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Issues in Child Labor in Africa

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Foreword

Human development is crucial to confronting the many economic and social ills facing Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). And within the context of human development, addressing the thorny issue of child labor is vital to the development of many of Africa's youngest citizens, who will determine the future of SSA. With more than a third of Africa's children not attending school, and most of them working, the child labor issue will be central in the fight against poverty and destitution.

This paper looks at the question of child labor in its totality—cultural, social, and economic. In order to design effective interventions, the development community—including the Bank—must understand the complex problems linked to child labor and school attendance in many African countries. The paper argues for a comprehensive strategy rather than targeted approaches, and details some innovative instruments to address child labor.

The World Bank is committed to supporting measures that reduce harmful effects of child labor, and to exploring fully the human capital potential in Africa. The authors hope that this paper will encourage future discussions on policies and strategies to address Africa's development challenges—especially human capital issues—in an effort to reduce poverty and spur economic growth.

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This paper was written by Jens Andvig (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs) — who, at the time, was a visiting fellow at the World Bank — and Sudharshan Canagarajah (Senior Economist), and Anne Kielland (Child Protection Specialist), both of the World Bank. The findings and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the World Bank. All errors or omissions are those of the authors. We are grateful to the Norwegian Education Trust Fund for financing Jens Andvig’s fellowship at the World Bank and the publication of this book.

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Overview and Definitions

Almost one-half of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population are children. The current economic and social developments that make them sad or happy today are crucial for the continent’s economic and social future.

This paper will focus on children’s welfare—but from a paternalist and modernization point of view. We are fully aware that going to school may make many children unhappier than most normal work experiences might. Nevertheless, in this paper, attending school is considered a precondition for preparing children for working and living in a modern, market economy—a transformation that is desirable or at least unavoidable. Most Africans, and their governments, accept and desire the transformation.

The African child labor participation rates: macro explanations

If we look at the major regions, we see that, of all the regions, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest child labor rate. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) statistics, 41 percent of children under age 14, approximately 80 million, are working. This number is almost twice the Asian rate.

Poverty appears to be the major reason for child labor. As the poorest continent, Africa has a higher incidence of child labor, which is further differentiated within the continent itself. Countries in which a large share of children are working are, on average, poor countries. As Basu (1999) states it, sending their children into the labor force is the family’s last income-earning resort. As soon as income increases, the children are withdrawn from the labor force.

However, when we look at the sample of African countries for which ILO has child labor statistics, the negative association between the child labor participation rates and the national income becomes almost non-existent. At the same level of national income, we find countries with widely different child labor participation rates, and countries with similar participation rates may have widely different national income levels (Figure 1).

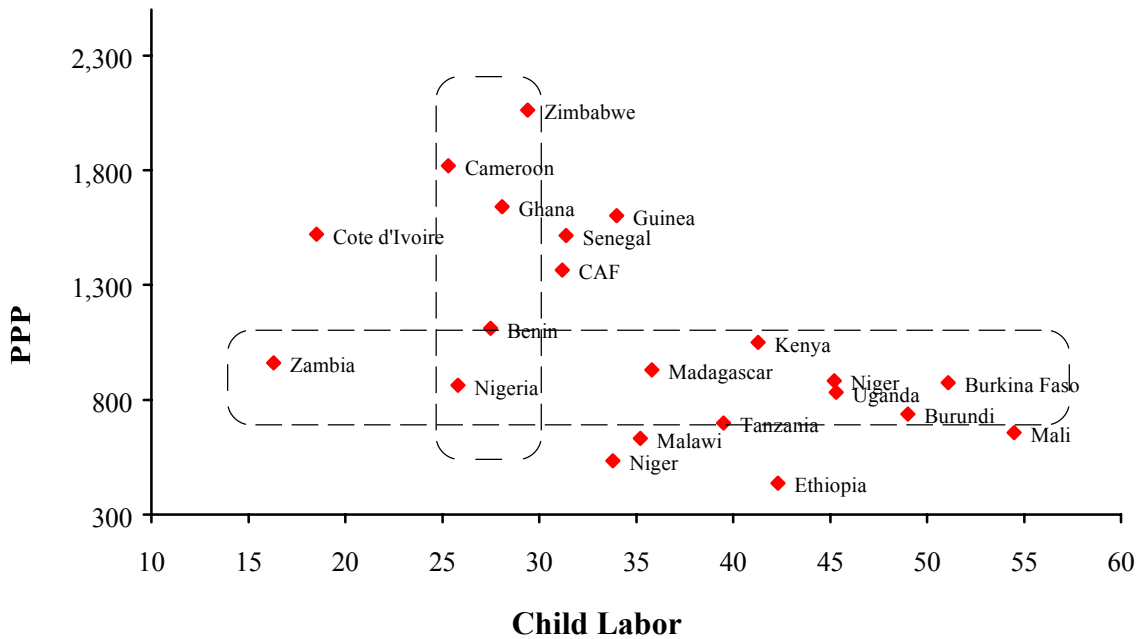
Why do we find that poverty is not so important in explaining child labor in Africa? One possibility may be “noisy measurements” of child labor—but the major explanation is that most African child labor is not wage labor, but labor performed in the household.

The participation rate at the national level will largely reflect the share of total economic activities performed in the households. On average, that share is decreasing as the national income increases, but not uniformly so. Figure 2 compares the child participation rates to the share of the population in the rural areas because statistics on household production are unavailable.

Compared with other continents, African countries are more rural, and still dominated by household production, not large land holdings combined with labor markets. All factors cause high child participation rates.

There are also cultural factors and norms that pull children toward the labor force. Of these, Bradley (1993) has highlighted the most important. Using data from ninety-one different societies in the world that focus on task assignments among both adults and children, she found that children of both sexes did more of women’s than men’s tasks. Traditionally, children

Figure 1
Child labor participation rates and GDP US\$ (PPP)
A sample of Sub-Saharan African countries (1993)



Source: Authors' calculations.

in most African tribes for which ethnographic evidence exists tend to do a larger share of the work in African homesteads than children elsewhere *because women shoulder a larger share of the economic tasks in African agriculture.*

Several recent anthropological studies have confirmed that women in African agricultural households do a larger share of tasks. In an extreme case in Zimbabwe, Reynolds (1991) found that, during the farming season, women were working eight hours and twenty-seven minutes each day, while the men were working three hours and thirty-two minutes. As the children grow older, they tend to do more of the tasks of the adults of the same sex. Because the women are doing a larger share of the time-consuming tasks, the issue of child labor becomes largely an issue of the girls' labor. Recent World Bank statistical studies confirm this point of view.¹ The skewed distribution of work between the adult division of labor has a great influence on the child labor problem in Africa.

The *high birth rate* is another influencing factor at the macro level. It is well documented in micro-oriented studies of single communities that older children, primarily girls, do a large share of infant and toddler childcare. Reynolds (1991) observed in her village that, while women spent 20 percent of their waking hours

cares for infants and small children, girls in the 4–8 age group spent 56 percent of their time this way.

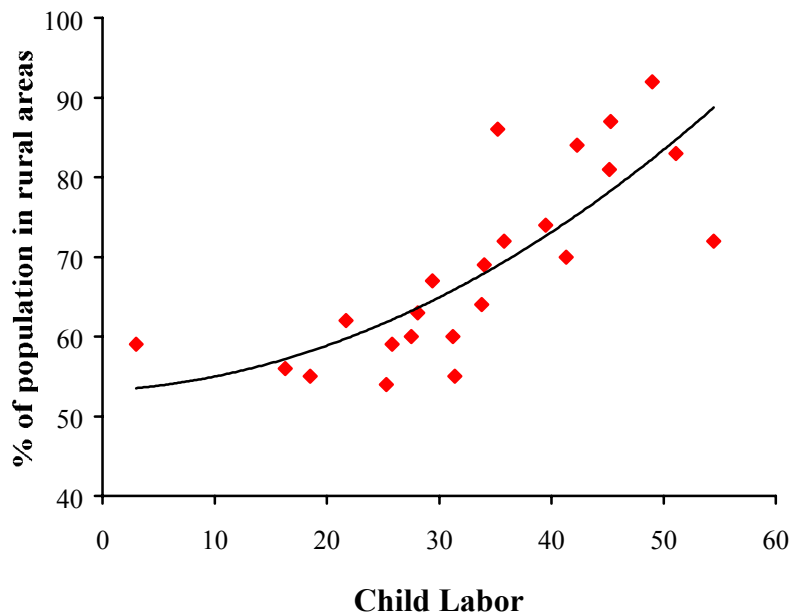
Child labor has a long history in most countries, and changes in participation rates are naturally regarded as a long-term growth issue. Slow changes in norms, in the educational system, and in technology, together with changes in the economic structure, will influence both the nature of the work performed and the participation rates. Changes in the participation rates will impact the accumulation of human capital, production, and the growth rate of the economy.

There might also be a short-term, strongly anti-cyclical, macro component to African child labor, as suggested by Grootaert (1998). This is important for several reasons. If tight fiscal policy and devaluation cause large increases in child labor, this is a valid reason for government policy concern.

Child labor defined and classified

Most child labor in Africa takes place at home. Some labor might be harmful, while other kinds of labor are either harmless or develop skills. Furthermore, the health and the nutritional status of the individual child greatly affect to what degree the same labor is harmful or helpful. We cannot expect to find an easy, op-

Figure 2
Labor participation rates and the share of population living in rural areas
A sample of African countries



Source: Authors' calculations.

erational way to divide child labor into “good” and “bad.” This does not mean that it would not be worthwhile in empirical work to develop informal guidelines that identify most of the labor activities in the homesteads likely to harm children.

The following gives a general *economic* definition of child labor:

By child labor we mean labor performed by children believed to be too young, meaning that by doing so they unduly reduce their present economic welfare or their future income earning capabilities, either by shrinking their future external choice sets or by reducing their own future, individual productive capabilities.

By child work, we mean work performed by children under fifteen years of age. Child work is simply a descriptive term in which we assume nothing about welfare consequences.²

To keep the child welfare perspective within a household setting, we believe it more productive to describe child labor in terms of questions raised by the decision-making structure: Who *decides* if the children are going to work? Who organizes and monitors the la-

bor? What is the motivation of the children and guardians? Which type of information about the labor and its consequences do the decision-makers possess?

One way to classify child labor is to begin with the monitoring agency, the economic unit that employs the child. This can be derived from Table 1.

Three asterisks mark the forms of child labor we believe to be most frequent. Two asterisks indicate common forms; a single asterisk indicates not very common forms; and the empty boxes indicate extremely rare forms.

The right column requires an explanation: Is not a child as a monitoring agency almost a contradiction in terms? While this may be true, many African children are forced by external circumstances or their own mistakes to act independently, with extreme poverty as the normal outcome.

Girls married at a very young age make up the largest group of children that fill the upper-right box. Orphans fill a large part of the farm work block below. In the gray zone between sales and manufacture, we also find children running their own business.³ “Firms” monitoring begging are partly religious and partly criminal organizations.⁴

Table 1
Classification of African child labor after controlling (demand) sector

Type of activity	Control-sector	Own household	Extended family	Unrelated household	Firm	Child *
Domestic work		***	**	**		
Farm work		***	*	*	**	*
Selling /begging		**	*	*	*	*
Manufacture		*	*	*	*	*

Source: Authors' calculations.

The table may be read in at least five different ways, depending on the decision-making process on the supply side: (a) The adults in the family decide that the child has to work; (b) the child decides; or (c) the child's supply might be the outcome of a joint decision. In the case of (b) three possibilities exist: (i) The parents have forced the child to become a decision-maker through expulsion or harassment; (ii) the child has run away of his own accord; or (iii) the child has started to work as a child laborer by mutual consent.

It becomes evident that even with a simplified list of activities, we have to consider numerous possible forms of child labor about which we often hold very different ethical intuitions.

- 1 The household studies made by World Bank researchers may also be applied to study this problem. If we assume that the number of disposable hours for child labor lasts from day-break to sundown, twelve hours every day, eighty-four hours a week, we look at the rural areas only and multiply the numbers worked every week for boys and girls, we arrive at the following results for Côte d'Ivoire: 38.76 percent of total girls' time available is spent on working, while only 17.61 percent of the boys' time is spent that way. That is, girls are working 62 percent more than boys are. However, the Ghana numbers are different. In Ghana, only 15.74 percent of the girls' time is spent on work, while the boys spend practically the same amount of time, 15.66 percent. Note that if we only analyzed the participation rate, child labor appears to be a more serious issue in Ghana than Côte d'Ivoire, while it is, in fact, the opposite.
- 2 Unfortunately, we will not be able to consistently use this language in the remainder of the document because it does not reflect common usage to distinguish between labor and work in this way. We will often use child labor and child work synonymously. Only when we need the distinction will it be re-introduced.
- 3 UNICEF Benin (1998) finds that of 136,000 enterprise leaders in the informal sector in 1992, 2.6 percent are children below the age of 10.
- 4 Even more than families, religious leaders (often within Islamic organizations) with caretaker responsibility for children experience a degeneration of their traditional role as educators due to rural poverty increase and migration. Islamic education increasingly has become combined with economic exploitation of the young pupils, who are often deprived of contact with their families and, even more often than street children, find themselves in miserable health conditions (UNICEF 1998).

2

Children Working at Home

By housework we mean labor performed in the children's residence, either in their parents' home or in the home of close relatives. The family arrangements may be complex, so we sometimes use the terms "guardians" or "monitors" as terms for the adults who organize the children's work at home.

One of the important characteristics of a family as an economic system is that emotions and economic activities interact. For any given child involved in housework, the family *atmosphere* will be important, particularly for the long-term psychological effects of the child's work for the family. If, for example, the oldest girl sacrifices her own schooling in order to take care of her siblings, that labor's effect on her future working capacity will depend on whether she is forced to do it, and whether she receives recognition or spite.

In addition, children, as a workforce, have few opportunities to move out of exploitative households. A large share of harmful child labor in Africa takes place in households of this kind, but there is no way to tell how large this share is.

Compared with a nuclear family, most traditional African family systems seem to give children a larger scope for leaving their original households if dissatisfied, and there is greater social acceptance of the guardians sending their children away for practical or disciplinary reasons. It is well established empirically that a larger share of African children live away from their parents than do children on other continents.

The high propensity of African children who move away from their original household, is an important behavioral code developed in a family-organized economy. It may, however, generate quite different and often undesirable outcomes when followed in a market-based economy.

Child labor in the countryside: empirical studies

The empirical information available is far from sufficient to map the different forms of child labor in Africa. Nevertheless, valuable empirical research has been taking place over the years in scattered anthropological work, sometimes giving detailed knowledge of the children's activities

However, quantitative studies of child labor in Sub-Saharan Africa are more recent. ILO has developed and published two surveys in Africa using its own household data, one from Ghana and the other from Senegal. Using information from existing household surveys, World Bank staff have conducted child labor research from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and Tanzania. The World Bank studies have been relying on household living standard surveys originally made for other purposes, but which include questions about children's work for those age seven and older.

The basic question asked in both the ILO and World

Bank studies was whether the child had worked at least one hour per day for the last seven days, either on a farm or enterprise belonging to the household, or as an employee outside the household (Coulombe

1998, 6). If they answered "yes," children in the 7–14 age group were then considered child laborers. This definition is too broad for defining (harmful) child labor in the household economy—the participation rates become too high. However, the studies also contain some data of time allocation, which is the most detailed for Tanzania.

Table 2
Children's weekly time use in Tanzania, by gender and age cohort, 1993

	Male (by age)				Female (by age)			
	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18
Hours worked, children not in school	24.0	32.9	33.8	45.5	31.5	36.6	48.6	47.5
Hours worked, children in school	5.9	9.7	8.5	9.3	12.3	10.0	11.8	10.2
Hours in school or on school work	38.4	39.3	47.3	49.7	35.8	42.5	47.9	48.6
Hours work foregone by school children	18.1	23.2	25.3	36.3	19.2	26.63	6.8	37.3

Source: HRDS, Mason, and Khandker, 1998.

To date, the studies have mainly highlighted the welfare issue of interaction between child labor and school participation rates.¹ The focus has not been on the rural areas; but because more than 90 percent of the child labor registered in countries such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire (Canagarajah and Coulombe 1997, 10; Grootaert 1998, 25) has been rural, it constitutes the majority of child labor to be explained.

The results are not conclusive. Canagarajah and Coulombe could only find weak negative correlation between school and labor participation rates for Ghana. However, this overall weak connection, particularly when domestic work is also included, is not surprising because most children are registered as working due to the broad definition of child labor. However, only a fraction of the children defined as laborers have to work so much that it really impairs their school performance and well being.

terns vary. In Tanzania (Mason and Khandker 1998), the sum of schooling and work appears constant, while in Benin, rural school children work as many hours as children not in school. Among urban children, there is a much stronger division between those who work and those who study. School children work much less than other children. Children who work in the urban households are often poor, rural relatives who have been placed there to cover the domestic child labor demand left when the urban family sends their own children to school.²

In Ethiopia, research has been done to explain the country's low school attendance. When directly asked, the most important reason for rural children to drop out of school is a conflict between work and school (World Bank 1998: 96). Household labor needs are also the predominant cause of non-enrollment for girls. The low school attendance in the rural areas of Ethiopia

Table 3
**Why girls and boys in Ethiopia never enroll—
 first and second reasons given**

	Girls		Boys	
	Needed for farmwork	Needed for housework	Needed for farmwork	Needed for housework
First reason	8	30	34	4
Second reason	8	23	14	12
Total	16	53	48	16

Source: World Bank, 1998.

The time allocation data from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire show significant differences between rural and urban children. The results from Benin are even more conclusive (Kielland 2000). Rural school children tend to combine schoolwork and work, but the pat-

may make the negative association of child labor and schooling in African countries stand out more clearly.

It is unknown how many children are overworked in their guardians' homes and farmlands. To answer

Table 4
Portrait of the full-time child worker in Côte d'Ivoire

Characteristics	Full-time child worker*	All children
7-17		
Average age	12.7	11.2
Average years of education	1.2	2.5
Urban	11.8	41.6
Rural	88.2	58.4
In poorest 40 percent of households	62.1	48.0

* A full-time child worker is defined in this paper as a child not attending school.
 Source: Grootaert, 1998.

the question, average hours per week is not sufficient information. We should know when in the week the work was done, and how many hours the local school demands in order to tell whether the work is likely to interfere with schooling.

Variation in hours worked is important, however. Grootaert (1998) showed that in 1988 the average number of working hours per week for the children working in Côte d'Ivoire was 30.7 hours, constituting about 10 percent of the total labor supply of the country. In addition, the children spent 12.1 hours on home care—that is, almost 43 hours of work per week, on average. Presumably, those who were school children worked less, particularly when the schools were open, but this result indicates that even the average child had to work so much that it would have impaired the child's school achievements. Coulombe (1998) arrived at a figure of 46.6 hours for the same country using the same data. When household work was included, girls were working five hours more than boys per week. Using Grootaert's numbers, we note that the children that did not attend school worked, on average, forty-four hours per week; when we include household chores, we may expect their to be more than fifty-five hours per week. When adding schoolwork, and the lack of playing time implied, we see that children's working duties were likely to impair their present welfare and future prospects.

Canagarajah and Coulombe (1997) indicate a much lower burden for children in Ghana. Average working hours for these children is about one-half that of the children in Côte d'Ivoire—26.8 hours for boys and 32.2 for girls, when we include household work. On the other hand, at the macro-economic level, the country may dispose of their work without seriously impairing the present level of production. Overall, the children contribute only about 5 percent of total work-

ing time of the country, and their productivity levels are likely to be less than that of the adults.

In Tanzania (Mason and Khandker 1998), the situation appears to fall between these two examples; however, the difference between boys and girls was larger. If the size of the age cohorts 7–9, 10–12, and 13–15 are equal, we find that the average working hours for children not in school were 30.2 hours for boys and 38.9 for girls in 1993. This compliments an earlier sociological study of Kenya where the children's working time ranged from 35 to 50 hours per week (Kayongo-Male and Walji 1984).

According to Mason and Khandker, school children in the area studied in Tanzania spend approximately the same time on school and work together as the working children spend on labor. This indicates that from the household's point of view, schooling represents a considerable investment of unused child labor. For each boy between the ages of 7 and 16 who attends school, the household foregoes, on average, 22.2 hours of work per week; and for each girl 27.5 hours. If the children themselves are indifferent about the choice between schoolwork and homework, the likely result is that their welfare will hardly be reduced through this work, while their future situation might well be harmed through the reduced efforts at school.

World Bank researchers have also studied the more urbanized areas of Zambia (Nielsen 1998), where a much lower incidence of child labor was found with participation rates ranging from 1 percent to 20 percent in the different provinces. It must be noted that the operational definition used for a child worker differs strongly from those used in the other studies. The survey question used asks for the main activity of the child, and thereby often excludes the schooling–labor combination option.

To date, no statistical studies highlight the distribution of the children's labor burden inside the villages and families. Field studies indicate that it may be skewed in several directions. The gender differences are sometimes striking. Reynolds (1991) claims, using one method of time registration, that in her poor Tonga village in Zimbabwe, the girls spent 65 percent of their waking hours on labor, while the boys in the same age group only worked 25 percent of their time.

This is an extreme result, but a similar study from Giriama on the coast of Kenya (Wenger 1988) observed that, in the 8–11 age group, girls spent 51 percent of the time working (daylight hours), while the boys only worked 26 percent.

The allocation of labor between the girls from the different families in Reynolds' Tonga village was also unevenly distributed. Moreover, it showed an interesting pattern in that a large number of the girls were treated as small children and were given some freedom to play while the rest had approximately the same workload as adult women. The age at which girls were treated as adults differed among the families.

Even within a single family, the distribution of labor is often strongly skewed, not only along gender divisions, but also between the individual children. Reynolds (1991) has some detailed data on the matter. The household survey-based research also provides some indirect, circumstantial evidence. The Lloyd and Brandon (1994: 303) study of fertility and schooling in Ghana shows that each additional younger sibling significantly increases the probability that an elder girl will drop out of school; this is not the case for boys. If the observations of Mason and Khandker (1998) from Tanzania can be generalized, these dropouts imply increased child labor for these girls.

Child labor in the countryside: traditional welfare economics perspectives

As in other countries studied, child work is more extensive in rural than urban areas of Africa. Even in fairly well-off Côte d'Ivoire, 98 percent of all working children were unpaid family farm "workers" (Coulombe 1998). The dominant activity of the children is related to farming, but domestic activities should also be included because the focus is the effects on the children's welfare and the development of their productive potential: whether the children carry water for cows or people is of little relevance.

In this context, there are two clusters of welfare issues involved:

- a) The children may, in one sense or another, work too much or too hard at too early an age in their guardians' households. Their labor might be performed in an atmosphere detrimental to their further development. While it is wrong to interpret this situation through Western eyes, it is indicative that corporal punishment performed by the women is often used to make the children work in this environment.
- b) They may, in one sense or another, leave their guardians too early, when they are still children, to survive on their own or in other households.

This part of the paper will focus on the first cluster (a).

From the point of view of traditional welfare economics, it is difficult to see that child labor of this kind implies any serious welfare issue. When children work more in Africa than elsewhere, it is likely to reflect the decisions of altruistic household heads. For example, technological conditions in the African countryside are likely to make the marginal product of children's labor higher compared with the adults' labor than in other continents because of the level of agricultural technology. The children should then also work more.

Nevertheless, problems may arise. Let us assume that each household establishes a central welfare indicator as a function of the members' utility. An optimal allocation of labor across members would normally imply that the marginal disutility of labor for each member should be positively related to its marginal productivity, and their ratio equal among all members if given equal distributive weights in this welfare function. The reason the adults should work more hours is that their marginal product is higher for the same length of the working day, and (possibly) that their marginal disutility will be lower than that for children. This applies if all the relevant economic activities are taking place inside the household. It follows from this set-up that households with more assets should let their children work longer hours.

However, the household head, not the children, makes labor decisions. Lack of complete *information* may lead to excessive child labor. When the head of the household believes her children work less than their actual hours, they will work more than what

is optimal. A household study from the Philippines (Thomas 1992, 35) indicates that this might be common. If she underestimates the marginal disutility of labor for her children, the same will happen. In fact, that is likely to happen. Moreover, experimental psychology has shown that time is experienced as passing more slowly for children compared with adults when they are doing boring tasks.³

More serious than the lack of information is the possibility of exploitation. The incentives are there, even in isolated households. This means that the children are given too little weight in the family welfare function. After all, if the children work more, more leisure time for the head might be possible. However, in this case, not only would the children do too large a share of work, they would also receive too small a share of the household's consumption basket.⁴ The issue then is not child labor as such, but the fairness of the distribution system in the household.

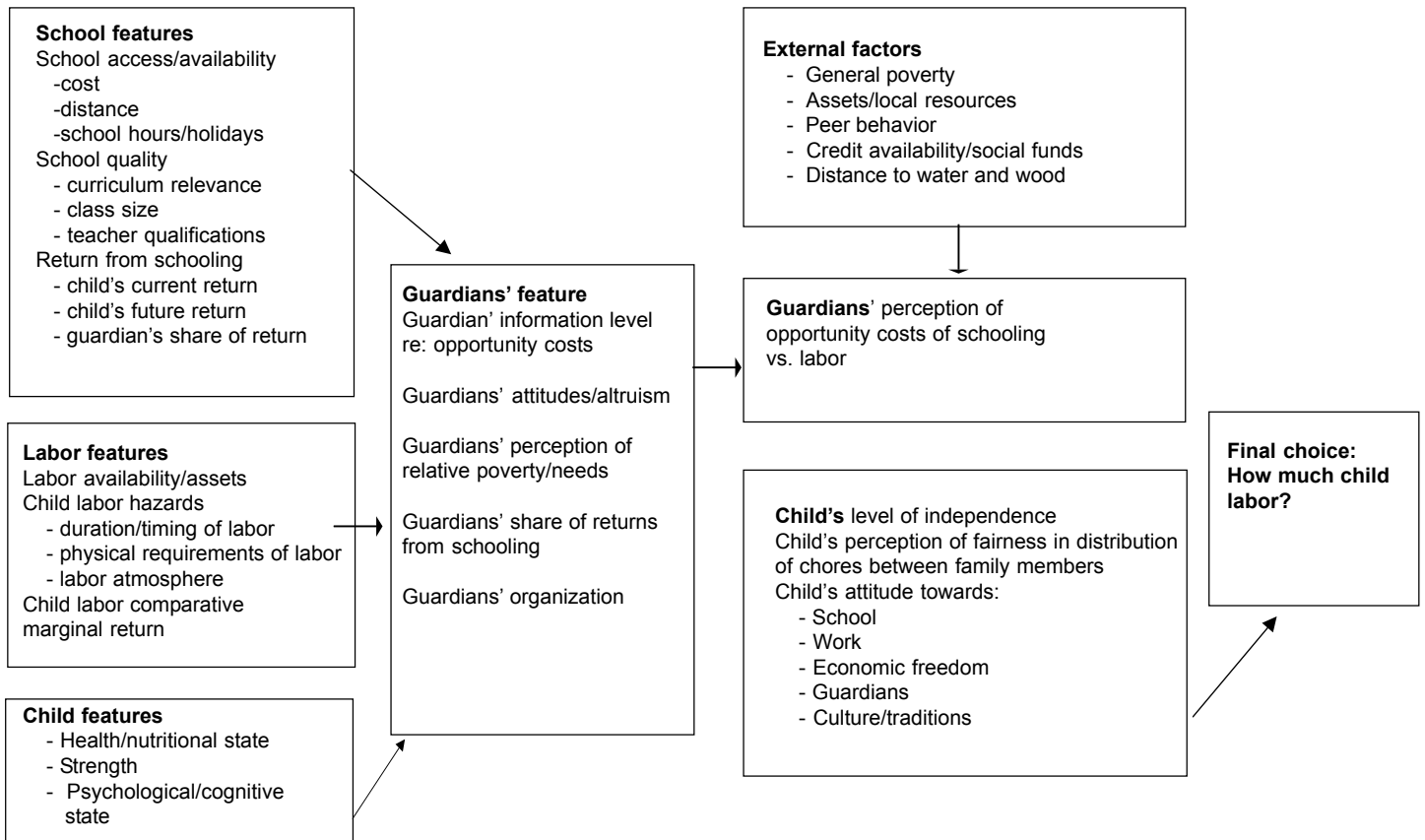
The welfare discussion of this isolated household assumes that the only alternative to work is leisure. The

fact that a schooling system has been developed makes attending school a realistic alternative to working at the farm for most African children. The decisions of fully informed but exploitative guardians may now not only be unfair, but lead to serious economic inefficiencies from a collective point of view. How serious, however, hinges upon the macro development of the African economies. Only that can determine the factual economic return (both social and private) of education.

Children are within the guardians' control for a limited period of their economic life, while the eventual negative effects on the children's future productivity of non-schooling will become the burden of the children themselves. Moreover, the children are in full control of their income when adult, and without some type of social control there is no way they may credibly commit themselves while children to pay their parents back as adults (Baland and Robinson 2000).

Some of these external effects may be internalized by remittance systems, in which the guardians expect to receive a share of the children's future productiv-

Figure 3
Determinants of child labor



ity. If the remittance system weakens, child labor may increase. The children may not be fully informed, have a short memory, or not have the power to internalize these effects themselves.

Furthermore, welfare issues may arise through a lack of information. The guardians may not be fully informed about the negative consequences of children's work on schooling. They may also underestimate the future advantages of education.

Children's work in the household sector, whether harmful or not, is not always caused by poverty alone, even at the individual level. When the farms are too poor or the guardians too disorganized, for example through alcoholism, there will often be too few assets for children to work with or no monitors present; idleness may be the result.

The African child labor participation rates explained: variation across households

Children's labor participation rates should be explained at both the micro and the macro level. The macro-level explanation will have to include the structural differences between the countries or continents. This study disregards them.

Does *poverty* explain the micro variation of the child labor participation rates across households? Grootaert (1998) finds a clear positive correlation for Côte d'Ivoire between the degree of poverty and both participation rates and hours worked by children in the 7–14 age group in 1988. In the rural areas, 79.6 percent of the children of the rural extreme poor worked, on average, 1,742 hours per year, while 19.4 percent of the non-poor worked, on average, 1,558. Constituting 26.3 percent of the total labor supply of the poor households and only 8 percent for the non-poor, child labor appears to be much more important for the survival of poor households, even when we consider the household's own use of the children's labor power.

Coulombe (1998) also found an inverse relationship between expenditure levels and children's labor participation. However, when using a multivariate probit approach (schooling and work were the endogenous variables), the relationship was weak. Furthermore, he also found a strong positive connection between the land size of the household and the probability of its children working. While the probability of working for children living on farms with less than 5 acres was less than 20 percent, that probability increased to almost 40 percent on farms of 40 acres.

In a very detailed study of childcare in the Gusii area in Kenya, LeVine and others (1994) found a strong inverse correlation between the size of a woman's landholding and the extent of non-maternal care of her infants in the 9–24 month age group. That is, if she had daughters, they had to do more childcare the more land she owned.

Canagarajah and Coulombe (1997) arrived at an even weaker association between poverty levels and child labor participation rates in Ghana. While the participation rate for the poorest group was 28.6 percent, the highest expenditure group had a participation rate of 24.8 percent. The poorest farming areas had lower child labor participation rates than the richest. The most striking aspect of poverty was the large share of the poorest children who did nothing. They neither went to school nor worked. While 24.9 percent of the poorest children did nothing, only 10.6 percent of the richest children were idle.

Despite the fact that poor households spend more time carrying water and firewood,⁵ the most likely explanation is that in poor farming households there are few assets to work with, and the marginal productivity for children is exceedingly low. Doing nothing may be a rational way of saving calories.⁶

Table 5
Income quintiles and child labor in Ghana

Expenditure Quintile	Work Only	School Only	Work and School	None	All
Lowest	13.1	46.4	15.5	24.9	100.0
Second	6.8	54.1	21.7	17.3	100.0
Third	10.5	53.8	18.6	17.1	100.0
Fourth	8.7	55.2	19.2	17.0	100.0
Highest	5.7	64.6	19.1	10.6	100.0

Source: Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997.

Estimating the size of the rural child labor problem

No reasonable estimates exist of the size of the child labor problem in Africa. No one has tried to assess how much of the labor performed by children in the households is lasting so long or has such a time shape as to seriously interfere with schooling. Neither do we have a solid basis for counting the number of children working in the rural areas whose work is physically dangerous or psychologically harmful.

We will have to make a rough estimate, based on available data. A rather subjective guess is that approximately 20 percent of the girls and 5 percent of the boys who work in the countryside do so according to the definition cited above. We have already noted considerable cross-country variation when comparing Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, but only a rough estimate can be made for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. We assume that 90 percent of the rural children in the age group work, that one-quarter of the population is in the 7–15 age group, and that the gender distribution is equal. If 68 percent of the 614 million people living in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1997 were living in the countryside, slightly more than 9 million girls and 2 million boys are doing harmful work—child labor.

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- 1 It should be noted that, given the econometrics of these studies they cannot, in principle, answer whether child labor is causing lower school enrollment because they are both endogenous variables in a reduced form equation system. Their relation becomes a conflux relation that will change when the exogenous variables, like their parents' age change. This reflects the way household choices are usually conceived in economics. It is, of course, possible to construct different types of models in which it is prudent to ask whether the children's labor has caused them not to go to school.
 - 2 Kielland (2000, unpublished). Background paper for World Bank social sector report on Benin, analysis based on UNDP data from the *Enquête Emploi du Temps au Benin* 1998.
 - 3 It is, of course, possible that this kind of household may lead the children to work less than the household optimum should dictate. The main reason for this is that principal agent types of games may easily arise within the context.
 - 4 That children receive too small a share of food in regular situations is more frequently reported for girls in South Asia. In Africa, the major problem in the intra-household regime may be an unfair labor distribution. The fact that children work so much, combined with some kind of efficiency wage mechanism (nutrition variety) or a principal agent game in which girls have a more realistic exit option in an African context, may explain this difference. In extreme situations that may not apply, but these situations are more closely related to the situation when children are sent away from home.
 - 5 See Zimmerman (1998).
 - 6 A possible counter argument could be that West African households with few assets are more likely to "place" children with relatives or as domestic servants away from home. Such children were probably not registered by the survey.

3

Children Working away from Home

Child labor away from home: empirical studies

In 1996, ILO's child labor program IPEC (International Program to Eliminate Child Labor) conducted a preliminary study of children in commercial agriculture in thirteen African countries. They estimate that among 17 million economically active children under age fifteen, 77 percent work in the agricultural sector. They further assume that as much as 38 percent of this labor is paid employment. In Kenya, children constitute 20 to 30 percent of the casual labor force on plantations. In the harvest seasons, around 30 percent of coffee pickers are under age fifteen. In some rice fields up to 90 percent of the planting was done by children. In the countryside of Tanzania, approximately 25,000 school children are estimated to be working under

have left for other countries. The majority are boys heading for the plantations in Côte d'Ivoire. The migrating girls are mainly looking for domestic service within Benin or in Gabon; some boys also look for this type of work.

Child migration data from Benin indicate that the relative welfare level of the household may be less important than the general wealth of the village.¹ The welfare differences between urban and rural areas—and between counties like Benin and Gabon—are so substantial that even a relatively wealthy rural household may consider it a good opportunity to offer their child as a servant to an urban or a Gabonese family (Adihou 1998).

From a statistical point of view, the child labor performed in work places that are more organized will probably be a minor factor in the African economies. According to ILO statistics (Ashagrie 1993), only 3 percent of children are waged workers. But, what some of these children experience raises serious ethical concerns, and the plight of the hardest hit, such as street children, has wider consequences. The fate of such groups is an important indicator of the general welfare level. Poverty is a more direct cause of the problem of children leaving their original families in order to work or search for income.

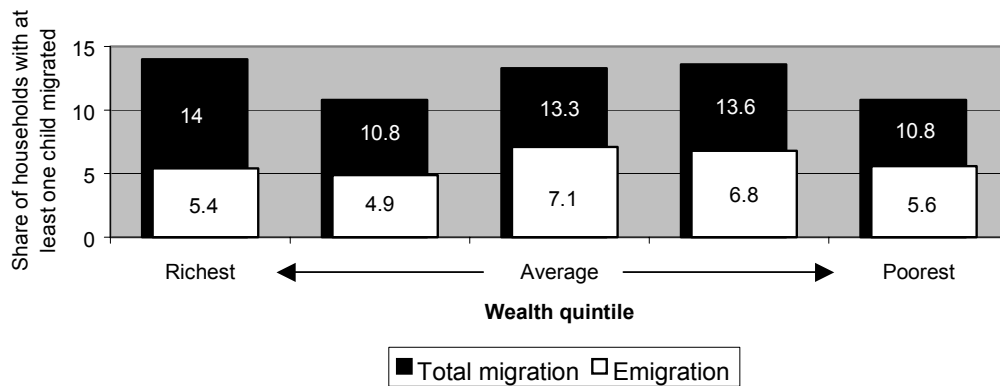
hazardous conditions in commercial plantations, mines, and quarries. On rubber plantations, almost 15 percent of the labor force are children. At the coffee plantations, around 70 percent of the working children come to work before and after school, while 30 percent had either never been to school or were school dropouts (ILO/IPEC 1996).

In Benin (Kielland 2000), 8 percent of all rural children between six and sixteen have left their parental households to work, and as many as one-half of them

The welfare economics of children's exit from home

For various reasons, many children are sent away from their parents or guardians and have to survive on their own. A classic but extreme case from a resource-poor area is the horror story that took place in the mid 1960s among the Ik tribe in the borderland of Uganda, Sudan, and Kenya and described in *Mountain People* by Colin Turnbull. Here children were pushed out of their parents' house and had to survive on their own

Figure 4
Share of rural households in Benin with at least one child labor migrant age 6 to 16, on wealth quintile (white bars show the child labor emigration share of the general child labor migration)



Source: Authors' calculations.

at the age of three. When finished with breast-feeding, the children became too expensive to feed. The only help they received from adults was permission to sleep inside the external fence—any other form of shelter had to be made by the children.

Although this is an extreme case, it illustrates the difficult decision that all poor households must make—that is, when is the optimal time for children to start out on their own?²² By being so extreme, it also underlines that poverty, in most cases, will not dictate the outcome of this decision process. Given the resource constraints, are there reasons to believe that children leave their homes earlier than what would be the socially optimal situation, and does this result in a socially excessive supply of child labor directed at non-home environments?²³

Again, we distinguish between situations in which the economic agents are fully informed and those in which they are not. A common economic characteristic is that young children, like the elderly, are expected to consume more than they produce. If expected remittances do not increase with the length of their stay, it will be economically advantageous for the rest of the family to push children out as early as possible, in particular when they can do little work at home. This means that the guardians of resource-poor farms have strong incentives, in addition to their poverty, to push children out early.

The same applies if children make the decision. When the job prospects for children are good, the children's incentives for leaving are stronger than the guardians' incentives for pushing. When job prospects are bad, the opposite occurs. The traditional outlet for such children was the extended family—but the extended family's willingness to absorb children is declining in many areas of Africa.

Depending on how the work fits the experience and skills acquired by children, their expected consumption outside may increase or decrease. In the market for domestic services, despite all the other disadvantages, a kind of leveling of consumption between children is likely to take place.

While sometimes harsh and unfair, no inefficiencies are necessarily involved by these exits, but they may easily arise. Since any future decline of the productive capacities of the children—either directly because of the early push-out impairing their health, or indirectly because of reduced schooling—will not affect the guardians, they may want to push their children out prematurely. When remittance systems are in place, some of these external negative effects may be internalized.

The ability to “place” children within the traditional extended family and let them work there could also reduce consumption risks of the household. The weak-

ening of this system in parts of Africa has increased this kind of risk and shifted much of it to the children themselves.

Since there are indications of the weakening of the traditional remittance systems, as well as other aspects of traditional authority systems in many African families, we should note their importance for the supply and demand of child labor in the context. Reduced expected remittances will increase the guardians' incentives, both for applying that labor at home and reducing the optimal age for pushing out the children. Any weakening of family authority should also increase the exit propensity on the part of the children. If fully informed, they would rather wait until their expected wages were higher than their present share of the family consumption. We expect that the total effects should be an increase in the labor performed by the children, although the "shirking" problem will increase. A further elucidation of these questions demands formal modeling.

When we allow for lack of information, which is likely to arise in the situation, the scope for economic inefficiencies widens. If the guardians believe that working conditions, including the prospects for schooling, are better than they are, or the harmful effects on health less, they may send the child away prematurely. The child himself may underestimate the negative effects of reduced schooling and overestimate the employment prospects or the joys of moving away from home. In principle, mistakes may also be made in the opposite direction, inducing too few children to leave their homes, or making them leave too late.

Intermediaries purposely skew the information they give when they broker a deal between a child and his parents and the future employer, and thereby affect the deliberations of the economic efficiency of sending the child away. The intermediary's welfare depends on her commission, and she will therefore stimulate exaggerated expectations for both parties. Decisions of sending a child to work are often made based on false assumptions and expectations of higher than realistic economic efficiency.

Some children do not have a choice. Among children who have been made orphans, for example by AIDS, a large group of children have to shoulder the responsibility for their own economic survival. Traditionally, the African extended family systems have been able to absorb such children. In the areas where

this system is weakened, the traditional excess demand for children has been changed into excess supply, causing an increase in the children's own supply of labor. The level of demand determines whether this situation, in fact, causes more child labor.

Parent-controlled child labor supply

This section examines situations in which the children are living at home or working with one of their guardians, but in which an external agent monitors the children's labor activities. The agent pays for the child's activities, but the guardians normally control the wages, and they may or may not redistribute some of the proceeds to the children. As they grow older, the children are more likely to be able to keep a larger share for themselves.

This form of labor competes with labor at home and schooling for the child's time. In rural conditions, wage labor will often be preferred to work at home by both the children and the guardians, although it is more difficult to combine with school. However, such work may be difficult to find.⁴

Their parents may direct the transfer to the new farms, but following the transfer the children may be on their own, or they may still be parent-controlled or moved into the control-sphere of the new guardians. While not often described, a considerable amount of circulation of working children is likely to take place within agricultural neighborhoods; however, the literature has focused on the rural-urban dimension, not the child labor markets in the countryside. Ainsworth (1996) has made a statistical analysis of foster children in Côte d'Ivoire that includes circulation of children in the countryside. In both rural and urban settings, foster children are doing more housework and less schooling than in the fostering household, but the difference is larger in urban areas.

A large share of the urban labor performed by children is parent-controlled in this way, even much of the work performed by so-called street children. Here again boundary cases arise, as the family authority structures weaken, and the children's actual work and income become more difficult to control by the guardians. However, when at least one of the parents is living in an urban area, the parents will, in most cases, follow closely the child labor performed at fixed sites, as in shops.

The children themselves often consider becoming a wage laborer an improvement. When earning money, a child's bargaining power in the family increases, and it might even be used to shorten his working hours in the household.

Child-controlled labor supply

The child-controlled labor supply is a form of child labor that we believe to be more prevalent in at least some African countries than elsewhere.⁵ The child-controlled labor supply has five basic sources:

- Her original guardians force the child from the household in the first stage, and she supplies labor in the second stage.
- She might decide on her own to leave the family and supply labor.
- She might stay, but the guardians do not care about her income-earning activities. This possibility presupposes a far-going breakdown in the family's authority-structure. The same applies, but to a lesser degree than for the other possibilities.
- Random events such as war, illness, and famines may separate the child from the guardians, or they may be forced away from the family consumption basket to allow the adults to survive.
- Premature marriages that can sometimes be linked to the adults' survival.

When is the optimal time for a child to leave the household for the labor market? When is that point for the parents? The Ik have given the answer for the (almost) completely selfish parents—as early as possible. It does not pay to have children because the value of what they eat is larger than what they produce. Such extreme behavior cannot normally be assumed. Instead, we may assume that there are some fixed non-economic returns for the guardians that decrease with the child's age because the parents know that the like-

lihood that the child would survive in a healthy manner increases by age. This prevents most parents from following the Ik's lead. There are several reasons, however, for fearing an increase in this type of child labor supply in Africa in the near future. These include:

- *A weakening of the family authority structure* will make children less willing to stay at home when they are still children in many ways, but old enough to produce a surplus. This means that, while it will cause a decline in the child's work in the household, it implies an increase in the supply of child labor in the market. This weakening of family authority is not only a theoretical possibility, but is prominent in many African countries, particularly in East-Africa (see, for example, Kilbride and Kilbride 1993).
- *A high, but declining birthrate*, the so-called demographic transition evident in Kenya and the eastern part of Nigeria (Caldwell *et al* 1992) implies that there is less use for child labor in the household, particularly for the older girls. This transition may not only be a sign of an acceptance of modern contraceptives, but a sign of a child-stock disequilibrium: the expected net worth of having children is declining for a number of reasons (Andvig 1997). Before the stock is adjusted to the new desired levels, the short-term supply of child labor may increase. This situation by itself weakens the authority structure, particularly of the extended family and the circulation of children within it.
- *The AIDS epidemic*. The death of parents will increase the number of children who have to survive on their own—that is, it has to increase the supply of child-controlled labor. Unlike the preceding factors, actual data exist that may give an impression of the size of the shift in potential supply.
 - The main economic driving force behind the child-controlled labor supply is *rural poverty* and *lack of opportunities*. As long as poverty worsens, the child

According to the UNAIDS/WHO report (1998: 64) there were an estimated 5 million orphans (that is, children whose mothers have died) caused by AIDS at the end of 1997.⁶ If we assume that one-half of these children are in age groups capable of working, this represents a potential shift in the child labor supply of 2.5 million. Calculated the same way, the potential child labor supply in Africa is roughly 153.5 million.

A very rough estimate of the number of children actually in the market in Sub-Saharan Africa is 5 percent, or nearly 7.7 million (if we include most "house girls"). Although many of the orphans are likely to be absorbed into the extended family and neighborhood networks, it is clear that AIDS means a considerable supply shift.

Note how important the family system will be for the effects of the AIDS epidemic for the children. While, for example, an effective extended family system may absorb nine-tenths of the children, a disintegrating extended family may only be able to accept two-thirds. In the first case, only 250,000 will be orphaned, around 3 percent of the children's labor market, in the last case more than 830,000, or more than 10 percent.

labor supply increases. However, boredom with rural life might also be an important push mechanism.⁷

- In many cases of child-controlled labor supply, the child has to leave his homestead—a phenomenon referred to as *child migration*. For a long time, young adolescents and children have constituted a considerable part of the migration to the cities in Africa. In Benin, 32 percent of urban children age six to fourteen live away from both their mother and father, and the majority of them are girls. While 62 percent of these boys attend school, only 23 percent of the girls attend.⁸ Studies from the mid-1960s indicated that one-half of the children who migrated to Douala, Yaoundé, Dakar, and Abidjan arrived alone. In Lomé in the mid-1970s it was found that 10 percent of girls younger than ten did not live with their parents. However, in the mid-1960s, they were mainly moving along family networks, at least in the West-African cities (Bekombe 1981, 123).

Child slavery in Africa

The Swiss-based NGO Christian Solidarity International recently received media attention for buying the freedom of 5,066 Sudanese slaves since 1995, most of them children. A child slave in Sudan can be bought and sold for US\$50. In Sudan, soldiers from the National Islamic Front raid animist and Christian villages in the south and sell captured children as slaves to northern Muslims. Not only does this child slavery have a religious dimension—it is also racial, as the children sold are black, and the buyers mainly white Arabs.⁹

The U.S. State Department estimates that 90,000 blacks, including children, live as the property of Berbers in Mauritania. The slaves are mainly from the Tukolor, Fulani, and Wolof ethnic groups, and have been brought north after being captured by raiding Arab/Berber tribes.¹⁰ Also, in Mauritania there is a racial dimension to the slavery, but in contrast to Sudan the slaves and the masters are Muslim.¹¹

In several African countries, newspapers recount stories about individual children sold practically as slaves. Slave-like arrangements are reported about children from Benin, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, but the gray zones between slavery and contracted child labor may, in this case, be blurry.¹²

In the cases of sales observed in an African context, geographic space is created between the sellers and

buyers. The crux is that the period of the buyer's control might be extended if the children are moved into areas where they do not know the language, and have neither the social networks nor the financial resources to return. This results in a rather bizarre phenomenon in West African countries, such as Benin and Nigeria—the “exchange” of child labor migrants.

The economic essence of these transactions is that the children's economic survival is achieved through a credit operation in which the consumption is repaid by the child's future increased working capacity. The shuffling of children through the African extended family system performed, and still performs in many ways, the same task, in most cases in a more gentle way. The new tendency is the systematic discrimination between own and fostered children that in many ways is a result of schooling becoming an option for the children who are given preference.¹³

The market for domestic services

The market for domestic servants is the most extensive market for child labor in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the city of Cotonou (Benin), it is estimated that one-half of the households have a domestic servant, and that around 85 percent are girls (World Bank 1994, 38; METAS/UNICEF *enquête*¹⁴); in Lomé (Togo) one-third of the households are estimated to have a house girl, most of them children. If one-third of the urban households had a child domestic servant, and we assume a household size of five, we should find roughly 14 million child domestic servants in African cities.¹⁵

What is the life of house girls? How does this market operate? The sector has a mix between a parent-controlled and a child-controlled supply. In practice, as the geographic and social distance between the employer and parents increases, the child becomes more independent. The poorer the parents, the less control will they be able and willing to give. The majority of parents are poor; therefore, the supply of domestic services becomes most often child-controlled.¹⁶

Because the youngest children have the weakest exit opportunities, the outcome in the bargaining process after their arrival is likely to result in the weakest receiving the lowest pay and working the longest hours. In many cases, house girls in Dakar (Senegal) live in their own shelters, in which the older girls assume the role of supervisors for the younger who have just arrived in the city. Salary differences are considerable,

and the younger girls can, in many ways, be seen as apprentices in domestic work.

Observers with first-hand knowledge of the market tend to describe it as segmented (see, for example, Bwibo and Onyango 1987). The youngest house girls, as young as six years old, but normally between eight and twelve, get very low pay if anything at all, work long hours, and often are treated harshly, including receiving more physical punishment than they get at home. A normal payment for a house girl of this kind in Nairobi is around US\$6 per month. In Lomé and Cotonou, the payment is about the same. Because of their young age and lack of knowledge of the urban setting, they are considered “low-quality” house girls; they may make many mistakes, not properly caring for the younger children in the house, or breaking a glass, something that may lead to subtractions from their salary. The demanding households are normally in the lower income range because households that can afford it would prefer higher quality help.

On the one hand, these house girls relieve the urban girls from childcare and other domestic chores, so that they may go to school, and the urban women may take a job outside the household to acquire the income needed for survival. On the other hand, the house girls themselves are often not permitted to attend school.¹⁷

The older house girls are more independent, more difficult to discipline, and less harshly exploited since their bargaining position is stronger, but they are more often exposed to sexual harassment. In Nairobi, their pay is considerably higher, often close to US\$40 per month, while differences are smaller in West Africa. Households in the higher income bracket in the urban population employ them. While less exploited, this segment of the market has its own efficiency problems.

The transplantation of male polygamous behavior in an urban setting contributes to these market efficiency problems. When employing a house girl, the housewife fears that the girl may steal, particularly her husband or boyfriend. Wise management dictates a short-term contract and a quick turnover of house girls. Although the house girls are often exposed to serious sexual harassment, the housewife’s concern is legitimate. Seen from the house girl’s point of view, an adult male with a well-paid job in the formal sector may be a promising object for investment in time and care, and a chance for upward mobility, although risky. The risk of being let go or getting pregnant is high.

The short-term status of the employment contract induces a low degree of loyalty and may increase the risk of stealing, either goods¹⁸ or persons, since the house girl knows that she will soon be fired anyway.

This segment of the market has several negative external effects due to its short-term contracting. The children that “belong” to the household receive low-quality care with negative consequences for their future capacities. The house girl experiences lower welfare and a more insecure situation, with a considerable outflow to the (child-) prostitution markets.¹⁹

The whole game confirms low-trust behavior patterns, which are harmful to growth.

These external effects are, to some extent, mitigated when the house girl and the household belong to the same family or village network. Where these are weak, as they are in parts of Kenya, commercial networks that collect information about households, but particularly house girls’ characteristics, have arisen.²⁰

Given the size and importance of the market for house girls in African countries, much more should be known about it than we do. It is not even certain whether house girls are more prevalent in the higher or the lower income African countries.²¹

Street children

Street children make their living primarily from petty services, sales activities, begging, and sometimes delinquency in streets and public places in urban areas. However, only a few of the economically active children found in the streets of African cities do, in fact, sleep on the streets. Boys tend to have fewer skills that are marketable at an early age, and which may be applied by young children in an urban environment.²² When the children run away from home, or are pushed out from home, they are often left to search in the streets or in the rural neighborhoods for more or less random income opportunities, legal or illegal. The main driving force behind the recruiting of street children is, again, rural and urban poverty, war, disaster, and family disintegration. In addition to the lack of skills, an early development of seemingly emotional independence and a boyish lack of risk aversion are important reasons for boys going to the street rather than competing with girls for domestic work.²³ This lack of risk aversion might, in some cases, become a marketable characteristic useful for petty delinquency and even more serious criminal activities.

The nature of this search process for income implies that the children have to stay in the streets for most of the day. How many of those who have to stay on the streets at night, and who have no guardians at all, is disputed.²⁴ The children are usually organized in gangs, where the youngest associate with the ones closest in age. In addition to giving mutual support and protection, the banding also assists in the collection of information and risk sharing, so much so that it outweighs the advantages of possible cornering of information and the income opportunity when operating alone.

While a large share of the children's labor can hardly be considered useful (Onyango classified 21 percent of their activities as begging, Suda 46 percent), most of them are certainly working long hours, more than sixty hours per week on average. Seventy percent of street children use drugs, of which glue is the most affordable.

Muslim areas in West Africa offer a special version of the street child phenomenon. Talibes, or children who have been placed as apprentices with Koranic masters, are increasingly visible in West African cities, begging or carrying goods for people in order to support themselves and their master. Hunt (1993) points out that in many countries these children, mainly boys, are the closest to fitting the description of a street child. Depending on their monitor's level of organization, the Koranic master, and the initiative of the child himself, their labor moves in and out of the gray zone between guardian-controlled and child-controlled child labor.²⁵

How extensive is the street children phenomenon in Africa? Again, no reliable information exists. However, Onyango and others (1991) made a careful calculation for Kenya in 1988–89 and estimated the number to be 16,300. A crude calculation, using the urbanization and population rates of Kenya at that date, shows that roughly 0.3 percent of the urban population were street children. A crude generalization applied to the whole Africa today results in approximately 600,000 street children. Based on her survey from the late 1980s, Onyango and others (1991) also estimated a separate growth rate for the street child population in Kenya at that time. If that rate remains constant, it would amount to 40,000 street children in 1997, and close to 0.48 percent of the urban population—933,000 for Africa as a whole. A reasonable number for all of Africa is close to 1 million street children,

probably the second or third largest "market" for child labor in the continent. In post-conflict areas the rate is certainly higher.

In addition, a number of children can be found roaming around in the countryside, almost in the manner of the children of Ik, although not quite as young. Instead of staying in the mountains, they keep close to the roads. Like their urban counterparts, many are sheltered by their family, but earn their pocket money themselves. It is currently impossible to make any reasonable guess of their number.

Child soldiers

Nearly 10 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa has lived the last decades in areas where armed conflicts have become part of everyday life. The consequences for the welfare of the population in the short-term are extremely serious. The negative effects for the growth rate in GDP in the longer run tend to persist after the conflict has ended (Collier andunning 1998).

The conflicts have a strong impact on the societies in which they take place. The family structure becomes weakened. Many small children and women flee the conflict areas, while the older children, particularly boys, may try to survive on their own. The conflict areas tend to develop their own economic structure in which the household production, the property rights, and the supply and demand structure become deeply affected. The negative effects on the household economy, including the risk of being killed or robbed, mean that for elder children the incentive for moving out of the poor farms becomes even stronger than in peacetime. While many of the elder children move out of the conflict area, the excess supply situation in the child labor market in the conflict area persists. The situation is worsened as crops and assets are often destroyed or stolen. We have already noted the increase in the number of street children, among whom many child soldiers are recruited.

Unlike the situations that arise under famines, new "jobs" matching the older boys' skills may be created in this situation, since the warring armies normally need increased manpower. While considerable forced drafting of children into the armed forces is certainly taking place, it is in the nature of the economic situation that many boys will join the armies on a voluntary basis, despite all the horrors connected with sol-

diering. There are food increases, the army has some family-like characteristics, and as the fighting goes on, the alternative of staying at home and the prospects for surviving there worsen anyway.

The reasons military organizations find children useful are partly technological and partly because of children's characteristics. While in other areas the technological change has gone against the use of child labor, the opposite has taken place in some forms of warfare. The development of light, reliable hand-weapons makes it possible to delegate military tasks to individuals who are neither physically strong nor technically very competent. The lack of risk aversion and short memory of many boys may, to some extent, compensate for their lack of discipline. The average age in many African armies is frightfully low.

Radda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden) keeps a databank that registers the effects of wars on children. According to this databank, there are more than 100,000 child soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa today. The largest contingent was in 1997 in Sudan. Recent developments in Congo and Angola may have increased this figure.

The harmful physical and psychological wounds these children receive will reduce their future working and learning capacities. Moreover, both the personality development and the skills they acquire during the war may turn them into a force that, rather than contributing to economic growth in the area, may assist in future social and economic destruction.

1 Rural household survey on child labor migration in Benin, conducted by the World Bank, *Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique* (INSAE) and *Carrefour d'écoute et d'orientation* (CEO) in April 2000.

2 With the partial exception of the Ik case, we do not discuss the welfare economics of famine and war situations.

3 When and where free farmland was available, this push-pull mechanism must be different, but still one might raise the question of whether there was a tendency in many parts of Africa for children to establish their own farm on new farmland before the socially optimal point of leaving.

4 *Nation* (July 5, 1997) carried a small note about a quarry opening up in a village in Muranga north of Nairobi. Within weeks almost 20 percent of the students in the nearest primary school dropped out. Similarly, increased enrollment was observed during the drought in Mauritania, as child labor demand in agriculture declined. Note that this observation partly conflicts with Grooart (1998), as his econometric modeling assumes that schooling is the preferred option.

- 5 Referring to a study from South Asia, Siddiqi and Patrinos (1995) claim that only 8 percent of the work decisions are made by the children. In an informal study of early school dropouts in Kenya, Bwibo and Onyango (1987, 107) found that 41 percent of the boys and 52 percent of the girls had made this decision themselves. The parents had presented them with important push-out mechanisms: 28 percent of the boys and 36 percent of the girls reported that they did not receive proper care; and 12 percent of the boys and 16 percent of the girls told about direct harassment by the parents. Finally, 15 percent of the boys and 39 percent of the girls reported that the parents had refused to pay school fees.
- 6 The cumulative number of orphans (7.8 million) was published. We used this figure and the ratio of living orphans to the cumulated number for Uganda to reach 5 million. These estimates are, of course, only indicative of the size of the problem.
- 7 Curiously, Kielland found in the Benin child labor migration data that child labor migration was considerably lower from villages where soccer was the main leisure activity.
- 8 DHS (Demographic Health Survey)/Macro International (1996), *Enquête démographique et de santé*, for Benin.
- 9 Charles Jacobs, President of the American Anti-Slavery Group, Boston. Opposition against slavery is strong also among Muslims both inside and outside Sudan. In Sudan, the leader of the largest Muslim Association, Warith Deem Mohammed, has endorsed the work for freeing the slaves. Likewise, many members of the U.S. Nation of Islam have signed the petition to end slavery in Sudan.
- 10 Samuel Cotton. "Arab Masters—Black Slaves," *The City Sun*, February 1–7, 1995.
- 11 The Koran explicitly states that Muslims cannot keep other Muslims enslaved, and that enslaved war prisoners that convert to Islam must be freed.
- 12 Statistics provided to CEO by police, gendarme, Interpole, and *Ministère des affaires étrangères et de la coopération* (MAEC) show that forty-one Beninese children were found dead during illegal transport in 1995. The price per child on the plantations in Côte d'Ivoire is estimated to be 200,000 CFA for two years of work, or approximately \$300.
- 13 Elysee Soumonni, (2000). *Les règles traditionnelles du placement d'enfants au Bénin*
- 14 The METAS/UNICEF *enquête* (1994) further estimates that the number of house servants in Cotonou and Porto Novo is 100,000, and that 20 percent are younger than 10. Sixty-two percent of the children come from peasant or fishermen's households.
- 15 Using numbers from *World Development Report 1998*, we reach this figure in the following way: Total urban population is 196 million. Assuming each household has five members, and every second household has a house girl, we reach the high number. The low number is reached by observing that the household surveys from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire indicate that an estimate of 5 percent of the children in the 7–15 age group as being in the market is too high, but possible if 5 percent are participating, assuming that the age group constitutes 25 percent of the total population, and domestic work two-thirds of the total child labor market, we will get 5.1 million house girls. If we more realistically assume a participation rate of 3 percent, we will get 3.1 million.
- 16 In a survey conducted in Lomé, 95 percent of the children claim to have been sent to town or had left on their own because of rural poverty. As reported in a recent (1996) World Bank study, most of the following analysis is based upon observations made in Nairobi (Kenya). In other cities, the transactions may be less distrustful, and more family-based.

- 17 A survey conducted in Benin found that the enrollment rate for children living in households with close relatives (parent, uncle, aunt) was 86.2 percent, compared with 25 percent for children living with non-relatives (World Bank 1996, 38).
- 18 Bwibo and Onyango (1987, 107), who took a survey of school dropouts, found that while 4 percent of the boys had dropped out because they had committed a crime, 7 percent of the girls had. Thirty-one percent of the girls who had been caught stealing reported they had done so because they were dissatisfied with their employer, while only 14 percent of the boys reported this as a reason. Ten percent of the girls and none of the boys reported that they were caught stealing because their employer had lied about them. While indirect and circumstantial, this survey gives some evidence of the game outlined above.
- 19 In their admittedly very small sample of thirty prostitutes in Nairobi, Bwibo and Onyango (1987) found that twenty-four had been house girls.
- 20 Incidentally, it may reveal something about the change in the remittance game that some of these bureaus advertise that they will keep the girls' job site secret to avoid begging from their parents!
- 21 Most of these countries probably are in the income range in which the demand for house girls is highly income elastic. Onyango (1993) reports from two surveys she took in two townships in Nairobi that the number of house girls declined rather dramatically from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, a period when the income in these townships declined significantly. The apparently much higher density of house girls in Zimbabwe compared with Kenya might also be explained this way.
- 22 While Onyango and others (1991) found that 91 percent of her street children were boys, Suda (1993) arrived at a figure of 73 percent. Part of the explanation of the discrepancy is that the first sample was only based upon daytime observations. Presumably, the income opportunities are better for girls at night.
- 23 A remarkable change in the gender composition in the market for domestic servants has taken place in many African countries since the turn of the century. Historically, most domestic servants were boys. A historical study of part of this process for Zimbabwe is Grier (1994). Grier's study shows how the movement of boys into the labor market weakened the authority structure of the male household heads.
- 24 We will rely on several studies of street children in Nairobi, mainly Onyango and others (1991) and Suda (1993). Onyango found that 67 percent lived at home, and only 27 percent on the street. Suda found that 53 percent of the children had to survive on their own, while 45 percent were cared for by their parents; only 2 percent by relatives. High dispersion in results is to be expected in this research because street children are naturally a low-trust group, and are not expected to report truthfully about their activities. It is easy for researchers to be fooled. In this case, the results are reconcilable, however, by the fact that a large number of children in Kenya are living with guardians on the harsh terms that they are provided with shelter, but have to provide food for themselves. Suda found that 29 percent of the children had to provide their own shelter. Compared with the prevailing opinion among researchers, the street children in Nairobi are more left on their own than street children elsewhere. It is unknown whether this also applies to other African cities.
- 25 In a 1998 study on "Special Child Protection Issues in Twelve Countries of West and Central Africa," UNICEF indicates that there may be as many *Talibes* as child domestic servants in this region.

4

Policy and Its Instruments

This section looks at African child labor issues in the light of a desired transition from a household-based economy to a modern, market-organized economy. In several ways, the problems are similar to the problems associated with the transformations of centrally planned economies to market based ones. The challenge is how to achieve this transformation while doing as little damage as possible to the former economy. Unlike the transformation from the centrally planned economies, this transition should not be abrupt. The units to be changed are too decentralized, slow-moving, and loosely connected.

Policy in the child labor markets

The markets for child labor in the *official economy* are few and narrow, usually well known by national policymakers. The ILO conventions forbidding children under the age of fifteen to labor apply to this narrow area. This does not mean that this policy is unimportant, for two reasons:

- Pockets of low-paid jobs for children with appalling work conditions do exist in many African countries; in quarries, low-technology mines, forestry, fishing, coffee and tea plantations, etc. Here too the policy debate around international trade sanctions and children's rights is applicable.
- An even more important consideration is the effect of such regulation on child labor not yet performed. As we have argued before, there is likely to be a considerable excess supply of child labor. If the African economies succeed in achieving faster growth and the formal sector demand increases, child labor per-

formed for the market might become a serious problem, and the ILO approach important.

There are valid reasons to doubt the effectiveness of direct intervention in the labor markets for children. However, it is worth trying because it may lead the transition into a "good" (Basu 1999) equilibrium with few child laborers, and it gives the authorities incentives to watch the outcomes of important social and economic processes. An additional advantage is that it is likely to work only on the child labor market without creating incentives to increase child labor activities at home.

As indicated above, the child labor markets in the informal economy are a wider issue, but more difficult to regulate. The *raison d'être* of the informal economy is precisely to ease entry by avoiding costly rules. In principle, however, regulations should work in the same way as markets in the official economy, only be more difficult to implement. The most urgent task in Africa is to regulate the market for domestic servants. In addition to fixing age standards, working hours, and working conditions, it is possible that the authorities should stimulate the collection of information made by the brokers in this market. It is also an area to mobilize both the elite and the parents' soul searching.

Attempts to develop services, schools, and centers for mistreated house girls have had some success, but it is unlikely to work on a large scale. Both these and the separate schools and lodgings for street children are useful in assisting the collection of information

about serious social problems, but can hardly be developed on a scale large enough to address the problem without stimulating it at the same time.

Education

Schooling and education must remain the central policy instrument for overcoming child labor in Africa. Unlike most other policy instruments, they work against both major forms of child labor. To be effective, a *two-ways adjustment* between the children's work tasks and schooling is necessary. Otherwise, the children may quit or not join the school, either on their own or their parents' initiative.

While it is important to improve the quality of the schools, such an adjustment also implies that the schools should be adjusted to the agricultural seasons and not become overly ambitious.¹

If the schools are *not adjusted to the agricultural seasons*, the alternative costs of having the children attend during those seasons may become too high. Due to the cumulative nature of many learning processes, the result might be that the children drop out and have to work full time at home or in the market.

If the school is *too far*, only the most highly motivated and those with nutritious diets will be able to attend. If the *financial costs* are too high, the poorer children and children living in communities with small cash income cannot afford to attend school, and will work or go idle.

In order to fight harmful child labor, *free, compulsory* schooling has the advantage that it gives the teachers more power over both children and parents in influencing a child's time allocation. Teachers are the only persons who possess the information needed to distinguish harmful child labor from useful child work in the homesteads. Because there are important spillovers from one child's participation at school to the other children's from the same hamlet, an active involvement at the community level among the teachers in fighting dropouts due to harmful forms of child labor is essential.

Moreover, and this might be a Utopian argument for some countries, compulsion will give incentives to trace the children who are without guardian supervision, who are becoming house girls, street children, and have moved outside their local community in the process. Such tracing will limit the powers of exploitation at the hands of their employers.

In areas with high population growth, preschool or kindergartens may be particularly helpful in fighting both school dropouts and harmful child labor. The reason is simply that too many schoolgirls are hard-pressed by childcare responsibilities in addition to their other work burden. To have kindergarten close to schools may give some relief.

Health policy

The connections between child labor and health policy are less evident. Clearly, malnutrition affects young children's school performance and leads to irreversible dropouts. Because of malnutrition, children may resort to harmful labor at home or in the market. Later, they may become somewhat apathetic, and stay in their homes performing activities on the borderline between work and idling because they lack the energy to leave.

Some forms of child labor expose the children to high health risks, and a reasonably effective health system might be able to register this exposure and help identify these forms of child labor and also the children becoming orphans because of the AIDS epidemic. The measures to control the spread of the AIDS epidemic are also important in reducing the number of children who have to survive by selling their labor services in the market.

Agricultural policy instruments and rural infrastructure

General poverty reduction measures in agricultural areas are likely to mitigate some of the more serious forms of child labor because the incentives to push children out early are reduced. However, for the better-off farms, the alternative costs of schooling may increase, and some of the less harmful forms of child labor may increase.

Reducing the average distance between the household and its water resource, and improving cooking techniques so they become less unhealthy will help reduce harmful child labor.²

One of the reasons that women and children shoulder such a large share of agricultural work in Africa is that the traditional methods of cultivation (no plows or draught animals) permit it. *Major changes in methods of cultivation* are likely to reduce the role of children and free their time for more play and studies.

Labor market policy instruments

In most African countries, the Ministry of Labor has direct policy instruments of varying strength. These are applied in the context of the official economy to ensure that the countries are following their legal frameworks, regulating which industries allow children to work at the specified age. While deviating in detail, most countries have rules modeled on the international conventions proposed by ILO and adopted by several African countries. A larger number have signed the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that implies similar rules. The key instruments are labor inspectors and cooperation with the trade unions and employer associations in the country. Some feeble attempts to address the problem of child labor in the domestic servants market have also been made with these instruments.

Family policy

Given the important role family structure plays in the economy, family policy should, in principle, have wider implications in African countries than within the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) area. However, it is a notoriously difficult area of policy, which is one reason it is difficult for the government to control important sections of the African economies without violating the principles of non-interference in family life. Because breakdowns in the traditional ways of the African family systems are the cause of the most socially harmful forms of child labor, it is difficult to find effective policy instruments that may attack the problem at its roots.

It is, of course, not difficult to construct policies that may address parts of the problem, such as laws to make fathers liable to pay for their children's upkeep after they have left the mother. In order to be implemented, however, such laws demand more administrative capabilities on the part of the governments than they are likely to supply. To establish a network of social workers that would be able to remove exploited children and send them to other parents or to public institutions is clearly an administrative Utopia that could easily turn into nightmares of corruption.

In practice, teachers and health personnel are in the best position to observe families and respond to their problems. If they care, that knowledge may change the family game. Demoralized cadres of primary school teachers will likely respond to the most harmful forms of child labor.

While important, there are reasons to fear that none of these public networks is strong and effective enough to compensate for the decline in the protection of the extended family system against the most harmful child labor.

In addition to addressing excessive child labor performed within private households, family policy is also confronting a set of influences with important consequences for the children's work responsibilities and the division of labor among the children.

The measures to reduce population growth, such as measures to introduce contraceptives, will also reduce most forms of child labor.

Because there are few "objective" policy instruments in this area, and most are weak, propaganda is sometimes the only instrument left. Public debates are essential to re-adjust the gender division of work and responsibilities that, under modern conditions, gives many men such wide scope for free-riding and many young children heavy work and responsibilities.

Alcoholism is a social ill that has not received the attention it deserves within the African context, although it may have important consequences on child labor within the family. It is both an expression of and a cause of a weakened family structure. Female alcoholism has particularly severe consequences for the children, resulting in both malnutrition, and increasing workloads and responsibilities (LeVine and LeVine 1981). In addition to forcing increased responsibilities on their own children, young house girls are frequently forced into substitute parenthood.

Premarital pregnancies currently give rise to a large number of children that are not accepted by the families. The fathers of these children usually pretend the children are not theirs, and the children may become severely disruptive of their mothers' careers. Often, their mothers are not even permitted to continue their education. Given the general excess supply of children in large areas of Africa, these pregnant children are not welcomed elsewhere in the family. They often receive worse treatment than legitimate children. Kilbride and Kilbride (1991, 189) relate a story in which the illegitimate children receive less food and more work than the other children in the household. Both public propaganda and African public debates on this subject are essential to change the undesired behavior patterns and to reduce their harmful effects.

- 1 It is important to avoid a misunderstanding about what is meant by quality. Many will think of very demanding curricula, expensive books and schools, etc. Rather, we will think of realistic curricula, realistic progression, and teachers who know the pace at which their groups of students are able to follow and are allowed to teach at that pace.
- 2 Zimmermann (1998) documents, with PLSLD data from black rural households in South Africa, that it takes more than 50 hours per week to carry water and firewood for an average household, which comprises one-half of the total time spent on housework.

5

Donor and Government Instruments

We have seen that harmful forms of child labor in African countries may be influenced through a large set of policy instruments, most, however, with uncertain and weak impact. Given this situation, it is unclear whether this uncertainty should be a major concern for the donor community. But it is also clear that policies intending to address other matters may have unintended side effects on child labor. Child labor is a policy issue with wide ramifications. This implies coordination among donors and the national governments across a broad field.

Awareness programs

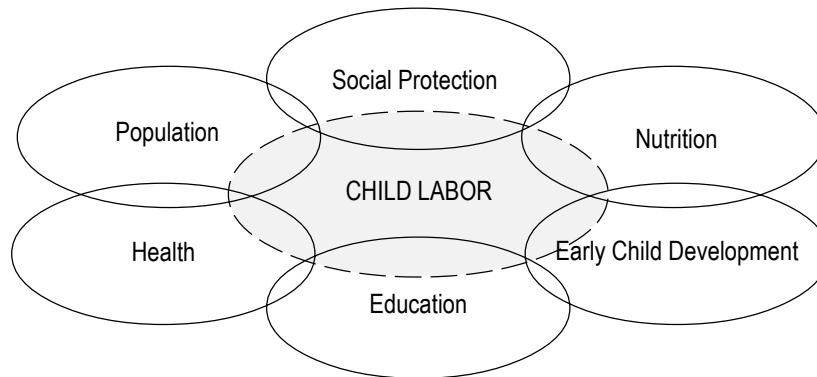
The child labor issue is closely linked to less well-known changes in the family structure and many different invisible social and economic interactions, for which there are few statistics. Awareness programs for donor organizations and government employees may be a necessary part of child labor policy in Africa. Following are some examples:

- For a variety of reasons, recent donor policy has been to stimulate small-scale entrepreneurs and the development of a strong informal economy. A side effect of this policy is an increase in the market for child labor. In order to really reduce this form of child labor, a thorough review of the stimulation of an informal sector and ways to police the private entrepreneurs' hiring policy must be undertaken, a very difficult policy task. Given the difficulty of the latter, it is necessary to either accept increased child labor as a necessary cost or try to stimulate formal economic organizations to instead consider that the

efficiency gain by the private solution is large enough to accept the increase in child labor.¹

- Growth considerations for a rural area may imply the development of an extensive rural road network. In order to build the road, a quarry has to be established. When in operation, the (private) quarry empties the local primary school for children in the higher grades because their labor power is cheaper. International donors have no right to interfere in the operations of the quarry after its establishment. In this case, however, donors are in a much better position in their initial deliberations to establish the condition of no child labor, if they are aware of it. Here an awareness program is also of clear *operational* significance.
- Similarly, other public works are commonly used means to reduce unemployment and strengthen infrastructure. Awareness of these programs' attractiveness for local child workers can help in taking precautions to prevent massive temporary dropout and increased child labor.
- Many African countries find themselves in a difficult debt position. The IMF and the World Bank, supported by many other donor organizations, have advised the countries about the appropriate macro-economic policies to adopt. If Grootaert's (1998) results from Côte d'Ivoire are generally valid in an African context, deflationary policies may generate a heavy increase in the extent of child labor, a long-term social and economic cost not normally considered by macro-economic advisors. Again, clearly a child labor awareness program may prove useful before the final advice is given.

Figure 6
Child labor borders many sectors



- A country may need donor assistance to reduce a trade deficit. Massive investments in increasing rural export may have a significant impact on the opportunity costs of labor versus schooling in rural areas. Awareness and impact analyses may improve the harmful effects of such policies.
- Donor policies may also have partially unintended positive effects on the child labor problem. The most obvious are the rural water supply programs. Girls and young boys, together with women, are tied to this heavy and time-consuming work. Also, other rural infrastructure programs may have this effect, and it can be viewed as an additional gain from the investment.

Donor assistance and education

Overall, the negative association between education and child labor places priority on education in donor assistance, as has been pointed out by the World Bank in its general Issues Paper on child labor (Fallon and Tzannatos 1998). The fact that the time spent at school by children sometimes has high alternative costs may call for several adjustments from the school system in order to avoid making child labor an important cause for dropping out of school. Therefore, country assistance strategies for many of the African countries should be more realistic and urge greater *flexibility* in schooling.

Given primary schools that are better adjusted to the local conditions, we believe *compulsory* primary education more important as a way to reduce child labor than Fallon and Tzannatos. The main reason is that, without it, the teachers are in a much weaker po-

sition to convince parents to allow children adequate time for doing schoolwork. It is also a natural starting point for countries to develop firmer government. Finally, it makes it more difficult for governments to increase the financial costs borne by the parents when the government in question finds itself in financial difficulty. It follows that the most important group for which it is important to raise public awareness of child labor problems is the teachers.

The fact that many young girls have heavy domestic tasks makes the creation of kindergartens, pre-schools, and daycare centers a useful measure for reducing child labor in an African context.

Child labor and the donor policy for reducing poverty

Reducing poverty is a major policy aim for most donor organizations. We have argued that the relationship between poverty and rural child labor (performed in the family) is not likely to be negative at all income levels, but more likely an inverse U-shaped curve, with the children in the middle-income ranges performing the most extensive work. Furthermore, when reviewing urban child labor, we discovered indications of a somewhat income-elastic demand for domestic labor in African cities. Given the state of excess supply of child labor, we may find that the relationship between the poverty level and the observed level of child labor is not straightforward in the urban case either.

Nevertheless, we find no reasons to doubt that poverty is a major, overall cause of child labor in the sense that when the countries grow richer, the extent of child labor will eventually decline. Furthermore, general rural poverty is likely to be a primary cause for chil-

dren to leave their families early to supply child labor on the market. Poverty may be the major cause of the most harmful forms of child labor. General measures to reduce poverty applied by the bilateral and multi-lateral donors are likely to reduce the seriousness of the child labor issues, although they may increase the quantity of child labor applied in the economy.

The fact that children who supply labor in the market are among the poorest in the country, and are part of a significant group in which human capital is destroyed, raises the question of whether to target this group with specific policies. We believe other organizations to be better equipped to develop such policies, but given the broad field of the World Bank interventions, the Bank is in a favorable position to support many of the specific child labor proposals made by more specialized organizations.

Child labor research and donor policy

To date, researchers have done useful household studies in a few African countries that map the work activities of the children associated with the households (for example, Grootaert 1998; Canagarajah and Coulombe 1997; Canagarajah and Nielsen, 1998). No serious attempt has been made to present more precise criteria for the kinds of child labor performed inside families that should be considered harmful, and how many and what kind of children are exposed to it. However, without criteria, child labor statistics might be applied to several reasonable anti-poverty measures. It is also important to establish the strength of the correlation between the total and the harmful forms of child labor.

From an IMF or World Bank policy point of view, it is also important to settle whether child labor fluctuations are as contra-cyclical as Grootaert's work suggests.

Little is known about the markets and pseudo-markets for domestic labor. In this study, it should be important and possible to estimate income elasticity for it. Researching the precise size and causes of the street children population would also help determine the seriousness of the child labor issue in African countries. While less significant from a quantitative point of view, the donor community should be interested in the mechanisms that create child soldiers, what happens to them, and what they do under economic reconstruction, another traditional policy area for donors.

To claim that more social research is needed for developing policy for adequately assessing social and economic problems is often a cliché or an excuse for postponing action. This is not the case in this study. The lack of serious empirical research leaves a wide scope for different opinions about the African child labor issue. It consequently allows informed people to claim that child labor in Africa is both a non-problem and, at the same time, one of the most important social ills developing on the continent. Serious empirical research is almost doomed to significantly narrow this range of disagreement and to prepare the ground for more effective policies.

1 At this point, the ethical system chosen is obviously decisive. Standard welfare economics allows such judgments, but if we argue like children's rights activists, that children have a right not to labor, we are not allowed to compare the two situations. At this point, only the formal economy alternative or the "do-nothing" alternatives remain. Given the extremely poor African women's fight for economic survival, it is ethically difficult to remain a children's rights activist under these circumstances.

6

An Operational Strategy for the World Bank

One of the striking conclusions from African child labor research is that more than a third of African children are not in school, and that a majority of those children are actually working. Moreover, many school children work as well. Africa's human capital is declining and will continue to do so for a few more decades if child labor is not immediately arrested. The role of the World Bank in such a fight is undoubtedly very important.

It is clear from the discussion in this paper that African child labor is extremely nuanced; hence, an Africa specific approach is called for. Although many of the findings from global child labor research are relevant for Africa, their importance and intensity differs substantially from other continents. And there are huge differences between countries within Africa, between regions of the same country, and even between ethnic groups living in the same village. In this context, any operational strategy to address child labor needs to be adapted to the local conditions of the country or region in question.

Some of the research examined supports the traditional welfare economic perception that child labor, *increased* child labor or *more extreme* child labor, is a common household reaction to a negative income shock. In a social risk management perspective¹ this defines child labor as a *household risk coping mechanism*. When this is indeed the case, strategies that enable risk prevention become a central objective in the prevention of child labor. Risk mitigation efforts can also contribute to an effective strategy against child labor in the sense that they reduce the negative impact of income shocks on both households and children.

When the shock is idiosyncratic, African families can often fall back on a strong tradition of extended family support arrangements. However, when a person is detached from his or her family, or community, or when covariant shocks occur, other insurance arrangements are needed. An important question in the African context is how the burden of risk coping is distributed on the various household members. Research indicates that children often bear a disproportional share of the burden, and efforts need to focus on sensitization regarding child rights issues.

Based on the discussions in this paper some common principles can be derived for a possible course of action:

- Where children's work occurs as a common household risk coping strategy, the first best option is to address income shocks and income variability through stable macroeconomic policies that benefit the poor. The World Bank could play an important role in promoting this as a long-term sustainable strategy to prevent and reduce child labor.
- However, where children work due to imperfect parental altruism, harmful traditional practice, or under conditions of pure exploitation, information campaigns (IEC), child rights advocacy, sensitization, and, in the worst cases, even legal prosecution are more adequate means.
- In conditions where child labor cannot be eliminated, due to desperate household needs, we need to create policies and programs to assist and protect working children. Several education, health, and social protection projects already in place can be strengthened and expanded to address child labor

issues. Experience suggests that community-based projects that address household and children's needs are effective in dealing with reducing the harmful effects of child labor and in providing rehabilitative assistance. In addition, the role of targeted interventions addressing traditional risk mitigation and risk coping strategies should not be overlooked.

- Finally, World Bank staff must be aware that child labor may occur as a negative side effect of many of our programs, like road construction, agrarian programs and public sector reforms. Therefore, adequate child protection measures need to accompany these interventions where risk of increased child labor is present.

Lending and non-lending options to address child labor in Africa

Alongside freestanding child labor projects, the existing lending and non-lending instruments of the World Bank can be effective in addressing child labor in both the short and long term. Several operations have already started addressing child labor through projects and policy dialogue. Lending figures for fiscal year 2000 indicate that more than half a billion dollars is committed to education, social protection, water, and reconstruction projects in Africa, and part of these funds can be effectively used to address child labor issues. Dependent on the determinants and cultural context of the specific child labor situation to be addressed, some of these program types and components could adequately be applied:

Changing attitudes

IEC: Information, education, and communication

Even the idea that children have rights, and that those rights are universal for *all* children is not widely accepted by most Africans in spite of the ratification of the *UN Convention for the Rights of the Child* by all African countries but Somalia. The negative effect child labor may have on a child's physical development, health, intellectual capacity, social skills, psychological state, future opportunities and general well-being is largely unknown and unaccepted in many parts of SSA. Communication and sensitization is therefore crucial to change some fundamental attitudes allowing the continued practice of harmful child labor.

Attacking poverty

Poverty reduction strategies

Strategies to reduce general poverty and increase incomes are likely to have a positive effect on reducing child labor. PRSP strategies are currently being prepared in most SSA countries. As noted earlier in this paper the link between child labor and poverty differs largely depending on local conditions, and should be examined at the country level, such that appropriate interventions can be designed as part of PRSC.

Income generating activities

Improved income will reduce the pressure on all family members (including children) to be involved in low-return, harmful, and time-consuming activities to meet household needs. Micro credit programs may be an effective way to address this route of attack on child labor. It is also worth exploring and expanding CGAP and social funds experiences in micro finance and income generation programs to optimize strategies in this field.

Improving school participation

Better access to school

Research highlights the lack of easy access to school as an important reason for joining the labor force. Education interventions in Africa need to address this wherever access issues are a major reason for low enrollments.

Improve education delivery

Children and parents have stated that schools are a waste of time because teachers are not always there, they are not trained, classrooms are in deplorable conditions, or books are not available. It is within the World Bank's mandate to assist countries to improve the quality of education, and where possible such factors can be addressed through existing lending and non-lending instruments.

Flexible school hours

In areas where agriculture is the primary activity, many children have to work during the harvest season and cannot go to school. This can be accommodated at local government level by introducing appropriate flexibility in school hours and holidays.

School vouchers/assistance/school feeding programs

Due to hardship or cultural factors, parents often refuse to send their daughters to school. Adequate subsidies or graduation stipends can effectively reduce the incentives for child labor. School feeding programs have proved to increase school attendance and reduce child labor.

Literacy classes

This is effective both for dropouts and adults. Although current projects mainly target the adults, there is no reason why they cannot be extended to serve street/dropout children.

Alternative education*Non-formal education*

The formal education system has not always been good for poor families; hence, if there are possible non-formal education options (e.g. Koranic, Normadic, Apprenticeship training) then they should be supported to ensure that the children not enrolled in schools have a way of building their human capital.

Skills training

Studies indicate that many school dropouts and child workers lack skills but are keen to learn new ones to improve their prospects in the future. This again can be accommodated within the World Bank's current lending for vocational education and training programs.

Child care*Child care facilities*

Child care facilities can reduce the pressure on girl caretakers. Most studies show that older girls take care of younger siblings because of a lack of affordable childcare. Sectoral (e.g., education, agriculture etc.) and multisectoral interventions (e.g., poverty, social funds, CDD) need to consider childcare a program component.

Early child development programs

Early childhood development programs that seek to provide a good start for kids and their families have a great potential for reducing child labor. This also enables children to be healthy and interested in learning, and thereby reduces school dropout rates. Ongo-

ing and new education, health and social protection programs should consider ECD as a possible component in their future operations.

Parental education/awareness programs

Some studies show that when mothers and fathers are educated the probability of child labor declines. Therefore, programs (e.g., literacy classes, community awareness programs) should seek to target parents in terms of literacy and awareness of human capital benefits so they will send their children to school instead of work.

Useful infrastructure*Improve infrastructure*

Improving roads, markets and community infrastructure can improve access to markets and improve incomes. It can also reduce the constraint infrastructure places on access to schooling. Social Funds have been an effective means of addressing this need and more can be done in SSA through such interventions.

Transport

A very high share of children's work in Africa consists of transporting water and firewood to the household, grain to the mill, and products to the market. Many simple improvements in transport could be adapted to reduce the demand for such child labor.

Improved water supply

Water fetching is children's most time-consuming activity in many rural communities in Africa. If access to water is improved, children—and particularly girls—will get more time to go to school. Infrastructure (roads, water, etc.) and Social Funds need to give special attention to these linkages as a way of addressing child labor.

Rural development programs

Child labor demand can be strongly reduced through improved organization of several rural and domestic chores like herding and food preparation and preservation. Introducing improved technology in low status work like manual grinding and pounding is probably also an effective way to reduce the demand for children's services.

Cross-cutting efforts

Rehabilitation centers

Abandoned children, children separated from their families by war or natural disaster, and children who have run away from home are often forced to work and live on the streets. Those involved in extremely harmful forms of child labor, like child prostitutes and others traumatized by past and current experiences, are in urgent need of rehabilitation centers that are both places of refuge and learning. For example, post-conflict or reconstruction credits can be used to serve former child soldiers.

Legal reform and law enforcement

The World Bank is involved in legal reform efforts in several African countries. Certain types of extremely harmful or extremely exploitative child labor are in clear conflict with international law, and need to be prohibited. For instance, studies in West Africa indicate that child trafficking is a more common problem than previously recognized. In addition, abuse and maltreatment of working children by their employers need to be taken seriously, and the children need to be granted legal protection. Enforcement of existing law and ratified conventions needs to be improved in order to deter profiting from the worst forms of child labor, like child slavery and child prostitution. The World Bank can indeed assist countries through its capacity building and technical assistance programs to effectively enforce laws and regulations that can reduce harmful forms of child labor.

Concluding thoughts

This paper has argued that child labor in Africa is a complex issue intertwined with society, culture, and economy. The exact nature of these linkages can differ between countries significantly. If child labor continues at the current rate in SSA, the risks are high for the future economic development and human survival

prospects. A clearer understanding of child labor is essential for designing appropriate interventions to address this issue without further delay. Although donor interest and involvement in this issue have been stepped up in recent years, the need is still great. Donor programs should seek to identify and address the root causes of child labor, and address this issue through most of their ongoing and new programs.

In thinking about how to effectively combat child labor in SSA, it is worth highlighting three features that seem to have been critical to the successful end of trans-Atlantic slave trafficking. First, there was the development of a *humanistic movement* that rejected slavery from a moral perspective. Second came the *legal prohibition* of slave trafficking. Third, the British navy *enforced* the prohibition. If we should draw a lesson from history, support to the African child rights movement should be combined with enforced legislation that protects children from economic exploitation and securing their right to education.

Even more importantly, African child labor is an African problem, and the Africans themselves should take responsibility for developing effective and sustainable strategies to eradicate its harmful aspects. The World Bank and other international bi- and multi-laterals should consequently support the good local forces that strive to improve the welfare of African children. Child labor plays a different social and economic role in different societies and among different ethnic groups in Africa. SSA-centered participatory research and project planning are therefore critical for an effective operational strategy.

1 The Social Protection Strategy introduces Social Risk Management, which seeks to improve on the instruments that the society uses to manage risks in terms of risk prevention, risk mitigation and risk coping (see World Bank, 2001 for a more detailed discussion).

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