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ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**Child Labour in
Hazardous Employment:
The Case of Zimbabwe**

L.M. Sachikonye

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**CHILD LABOUR IN HAZARDOUS EMPLOYMENT:
THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE**

by

L. M. SACHIKONYE



ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

HARARE, 1991

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INTRODUCTION

The study examines the extent and implications of child labour in hazardous employment in contemporary Zimbabwe. It identifies the socio-economic determinants which compel children under 16 to enter employment in order to earn an income for themselves or to supplement marginal family earnings. This study, therefore, stresses the causal link between these determinants and the specific forms which child labour assumes in several sectors.¹ It then examines the nature and magnitude of the hazards to their health, safety and morals and argues these should be explained in the context of the social division of labour within the conjunctural capitalist setting of Zimbabwe. The study also focuses attention on attempts to address the problem of the hazardous working conditions for child workers and marginalized children or the so-called "street children." It does so by evaluating Government policy but especially the limitations of the existing legislation with respect to child workers. The ambiguity over their rights to minimum wages, protective clothing and enforcement of contracts *vis-a-vis* the employer is shown to affect the bargaining leverage of child workers. The study then discusses some attempts that could go some way to ameliorate the dangerous conditions under which they work. A programme to reintegrate marginalized, and often homeless, children is assessed and shown to offer an alternative but more innovative approach to the problem of the marginalized children or "street children".

The broad analytical framework of this study is premised on the International Labour Organization (ILO) programme on the abolition of child labour in hazardous employment (ILO, 1989). The objective of this programme is to draw up a report on the design and implementation of policies and programmes for the elimination of child labour in hazardous activities (*Ibid.*). This report, which would in turn draw upon data from country case studies, will contain information "on international labour standards, a comparative review of national legislation and regulations, examples of successful local efforts and national policies and programmes, and suggestions on ways of detecting and eliminating child labour in hazardous and unsafe activities" (*Ibid.*).

This study has, therefore, sought to examine those working conditions which constitute hazards to children rather than to describe the general characteristics of child labour in Zimbabwe. The specificity of Zimbabwe's historical and contemporary experience emerges from our analysis of the imperatives and forms of child labour. This has significance for our broad analysis: the study, rather than specifically argue for the abolition of child labour *per se*, seeks to explain why it is generally widespread and intrinsic to the reproduction of the lower stratum of working-class households. We

1 Children in this study is used to refer to young persons of 16 years and below. "Child labour" denotes both paid and unpaid work. It would have been overly restrictive to confine "child labour" to waged child work only. We thus would agree with the position that: "Using wages as a criterion of definition would be by far the simplest solution were it not grossly inadequate... One possible working definition of children's work might be any activity done by children which either contributes to production, gives adults free time, facilitates the work of others or substitutes for the employment of others" (Schildkrout, 1981: 91-95). Although it leaves some problems unresolved, this definition is preferable to others in that it is more inclusive (*Ibid.*).

stress that exposure of children to agro-chemical residues in commercial agriculture should cease and that the dangers of injury posed when protective clothing is not worn in certain trades, including welding in the informal sector, should be eliminated, but we also emphasize that the roots of child labour (its socio-economic determinants) should be tackled at the policy level.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in July and August 1989 in several provinces and centres in Zimbabwe. Data was largely collected on the basis of questionnaire-based interviews with child respondents, their employers and parents, Government labour and social welfare officers, trade union officials and organizers, child welfare agencies and health experts. Although the bulk of the interviews were conducted mainly in the suburbs adjacent to the capital, Harare, extensive fieldwork was done in Bulawayo (the second largest city), Kwekwe, Mutare and Chipinge. Child farm workers were interviewed in the Chipinge coffee and tea growing district in Manicaland and Esigodini livestock-ranching district in Matabeleland. Much of the fieldwork was, therefore, conducted in urban and commercial farming areas; only one rural centre, the Chitepo District Centre in Mutasa, was visited. The focus on urban and commercial farming areas was largely determined by considerations of accessibility to data given the limited time in which the study had to be carried out. Although the inability to cover patterns of child labour in the peasant sector represents a limitation of this study, we nevertheless feel that our findings from the urban and commercial agricultural sectors are broadly representative of the major employment activities of children in contemporary Zimbabwe. In any case, the use of agro-chemicals and agricultural machinery in the peasant sector has still not yet reached an advanced stage where the safety and health of children is in danger as on some large-scale commercial farms and estates.

The focus of the fieldwork on four main sectors - commercial agriculture, informal and domestic sectors and that of marginalized children - was partly determined by the absence of child labour on any noteworthy scale in the formal manufacturing and mining sectors. The reasons which explain the absence of children in these formal sectors have less to do with the existence or observance of any specific legislation but more to do with the nature of the labour market and the preference of employers for an able-bodied, adult labour force.

The total number of child workers interviewed was 150; the bulk of these (about 80) were in Harare and the adjacent suburbs of Kuwadzana, Warren Park, Highfield, Mbare, Epworth and Chitungwiza. In Mutare, Chipinge and Kwekwe, some 50 child workers were interviewed and approximately another 20 in Bulawayo and Esigodini. In addition, about 45 employers of child labour and parents were interviewed in all the above-mentioned centres in order to cross-check the data obtained from the children and to establish what the employer perspective was on child labour, its causes and hazards. Finally, in all the centres we interviewed the district labour relations officers, social welfare officers, trade union officials and, where available, representatives of child welfare agencies.

The first section of this study discusses the specific socio-economic context in which child labour occurs in Zimbabwe. It argues that there is a strong causal linkage between poverty or marginal incomes and the imperative for children to seek employment. The second and third sections examine the conditions of work for children in commercial agriculture and in both the domestic and informal sectors, respectively. The hazards experienced by child workers are discussed not only in relation to loopholes in the

existing labour legislation but also to the social division of labour and reproduction of the working class. The fifth section focuses on the emergent problem of marginalized or "street children" and the attempts to address it. Finally, the last section of the study examines the policy issues which emerge from our survey and current programmes which seek to address the problems of child labour in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Section 1

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTENT OF CHILD LABOUR

In this section of the study, we set out the socio-economic context in which child labour occurs. In addition to a brief review of pertinent comparative studies, we identify the major socio-economic determinants of child labour in contemporary Zimbabwe. It is our argument that a sharper analysis of the social division of labour, and more specifically child labour, requires the spelling out of the socio-economic context which shapes it.

Child labour is largely associated with the poor social classes. It predominates in the poorer working-class households and certain segments of the informal sector within both urban and agrarian settings. Although this observation requires qualification because of variations in the levels of child labour in different societies, it is generally the case that child workers do not come from wealthy social classes.

In the latter case, there are no compelling economic reasons for children from privileged backgrounds to enter into wage employment before the age of 16. We, therefore, agree with the observation that:

the search by children for income-earning opportunities is typically part of a family survival strategy - a response to extreme poverty or to major household crises (Rodgers and Standing, 1981:22).

This perspective dispels not only certain functionalist notions of child labour, but also those which treat it as an aberration.

Several useful studies have explored this theme of the close relationship between class and patterns of child labour. In a study of the quarry and brick industry in Bogota in Colombia, it was established that:

all the adults interviewed stated that child labour in the quarries and brickyards is made necessary by the extreme poverty of their families. They attributed this mainly to irregular employment and low income among households, whether male or female, which force the family to mobilize all its labour resources in order to survive (Salazar, 1988 : 53-55).

A survey of child workers in the Peruvian gold panning industry showed that more than half of those interviewed had stopped attending school because their family needed the children's income (Guillen-Marroquin, 1988:70). In the Philippine wood-based and clothing industries, the incidence of child labour among families in which the father had regular employment was much lower than among those in which he was either in sporadic employment or was unemployed (Institute of Industrial Relations, University of the Philippines, 1988 :86). The conclusions cited above are broadly confirmed by a Kenyan study on the socio-economic determinants of child labour (Onyango, 1988 : 161). It was observed that:

Most children join the labour market because their parents cannot keep up with the financial demands of schooling or are even unable to provide for their basic subsistence needs. Factors such as adult unemployment, large, closely spaced families, irregular income and family instability play an important part in pushing children into the labour force (*Ibid.* 161).

From this brief review, it emerges that analytical case studies of child labour need to incorporate a class analysis which explains why the source of child workers tends to be the lower working and peasant classes. We will return to this theme when we explore the roots of child labour in Zimbabwe in some detail below.

Here we may briefly review other related socio-economic factors which explain the preference for child workers by certain employers. These relate to the structure of the labour market, the imperative to lower production costs and the absence of unionization

amongst child workers. Child labour influences both the extent of labour force stratification and the levels and incidence of unemployment. Unemployment levels may be raised by the labour force participation of young workers reducing job opportunities for adults (Rodgers and Standing, *op. cit.*: 35-36). High unemployment also contributed to the growth of labour force stratification through educational differentiation (*Ibid.*). However, the effects of child labour on the development of the labour market are best understood in terms of several differentiating tendencies. First, manual work done by children of the poor was liable to leave them permanently disadvantaged in the labour market "insofar as it results in educational shortcomings and ... nutritional-health inadequacies not shared by children of more affluent families who are not required to work" (*Ibid.*). Second, sexual dualism in the labour market may be strongly intensified by patterns of sex roles among children (*Ibid.*).

Furthermore, child labour contributes to the maintenance of low wages for the labour force as a whole. This is achieved because "as a low-cost form of labour they can be substituted for more expensive adults and because they can reduce the cost of producing wage-goods" (*Ibid.* 37). In industries which operate under stiff competition from larger and more mechanized companies, child labour has certain advantages over that of adults:

Children are better suited to the fluctuating demand for labour and can be laid off when business is slack; they are cheaper than adults... (Bequle and Boyden, 1988 :1).

In certain occupations, child workers are believed to possess sought-after attributes such as manual dexterity. This applied particularly in industries where technologies were "simple and labour-intensive" as in carpet-weaving (*Ibid.*). Even though carpet-weaving can be damaging to their health in the long term:

It is seen by many people as an occupation more appropriate to children than to adults because they are faster and more agile and have sharper eyesight (*ibid.*).

In addition, the low wages paid to children gave employers a competitive advantage not only in national but international markets as well. Thus, it was not simply a reliance on casual labour that persuaded employers to hire children; the question of cost was central in their considerations (*Ibid.* 5).

Additional characteristics of child labour relate to its malleability because it is not unionized. It can, therefore, be easily cowed by employers. This has far-reaching implications for the definition and protection of their interests as workers. As it has been argued:

Child labour... should be a vital concern of all workers' organizations, for where it exists it weakens the working population generally. Children are highly exploitable, and it is right to be concerned to focus on those circumstances in which their vulnerability is manipulated to their lasting disadvantage (Rodgers and Standing, *op. cit.* 43).

Their very weak bargaining leverage at the workplace constitutes an advantage to the employers. Parallels have been drawn between their vulnerable position and that of women workers. These should not be overdrawn, however. A major difference between the two groups relates to that children do not constitute either a movement or a political force capable of initiating or controlling studies on their own situation (*Ibid.* 134). Furthermore, whatever hypotheses or proposals may be put forward by researchers and experts working on children, "they can be sure of silence from their subjects" (*Ibid.* 135).

We now relate these general considerations on the socio-economic determinants of child labour to Zimbabwe specifically. This brief discussion will provide a useful setting for subsequent sections which focus on particular sectors in which child labour is an

important segment of the workforce. Zimbabwe is not a large economy although it possesses a relatively sophisticated (though developing) industrial sector, a significant agricultural base, an expanding mining sector and a considerable, if still underdeveloped, peasant sector. With a population of about 9 million, Zimbabwe has a waged workforce of slightly more than 1 million. There exists a serious unemployment problem which becomes graver each year with the entry of thousands of school graduates on to the labour market. The labour market is, therefore, saturated. The existence of an unemployment problem, however, does not necessarily imply that there is no niche in the labour market for child labour. Indeed, its prevalence in those sectors where it exists adversely affects the bargaining power of adult workers over working conditions and wages. The considerations pertaining to the lower cost of employing child workers, their malleability as a workforce and their exclusion from organized trade unionism obviously influence employer preferences. As we will show in subsequent sections, some child workers perform unpaid labour insofar as they contribute to their parents' task-work (*mugwazo*) targets especially in the commercial agrarian sector. Such child workers do not receive a wage; only the parent is paid for the particular task-work target achieved.

We have referred above to poverty and meagre wages as being one of the major socio-economic determinants of child labour in Third World countries. Zimbabwe is no exception. In spite of the post-1980 minimum wage legislation, most working-class income levels are still, on average, low. They are lower in the agricultural, domestic and informal sectors in which the bulk of the workforce is concentrated. This concentration is an index of the low level of industrialization of the economy. However, it points to the significance of a sizeable presence of child workers in these less regulated sectors. To give an indication of the low wage structure of these sectors, it may be noted that agricultural wages averaged about Z\$ 15 per month before 1980. Domestic sector wages amounted to Z\$20 on average prior to independence. Although these have been regulated and not insignificant increases to Z\$110 and Z\$136 in the two sectors respectively in 1989, inflationary trends and the depreciation of the Zimbabwe dollar have undermined the awards. The levels of poverty amongst low-income working-class households have, therefore, not been significantly dented. Trade unions have strongly argued that the present levels of minimum wages fall way below the Poverty Datum Line (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, 1986; 1989). The squeeze on the minimum wages has also been exacerbated by periodic price increases for basic commodities which form the subsistence goods for lower working-class households (*Ibid.*). As we will elaborate in subsequent chapters, their marginal incomes force them to supplement through utilizing their children as vendors of different kinds of commodities ranging from vegetables and fruit to cigarettes and firewood.

A large proportion of the 140 child workers of 16 years and below whom we interviewed had engaged in work mainly to supplement low family incomes. The major compulsion for them to work was, therefore, economic. Proceeds from petty trading in vegetables, fruit, confectionery, cigarettes, sweets and meat went to pay for rent, clothes, school fees and assorted family needs. It was extremely rare for a child vendor to organize such petty trading single-handedly and even more unlikely for him/her to appropriate the income accruing from it. The parents or employers normally controlled both the procurement of the commodities for sale and the earnings therefrom. This control by parents was replicated in those instances where children earned wages from work performed in the agrarian, informal and domestic sectors. We elaborate on the patterns

of child wages in these sectors below. From the evidence accumulated in our research, it is abundantly clear that the absence of pressures relating to poverty made it unnecessary for children from the middle and upper social classes to engage extensively in paid labour.

Table 1

PERCENT OF TOTAL WAGE AND SALARY EARNERS BELOW THE PDL IN 1982 AND 1984

SECTOR	1982	1984
Agriculture	n.a.	n.a.
Mining	63,6	77,7
Manufacturing	53,7	61,0
Electricity	43,5	49,1
Construction	67,1	63,6
Finance	7,3	16,8
Distribution	44,5	57,2
Transport	25,3	36,9
Public Administration	29,2	46,2
Education	43,7	50,3
Health	34,1	39,3
Private Domestic	n.a.	n.a.
Other	55,5	65,0

Source: Zimbabwe Government, 1987:31.

Notes: 1. Agricultural and domestic workers are not incorporated as a minority are paid in cash only.

2. It has been assumed that wage earners are evenly distributed within each income interval given in the source material.

Table 2

REAL WAGES (1980-1987)

YEAR	CPI	NW(\$)	NWI	RW(\$)	RWI	VARIATIONS
1980	100,0	70	100,0	70,00	100,0	0,0
1981	113,1	85	121,4	75,20	167,4	7,4
1982	125,2	105	150,0	83,90	119,8	19,8
1983	154,1	115	164,3	74,60	106,6	6,6
1984	185,2	125	178,6	67,50	96,4	-3,6
1985	200,9	143	204,3	71,20	101,7	1,7
1986	229,7	158	227,7	65,50	98,3	-1,7
1987	264,8	158	223,7	59,67	85,2	-14,8

Source: Masuko and Mupindu, 1988:26.

Key to abbreviations used in the above table:

CPI= Consumer Price Index

NW = Nominal Wage

NWI= Nominal Wage Index

RW= Real Wage

RWI = Real Wage Index

Table 3
PURCHASING POWER OF THE 1980 DOLLAR FOR LOWER-INCOME URBAN FAMILIES

Year	CPI	PURCHASING POWER OF THE \$
1980	100,0	100,00
1981	113,0	88,49
1982	125,2	79,87
1983	154,1	64,89
1984	185,2	53,99
1985	200,9	49,77
1986	229,7	43,53
1987	264,8	37,77

Source: Calculated from CSO data on CPI (Consumer Price Index).

Table 4
MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES (1980-1987)

YEAR	DOMESTIC & AGRICULTURAL WORKERS	COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
1980	30	70
1981	50	85
1982	50	105
1983	55	115
1984	65	125
1985	75	125
1986	85	158
1987	85	108

Source: Masuko and Mupindu, 1988:28. ,

Table 5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR LOWER-INCOME URBAN FAMILIES: AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGES (Percent) (1980 = 100)

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1980-1986	1981-1986
Foodstuffs	10,0	12,1	3,6	12,0	10,5	28,5	25,0	6,8	13,1	15,7	16,5
Drink and Tobacco	10,4	12,5	11,2	59,1	8,2	26,6	13,4	7,2	12,2	19,9	13,1
Clothing and Footwear	4,0	16,1	13,4	17,7	12,2	9,8	8,7	13,5	11,6	12,2	8,6
Rent, Fuel and Light	14,7	14,5	6,6	7,2	9,7	14,5	12,7	10,3	21,4	12,6	13,7
Households stores	7,2	13,7	10,7	9,4	7,3	12,8	15,4	15,4	10,41	1,7	12,2
Transport	11,7	24,2	9,5	15,4	10,7	19,4	9,8	7,6	18,4	13,5	13,1
Miscellaneous	3,5	12,4	-8,8	-16,4	8,7	18,6	21,6	14,7	11,6	9,0	15,0
All items	9,7	13,8	5,4	13,1	10,7	23,1	20,2	8,5	14,3	14,9	15,2
All items net of sales tax and excise duty	9,9	13,7	7,0	13,5	10,0	21,8	20,5	9,0	14,6	14,5	15,1

Source: Zimbabwe Government 1987:27

These observations on the imperatives for entry into paid and unpaid labour by children may be related to a broader discussion concerning the vulnerable poor. It has been argued that in understanding general poverty...

it is necessary to look at both ownership patterns, and at the forces which lie behind them. This requires careful consideration of the nature of modes of production and the structure of economic classes as well as their interrelations (Sen, 1981: 6).

This argument reiterates our observation above on the need to link a child worker's class background and the compulsion to engage in work. Although the measurement of poverty is not a simple exercise, Sen proposed two methods of undertaking it: the "direct method" and the "income method" (*Ibid.* 26-27). As he explained:

The direct method identifies those whose actual consumption fails to meet the accepted conventions of minimum needs, while the income method is after spotting those who do not have the ability to meet these needs within the behavioural constraints typical in that community (*Ibid.* 28).²

The income indicator was of direct interest in our own research on the social background of the parents of child workers. Interviews revealed that most working class households relied on the male parent for a wage income. Although most female parents of child workers did not engage in wage-labour, they were nevertheless compelled to enter into income-generating work which included vegetable vending, sewing, basket-weaving and small-scale crop production. The wife's income from such self-employment activity and the child's earnings from petty trading or piece-jobs generated additional income to supplement the husband's wage-labour. This combination obviously varies with the sectors in which the households are located. In capitalist agriculture, the whole household may be employed either in the members' own right or with wives and children as seasonal or casual workers or as mere helpers to the husband to complete his designated task-work.

These observations on the indispensable role of children in contributing to the reproduction requirements of working-class households have not been fully investigated in the Zimbabwean context. It would therefore be a useful exercise. It would presumably demonstrate the far-reaching implications of the low wage structure into which most workers are locked. The effects of the early entry of children into paid and unpaid employment would include their lack of access to higher education and vocational training. Their social mobility would thus be further hampered; their lower working class background would lock them further into the lower tier of the wage structure.

In concluding this section on the socio-economic determinants of child labour, it has become clear that the class background of the affected households is central. However, it has also emerged that lower working-class households have diverse survival strategies which include participation in income-generating activities by one or both parents and their children. As it has been observed in a related context:

Most poor people have strategies which are complex and diverse... Most poor people do not choose to

2 Sen adds: "Both concepts are of some interest on their own in diagnosing poverty in a community, and while the latter is a bit more remote in being dependent on the existence of some typical behaviour pattern in the community, it is also a bit more refined in going beyond the observed choices into the notion of ability. A poor person, on this approach, is one whose income is not adequate to meet the specified minimum needs in conformity with the conventional behaviour pattern" (*Ibid.* 28).

put all their eggs in one basket. Rather they reduce risk, increase adaptability and seek a degree of autonomy, by developing and maintaining wider options, through the ability and willingness of different household members to do different things in different places at different times (Chambers, 1989: 3).

The subsequent sections of this study will elaborate on the survival strategies and reproduction mechanisms of this underprivileged social stratum. The pressures which impel children to enter dangerous jobs stem from the socio-economic factors identified above. Exposure to hazardous job conditions affects children more than it affects adults, but we also concur with this general observation on the vulnerability of the poor:

The bodies of the poorer are more vulnerable than those of the less poor: they are more exposed to sickness from insanitary, polluted and disease-ridden environments both at work and at home, and to accidents in their work; they are weaker, with malnourishment and previous sickness tending to reduce resistance to disease and to slow recovery; and the poorer have less access to prophylaxis or to timely and effective treatment (*Ibid.* 4).

The bearing of socio-economic circumstances on health cannot be disputed. As later sections show, what is more worrying is the lack of close attention paid to the preventive measures, protective clothing and regular inspection of the various enterprises where child workers are engaged. We will also argue why child labour is bound to persist in one guise or the other unless the socio-economic pressures identified above are addressed. As long as the poverty sustained by the low wage-structure abounds, households will be compelled to push their children into work so as to supplement their income. Programmes to phase out child labour would require to tackle the roots of this phenomenon, namely the marginal incomes and poverty of the lower stratum of the working class. This in turn implies the need for the redistribution of income, resources and opportunities to cater for the material needs of the vulnerable segments of the working class. We return to this argument in the concluding section.

Section 2

CHILD LABOUR IN THE AGRARIAN SECTOR

We now examine the conditions under which children work in a major sector of the Zimbabwean economy. Agriculture not only employs the largest proportion of the total national workforce but it is also a significant contributor of raw materials for the manufacturing sector and of foreign exchange through export earnings. It has been estimated that at about 270 000, the agricultural proletariat forms approximately a quarter of the national workforce. The concentration of the majority of these workers on large-scale commercial farms and plantation estates is characteristic of a relatively developed capitalist form of agriculture. The commodities produced range from tobacco, coffee, sugar and tea to maize, cotton and soyabeans. A notable feature of this commercialized sector is the extensive use of mechanized equipment including tractors and sillage cutters and agro-chemical inputs such as herbicides and pesticides. It is during and after the usage of this equipment or application of inputs which constitutes a source of danger to the workforce in general but child workers in particular. We elaborate below on the hazards which certain farm equipment and agro-chemicals create for children below 16.

Here we seek to show that child labour has been utilized on commercial farms for several scores of years. It is definitely not a recent phenomenon. A survey of labour utilization on tobacco farms in the late 1940s observed that:

Children of about eight and upwards are employed on both a casual and a permanent basis, as herds, for leading the oxen at the plough, and for lighter seasonal labour (Wadsworth, 1950).

Child workers, also then called "picannins", were also employed in other branches of agriculture. During the period under review, they were paid monthly wages "of anything between 2 shillings and sixpence and one pound (sterling), with an average running at 14 shillings" (*Ibid.*). In many respects, however, child workers were "a captive group" by virtue of their residence on farm compounds. Commercial farmers encouraged parents to utilize their children's labour in order to accomplish task-work, a practice which still continues to this day. For instance, one tea plantation manager stated that:

What we are really aiming at in the long run is family participation - the wife, the husband and children all working on the plantations (Clarke, 1977 : 250).

It is therefore generally clear that children resident in estate compounds have often been taken either as seasonal or casual workers or encouraged to assist their parents in task- or piece-work. This is the background against which we may now discuss the hazards to which child workers are exposed in agriculture. We have already mentioned briefly that agro-chemicals can pose danger to workers' health. A study conducted in the Mashonaland Central province in 1986 on exposure to organophosphates established that levels of protective clothing, knowledge of correct practices of pesticide use and of associated hazards were found to be low amongst workers (Bwititi *et.al.*, 1987 : 120). The study revealed that on large-scale privately-owned farms :

Organophosphate exposure in the sprayers increased during the course of the spraying season, as shown by a decline in blood cholinesterase activity, particularly between the months of December and February. During the spraying season an almost two-fold increase occurred in the proportion of workers whose cholinesterase activity implied clinical risk (*Ibid.* 125).

It was further observed that some of the means of application of the chemicals were antiquated and poorly maintained. For instance, knapsack sprayers were leaky and

therefore increased the rate of exposure. Furthermore, none of the workers' committees (representative organs of the workers) reported that workers received regular medical checks but they thought that pesticide exposure was a problem arising from lack of protective clothing (*Ibid.*).

That the dangers of pesticide exposure were exacerbated by lack of protective clothing and safety education for workers was corroborated by union officials and Government labour officers whom we interviewed. The vulnerability of children to agro-chemicals lay not so much in their application (in which no children were normally engaged) but in that the residues were still dangerous after five weeks. Those child workers who picked sprayed coffee and apples were thus exposed to the agro-chemicals (Interview with a General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe official, July 1987). There had been instances where children who had worked on sprayed cotton had their health endangered because the chemicals had still been active (*Ibid.*).

Cases of adverse pesticide effects had also been identified among child coffee pickers. Coffee chemical residues which were still active when picking began affected the children's eyes and faces (*Ibid.*). The affected eyes tended to become red and there was a real danger of blindness at an early age. In the coffee-producing district of Chipinge, in eastern Zimbabwe, union officials intimated that not only had some child coffee pickers turned blind due to agro-chemical residues but others had collapsed during the course of picking (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, August 1989).

The effects of the residues on the child coffee pickers in most cases were more gradual in the manner in which they affected the skin and lungs. Nevertheless, these effects did permanent damage to their health (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, August 1989). Although it had not been proved definitively that organophosphates affected the nervous system, the fear existed that its long-term effects did so (Interview with a Clinical Pharmacologist, September 1989). What had, however, been conclusively established was that the application of herbicides could result in long-term damage to the lungs in the form of lungsclerosis.

Furthermore, toxicity from DDT affected the liver (*Ibid.*). The real danger to child farm workers was that they could come into contact with the active residues of these agro-chemicals while weeding or harvesting crops. Several reports produced by the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Workers' Compensation have stressed the prevalence of agro-chemical poisoning and the imperative need for preventive measures. It was observed, for example, that there were over 489 currently registered formulations of agro-chemicals used in agriculture and that:

Incidents of poisoning undoubtedly occur in the country but accurate statistics of cases of poisoning are not readily available due to poor reporting. In Manicaland region alone for the period January 1st to February 28th 1989 already two fatal accidents due to agro-chemicals have been reported... In both cases, workers got poisoned by a pesticide called Parathion used in spraying coffee. Other cases of poisoning include children drinking pesticides by mistake... (Nota, 1989 :3).

Another report on the usage of agro-chemicals examined the safety record in the tobacco

growing industry (*On Guard*, 1988). It observed that one of the chemicals used - Ethylene Dibromide - which is used to kill worms on tobacco plants, was one of the "12 most hazardous pesticides" included in the "dirty dozen" group. The report also remarked that surveys had shown that:

There is extensive use of child labour and pregnant women in the tobacco industry and it is common experience that mothers with babies on their backs handle and use agro-chemicals on tobacco farms without taking any precautions against poisoning (*Ibid.* 5).

Some of the agro-chemicals caused ill-effects on an unborn child (*Ibid.*). These observations were confirmed by union officials and a clinical pharmacologist (Interviews with a GAPWUZ official and a clinical pharmacologist, July 1989).

In tobacco growing, children were often employed not only to pick small insects before the leaves were picked but also as "waiters" who loaded the tobacco on to the tractor (*Ibid.*). The danger of contact with agro-chemical residues in this process should not be underestimated. The critique of the widespread use of women and child workers in tobacco was, however, dismissed by the tobacco lobby as represented by the Zimbabwe Tobacco Association (ZTA) (*see Financial Gazette*, 24th April 1988). The refutation by the ZTA nevertheless did not totally discount the fact that women and children are employed especially at peak periods as seasonal workers.

Further instances of hazards to child workers occur in the tea growing industry which, like coffee, is based in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands. These hazards also relate to agro-chemicals as well as injuries during picking. The pruning of tea left sharp edges on the plant which hurt the fingers and feet of the pickers. As an occupational health and safety officer observed:

During the tea picking season, which is done mostly by women with children on their backs and schoolchildren before they go to school, lacerations and callouses on the plucking finger are common. The intertwined branches of the tea bushes also cause scratch wounds known as 'tea ulcers' on the hands and legs of the tea pluckers (Department of Occupational Health, Safety, and Workers' Compensation undated; Own Field Observations, 1987).

In addition to injuries from work, there was a common problem of malnutrition amongst child workers "who work in the fields before they go to school" (*Ibid.*). Their school performance was adversely affected as a consequence. Furthermore, the babies carried on the mother's backs as they picked tea "also often suffer from malnutrition which may affect their adulthood. They also suffer from the effects of pesticides..." (*Ibid.*)

The observations on child malnutrition corroborate earlier observations regarding farm-worker children in tobacco and cotton farming in the Bindura district in Mashonaland Central province (*Chikanza et. al.*, 1981).

We may now briefly refer to hazardous conditions faced by children in other branches of agriculture including sugar production. During the transplanting of cane seedlings, weeding and the application of fertilizer, child labour is often utilized. The exposure to agro-chemicals, especially herbicides, endangers their health. In addition, a major complaint amongst them is backache. Agricultural and plantation workers' union

The 12 most hazardous pesticides - some whose use has been banned in other countries - include Parathion, 2,4, 5-T, Paraquat, DDT, Aldrin, Chlordimeformo, Dibromochloropropane (DBCP), Chlordane, HCH/Lindane, Ethylene Dibromide, Camphechlor and Pentachlorophenyl (*On Guard*, 1988).

officials also pointed out that child workers were sometimes employed as cane-cutters and often sustained painful swollen wrists. The recruitment of women and child workers was done by labour contractors who had contracts with commercial sugar plantations to cut specified quantities of sugar (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, July 1989).

In addition, there were other hazards encountered in most branches of crop production. These include those caused by improper handling of agricultural machinery. Hazards associated with tractors include overturning; falling from moving tractors; failure to uncouple brakes after ploughing; riding on implements being drawn by tractors, noise and vibration (*On Guard, op. cit.*). There had been several cases of child cotton pickers getting injured by falling from moving tractors (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, *op. cit.*).

The conditions in tobacco grading sheds were inhospitable due to excessive steam and smoke which caused flu, headaches and other sorts of diseases amongst child workers (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, August 1989). In the curing of tobacco, boilers are used which, if they are not maintained properly, can explode and kill workers in the process. Other sources of hazards included the unsafe handling of irrigation pipes. Accidents occurred when the pipes were raised vertically and got in contact with overhead powerlines resulting in electrocution (*On Guard, op. cit.*).

There is need, however, to relate the hazardous conditions under which children work to broader considerations relating to their rights as workers, protection under existing legislation and the conflicts which have flared up between some schoolchildren workers and a major tea plantation estate. We referred briefly in a section above to the supplementary role which child labour plays in the fulfilment of the task-work targets prescribed for their parent workers. This phenomenon of unpaid child labour has been an object of strong criticism from both the agricultural and plantation workers' union and Government labour officials (Interviews with GAPWUZ officials and Ministry of Labour officers, July 1989). This criticism centres on the conversion of child labour into cheap labour by encouraging, if not enforcing, the task-work or *mugwazo* system. Task-work here refers to a labour-task set by an employer to a worker to be completed as a condition for earning a wage. Task-work is closely related to piece-work which denotes a system by which earnings are calculated wholly on the quantity of work done irrespective of the time spent on it (Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Workers' Compensation, *op. cit.*). Task-work thus represents an intensification of the labour regime by the employer. It is aimed at speeding up production and it is widely utilized as a form of labour control in tobacco, cotton, sugar, tea and coffee production. The task-work system increases the pressure on the worker to finish the designated labour-task else he would not be paid. The chief attraction of the system to the employer is that "it is easier to supervise. Each worker knows what is expected of him" (*Ibid.*).

However, what might constitute an attraction to the employer often entails both the enlargement of the labour-task and intensification of the production regime by forcing the worker to complete it in a shorter period of time. This is why parents are forced by that regime to utilize their children to complete the tasks. As a unionist explained with reference to the coffee industry:

Task-work demands that the head of the family use other family members. Those workers without a family resident on the estate often work for several days for a given task-work. But double task-work does not earn double pay (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, *op. cit.*).

What characterizes these task-work arrangements is obviously the inflation of the

allocated tasks in the expectation that child helpers would be utilized. Hence the "cheap labour thesis" advanced by the agricultural and plantation workers' union to explain the attraction to employers of the task-work system. The pressure on the worker was palpably intense. The agricultural and plantation workers' union has now argued for the abolition of task-work in its submissions to the Ministry of Labour (Interview with the GAPWUZ Secretary-General, July 1989).

In addition to this particular form of task-work allocated to adult workers, child workers are often also employed as casual or contract workers on the basis of a contract with the employer. As we have already indicated above, some of the areas in which children were employed on this basis include cotton, tea and coffee picking, maize planting, apple harvesting and tobacco growing. The ages of such child workers range from five to 16 (Interviews with child coffee pickers, August 1989). This is a vulnerable age for these strenuous labour tasks but the low incomes received by their worker parents on the estates necessitate their entry into piece-work.

In the course of our fieldwork, we encountered child coffee pickers - some of whom were as young as seven - who were paid on the basis of the weight of the coffee they had picked (*Ibid.*). They were paid at the rate of between 5 and 7 cents for each kilogram picked. Child workers of nine years and above were able to earn about Z\$10 to Z\$12 per week from picking coffee (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, *op. cit.*). However, some of the child coffee pickers we interviewed indicated that they sometimes received lower earnings; as little as Z\$1 a day (Interviews with child coffee pickers, *op. cit.*). The number of hours worked ranged between 10 and 11, six days a week. These arduous working conditions were aggravated by those instances in which agro-chemical residues caused eye and skin diseases as we observed above. Most of these child pickers were poorly clad and often walked barefoot, exposing them to contamination from residues.

Although cases of exposure to residues were rare in cotton picking, the hours were often arduous and the children housed in temporary boarding houses away from their villages of origin (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, *op. cit.*). In addition, some child workers reported ugly incidents of being beaten up by a farm-owner in Matabeleland South. These children were employed to pick plastic rubbish to prevent cattle dying from eating it. They were paid about Z\$1,75 an hour. The threat of being beaten up for lapses during the work created fear and nervousness on the part of the child workers (Interviews with child workers, Esigodini, August 1989).

The arduousness and hazards which children encounter in their employment are further complicated by the lack of legal protection and access to protective clothing. Child workers are treated as casual workers without the rights and benefits which permanent workers enjoy. The main piece of labour legislation, the *Labour Relations Act* (1985), has been criticized for being "silent" and "very weak" on child labour and its protection (Interview with the GAPWUZ Secretary-General, *op. cit.*). It does not specify, for example, the penalties for the underpayment of child workers. Thus, there are no specific safeguards for children in the existent legislation with the exception of the cryptic reference that:

No contract of employment shall be enforceable against any person under the age of 16 years, whether or not such person was assisted by his guardian... but such person may enforce any rights that have accrued to him by such contract (*Labour Relations Act*, 184).

In practice, however, very few children would have the temerity, still less the resources, to seek legal redress for such grievances as underpayment and lack of protective clothing.

Although the *Agricultural Industry Employment Regulations* (1983) specify that every employer was required to provide a water-proof cap, overcoat or other protective clothing to every employee exposed to "inclement weather", casual workers (who include child workers) are not covered by these regulations. This is a serious anomaly because children are not exempted from work during "inclement weather" nor from tasks which involve coming into contact with agro-chemical residues. Hence the insistence that these employment regulations be amended to embrace every worker (Interview with a GAPWUZ official, *op. cit.*). The ambiguity in the regulations on protective clothing has been partially explained in terms of the powerful commercial farmers' lobby against a comprehensive statute which would raise their costs even though this should save many lives (*Ibid.*). We broadly concur with the observation that:

The low level of compliance with the requirements of the Hazardous Substances and Articles Act 1978 and its Protective Clothing: Pesticides Regulations (Statutory Instrument 205 of 1985) as indicated by the poor provision of protective clothing and inadequate conditions of disposal of containers, implies a need for greater enforcement of existing legislation (Bwititi, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*).

Thus not only is the existing legislation weak but it is poorly enforced. We will return to this theme in a later section. Here we briefly discuss the phenomenon of schoolchildren (enrolled in estate schools) who provide labour during part of the schooling day. In their case, labour prior to attending classes is an integral aspect of their lives and education on the estate. The establishment of farm or estate schools from which child labour could be drawn has a long history. Various pieces of legislation - the *Native Development Act* (1929) and the *Non-Government Schools Regulations* (1959) - provided the Ministry of Education with powers to encourage the establishment of farm schools (Clarke, *op. cit.*). It was subsequently observed that although some farmers established good, well-equipped schools, there were less scrupulous farmers who:

dangled the educational carrot before the noses of school-hungry youngsters, and some not so young in order to provide themselves with a cheap labour force at the busy seasons of the year (*Ibid.* 117).

Farm schools still operate in post-independence Zimbabwe. The Government has sought to exert some modicum of control over these schools. However, individual farmers or estates still determine the specifics of the school timetable and ensure that the children engage in farm work during part of the day.

One such estate with reasonably good school facilities produces tea and coffee in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands. Children receive both primary and secondary education. These children do not pay fees but in return they pick tea from 5.30 to about 1 in the morning before attending school (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, August 1989). Some of these student-workers are as young as eight (*Ibid.*). In addition to the commutation of their fees, the estate claims that it pays for the children's board as well. In reality, however, their labour contributes both to the fees and board. Although the children are allowed to go on holiday in April each year, they often are required to work on the estate during the other holidays (*Ibid.*). This arrangement was instituted in 1964 and has catered for the children of estate workers and those from Peasant backgrounds whose parents could not afford school fees.

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the intense supervision and the arduous hours of work compelled the student-workers to strike at one of the estate secondary schools in 1988. The children complained of over-work both in the mornings (from 5.00 am to 12 noon) and during the compulsory unday shift. In the ensuing confrontation some estate property was damaged by the children. It required the mediatory intervention of Government labour officials to avert the crisis. One concession made to the children was that incentives in the form

of higher pay be awarded to them especially for the work they carried out on Sundays. However, the strike demonstrated that organized industrial action by children is not beyond their reach as a strategy to defend their interests as workers. Furthermore, it revealed the intense labour regime to which underprivileged children were subjected due to their lack of means to enter the conventional schooling system. Finally, it showed the very limited nature of control which the Government exerted on the running of these schools (*Ibid.*).

In this section of the study, we have identified the circumstances which compel children to enter into both remunerated or unremunerated employment. We then surveyed the hazardous aspects of their conditions of work showing the ambiguous nature of the existing legislation in relation to child workers. The illnesses and injuries which they sustained were discussed with reference to coffee, tea, tobacco and cotton production. Here it is necessary to stress several conclusions which may be drawn from the patterns of child labour in commercial agriculture. The first concerns the cheap labour thesis to explain the incidence of child workers. We have shown how they undercut wages for adult workers and how they buttress the low-wage structure in agriculture through the participation in task-work for their parent-workers. The prevalence of child labour also contributes to unemployment amongst adult workers. Understandably, this is of great concern to the agricultural and plantation workers' union (Interview with the GAPWUZ Secretary-General, *op. cit.*). Although statistics on the total number of children employed are not available, the widespread incidence of child labour suggests that they occupy several thousands of jobs in commercial agriculture to which adult workers should have had access. Finally, there is a consensus of opinion among those who have studied the dangers posed to workers by equipment and agro-chemicals that the existing legislation be tightened and that children should not engage in work where these are used (Bwititi *et. al.*, *op. cit.*; Makamure *et. al.*, 1985; Murenha, undated). As it was stressed, what was required was:

greater monitoring of practices of pesticide use on the farms through health and labour inspectorates, and penalties for legal infringements. It also calls for greater educational inputs to employers and employees on the hazards of pesticides, and on safe application of pesticides and for worker protection needs to be further developed and made available (Bwititi *et. al.*, *op. cit.*).

Furthermore, adequate protective clothing and equipment should be provided to workers who should be informed of why and how they should use and maintain it (Murenha, *op. cit.*). All casual workers - including children - should be registered for compensation purposes and all accidents involving them recorded and investigated to prevent their recurrence (*Ibid.*). The safety policy and accident prevention programmes ought to be integrated into the production plans of the farmers and plantation owners.

Section 3

CHILD LABOUR IN THE INFORMAL AND DOMESTIC SECTORS

We now examine the patterns of child labour in the informal sector and domestic work and identify the hazards or problems that they are exposed to. Zimbabwe, like other developing societies, has a considerable informal sector in whose activities children are engaged both as paid and unpaid labour. Indeed, more children are employed in this sector than elsewhere. This is also a reflection of the fact that relatively few children under 16 are employed in the formal sector with the exception of commercial agriculture as we observed above. However, it is useful to begin by outlining the salient characteristics of the informal sector.

The informal sector consists of a broad range of small-scale business or manufacturing enterprises and economic activities which range from vegetable vending to basket-weaving and tin-making. However, a common weakness of purely descriptive studies on the informal sector is their failure to identify the centres of power and capital accumulation and "an overhasty characterization of petty activities as improvised and independent" (Morice, 1981:138).

Indeed, it has been argued that what appeared to be an "unstructured" sector was, in fact, structured through its linkages with the dominant capitalist sector and through the existence of organized groups within it (*Ibid.*). Certain characteristics of the subordinate nature of the sector which Morice identified apply to the Zimbabwean informal sector. These relate to the production by the small enterprises or individuals of commodities "at low prices and under heavy competitive pressure" and its ability, still under the same competitive conditions, to "provide goods and services for wage earners in the modern and public sectors and for the urban poor, thereby contributing towards lower wage rates" (*Ibid.*).

Furthermore, the informal sector played the role of "a reserve army" by shouldering the burden of job creation, exerting an indirect pressure on the wage structure in the modern and state sectors and through operating in fragmented markets where capital was not interested in investing (*Ibid.*). A study on the Zimbabwean informal sector revealed that most enterprises were small in size and especially in terms of the ownership of capital equipment (Jassat and Jirira, 1987). The sector therefore tended to be labour-intensive and the goods that it produced had to be cheaper if they were to compete with those from the capitalist sector. This often entailed the minimization of production costs, principally through lower wages for workers in this sector. Where certain informal sector enterprises were subcontracted by capitalist firms, their lower prices contained a subsidy for the latter.

Table 6
PATTERNS OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND NON-ATTENDANCE AMONGST CHILD WORKERS

Category	No.
Number of Children Attending School	51
Number of Children who no Longer Attend School	63
Number of Children who Have Never Attended School	24
TOTAL	138

Source: Field Interviews, July-September 1989.

The majority of the child workers who we interviewed - slightly more than a hundred - engaged in labour of some sort in the informal sector. The most common activities in which they were engaged related to petty trading mostly in urban centres. Selling vegetables, fruit and groundnuts in people's markets, roadside stalls and at bus stations was easily the major activity among children of school age. Both male and female children, paid and unpaid, were involved in selling these wares.

Our survey of child workers in this sub-sector covered seven centres distributed amongst four different provinces. The centres covered were Harare, Bulawayo, Kwekwe, Mutare, Chipinge, Esigodini and Mutasa. Certain general trends and problems characterized this form of child labour. These were that most of the child vendors began working to supplement family income at an early age: most of them were aged between nine and 13. The majority of the children sold modest quantities of the vegetables, fruit or confectionery products with a gross value rarely exceeding Z\$7-Z\$10 a day. Their profit margins were necessarily quite small.

Most child vendors worked long hours ranging from nine to 12 hours a day for six or seven days a week. The time-consuming nature of vending becomes clearer when it is remembered that about 36 percent of the sampled child workers also attend school. In their case they either engage in vending for several hours in the morning before attending afternoon school classes or after morning classes. In both cases, the children have very little time to prepare for their school-work or to indulge in normal recreational activities with other children.

Their long hours of work should be related to the less than favourable environment in which they work. Although some children tend market stalls, most do not. They often sell beside roads which criss-cross the high-density suburbs formerly known as "townships". Usually they set up temporary roadside stalls for their greens, bananas, oranges, groundnuts, boiled eggs and so forth. These stalls are in the open air and so virtually unprotected from wind, dust, rain and the sun. The most commonly cited problems which this entailed concerned complaints of colds, headaches and malaria (Interviews with child vendors, July-August 1989). The prolonged exposure of the children to the elements was unhealthy. Road traffic was another hazard. There had been incidents where child vendors had been hurt by moving buses while selling to passengers (*Ibid.*).

Additional hazards emanated from the locations in which vending was carried out. These include those relating to child cigarette and snack vendors who entered beerhalls in order to sell to drinkers. During our survey we came across vendors as young as five

selling boiled eggs and cigarettes to beerhall patrons. This was obviously frowned upon by the municipal councils which own the beerhalls. Selling wares in this environment exposed the children to harassment not only by the municipal police but sometimes by drunken customers (*Ibid.*). There were instances in which drunken customers refused to pay for the items bought (*Ibid.*). Sometimes the young vendors were the object of verbal abuse by the patrons and yet in other instances they were caught in the crossfire when fighting broke out between drunkards. Clearly, vending on premises from which they were restricted by law but also where shady elements such as thieves and prostitutes operated from exposed the children to moral insecurity and harassment.

However, our survey established that a considerable proportion of child vendors had experienced harassment from the police at some stage in their job (*Ibid.*). About 30 percent of the sampled vendors confirmed that they had either had their wares confiscated by the police or been fined (or both) (*Ibid.*). Police swoops on child vendors were a regular occurrence at those premises which were unlicensed for selling. A particular target of harassment were those child vendors who did not possess a hawker's licence to allow them to sell their products. The majority of those who had had their wares confiscated were required to pay fines of \$15 as an admission of guilt. Neither the swoops nor fines appear to have deterred the children from vending. In one particular incident at Harare bus terminus, this author witnessed the confiscation of a packet of "centacools" from a boy vendor of 14 by a policeman. In this case, the vendor was not taken to the police station and fined because he slipped away. Half an hour later, the boy was back in business with another pack of centacools! In most cases, however, child vendors caught selling are detained at the police station until their parents pay the fines. Very rarely do the children have takings of more than Z\$10 to be able to pay the fines on their own.

The fear of the police seems ingrained in the child vendors. Rather than view the police as source of assistance and security, they seek to dodge them and it would be surprising if some of them did not develop a bitter and resentful attitude towards them. There is obviously a strong case for more sensitive policing than there seems to have been, if the children's responses on this issue are anything to go by. The designation of street vending as an illegal activity may form a neat aspect of the law but it thereby criminalizes a basic form of survival strategy by households with marginal incomes. Even so, the relevant section of the law which forbids vending was inherited from the colonial period. According to the *Children's Protection and Adoption Act* of 1972, vending falls under "street trading", which is defined as:

the hawking of any article and the distribution of handbills... shoe cleaning, motor car attending and any other like occupation carried on in a public place (Rhodesia Government, 1972).

4 **There was a more pathetic case of a young girl vendor who had been taken to a juvenile court for having been caught four times while selling (Interview with a Social Welfare Officer, August 1989.)**

Table 7
CHILD WORKERS: BREAKDOWN BY VENDING SECTOR

Vending Sector	Number of Child Vendors
Vegetables and Fruit	58
Eggs	10
Cigarettes	8
Clothes	4
Confectionery	9
Firewood	4
Agricultural Implements hoes, ploughs, etc.	3
TOTAL	96

Source: Field Interviews: July-September 1989.

Table 8
PATTERNS OF PAID AND UNPAID LABOUR AMONGST CHILD WORKERS

Category	No.
No. of Child Workers who are Regularly Paid a Wage	54
No. of Child Workers who are not Paid for their Work	72
No. of Self-Employed Child Workers	14
TOTAL	40

Source: Field Interviews, July-September 1989.

These "street trading" activities are outlawed under the Act which goes further to pronounce that any child or young person who engages in such activity is liable to be "taken into care". Of course, not all aspects of the law on vending have been strictly enforced since independence; nor would it have been practically possible to do so. Discussions with the Department of Social Welfare officers confirmed the impossibility of stamping out child vending through the enforcement of the Act. However, some of the officers argued that it was the prerogative of the police to enforce the law in the interests of public health and the children's own safety (Interview with Social Welfare Officers, August 1989). This did not detract from the thrust of the survey evidence to the effect that there was a glaring contradiction between the assumptions of the existing Act and the socio-economic realities which compelled thousands of child vendors to engage in "street trading".

In concluding this discussion on child vendors reference must be made to pay conditions. Our survey established that a considerable proportion of the vendors were unpaid by virtue of their being family members selling on behalf of their parents. About 50 percent of the sampled child vendors were not paid a formal wage by their parents (Interviews with child vendors, July-August 1989). The majority of them, however, received token pocket money of 50 cents and in generous cases \$1 as a mark of gratitude from their parents. Those attending school used the pocket money to buy refreshments such as

milk, buns and scones (*Ibid.*). Most acknowledged that proceeds from their sales went to pay for their school fees, clothes, food and accommodation.

We have already observed that their average daily takings rarely exceeded Z\$10. Their operating margins were small; vending was thus a useful but still marginal source of supplementary family income. It played a crucial role in the reproduction requirements of the working-class households.

Some of the child vendors received wages. Most of these did not attend school; and they tended to work for older established vendors. These children often worked even longer hours for miniscule wages (*Ibid.*). The wages ranged from Z\$8 to Z\$35 per month; only several who sold clothes earned about Z\$50 per month. Clearly these are abysmally low wages, far below the Government-stipulated minimum wages which have now been set at above Z\$ 100. They would still be low even though the majority of these children were provided with free accommodation and food. Most tended to utilize these meagre wages to purchase clothes: it usually took at least two months to save for a reasonable pair of trousers and a shirt (*Ibid.*). These workers were required to work seven days a week and consequently had no time for sport and recreation. They were caught in a trap from which it was difficult to escape. Only a few managed to become self-employed as vendors, but even then their net returns were still small and their working conditions unfavourable.

We now turn our attention to several other sub-sectors of the informal sector. These include welding, door-frame manufacture, fence and tin-making, basket-weaving, carpentry and bicycle repairing. All the centres we surveyed possess an informal sector which specializes in one or more of these trades. To varying degrees they also draw on child labour. It should be stressed, however, that the sector is bedevilled by problems of access to credit, discount and sometimes supplies from the capitalist sector. Marketing of their products is another hurdle which the small enterprises encounter (Interviews with informal sector entrepreneurs, July-August 1989). Their expansion has accordingly been hampered. This has had a negative effect on their capacity to recruit more labour but particularly child labour.

In welding, there were very few children below 16 who were employed in the sector. This was partly attributed to the specialized nature of welding, the expensive equipment involved and the hazards associated with it. Employers were not keen to employ children because it would entail training them for a lengthy period and it included the danger that their equipment could be damaged in the training process (*Ibid.*). It is also more dangerous for children than for adults to engage in welding. If no protective goggles are worn it could damage the eyes due to the bright light and there had been some cases of electrocution (*Ibid.*).

In the manufacture of door-frames, fence and tin or pot-making, there were relatively more child workers employed. A sizeable proportion of these workers were recruited by parents who had provided them with the initial training. Some of these child workers attended school but joined their parents after classes or during the holidays. In these trades, we therefore witness the phenomenon of both paid and unpaid labour.

Our survey showed that the manufacture of door and window-frames, tins and pots involves a great deal of metalwork using hammers, cutters and iron implements. These provide a source of danger to workers, particularly children who complained of injuries sustained from cuts on the fingers (from metal sheets). This was a common complaint. Most workers - including the children - did not wear protective gloves or goggles while

working on the metal. Almost every tinsmith has sustained an injury of some kind on their hands from working on metal. Furthermore, the noise caused by hammering on the metal often in open spaces was unbearable and could affect the workers' ears in the long run. Yet, in spite of these hazards, children of about 14 were already experienced tinsmiths having begun the trade when they were nine or 10.

Most tin and pot-making enterprises were family businesses wholly dependent on their children's labour and in some cases this had negatively interfered with their education which had been discontinued. However, it is again necessary to situate child labour in these enterprises in a broader context: the struggle of the concerned households to survive in an environment of unemployment, low wages and competition from the formal sector. Similar observations may be made in connection with those engaged in family-based basket-weaving enterprises.

In carpentry, bicycle and car repairing enterprises, more child workers could be found. These trades require some training before skills are inculcated. There were, therefore, instances of child workers who were recruited as apprentices while some were again children of the enterprise owners. The hours of work were similarly arduous as they were rarely less than nine per day. Lack of protective clothing - at least overalls, gloves and goggles - exposed them to hazardous injuries. The child carpenters often complained of the strenuous nature of the woodwork they did, long hours, injuries from the equipment they used (saws and planes). Most of them had left school and been inducted as full-time apprentices taught to make wardrobes, coffee tables, sofas and kitchen furniture. There were cases of these apprentices going unpaid for months for the ostensible reason that they were receiving free training or that they were close relatives (Interview with carpentry apprentices, July-August 1989). For those who were paid, monthly wages ranged from Z\$40 to Z\$95 a month (*Ibid.*).

There were fewer cases of child apprentices in the motor-car repair and maintenance sub-sector. Children employed in this sub-sector were, on average, older at 16 although some had begun the apprenticeship several years earlier. Their work was quite heavy as it involved changing wheels, working on the engine and on the main frame of the car itself (*Ibid.*). Due to lack of adequate protective clothing, some had sustained injuries on the hands and fingers from metal cuts. Again, while some were paid wages ranging from Z\$30 to Z\$90 per month, others were unpaid because, as the employers explained, "they were receiving free training" (Interviews with employers of car apprentices, July-August 1989).

There were children engaged in tailoring and bicycle repairing as apprentices of whom most had been forced by their domestic circumstances to abandon school. Some were unpaid in return for the opportunity to acquire the skills while others were not paid by virtue of being children or relatives of the employers. There was clearly evidence of the exploitation of the children's labour notwithstanding the long hours and the accidents at work. This exploitation should be related to the labour-intensiveness of, and marginal returns to, the informal sector. More significantly, it is not a regulated sector in terms of enforcement of laws on minimum wages and apprenticeship conditions. In some instances where employers had failed to pay the stipulated minimum wages, the apprentices had sought redress through the Ministry of Labour.

milk, buns and scones (*Ibid.*). Most acknowledged that proceeds from their sales went to pay for their school fees, clothes, food and accommodation.

We have already observed that their average daily takings rarely exceeded Z\$10. Their operating margins were small; vending was thus a useful but still marginal source of supplementary family income. It played a crucial role in the reproduction requirements of the working-class households.

Some of the child vendors received wages. Most of these did not attend school; and they tended to work for older established vendors. These children often worked even longer hours for miniscule wages (*Ibid.*). The wages ranged from Z\$8 to Z\$35 per month; only several who sold clothes earned about Z\$50 per month. Clearly these are abysmally low wages, far below the Government-stipulated minimum wages which have now been set at above Z\$ 100. They would still be low even though the majority of these children were provided with free accommodation and food. Most tended to utilize these meagre wages to purchase clothes: it usually took at least two months to save for a reasonable pair of trousers and a shirt (*Ibid.*). These workers were required to work seven days a week and consequently had no time for sport and recreation. They were caught in a trap from which it was difficult to escape. Only a few managed to become self-employed as vendors, but even then their net returns were still small and their working conditions unfavourable.

We now turn our attention to several other sub-sectors of the informal sector. These include welding, door-frame manufacture, fence and tin-making, basket-weaving, carpentry and bicycle repairing. All the centres we surveyed possess an informal sector which specializes in one or more of these trades. To varying degrees they also draw on child labour. It should be stressed, however, that the sector is bedevilled by problems of access to credit, discount and sometimes supplies from the capitalist sector. Marketing of their products is another hurdle which the small enterprises encounter (Interviews with informal sector entrepreneurs, July-August 1989). Their expansion has accordingly been hampered. This has had a negative effect on their capacity to recruit more labour but particularly child labour.

In welding, there were very few children below 16 who were employed in the sector. This was partly attributed to the specialized nature of welding, the expensive equipment involved and the hazards associated with it. Employers were not keen to employ children because it would entail training them for a lengthy period and it included the danger that their equipment could be damaged in the training process (*Ibid.*). It is also more dangerous for children than for adults to engage in welding. If no protective goggles are worn it could damage the eyes due to the bright light and there had been some cases of electrocution (*Ibid.*).

In the manufacture of door-frames, fence and tin or pot-making, there were relatively more child workers employed. A sizeable proportion of these workers were recruited by parents who had provided them with the initial training. Some of these child workers attended school but joined their parents after classes or during the holidays. In these trades, we therefore witness the phenomenon of both paid and unpaid labour.

Our survey showed that the manufacture of door and window-frames, tins and pots involves a great deal of metalwork using hammers, cutters and iron implements. These provide a source of danger to workers, particularly children who complained of injuries sustained from cuts on the fingers (from metal sheets). This was a common complaint. Most workers - including the children - did not wear protective gloves or goggles while

working on the metal. Almost every tinsmith has sustained an injury of some kind on their hands from working on metal. Furthermore, the noise caused by hammering on the metal often in open spaces was unbearable and could affect the workers' ears in the long run. Yet, in spite of these hazards, children of about 14 were already experienced tinsmiths having begun the trade when they were nine or 10.

Most tin and pot-making enterprises were family businesses wholly dependent on their children's labour and in some cases this had negatively interfered with their education which had been discontinued. However, it is again necessary to situate child labour in these enterprises in a broader context: the struggle of the concerned households to survive in an environment of unemployment, low wages and competition from the formal sector. Similar observations may be made in connection with those engaged in family-based basket-weaving enterprises.

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Table 9

PATTERNS OF ACCESS TO PROTECTIVE CLOTHING BY CHILD WORKERS

Category	No.
Number of Children with Access to Protective Clothing	7
Number of Children without Access to Protective Clothing	33
TOTAL	140

Source: Field Interviews, July-September 1989.

There existed therefore an awareness amongst most employers that they could be reported to the ministry for not paying or for underpaying their child workers. A few employers alluded to this possibility as one reason for their reluctance to engage the children in the first place (*Ibid*). However, these were clearly a minority of the employers: the exploitation of child apprentices is nevertheless a major problem in the informal sector.

We may now turn our attention to the domestic sector where considerable numbers of child workers are employed in difficult conditions. By "domestic sector" here, we refer to domestic work in private homes: such work would involve cooking meals, cleaning up the house, taking care of the employer's children, gardening and related tasks. In Zimbabwean society, children at one stage or the other and to varying degrees engage in household chores. However, with increasing urbanization and the tendency in emergent middle-class households for both husband and wife to enter employment, there has arisen dependence on domestic workers to be child-minders and to perform domestic chores. In terms of the numbers employed (about 100 000 in 1988), the domestic sector currently is the third largest employer of labour after the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. There is a likelihood that the exact numbers may have declined somewhat as a result of white emigration in the post-independence period.

Although the *Masters and Servants Act* (1901) which governed relations between the domestic "master" and "servant" has now been repealed, the conditions under which child workers are employed are difficult ones.⁵ First, the hours are very long. This is another case of unregulated working conditions which are difficult to police. It is not uncommon for the child domestics to work 10 to 15-hour continuous shifts. Such under-16 workers - the majority of whom tend to be girls - engage in motley activities from scrubbing floors in houses with as many as six-eight rooms before preparing breakfast (Interviews with child domestics and a Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers' Union official, August

- 3 One of the defunct Act's provisions made it illegal for a domestic worker to "refuse to accompany his master or any of his family, by desire of the master, on any journey within Southern Rhodesia... on which his master orders him to go, or to be in charge of, or to drive, herd or take care of any carriage, horse, or any kind of cattle, horned or otherwise, the property... of his master, which such servant would by reason of his contract be bound to do at his master's residence or on his premises or farm" (Cited in Clarke, *op. cit.* 170). The other provisions relate to the 'imprisonment or fining of his domestic servant if "without leave or lawful cause, absents himself from his workplace without the employer's permission; carelessly performs or neglects to perform his work... refuses to obey any command of his employer or the latter's proxy which it was his duty to obey" (*Ibid.* 171).

1989). They then look after children who have not yet reached the age to attend creche or school and prepare meals for them. They also do the laundry before preparing the evening meal. Rarely do they retire to bed before the employers and their children do so (*Ibid.*). In many instances, they are relied upon to clean up the dishes before the day's chores are over. For some of the child workers, the work continues when they are expected to look after their employer's children in bed (*Ibid.*). Thus they ensure that the children relieve themselves in the toilet if they woke up in the middle of the night! Sometimes they are required to go on errands such as buying bread from bakeries or receiving goods from early morning buses as early as 3.00 or 4.00 am.

Apart from the "unholy hours" which these children have to work, some encounter underpayment, sometimes non-payment of their wages and are subjected to various forms of maltreatment. Although domestic workers are entitled to a minimum wage of Z\$116 per month, most of the children receive far less than this amount (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, August 1989). Some of the children received between Z\$25 and Z\$30, others much less than this (*Ibid.*). In Chipinge, most child domestics received Z\$ 15 per month (Interview with a ZDAWU official, *op. cit.*). Even when due allowance is given to the food and accommodation which is accorded to most of these children, their wages are abysmally low. The wages forced these children to lead a marginal and impoverished existence. It often took several months of saving to buy reasonable clothes and shoes. Some of those we interviewed in Chipinge walked barefoot.

Quite apart from the very low wages was the problem of non-payment of the wages altogether. It was difficult to estimate the magnitude of this problem, but it does exist. There had been cases of these children being unpaid for up to seven months (Interview with a Labour Relations Officer, *op. cit.*). It was largely over non-payment that disputes reached a head between the employers and the child workers; these sometimes reached the Ministry of Labour for arbitration. However, it was a difficult if not risky exercise for the child to report under- or non-payment of wages to the local Labour Office. Normally such cases were reported only when the child had been dismissed. This is indicative of the vulnerability of these child workers.

Indeed, it is known that they are, discouraged by their employers from joining the domestic workers' union, visiting the union office or attending union meetings (Interview with a ZDAWU official, *op. cit.*). Child workers from rural areas receive rougher treatment: before they can lodge their cases, they are likely to be put on board a bus destined for their rural village! Clearly, there is considerable exploitation perpetrated by the upper working class and the emergent middle classes which do indeed need domestic workers for reasons advanced above.

There are, however, several ways in which the employers attempt to justify this exploitation of child workers. A common one is that the children in question are relatives when questions are asked. There are indeed cases where children of relatives are invited from the rural areas to work as domestics on the pretext that they would be attending school (*Ibid.*). This is reminiscent of a similar trend in Kenya where:

Sometimes wealthier members of the extended family would offer to take the children of poor relatives into their care, promising to educate them. These pledges were not honoured and the children became workers in the home of their 'foster' parents (Onyango, *op. cit.* 167).

This may be linked to those instances where the children's parents consented to their minor becoming a worker to enable them to receive his or her wages. Such cases were reported in the areas we conducted our survey (Interview with a Labour Relations

Officer, *op. cit.*). Here were clear cases where parental economic hardship resulted in the "mortgaging" of their children for a regular wage. It was, however, difficult to estimate the magnitude of this problem: It was unlikely to be more than a minority trend.

There were other excuses used by employers to underpay their child workers. It was often claimed that by providing employment they had granted a favour to the child in the first place. In the case of young child migrants from the rural areas, it was claimed that before they had been taken on they had had no clothes, food or accommodation. There were conflicting responses from labour relations officers to this rationalization of underpayment by employers (Interviews with Labour Relations Officers, July-August 1989). One argued that employing the child workers was "often a service for the youngsters from distant rural areas where it is difficult to survive" (*Ibid.*). The other dismissed this claim and asserted that the Ministry of Labour did not tolerate such excuses to justify the exploitation of the children (*Ibid.*).

Finally, child workers have been known to suffer abuse in the domestic sector. About 85 percent of the under-16 child workers are girls; and girls in this age group are particularly vulnerable at this stage of their lives. There have been instances of some males enticing such young women into a sexual relationship on the pretext that they would offer them employment (Interview with a Social Worker, August 1989). In some of the instances, the males concerned have had the temerity to take the child concerned to the social welfare office so that she could be repatriated to where she came from! (*Ibid.*). Some prosecutions have resulted when this has occurred. Clearly, the vulnerability of under-16 girl workers in the domestic sector cannot be overstressed. The experience of verbal or physical abuse is bound to scar them for the rest of their lives.

Our discussion of the broad range of the activities in the informal and domestic sectors in which child workers are engaged supports our general argument in the first section of this study concerning the centrality of socio-economic determinants. We have observed the predominance of child workers from the lower stratum to the working class in these activities. A considerable proportion of the child labour is "unpaid" because it directly supplements marginal family incomes. These households' survival strategies are thus premised on income earned by these children before or after attending school. The reproduction of certain working-class households now increasingly hinges on these child-generated incomes. So do those of some rural peasant households which draw their livelihood from incomes earned by their child domestic workers in the urban sector. Their vulnerability to these pressures was underlined and so were the physical hazards they encountered during the course of their work. The gap between the socio-economic realities which impel children to work and the rigidity of the existing legislation were alluded to. We return to these themes in a slightly different context when we focus on the problems and hazards encountered by marginalized children often simply known as "street children" or "street kids" to describe their vulnerability and homelessness. We seek to unravel the roots of this phenomenon and identify the inconsistencies in the official response to it.

Section 4

THE PROBLEM OF MARGINALIZED CHILDREN: THE SO-CALLED "STREET CHILDREN"

There has begun to emerge in some of Zimbabwe's cities the problem of marginalized children without fixed abode, education, skills or employment. Some of these children, whose age ranges from eight up to 17, do not have homes where they can retire to sleep during the night. They do not have a regular source of income or food. In appearance, most of them tend to be poorly clad, scruffy and ill-fed. It is in the capital, Harare (with an estimated population of over 1 million), that the problem of these marginalized children or the so-called street children is most visible. To a lesser degree, similarly marginalized children can be found in Bulawayo, Mutare and Kwekwe. The central part of the city - where most of the shops and entertainment houses are located - is where groups of these children fend for themselves along the streets. But how have these children come to be uprooted?

The roots of their marginalization must again be sought in their socio-economic background. Specific causes included the destitute status of their parents, poverty and drought in the rural areas and armed conflict in adjacent Mozambique. The last-mentioned explains the flight of a considerable number of Mozambican children into urban centres on the Zimbabwean side of the border. The social circumstances of the child's parents have a direct bearing on his or her drift into "street life". A social welfare officer explained that such circumstances included the divorce of parents, one-parent families which experienced inadequate accommodation and income and generally unstable family circumstances (Interview with a Social Welfare Officer, August 1989). Another welfare officer observed that economic stresses were undermining the safety net provided by the extended family network in our cultural context (Interview with a Church Social Worker, August 1989). These prevented relatives or guardians from providing support and a good environment for the child who now ended up on the street. A considerable proportion of the "street children" belong to destitute families who live in very difficult circumstances. Some of them receive assistance from the Department of Social Welfare. Those who were eligible for this type of assistance were provided with a maintenance allowance of Z\$25 (for those who were blind) and Z\$5 for children per month. In an urban setting, food has to be purchased and clothes bought and so this amount is clearly inadequate. As one unpublished study observed:

The giving of Z\$25, where about Z\$75 is needed, is just a pittance. This would explain the continued presence of beggars on our streets. They beg in order to supplement their small stipends (Department of Research and Planning, Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare, *undated*).

It is the meagre amounts which the blind and other disabled people receive which make it difficult for them to break out of their destitution. Their children are vulnerable victims of this state of affairs. True, in addition, those on the social welfare payroll also receive a small rent allowance and fees for their school-going children. However, their straitened circumstances and pressing needs often make such allowances inadequate and the continued school attendance of the children problematic. Sooner than later, the children of the disabled and destitute have to fend for themselves on the streets.

A second major cause of children subsisting on "street activities" is poverty and

drought-related dislocation which makes rural life unbearable. These contribute to the pressure for urban-ward migration by these children either on their own or with their parents. A sizeable proportion of the child vendors and domestic workers we interviewed consisted of this stratum of child migrant workers. We will elaborate on the broader issues raised by the emerging phenomenon of child migrant labour. Here we confine ourselves to identifying the linkage between rural poverty and its pressure on children to seek employment in towns. When such employment fails to materialize, a segment of these children become destitute or begin to fend for themselves on the street.

Finally, the armed conflict in Mozambique has severely dislocated family life, peasant production and internal security so that thousands of children have fled either with their parents or on their own into Zimbabwe.⁶ In towns in eastern Zimbabwe, there are many such children engaged in vending and domestic work. Some of them have, however, become "street children". Their pathetic circumstances include homelessness; lack of food, clothes and medical care and a legal status of residence. Trauma as a condition among these children was known to be widespread although very incompletely documented and even less generally treated (UNICEF, 1989:23). It was estimated that in Mozambique itself the number of children traumatized, orphaned or abandoned ran from 250 000 to 500 000 or up to 10 percent of the age-group (*Ibid*). The flight of thousands of Mozambican children into Zimbabwe and their presence amongst street children designates a spill-over of the fratricidal conflict in which they are a major victim group.

Having traced the origins of the marginalized children on the streets, we now examine the street work in which they engage in order to survive. We also discuss the hazards which such work entails. Most of the interviews and observations we made on the activities of these children were in the central business district of Harare. There has also been recent widespread Press coverage of these so-called "street kids" (*The Herald*, various editions, July-August 1989). The activities they engage in may be described as "communal" as the children operate in small groups. These peer groups seem to have emerged for the self-protection of the children and for the informal sharing of resources such as food, money and clothes. As one social welfare officer explained with some exaggeration:

These street children have an informal security organization. They wore their few clothes communally and they have refreshments together at certain times of the day (Interview with a Harare-based social welfare officer, August 1989).

We return to some of the negative aspects of the sub-culture of these peer groups shortly.

We now describe some of the work they engage in. A common one is to guard cars for shoppers, movie patrons or motorists with some business to transact in town. They normally guard such cars in groups in return for a small fee of Z\$2 or so. Given the considerable increase in car thefts in this part of Harare city, there are always motorists who partake of this service by the street children. There are sometimes cases of

5 **Within Mozambique itself, limited survey carried out in 1987 confirmed serious problems of acute malnutrition, rising to a high of some 13 percent of young children in the most war-affected areas, as well as underlying deterioration of nutritional status, evidenced by very high levels of stunted growth (UNICEF, 1989). It was believed that over half of the young Mozambican children now suffered from some of malnourishment (*Ibid*).**

motorists who do not want or need this protection service. To them the solicitations from these car guards constitute a nuisance akin to "harassment". A recent newspaper reported in somewhat sensational terms that:

Harare street kids anticipating brisk business in guarding cars ... harassed motorists by demanding payment for guard duties which in most cases were uncalled for (*The Herald*, 31st August 1989).

It is an exaggeration to allege that the children can "coerce" the motorists into paying for the service. However, there are instances where those motorists who have declined to pay for the service later found the tyres of their cars deflated. Misunderstandings have also occurred where those motorists who declined the service found their cars stolen or broken into. Although they do point fingers at the "kids", it cannot be conclusively proven that the latter "revenge" in this manner or whether they turn a blind eye to such burglaries even if they witness the perpetrators. The borderline between providing a genuine security service and alleged connivance with thieves is a very narrow one to the motorist victims. For the car guards, this is therefore neither an easy nor safe job. However, it is a source of earnings for those groups which participate in it. It is no longer limited to central Harare alone; we came across children in the neighbouring suburb of Mbare who worked as car guards after school especially at Mbare Musika and Rufaro Stadium during soccer matches (Interviews with street children, July 1989).

Other activities the children undertake are the washing of cars for a fee. This is viewed by the public as a more legitimate form of work. Both in some suburbs and central Harare, these children offer to wash cars although it is often a problem for them to gain access to water for this purpose. In neighbouring Mbare, some children had found a solution by clearing a car-washing site on the banks of a stream!

Toy-making was another activity in which some street children had recently turned to. This involved using metal-wire to make toy cars which are popular with local kids. On one particular experiment which was being sponsored by a church, the children had made (minus their labour) a profit of 1 000 percent (Interview with a Church Social Welfare Officer, *op. cit.*). Unfortunately, there were very few of such enterprises in view of the necessary facilities - shelter, organization and money - which they would require (*Ibid.*). We will return to this problem when we discuss policy issues arising from this survey.

Finally, the two other activities which the children are forced into include begging and prostitution. Those who beg tend to be disabled or to be children of the disabled. Young girls often lead their blind parents around the streets while they beg or sing church songs to attract the attention of city shoppers or passers-by. The parents themselves are a pathetic sight, tend to be shabbily dressed and accompanied by smaller children. The older children not only lead the beggar parents around the streets; they also look after the takings as they are dropped into the plate. The related problem is that children who grow up in this environment of begging and destitution may end up as beggars themselves. Deprived of the security of a good upbringing, home and education they develop a dependence or beggar syndrome which becomes difficult to eradicate later.

The hazards of begging in the public include occasional round-ups of both the parents and children by the police (Interviews with Social Welfare Officers, *op. cit.*). When these round-ups occur to "clean up" the city, the beggars are normally taken to police stations for screening; children caught in the net may be sent to probation or children's homes (*Ibid.*). The physical process of being rounded up and the ensuing interrogation cannot fail to be a traumatic experience for the dependent children. However, the overall

impact of these occasional round-ups does not amount to much more than sweeping the problem under the carpet. As the study cited above observed :

Round-ups *per se* are regarded as *ad hoc* measures to combat the problem posed by vagrancy and begging... (but) they are never viewed as ultimate solutions in themselves. They only result in people being screened for arrest as criminals, or for repatriation if they are foreign nationals, or for resettlement if they qualify (Department of Research and Planning, *op. cit.*).

It must be said that this approach to the problem of begging (including by children) has not sought to tackle its roots. The problem will therefore continue to fester.

In order to survive on the streets, some of the children have been forced into prostitution. This applies equally to both male and female children under 16. An indicator of the problem is the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases amongst children as young as 13 in Harare. In one case, a young boy of 14 admitted to having contracted a venereal disease from a blind girl of a similar age.

We have already referred to cases where young girls were enticed into sexual relationships with older men in return for promised jobs. There are also cases where the young boys and girls indulge in prostitution in return for money simply in order to survive in the city. The reader would appreciate how difficult it would have been to unravel the extent of child prostitution given the limited amount of time in which we carried out the survey. Several publicized cases, however, came to our attention.

Although there has been reported cases of homosexual prostitution - involving young men - as far back as 1964, the publicity which surrounded homosexual prostitution among young boys in Harare in 1985 suggested that the problem may have had wider dimensions. The investigations into the prostitution racket in 1985 revealed that an elderly pimp, one Samanyika, recruited male street children as prostitutes to serve white homosexual clients. The investigations led to the prosecution of Samanyika and the dismantling of the racket. Here was a case of an elderly male taking advantage of the adverse conditions in which vulnerable young boys found themselves to introduce them to white homosexuals.

Before this particular incident of homosexual prostitution, there had been a case involving organized prostitution by young black girls in the Kopje area of Harare. A Mozambican emigre known as Jaricha ran a brothel for young girls under 16 for some Portuguese male clients (Interview with a Social Welfare Officer, *op. cit.*). This was a case of displaced young women being taken advantage of because of their difficult conditions. In the subsequent prosecution, Jaricha was himself deported to Mozambique.

There have been other publicized cases involving brothels by male proprietors for girls as young as 13. Two of them concerned such young girls in Harare. In each case, the girls were kept to provide sexual services to clients in return for cash. The bulk of the money earned in this manner was obviously appropriated by the brothel keeper. The police reportedly closed the brothels in the Avenues and Waterfalls areas of Harare but the question become whether there were possibly more than these two in operation.

More intensive investigations of the social background of the girl prostitutes would probably reveal that most of them come from poor families. To be sure, the existing legislation is cognizant of the problem of child prostitution. It specifies that:

Any person who allows a child or young person to reside or frequent a brothel shall be guilty of an offence (and) that any person who causes or conduces to the seduction, abduction or prostitution of a child or young person or the commission by a child or a young person of immoral acts shall be guilty of

an offence ... (Children's Protection and Adoption Act, 484).

While the existence of the legislation expresses an awareness of the existence of child prostitution, it does not again follow that the roots of the problem are being addressed. The socio-economic determinants of child prostitution may appear complex but they can be reduced to being a strategy of survival by the young children in inhospitable urban conditions. The organized nature of the prostitution also confirms the powerful position occupied by the male intermediaries and brothel keepers. Their capacity of exploitation of vulnerable and poor children assumes sinister overtones. However, no amount of "moralizing" about the problem gets us nearer to the long-term solution. The circumstances which compel young children into prostitution need to be tackled first.

This discussion leads to a consideration of activities which, like prostitution, can damage their health and self-esteem. These activities are forms of "relaxation", but nevertheless potentially dangerous. It is known that within the various peer groups some amount of drug-taking and glue-sniffing occurs. Although the drugs which some of these marginalized children take such as *mbanje*, may be described as "soft", they could seriously become addicted to them with time. Furthermore, dependence on drugs brings them into contact with the pushers with the possibility that some of the children may be subcontracted to distribute the drugs.

At the time of our survey, there had not surfaced such instances of drug-peddling by the "street children" although the likelihood of that happening in the future cannot be discounted. What has already emerged as a problem, however, is glue-sniffing which has the potentiality of causing death. In central Harare, the children are known to sniff glue in order to "get high" temporarily so as to forget the hardships they encounter in their daily struggle for survival.

In both the taking of drugs, the sniffing of glue and consumption of alcohol, the peer groups amongst street children play a crucial role. In addition to the protection and communal facilities which they extend to newcomers (as we observed above), they also introduce them to these more questionable, ultimately dangerous habits. The majority of the street children are inevitably male: smoking and glue-sniffing are seen as "macho" activities. They are also an expression of their "independence" from the larger society. One social worker observed that:

Peer groups force younger boys to sniff glue and to smoke *mbanje*. The new boys soon get caught up in this (Interview with a Church Social Worker, *op. cit.*). .

Another pointed out that once a newcomer joined, he was discouraged from leaving (Interview with a Social Welfare Officer, *op. cit.*). What emerges from these observations is that the sub-culture of these street children has certain binding aspects to it. However, they do exaggerate the voluntarism involved in either joining or pulling out of these peer groups. The structural trap into which both the peer groups, their leaders and members and newcomers are caught up cannot easily be shaken off.

Discussions with authorities such as social welfare officers suggested that some of the children occasionally indulged in petty theft and drunkenness. As we observed above, the borderline between legal activity and hand-to-mouth survival strategy tends to become very narrow in these circumstances. Our own investigations could not confirm that theft and drunkenness were widespread among the street children.

The temptation exists to treat these children as a "public health" or "public security" issue rather than a genuine social problem which requires a multi-pronged approach. An example of this authoritarian approach is the observation that they have an informal

security system of their own and that some of them were involved "in borderline criminal activities" (Interviews with Social Welfare Officers, *op. cit.*). Our own survey showed that although the children hung together in whatever they did as a group they did not constitute a security organization nor pose a security problem as such. We saw how they do provide protection for private property, mostly cars. Most were not criminals. If they were to indulge in criminal activities, they would be caught sooner or later. They simply did not seem to possess the resources nor the power to engage in criminal activity. Indeed their major problem, as we saw above, was their vulnerability, powerlessness and poverty.

To conclude this section on marginalized children, we may mention one group that has survived otherwise unbearable conditions with some limited success in an exploitative context. We refer to migrant Mozambican wheelbarrow porters whom we interviewed in Chipinge. Most of these young boys, whose ages range from nine to 17, are refugees from the conflict across the border (Interview with Mozambican boy porters, August 1989). They are employed both as domestic servants and wheelbarrow porters.

From 7.00. each morning they push their wheelbarrows from the nearby township of Gazaland into town to offer to carry shopping bags and cartons for customers to the bus station. They often charge less than Z\$1 for a wheelbarrow load. At the end of the day, they normally take home between Z\$5 and Z\$7. The wheelbarrows belong to their employers who make a brisk profit. Some of the loads are very heavy for the young boys. Occasionally, some rude customers refuse to pay after the load has been carried to its destination (*Ibid.*).

At the end of each day, the boys give the takings to their employers and continue with the usual domestic work in the evening. In addition to food and accommodation, these porters receive wages of between Z\$15 and Z\$20 a month. Some walk barefoot; most are poorly clad. Like the child vendors we discussed above, they often have to save several months' wages in order to buy clothes.

These porters do not strictly belong to the "street children" category but their difficult conditions underline their marginalization. Their employers obviously have taken advantage of their refugee status to extract as much work or surplus out of them as possible. However, the employers do not have a right to explain away their exploitative activities on the basis that they are doing the young Mozambican wheelbarrow porters a favour!

In the section, we have elaborated on the activities and hazards which marginalized children experience in the cities. We have surveyed some of their survival strategies in an inhospitable environment. Again, we have stressed our argument that the roots of this social problem ought to be unravelled if we are to begin searching for solutions to it.

The next section of this study will discuss the policy issues that are raised by this survey of child labour in agriculture, the informal and domestic sectors and of marginalized children. We identify the limitations and inconsistencies of some of the policies pursued so far. We also report on more constructive approaches to this social problem of child labour and marginalized children.

Section 5

POLICY ISSUES AND PROGRAMMES

Our discussion above of the working conditions and hazards which children encounter has implied (if it has not also alluded to) the gaps which exist insofar as policy and legislation toward specific sectors are concerned. We now briefly assess the nature and implications of the policy gaps in the agrarian, informal and domestic sectors; and inconsistencies in the policy towards the marginalized or "street children". In this assessment, we also outline some of the programmes which have commenced to address these problems and policy gaps.

The Agrarian Sector

From our discussion of the legislative provisions governing the employment of children in particular and of casual or contract workers in general, it emerged clearly that these were ambiguous. There are no specific provisions regarding the minimum age at which children may be employed nor any relating to certain jobs (such as in the application of agro-chemicals) that they should be excluded from. The *Labour Relations Act* (1985) is largely silent on the question of child labour and it is seen as of little assistance to labour relations officers, union officials and to the child workers in protecting the latter's rights or seeking redress. If the authors of the Act ignored or underestimated the extent of child labour and the hazards it is exposed to, then there is a strong case for a serious revision of this view.

The Act ought to reflect the range of the problems and needs of child workers; provisions to protect their rights, health and safety should be incorporated into it. *The Agricultural Industry Employment Regulations* (1983) are similarly silent on child workers who are subsumed under casual and contract workers. A further disadvantage of casual, seasonal and contract workers is that they can, in practice, be employed for longer than six weeks without being ascribed permanent status which would entitle them to the laid-down minimum wages and other benefits.

In view of the tendency to abuse or exploit the task-work system of labour control and intensification of production by employers, it would be necessary to review it. We saw how parent workers are forced into relying on their children's labour in order to fulfil their task-work targets in reasonable time.

The other crucial areas where the legislation is extremely weak concerns the protection of children and even of adult workers from tasks which involve the use of dangerous equipment and agro-chemicals. We saw how casual and therefore child workers are not provided with the necessary protective clothing. This is despite their employment in jobs which expose them to the danger of agro-chemical residues or to injury to the fingers, hands and feet. We concur with the recommendation of a study on pesticide hazards to farm-workers cited above which ascertained:

a low level of awareness of health hazards of pesticides and of the correct practices of their use, with evidence of increasing exposure to organophosphates as the spraying season progressed. The findings indicate that, in view of the rising use of pesticides in large-scale agriculture, these problems require greater attention from occupational and primary health care services (Bwititi et.al, op. cit).

Educating the workers and especially the children of the dangers of handling pesticides and the need to wear protective clothing including boots while picking coffee, tea or cotton is crucial. The level of knowledge of the hazards which agro-chemicals posed was presently low. It was observed, however, that although it would probably never be possible to achieve absolute safety in the chemical industry, awareness of the potential hazards through the combined efforts of industry, workers (through unions), Government (through the various ministries) as well as improvements in toxicological testing would help to reduce chemical accidents (Nota, *op. cit.* 6.).

Specific programmes aimed at preventive measures should also be mounted. They should include pre-employment medical examinations for all workers who use and handle agro-chemicals. These would involve pre-exposure blood tests and post-exposure blood tests taken at regular intervals:

A rise above the acceptable limit of the product in the blood indicates that the worker should be removed from the work area to prevent further exposures (*Ibid.*).

There appeared to be virtually no programmes of medical examination of child workers in those branches of crop production which utilize agro-chemicals. Attempts to obtain data relating to accidents or illness suffered by child coffee pickers were unsuccessful. Discussions with union officials indicated that some child coffee pickers have indeed been hospitalized due to contamination by agro-chemicals.

A useful programme on testing workers who handle agro-chemicals has been launched by the Clinical Pharmacology Department in the Medical School at the University of Zimbabwe. It aims at evaluating exposure levels amongst these workers (Interview with a Clinical Pharmacologist, *op. cit.*). This is done through tests of the workers while on the job: a method has been developed to measure the blood and urine samples and eye fluid and achieve instant results. The same method (impression cytology) has been employed to measure exposure levels amongst DDT sprayers.

Although this modest programme is specifically geared towards adult workers, it needs to be extended to child workers who work on crops which are treated with organophosphates and other chemicals. Another constructive element of this programme related to its advisory aspects. The researchers in the Clinical Pharmacology Department, on the basis of their findings, do advise employers and workers on the types of protective clothing and preventive measures which should be used in a specific branch of crop production. However, there is a case for a wider dissemination of this advice: it should not be limited to formal meetings between researchers, employers, Government and union officials. More innovative methods of dissemination should be sought. The use of posters, drama, radio and other media (and with a component specifically geared for children) should also be investigated.

Finally, it is widely admitted that there is no inspectorate system to cover commercial agriculture in relation to occupational health and safety. This removes the few teeth that may exist in legislation on protective clothing and on the handling of agro-chemicals. The importance of instituting such a system cannot be overemphasized: it would deter some of the more negligent commercial farm employers. Similarly, there should be an inspectorate system to regularly investigate the conditions of work of farm schoolchildren. Children's involvement in unsafe work and cases of intensive over-work ought to be penalized. The use of children in farm labour should not be at the expense of their receiving a reasonable education nor contribute to the permanent damage of their health.

The Informal and Domestic Sectors

Our survey showed that the potential for the expansion of the informal sector does exist. Herein lie possibilities for reducing unemployment which has become a grave social problem. However, the structural constraints which currently limit both the sector's expansion and therefore an increase in employment were also spelt out. These include difficulties in obtaining credit from financial institutions, raw material supplies, discount facilities and marketing outlets. There exists competition from established capitalist firms which jealously guard their monopoly. Nevertheless, the informal sector enterprises could compete effectively if these constraints were removed. Their production costs are lower and they could produce goods more efficiently. A policy aimed at making it easier for these small enterprises to obtain credit and discount facilities and raw materials would lead to their expansion.

The policy of provision of assistance to the informal sector should be tied up with regulation of employment conditions. Such regulation should specify protective safeguards for child workers and apprentices. Aspects such as the minimum age for entry into certain job categories, protective clothing, length of apprenticeship contracts and pay should be included in regulatory provisions which would be incorporated into assistance programmes for the sector.

The mounting of such a programme would require Government resources. However, if a revolving fund for this sector was established, it need not be entirely State funded. The advantage of such a fund would be that it would not only contribute to the expansion of the sector and hence to employment but it would also provide a means for regulating employment conditions. The need to ensure that child workers were provided with boots, gloves and masks for the metalwork and welding tasks, carpentry and tin-making they undertake cannot be overemphasized as we observed above. It may even be necessary to consider tax rebates for those enterprises which employ more workers and apprentices while following good and safe employment practices.

The dissemination of information on the hazards of certain jobs in the informal sector would be necessary: the employers and workers need this education. In short, our argument is that the existing ambivalent policy towards the informal sector needs a major overhaul. To accompany such a review, provisions should also be drawn up to reward good employment practices while penalizing the bad ones.

The domestic sector would be more difficult to handle in terms of policy. We observed how the employment of children was sometimes related to their own parents' consent, how some employers exploited kinship ties to recruit the children, and how generally it is difficult to police the sector. The domestic workers' union expressed deep concern at the employers' reluctance to allow their child workers to become union members and secure protection from the existing legislation.

There is need to raise the awareness of domestic employers with respect to the consequences of exploitation of children. These children often come from depressed and poor family backgrounds and usually have little or no education. The class-based exploitation of this vulnerable segment of the proletariat ought to be addressed at policy and concrete programme levels. It may be useful to begin considering specific programmes aimed at child domestics in terms of providing them with information on their rights as well as on part-time educational or vocational courses.

The domestic workers' union should have a dominant role in such programmes. The union has been considering the possibility of setting up cooperatives of domestic workers which would run contracts of domestic work in the suburbs. This could be a protective umbrella for child domestics who are often isolated from other workers and vulnerable to employer pressure as we observed above.

The "Street Children"

The policy and programmes aimed at the marginalized or homeless children have already been assessed above as largely *ad hoc* and inadequate. There appears to be a strong dose of authoritarianism in official analyses and attempted solutions. The notion that street children are a "public security", "public health" or "juvenile delinquency" issue seems to continue to infuse official thinking. One social welfare officer, for instance, saw the solution in members of the public bringing to them such children with no fixed abode found "hanging around bus stops" or "outside shops" (Interview with a Social Welfare Officer, *op. cit.*). This solution would involve sending the children into probation hostels where they could be kept until 18 (*Ibid.*).

Another welfare officer believed the solution would be the removal of child emigres to rehabilitation centres, in this case refugee camps (*Ibid.*). In other words, much Government thinking still centres on the admission of the children into its "correctional" or probation institutions as the solution. This reflects the tenacious adherence to such pre-independence legislation as the *Children's Protection and Adoption Act* which contains strong overtones of British social welfare thinking and assumptions about what to do about delinquent children.⁷ The Act ignores the cultural context in which the twin problems of street children and destitution have emerged in Zimbabwe. This is one of its major limitations.

The fact that the round-ups of beggars, the destitute and the street children have failed to solve this social problem suggests the need for more innovative and sensitive approaches. The observation that most of the "rehabilitated" children are rounded up as many as four times because they soon emerge on the streets again calls for a review of this authoritarian official approach. It may be of some comparative interest to refer to the Brazilian approach to the "street children" problem. As Myers explained, at the beginning:

Street children were associated in the public mind with crime, being popularly regarded as youthful delinquents in the process of becoming hardened criminals as adults. Consequently, the growing contingent of street children ended up being treated largely as a public safety issue and police sweeps periodically removed them from the streets, often placing them in closed institutions as presumably delinquent or homeless. However, treating them in this way neither stemmed their flow into urban centres nor abated the serious threats and problems they encountered there (Myers, 1988:127).

For instance, the Act states that children who may be confined to institutions are those who beg or engage in street
TM^{wh} Sequent the company of any immoral or vicious person (*Children's Protection and Adoption Act, op.*

The realization of the limitations, if not failure, of this approach forced the adoption of a different approach. It emerged that most of the street children were neither homeless nor delinquent, "but simply looking for income to help support themselves and their families" (*Ibid.*). The problem needed to be redefined as one primarily of "unprotected working children who were frequently exploited and who worked under very abominable conditions for very low returns" (*Ibid.*). The Brazilian authorities then came up with programmes to promote the street children's integrated, physical, mental and social development on the assumptions that it was easier to help and protect children and that they should be encouraged to regard themselves "as agents of change in their own lives and should participate in the planning and execution of programmes on their behalf (*Ibid.*).

One modest Zimbabwean programme which is innovative and conceived from a similar perspective is that run by the Anglican Church for the street children in Harare. The programme is chiefly aimed at street children below 17 with the long-term view of reintegrating them fully into society. It is a relatively new programme: it was launched in 1988. The programme is centred on an informal approach towards the children who are persuaded rather than coerced into joining it. However, preliminary observations or research into the conditions of children began towards the end of 1987.

The observations revealed that the ages of the children ranged from seven to 16. Most were boys who had left school at Grade levels 2 and 3; only one had accomplished Grade 7 (Interview with a Church Social Worker, *op. cit.*). The social background of the children confirmed they came from poor or broken families :

Some report that they are on the streets trying to fend for themselves; their parents are separated or divorced. Others, because the parents are poor and unemployed (and) so they claim that they spend the day on the streets trying to supplement family income (*Ibid.*).

Some of the children remarked that their parents could not afford to secure building fees, uniforms and levies to enable them to attend school. Only a tiny minority of the children on the streets did not attend school because of delinquency or truancy. This undermines a common assumption by officialdom and the public that street children are basically mischief-making truants.

The activities of the children were also studied. These included begging, scavenging, car-guarding, etc, but some ended up pickpocketing and sniffing glue because of the influence of peer group members (*Ibid.*).⁹ Others undertook piece-jobs such as carrying shopping bags: "the money they use for basic needs and some take money to their

- 8 **"The institutionalization of children seemed to be bad for them: "While it met their most basic physical needs for food and shelter, it increased their psychological and social marginalization, undermining their ability to cope with the world upon discharge" (*Ibid.* 28).**
- 9 **A study of Johannesburg street children observed that: "Street conditions are far from idyllic and in order to escape the unpleasantness of street life, about 95 percent become glue addicts. 'Smoking glue', as the children call it, is the inhalation of noxious fumes through the mouth. This is most easily done by decanting shoemaker's glue into soft plastic bottles. The toluene in the substances to which the children are addicted is destructive, affecting first the respiratory and then the nervous system... 'smoking glue' causes vivid, frightening hallucinations and impairs motor co-ordination. Altogether it is a disorienting and numbing experience. Vision may become permanently impaired. Constant glue addiction can result in brain damage and total bone marrow deterioration" (Swart, 1988:36).**

parents" (*Ibid.*). It was, however, further observed that:

In all these endeavours, children are vulnerable to law and police intimidation. Some have been to probation hostels on several occasions. After release, they find themselves back on the streets again as there is no alternative (*Ibid.*).

It was on the basis of preliminary findings on the vulnerable conditions of the children that the Anglican Church, in conjunction with several other churches, founded a *Street Children Educational Programme*. The churches formed the *Harare Shelter for the Destitute* to run the programme. The main elements of the programme comprise a basic educational course, some impartment of skills to make toys and feeding the children. In the educational programme, the children are taught numeracy, literacy, English and Shona. These are supplemented with drama, singing, physical training and religious instruction. The present vocational training programme, which began in mid-1989, concerns the making of toy wire cars for sale. The Church has purchased the initial raw materials for the children who have now not only paid back the money used for that purpose, but also made some profit from the toy sales. As a result, there is an intention to expand the programme so that skills in tailoring, art, woodwork, cast iron or welding, and bead-making may be taught to them. The children could also be taught to make earrings, bangles and flower-baskets - products with a potential appeal to tourists (*Ibid.*).

These programmes are largely voluntary and informal: the control of the Church on the children is minimal. In order to gain their confidence initially, such an approach is probably well-advised. However, it also results from an awareness that the imposition of any conditions on their participation in the programme would deter them. As the Church social worker remarked:

Children come and go; they have their own agenda. They do not seem to have a 'time concept': they are always on the move. They should have the freedom and laxity to do what they want (*Ibid.*).

The programmes run for four hours in the mornings from Monday to Friday. Children were therefore given time in the afternoon "to fend for themselves. They presently cannot generate much income - so we let them off after lunch" (*Ibid.*).

The success of the programme was becoming obvious in 1988 when more than 50 boys had joined it. However, several police raids on Church premises disrupted the programme temporarily. Most of the boys were "lost" because they feared a recurrence of the raids. Although the police action has not been repeated, it dramatized the divergence of approaches towards the street children question. The truce between the Church and the police over the children was based on the understanding that no more raids would occur on the Cathedral premises.

The informal and relaxed approach adopted by the above programme to reintegrate the children back into the mainstream of society is more innovative and more likely to win the "hearts and minds of the children". It is reminiscent both of the Brazilian one mentioned above and another in Johannesburg known as "Streetwise" for poor black children (Swart, 1988). However, the future success of the Harare programme will depend on the availability of funding to secure suitable premises for the children; support from other **non**-governmental organizations for the educational programme; sponsorship for a vocational trainer and a more sympathetic response from the law-enforcement agencies.

CONCLUSION

This study on child labour in hazardous employment has sought to argue that the socio-economic context in which it occurs explains the particular forms it assumes. We stressed that therefore the socio-economic determinants of child labour needed to be specified if its imperatives are to be better understood. This is why in the first section of the study we argued that the causal relationship between poverty or deprivation and the imperative for children from this social background to engage in either paid or unpaid labour was a strong one.

In the Zimbabwean context, we explained why it was from the lower stratum of the working class that most child workers came and from the poor or unstable families that marginalized or "street children" emerged. This socio-economic reality counselled against simplistic prescriptions for the child labour problem. It was a social problem that could, only begin to be seriously addressed if equal attention was directed to programmes to remove its roots which lie deep in the fabric of contemporary Zimbabwean society. Thus any provisional attempts to reduce child labour should simultaneously consider reform of the low-income structure, consumer pricing and social services such as accommodation, education and health as these pertain to the working class.

The study then focused on child working conditions in specific sectors: commercial agriculture, the small-scale informal sector enterprises, domestic employment and of marginalized or "street children". In addition to describing the labour process in which the children were engaged, we also explained why the social division of labour in these sectors assumed the forms it did. We debunked notions and arguments of voluntarism on the part of the children as an explanation for their entry into employment.

In the section on commercial agriculture, we examined how the social reproduction of the agricultural proletariat was premised on children entering employment in their own right (on a casual basis) or on behalf of their parents to assist with the fulfilment of task-work targets. We also observed how in the process of working they were vulnerable to such dangers as infection by agro-chemical residues, injury by agricultural machinery and fatigue. The discussion on the role of schoolchildren enrolled on farm schools in production showed not only the crucial role they played, but also the hazards they were exposed to. Particularly, the lack of suitable protective clothing and regular inspection of their occupational health and safety were glaring anomalies. Regular medical checks of their exposure levels to agro-chemicals in those crops on which the children worked were recommended. It was argued that there was an obvious need to remove ambiguities in the labour legislation where it concerns child workers as well as tighten its implementation.

In the section on the informal and domestic sectors, we also surveyed the imperatives which explain the entry of children into unpaid labour (on behalf of their families) and paid labour (again to supplement low family incomes). The analysis into the patterns of child vending in urban centres showed how the earnings from this activity contributed to the reproduction capacity of the lower stratum of the working class. However, we also observed that the disadvantages of both part- and full-time job activities of the children in the informal sector were diminished access or time devoted to educational and/or

recreational activities. The hazards of vending in public places included the children's periodic apprehension by the police, their fining and sometimes confinement in probational institutions. Additional hazards in the informal sector were partly induced by lack of protective clothing by child apprentices and workers in such trades as welding, metalwork, carpentry and tin-making. The problems of arduous work, underpayment and sometimes non-payment of wages for those children employed in the domestic sector were also examined.

Finally, the study assessed the nature of the emerging problem of often homeless, marginalized or "street children" and sought to uncover its roots in contemporary Zimbabwean society. The description of the activities they engage in to earn a living in inhospitable city conditions was followed with reference to a Harare case study. The hazards which they encountered, such as periodic round-ups and admission into probation institutions or refugee centres, were identified. We also underlined the limitations of the authoritarian approach to the phenomenon of street children and instead described an innovative but more benevolent programme set up for them by the Anglican Church.

The last section of the study summarizes the main elements of our survey. We focus on alternative policy approaches and programmes which could begin to address the twin problems of child labour and marginalized children in a more realistic and constructive manner. At the same time, it is obvious that these social problems require far more detailed investigation and comparative analysis than the scope of this present study could allow. Child labour in the peasant sector was hardly touched upon; nor was that in mining and certain sub-sectors in manufacturing. These sectors could prove very useful to examine in the future for comparative purposes.

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