castor oil on its premises for a local business (HRW 2007). The same report reveals that in Xinjiang Province local authorities finally banned cotton-picking for elementary and middle school children as being excessively physically demanding, although picking vegetables and collecting recycling materials were not forbidden.

Working children around the world face physical health risks that would be deemed criminal if faced by adult workers in many parts of the world. In one case, a garbage-heap resident of Phnom Penh, Cambodia hoped that her 10-year old child would grow up to work in a factory because she had seen other children picking trash in the garbage-heap being run over by garbage trucks (Kristoff 2009b). In Uttar Pradesh, India over 5,000 children employed in pottery factories routinely inhale silica dust that could cause pulmonary fibrosis (Weiner et al. 2006). Around the globe, many child workers are affected by the onset of early arthritis and joint diseases stemming from repetitive movement and the cumulative effects of toxins and harmful chemicals (HRW 2000; Kenny 2007). In the brick-making industries of

Peru, it is not unusual for a young child to haul between 1,000 and 2,000 bricks a day – each weighing four to nine pounds (Parker 2008). Indeed, in Latin America, Asia, and Africa the sight of usually barefoot small children carrying loads on their heads while dodging a variety of hurdles is a regular affair. Although illegal, 1,000 of Bolivian children, referred to as “jucus,” work pushing and steering carts filled with tin, drill holes with sledge hammers weighing twenty-five pounds to extract and clean tin ore. When inhaled, dust from this ore can cause headache, loss of appetite, and death due to prolonged exposure (World Vision International 2007). Sudhakar (2008) reports that a minor girl was lured, without her parents’ knowledge or consent, by an official of a spinning mill in Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, India into feeding cotton in a machine which chopped off four of her right-hand fingers. In Ecuadorian banana plantations children as young as 8 and 12, working for as little as \$3.30 per day, are not only endangered by 12-hour shifts, sexual harassment, and sharp objects such as knives, but also toxic pesticides sprayed from aircrafts that pose long-term health risks. As noted by Human Rights Watch (2002: 4):

...they used to protect themselves from the toxic liquid: hiding under banana leaves, bowing their heads, covering their faces with their shirts, covering their noses and mouths with their hands, and placing banana cartons on their heads.

In violation of law, Egyptian youngsters employed in the cotton cooperatives are systematically exposed to toxic chemicals. Sometimes they are asked to saturate cotton ropes with dangerous pesticides using motorized pumps to spray since it is the pumps that have wide-aperture nozzles, and collect egg masses of pests from the residue-soaked cotton crop (HRW 2001: 8).

Besides the hazards of their work, child workers often experience brutal employers. For example, LaFerniere (2006) described the life of a thirty pounds 6-year old in Ghana, who from the chilly pre-dawn paddles a canoe a mile out from shore for 5 hours so that his employer could fish. He often worked 14-hours a day besides receiving liberally dealt out beatings from his employer. The lives of illiterate boys engaged in dangerous work in the lead gas fume filled environments of auto repair shops in the Dominican Republic are hopeless and bleak (World Vision International 2007). Children employed in roadside food stalls in India face a variety of threats (Pandey 2006). Besides the dangers lurking in working in recycling activities, the boys experience “Physical violence against child workers ranges from slaps to severe beatings using implements such as shoes, belts, sticks, or household implements; knocking heads against the walls; and burning skin with irons, among other forms of violence” (HRW 2003: 2). Children, some trafficked across from Mali and Burkina Faso working in the cocoa farms of the Ivory Coast report beatings, long hours in the hot sun, and injuries from the machetes they are too small to handle to split the cocoa pods (Bass 2004; Fedrau 2008; MSNBC 2009; Tiger 2003). Haitian boys and girls, report physical and psychological abuse in the hands of the masters of the households where they work as “restavecs” (World Vision International 2007). The problem is of a different kind, but accentuated when the child worker is female while working in someone else’s household. “One of the most common forms of mistreatment that serves to reinforce the inferiority

of child domestic workers' status in the household is the withholding of food, or providing poor quality or rotten food" (HRW 2003: 2). Besides demeaning personal attacks and slurs when they make mistakes, cause accidents, or commit minor infractions, or even for cleaning poorly or responding slowly to an order, some employers resort to physical violence such as beatings with objects or injuring the children with hot metal (Agal 2006; HRW 2003: 2; HRW 2006).

It is not uncommon for child workers to also encounter psychological trauma of various kinds. For example, when minor girls are employed as domestics, some of them are sexually harassed by the men of the household, or the women and children repeatedly taunt or denigrate them personally, use ethnic slurs or insults regarding their indigenous or lower status (HRW 2006). In El Salvador and Guatemala, more than 15% of the female domestic workers changed employers due to sexual harassment or abuse (HRW 2003). Indonesian and Philippino under-aged domestic workers report being fondled and sexual harassed by the men of the households. Similar accounts are not uncommon from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (HRW 2006). And Guatemalan girls working as maids often report unwanted sexual advances by men living in, or associated with, the households where they are employed (Human Rights Watch 2004). A young girl recalled that "The employer's sister's husband tried to abuse me sexually, several times. ... He used to come to my room. I would cry, so he never succeeded" (Haviland 2007: 3).

Many a physical woe and psychological trauma awaits girls trafficked, sold, or engaged in prostitution for a livelihood. These include HIV/AIDs, venereal diseases, recurrent unwanted pregnancies, and their consequent attempts to end them by abortions, serious and persistent physical injuries from their patrons and brothel owners, and pimps who humiliate them and induce a drug habit to terrorize the shattered children into obedience (Kristoff 2009a). In addition, physical damage can occur from sexual penetration of a girl or a boy by an adult – sometimes causing repeated bleeding and tears (Montgomery 2001). The sex-slave trade in girls in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, is notorious for its mistreatment of girls and young women (Hansen 2008; ILO 1996; Morris 2005). The same dangers are faced by girls in China migrating to the cities in search of work (Davidson 2001). Many of these girls wind up in the brothels of Bangkok and Chiang Mai in Thailand and minors from Nepal and Bangladesh are trafficked into the brothels of Indian cities (ILO 1997).

Thus, by the nature of their work and the adults they encounter while working, the involvement of children in labor can pose tremendous threats to their present and future wellbeing. Their physique, resources and power, knowledge and ability are unequal to those who may abuse and exploit them. In immoral and exploitative environments many children do, indeed, become disposable commodities.

Trafficking for Child Labor

The ILO's ban on the "worst forms of child labour" includes trafficking (ILO 1999). Trafficking of a child is defined as taking minors from their domicile country, across

different countries' borders – legally or illegally. The United Nations Trafficking Protocol, Article 3, prohibits recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by any means – including fraud, coercion, and deception – to give and receive payments or benefits (UN 2000). Even if the destination is not the brothels or the streets of cities but respectable well-to-do neighborhoods in urban centers, danger lurks for the victims of child trafficking – physical harm, sexual harassment, rape, non-payment of salary, loss of freedom to associate and move.

Children transported across borders are typically destined to two sectors of the labor market: domestic work and the sex trade. In an extreme case, children as young as 13 were kidnapped from the impoverished rural southwestern Sichuan Province and sold to work in the labor-scarce boom areas of China (Barboza 2008). Italian authorities discovered under-aged Bulgarian children working in circus in Italy (BBC 2007e). Unsurprisingly, sex-trafficking tends to focus on desperately poor young girls (BBC 2007e, f, g; Buckley 2005; Kitsantonis 2008; Kristoff 2009, a, b, Morris 2005; Pressly 2007).

The trafficking of child workers is closely intertwined with the practice of selling of children into bondage and slavery, particularly in South Asia and Africa. International agreements prohibit “All forms of slavery and practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict” (ILO 1999: Article 3a). Regardless, the slave trade in children is a global reality. By some estimates the worldwide number of enslaved children could be as high as nine million (Omaar 2007). Gang-controlled child slave-workers are an invisible and unaccounted source of labor in China (Tong and Lu 2004). Human bondage and slavery still prevails in many part of Africa and Asia where many a child is trapped, seemingly forever, by their own ignorant parents, and willing adult guardians (Bass 2004; Caistor 2007; LaFerniere 2006; Omaar 2007; Rodgers and Standing 1981). Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 35 prohibits the abduction, sale of children for any purpose, some governments like Sudan rationalize slavery as a tribal tradition of hostage-taking by rival ethnic groups (Winter 2007). A 12-year old boy in Mawulehawe, Ghana was sold by his mother to a fisherman “master” for \$48.00 worth of local money – two months' local wages (Omaar 2007). Child slaves are a common sight in the cocoa plantations of the Ivory Coast (Severson 2006). And, smuggled in from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, a child may be forced to beg by his or her owners (Omaar 2007).

Whether it is called slavery, bonding the labor of a child, “restavec,” fostering, or some other term the practice of trafficking children as labor is often motivated by the same inability of poor parents to provide fundamental amenities for their young. And, regardless of the explanations they may offer, the goals of the purchasers of bonded child labor are always the same – to maximize labor value, even if it means exploiting and endangering the children under their power. In this equation, the losers are the youngsters who are overworked, their health and life often put at risk, and their future traded off and made bleaker by their diminished potential for employment due to ill-health, and/or the lack of skills required in a modern world wired for technology.

Rodgers and Standing (1981a) describe the negative impact that low local farm wages have on debt bondage among the scheduled castes and tribes in several Indian states where, to free themselves of debt, fathers depute their sons to work for the lenders. Grammaticas (2007) reports that an estimated 25,000 sex slaves in Karnataka, southern India where prepubescent girls who were sold as “devadasis” – slaves to the goddess of fertility – by their own parents whose major source of income was their daughters’ prostitution. A 12-year old Cambodian girl, trafficked and sold to a brothel owner, was kept caged underneath the brothel (Omaar 2007). In a vivid report Hansen (2008) describes the plight of child sex-slave workers in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, whose ubiquitous health risks includes violent punishment for infractions.

In many tradition-bound cultures selling a child, particularly a daughter, is sometimes cloaked under the label of acceptable commercial transaction. For the equivalent of \$300 a poor father in Iran sold his under-aged daughter in marriage to an older man. Girls are sold for as little as \$33 in Khorassan, in the north, while in the southeast girls are reportedly sold for as little as \$4.00 to work in the brick-making, carpet weaving, textile and clothing-industries (Chatsaz and Samsami 2006). In the small American farming community of Greenfield, California a migrant laborer-father sold his 14-year old daughter to an 18-year old man for \$16,000 in cash, and some cases of beer, and meat (MSNBC 2009a).

Babies destined to be forced into labor as children from a Nigerian “baby farm” fetch about \$127 (BBC 2008a). In Mauritania, West Africa both chattel and contract slavery persists, even after the slaves have been freed by aid agencies. Of the 300,000 Africans who were “bought back” by aid agencies, many continue to work for their owners because of psychological and economic barriers to their returning home (Bass 2004). In Haiti, ironically the first country to abolish slavery after its independence in 1804, poverty and the breakdown of the social order has resulted in slavery-like conditions for 1,000 girls placed in domestic servitude under the euphemism *restavec*, “stay a while” (Caistor 2007). LaFermiere (2006: 3) narrates a vivid account of trafficked children:

In 2001, 35 children, half of them under age 15, were discovered aboard a vessel in a Benin port. They said they were being shipped to Gabon to work. In 2003, Nigerian police rescued 194 malnourished children from stone quarries north of Lagos. At least 13 other children had died and had been buried near the pits, the police said.

Nigerian police stumbled upon 64 girls aged 14 and younger, packed inside a refrigerated truck built to haul frozen fish. They had traveled 100 of miles from central Nigeria, the police said, and were destined for work as housemaids in Lagos.

In the case of trafficked and laboring children, it is difficult to count the numbers whose lot is the consequence of their family’s troubles or the victimization by machete and automatic weapons-wielding bands and gangs who kidnapped them to sell them into slavery. A 2002 study estimates that there are 12,000 trafficked children applying pesticides, clearing fields with machete, and slicing open cocoa pods in the Ivory Coast’s cocoa fields (LaFermiere 2006). Bass (2004: 149) reports that in the

large Adjame market of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, investigators discovered a "maid market" where young girls were being bought and sold from a ramshackle, corrugated iron and wood shack. A Small group of slaves who had been liberated from the estimated 20,000 slaves in Niger again had substantial number of children. In the late 1990s the Sudanese government was implicated in the practice of allowing marauders to carry out "slave raids" in which innocent women and children were captured and then sold as domestic and agricultural slaves. Amnesty International estimates that 90,000 black Africans still live as "property" of Arab Berbers in Mauritania, and that 300,000 freed slaves are trapped both psychologically and economically into continued servitude under their former masters. Additionally as many as 3000 girls live in bondage as part of the Trokosi institution in the Volta delta of Ghana, where girls and women provided physical labor and sex to shrine priests to atone for sins committed by their relatives. Slave families in Taudenni in the north of Mali mine salt blocks sold in Mpoti.

The prospect of poor youngsters being sold into slavery plagues African nations, while in South Asia bonded-labor is the nemesis of the children born into poverty. In India, there may be regional variations in its incidence. In the cotton fields of Andhra Pradesh, India alone some 95% of the 250,000 girl-laborers were bonded by their indebted parents (Weiner et al. 2006). Since the 1980s one social activist, Kailash Satyarthi, had freed 75,000 bonded, Indian child-laborers. Weiner et al. (2006: 26) note that "...according to the National Survey on bonded labour conducted by Marla, in Andhra Pradesh 20% of the bonded labourers in the state were under the age of 15... In Orissa children below the age of 15 years make up 20.5% of the total bonded labourers in the state." In Rajasthan, 17% of the bonded workers were below age 20, while in Tamil Nadu about 11% of the 11–15 year old workers were in bondage.

Economically developed nations are not immune to bonded child labor. In the United States, and in European countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, and England, employers – overwhelmingly themselves immigrants – have been tried and punished for bringing under-aged servants into the country. In Michigan a Cameroonian man was given a 17-year prison term for bringing a 14 year-old Cameroonian girl as an unpaid domestic (MSNBC 2008). An Egyptian girl was held as a virtual slave (leased for a 10-year period for the payment of \$45 per month to her parents) by a wealthy Egyptian couple in California charged with a number of crimes:

The couple pleaded guilty to all charges, including forced labor and slavery. They were ordered to pay \$76,000, the amount Shiyima would have earned at the minimum wage. The sentence: Three years in federal prison for Ibrahim, 22 months for his wife, and then deportation for both (MSNBC 2008).

LaForniere (2006) reports that a Ghanaian couple eking out an existence as fisher folk sold five of their children into labor through friends and acquaintances of their Ghanaian employers who paid a commission for each child supplied to work as domestics and fisherman.

Laws

The employment of children is not a simple matter of necessity dictated by informal tribal and social customs. Important socioeconomic factors such as modes and places of production, motives of entrepreneurship, and the concept and goals of work, generate the contemporary milieu of supply and demand that affect the role of children in the work place. For one, children are a cheap source of labor compared to adult, particularly unionized, workers. Two, by hiring children employers can avoid accountability as they are easily disposable and they are not constituents of politicians. Three, out of fear of physical and emotional brutality and ignorance of their rights, children demand less and are easily trainable, flexible, and controllable.

Many countries have laws concerning the hiring and employment of minors and some, like Nicaragua, even have constitutional provisions regarding children's rights (see Library of Congress 2009). However, the age at which young people can be employed vary, ranging from 14 years in Niger to 18 in Libya with most considering 15 or 16 to be the age of majority (Rodgers and Standing 1981a). Federated countries like the United States and Canada have a plethora of state and provincial laws under the aegis of their respective labor departments (Library of Congress 2009).

In addition to local and national laws, several international protocols and agreements on the employment of children provide them some protection. The International Labor Organization is foremost among the international organizations that almost single-handedly brought about changes in the laws regarding the employment of children. This organization has tirelessly waged a battle against the exploitative employment of children (Bass 2004). As early as 1930, the International Labour Organization's Forced Labour Convention No. 29 tried to set standards on compulsory and forced labor in all its form – slavery and debt bondage (ILO 1997). With the single exception of Saudi Arabia countries around the world have signed on to this agreement (HRW 2006). In 1973, the ILO also introduced the Minimum Age Convention No. 138 in all sectors of the economy (ILO 1997). This agreement allowed for the employment of children in light work when reaching age 13 in general and age 12 in under-developed economies. The agreement, otherwise, set age 18 as the norm for dangerous work. Since 1919, again in 1930, and in subsequent conventions that culminated in the Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention No. 182 during 1999, the ILO committed that signatories to the agreement eliminate child labor in their respective countries by the year 2016. The consensual priority of the convention was to abolish the worst form of child labor, with the final goal of eradicating child labor altogether (Pinheiro 2006). In the western hemisphere, the Central American country of El Salvador was the first to develop a time-bound program (TBP) for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Of the 173 ILO member states, 133 are signatories to, and bound by, one or more of the various ILO protocols.

Since 1979, the ILO has carried out its own research on child labor (Liebel 2004). In 1992 the organization also launched the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) specifically focusing on forced labor, hazardous conditions, and under 12-year olds (ILO 1992). For decades, the World Health Organization (WHO) has focused attention on the health risks faced by child workers. And the World Bank has investigated the correlation between poverty and child labor (see Cigno et al. 2002; Liebel 2004). And UNICEF's concern with street children led to a focus on child workers. Numerous Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) concerned with human rights and children's rights and children's lives, such as Save the Children, also started to pay attention to children in the labor force.

In declaring 1979 as The International Year of the Child, the United Nations began a move toward an international human rights movement on behalf of children. Ten years later the United Nations (1989) convened the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) with the goal of establishing the human rights of children. Member states voted and agreed upon Article One that sets age 18 as the end of childhood. Article 32 focused on children's work, while Article 19 protects children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect or negligent treatment (Pinheiro 2006; UN 1989). However, the Convention provided some leeway in Article One by asserting that every human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is reached earlier (OECD 2003).

Under this Convention, the various signatory countries that lacked protective legislation were prodded into enacting appropriate laws to prevent, and punish, those exposing children to exploitative and dangerous work. Again in 2000, the United Nations included two Optional Protocols to the Convention (UN 2000a). These forbid entangling children in armed conflicts and prevent the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, frequent sources for exploiting child labor.

Besides these general rules, other agreements among the member states of the United Nations have resulted in agreements regarding specific issues. Various international human rights agreements, and the protocols against "Kidnapping" (Article 11) and "Trafficking" (Article 35) specifically aim to prevent trafficking children for their labor by punishing those who transport, transfer, harbor, or receive the victims (Muntarbhorn 1996; UNICEF 2005; UN 1989, 2000, 2002).

However, these agreements are not as legally binding as are local laws. Moreover, for those countries that are not signatories to the Convention, and even among those that violate the agreed upon standards, enforcement power is lacking. There is little that the United Nations can do to actually "punish" any country for not living up to or agreeing to these standards.

In addition in many societies there are issues of deep-seated culturally ingrained misogyny against certain segments of the population. For example, in Pakistan with its cultural norms and legal standards that discriminate against females, instead of help, under-aged prostitutes from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka receive cruel justice (Muntarbhorn 1996). Some countries, putting national

prestige above the welfare of children, have chosen to opt out of time-limits to eradicate the worst forms of child labor (ILO 1999).

On the other hand, some countries have enacted major laws targeting the protection of children from harsh, hazardous, and exploitative deployment into the labor force (see: LOC 2009). For example, Argentina enacted “Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents” that went into effect in 2005. In Australia and Canada, federal, state, and territory-wide laws govern the employment of all children below age 18. The Brazilian Constitution covers the rights of minors below age 14 from being employed, except as apprentices. China also has passed various domestic laws guaranteeing that children below age 16 are not employed, except in literature, arts, and physical culture. France, requiring compulsory education between ages 6–16 and allowing only light work for those who are at least 14 during the school recess, has set into motion various mechanism to monitor the enforcement of the CRC. In Germany, the law forbids those below age 14 from engaging in the labor force under the rules of the European Human Rights Convention. Israel adheres to the international protocol while maintaining special laws to protect children below 15 from being hired. Japan and Greece have set the legal age to start employment at 15. Lebanon categorically prohibits those below 13 from working. Besides the CRC, the Mexican Constitution (Article 123) and specific laws protect children below 14 from being recruited to work (see: Carey 2004). Nicaragua meanwhile has incorporated the CRC as a constitutional mandate, and forbids those below 14 from working, while allowing minors aged 16–18 to enter into labor contracts and those between 14 and 16 to do so with the consent of their parents and the Ministry of Labor. Although a signatory to the CRC, national legislation incorporating the agreement has not been enacted in the Russian Federation, however children below 15 are not allowed to work. Iran’s Islamic law’s prohibits children under 15 from working and those under 12 from engaging in traditional carpet weaving. The South Korean constitution and laws also prohibit the employment of children below age 15 (Traver 2004).

With numerous ordinances Bangladesh limits the age at which children can be employed (Gentleman 2007; Hasan 2007). India has had child labor legislation from 1881 when various Acts of the Parliament were passed under British rule (Weiner et al. 2006). In addition, India’s constitutional guarantee of universal education until age 14, and the various labor laws on the books since colonial times, officially discourages employment of children younger than 14. The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act (Part B) of 1986 in India has a list of 17 occupations that are forbidden of children, such as rolling tobacco, carpet weaving, cement manufacture, cloth printing, dyeing, and weaving, soap manufacture, mica cutting, manufacture of matches, explosives, and fire works, tanning, wool cleaning, and soldering of electronics (Anandharajakumar 2004; Weiner et al. 2006).

Thus, both under international law and local and regional laws, child labor is either prohibited, or limited and regulated in some way. Yet children are found working around the world in spite of legal prohibitions against it. What more can be done?

Eliminating Child Labor

There are two basic identifiable goals sought by those concerned with the victimization of children who work. One is to abolish existing child labor. The second is to prevent child labor in the future. Achieving each may require unique and appropriate measures given the diversity of motives, circumstances, and economies associated with the use of children in labor.

Poverty, family breakdown, health issues, and disasters, cultural biases and other forces “push” children into the labor force. Unscrupulous employers, recruiters, and traffickers “pull” them into work (OECD 2003; UNICEF 2005). Boyden and Myers (1995) point out that child labor is difficult to control in developing countries due to poverty, the dispersive nature of most child work, and the limitations of traditional, legal approaches. Thus, measures to eliminate child labor must include a system-wide strategy such as the enactment of laws and their enforcement. In addition, individual actors – the parents, the children themselves, their recruiters, and their employers, and the consumers of the fruits of their labor – must be targeted.

Legislation is the major weapon that countries use in trying to eliminate child labor. However, such laws if un-enforced or unenforceable are useless. A case in point is India’s ban on children under 14 from being employed as domestics. In spite of the law, child servants are to found in households around the country (see Pandey 2007). In addition to “labor” laws, to make sure that children are not entering the labor force, risking their wellbeing and displacing adult workers, all countries have various laws requiring school attendance of children, and limit the recruitment of youngsters by setting age restrictions on when they can quit school. However, legislation is effective only if enforcement is rigorous (see Belletini and Ceroni 2004). Many countries like the United States have enforceable, state-level “truancy laws” and truancy officers to enforce them. But there is often a disparity between what exists on “the books” and what happens in reality. In many societies enforcement is a major problem, although many countries do have multi-pronged means of enforcement. Sri Lanka, for example, has a National Child Protection Authority, the Department of Probation and Childcare under the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Department of Labor, the police, and the juvenile magistrate courts available to enforce its child-protection laws (Arunatilake and de Silva 2007: 169–187).

There are also laws threatening employers with punishment, usually nominal monetary penalties, for employing children. Even in the rare instances when they are levied, these penalties do not appear to be adequate deterrents in many localities given the enormous profits to be made from exploiting child workers. In India surprise and midnight raids to rescue child workers from industrial units have been used (Kannan 2007; The Hindu 2006, 2007a, b, c). But, any attempt to abolish the victimization of child labor through legal means must involve the real use of prison terms and heavy fines (The Hindu 2007d). The problem is that of getting authorities to actually enforce the law. It is heartening that precedence is being set by a local regional tribunal in Niamey, Niger, for example, which ordered the government to pay \$19,000 in damages to a 24-year old woman who was sold into slavery at age 12 (Polgreen 2008).

One tactic that seems to be effective in getting those in power to enforce the law is to give them incentives to do so. Media coverage and publicity to educate the public everywhere about the plight of working children can be a powerful instrument to mobilize public opinion and support. Reminiscent of the successful grape and lettuce boycotts organized in the United States, yet another strategy is trade sanctions and boycotts of employers who use child labor (BBC 2007a; HRW 1989; McDougall 2008; MSNBC 2007). A case in point is the trade sanctions that were imposed on the importation of garments produced by Bangladeshi children (Boyden and Myers 1995). However, in a one-industry country like Bangladesh, an abrupt end to the employment of children does not guarantee a good life for children who come from households on the precipice of poverty unable to survive without the child's income. Moreover, the victims of such strategies are usually female children who have assumed some power that comes with being a wage-earner. Also, not providing the children viable alternatives, such as education, nutrition, and some training in skills, makes trade embargos and similar tactics less desirable as long-term solutions. In Bangladesh the effective trade-embargo campaign waged by various NGOs, with UNICEF and trade unions support, actively negotiated with the government, helped produce nation-wide long-term change by a gradual withdrawal of children's involvement in the economy while simultaneously improving education, nutrition, and family support.

Some action to enforce some laws seems to be taking place in countries where this kind of child victimization is most acute. For example, African countries have prosecuted nearly 200 traffickers during 2005 – four times as many as in 2003 (LaFreniere 2006). The Ghanaian government has convinced employers to sign social contracts under threat of prosecution thereby releasing at least some of the child workers for whom the parents had been paid (LaFreniere 2006). Recently, a West African regional court found the government of Niger guilty for its failure to protect a young woman who was sold into slavery when she was 12 (Polgreen 2008).

Worldwide valiant attempts are being made by various international organizations, such as UNICEF, the International Labor Organization, and the United Nations, to eliminate the use of child labor. In addition numerous worldwide and local voluntary, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and child advocacy groups, such as Save the Children, are involved in helping working children, besides preventing their being engaged in labor in the first place.

Targeting consumers of imported goods, the use of certification that products are free of child labor has been a useful strategy. For example, the Rugmark Foundation's label – a mark of good labor practices – was jointly introduced in 1994, by the Indo-German Export Promotion Council and UNICEF in the carpet industry in India, Pakistan, and Nepal, guaranteeing that no child labor was used in the manufacturing process (Subbharaman and Witzke 2007; Nepal 2007; OECD 2003). The "Fair Trade Organization's" mark identifies coffee, banana, and other products from the developing world as not involving child labor. In many instances, a corporate sense of social responsibility may be stimulated, particularly with the threat to their pocketbook (see McDougall 2008). "Global March against Child Labor" and its coalition partners, Free The Children, Radde Barnen of Sweden, International

Labor Rights Fund, Anti-slavery International, and the Child Rights Information Network of Switzerland have all raised consciousness of the consumers regarding the issues in the developed world.

Some groups promote the power of community mobilization to eradicate child labor (Bhargava 2003). In Andhra Pradesh, India one such movement was bankrolled by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the help of local women's self-help groups (SHGs). In a number of countries various voluntary agencies involved in child and consumer advocacy, have been vocal in eradicating child labor, particularly the most pernicious forms of them (Herath and Sharma 2007; ILO 2006; Montgomery 2001). In an attempt to create less expensive, local programs that respected the economic power of work on the self-concept, a different community-based initiative was launched in the Philippines. With help from UNICEF, various NGOs, and the government street children could continue working but under the protection of a community network (Boyden and Myers 1995). Local administrators and police in India have been raiding and rescuing children from their employers. In an attempt to educate children about their legal rights, traveling puppet shows are being used in India (The Hindu 2007e). And, with NGO and government partnership, child workers, rehabilitated child workers, and ordinary children in India regularly conduct national meetings to raise greater awareness of the rights of children (The Hindu 2007g, f).

Ninety-five percent of working children are forced to do so because of poverty (Montgomery 2001: 136; Oyaide 2000). Recognizing the interconnection between poverty and child labor, international agencies have followed-up with financial help to local initiatives (ILO 1999). The ILO initiative IPEC of 1995 was followed by 73 action programs and 52 mini-programs in Nepal alone (Nepal 2007). The 1999 Convention set new standards by rallying 87% of the member states, covering about 77% of the world's children, focusing on workers' organizations, employers, and poverty reduction assumed a critical role in combating child labor (ILO 2006).

Some people suggest that, within the framework of legislation and international agreements, investment in educational and other human capital development should be an integral part of efforts to combat child labor (Cigno et al. 2002; OECD 2003). Research suggests that age limits for compulsory education, minimum age to work, and per capita education expenditure do not correlate with child employment, although teacher-student ratio (a crude indicant of quality of education) correlates somewhat with the entrance of children into the work force (OECD 2003). Thus, as a way of eradicating child labor, at least in the interim, the provision of greater access to educational opportunity may not be very promising. As a long-term strategy, however, it may hold promise, at least for ending the cycle of poverty that leads to the necessity for children to work.

Yet another strategy is oriented to modifying the conduct of individual poor people. Governments provide incentives geared toward alleviating and breaking the cycle of poverty – such as cash transfers – for the development of “targeted human-capital” to poor (mostly female) parents to keep their children in school. In a program called PROGRESA, Mexico spends a massive one-fifth of its budget on education. Focusing on rural areas where most child laborers toil, schools offer

double shifts, and children are allowed to transfer – whenever, and wherever, their parents migrate – to complete schooling. The program provides free nutrition, healthcare, books, and housing to poor families, while dispensing cash grants to parents when youngsters stay in school, attend regularly, and advance in school (Carey 2004). Jamaica, and several other Latin American countries followed with their own minimum-income programs. The programs in Columbia, Mexico, and Nicaragua are considered very effective, and the rest as generally successful (Handa and Davis 2006; Legovini and Regalia 2001). A World Bank report (Cigno et al. 2002; ILO 2006) emphasizes the role of economic growth credit availability for the poor, old age security and reduced fertility, and increased school attendance in cur-tailing child labor.

Alone, such measures may fail among those who have been disenfranchised for generations, requiring that they overcome huge cultural and psychological barriers, and where parents feel children should work as training for future jobs (Pinto 2007). Freed slaves in West Africa or bonded workers in India may not quickly and readily unshackle themselves from their past baggage, transforming themselves into free agents. So, any attempt to free them from their usual modes of existence requires psychological counseling and supportive networks. Thus, rehabilitating child laborers and providing them with schooling is one way to end the cycle of child labor. Along with education, providing vocational training for job-skills that ensure employability can go far in ensuring their future and that of their children.

Can the world one day soon be rid of a labor force powered in large part by children? The International Labor Organization seems to feel it can (ILO 2006). Perhaps a continuation of the kind of public attention and concerted action the issue has received of late may make this belief a reality.

Conclusion

Worldwide, the percentage of children who work has gradually fallen from 20% in 1980 to about 11% in 1999 (Cigno et al. 2002). Although this may raise our hopes for an optimistic future, at present, child labor is an endemic problem in many societies. Usually it is the poverty of the children's families and the countries in which they reside that is to be blamed for the lot of children coerced, or forced, to work. Although children may be desired as an amenable, cheap, and disposable source of labor, there are numerous crucial issues associated with putting children to work. These involve such fundamental questions of human rights, equal opportunities for education, employment, and realizing one's potential. Moreover, besides the basic morality of expecting, or demanding, children to perform, and burdening them beyond their physical capabilities, are issues of fairness and justice. And the single most important issue concerns each individual child's chances for self betterment. It is not the idea of children working that is an anathema to human rights advocates. It is the exploitation and abuse of child workers that is troublesome. Thus, the objection to child labor is not to children working per se. It is to their being overworked,

undernourished, and required to engage in labor that is beyond their innate physical capacity and detrimental to their wellbeing that is objectionable and to be combated.

Although it may be impossible to precisely measure the extent of the child labor, the available information suggests that it is a major problem for the youth of the world, particularly for those in developing countries and specific segments of populations everywhere. The negative impact of labor on children's survival, health, and wellbeing is well documented, and requires immediate attention in enforcing local and international laws as well as addressing the conditions that make the work of children necessary in the first place.

Everyone, except perhaps the direct beneficiaries of children's work, agrees that the exploitation and enslavement of anyone is repugnant – particularly in situations of unequal power and knowledge. Although children work for various reasons, the chief cause of child labor is poverty. Since poverty is the lot of many marginal groups of any society, any attempt at addressing the victimization of working children must address the problems of their basic survival, or it is doomed to failure. But, besides keeping children out of the labor force is the necessity that they acquire the needed knowledge and skills for a better future for themselves and their offspring. The work of the UNICEF, the ILO, and a host of individuals and organizations is a promising beginning in the campaign to do just that.

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