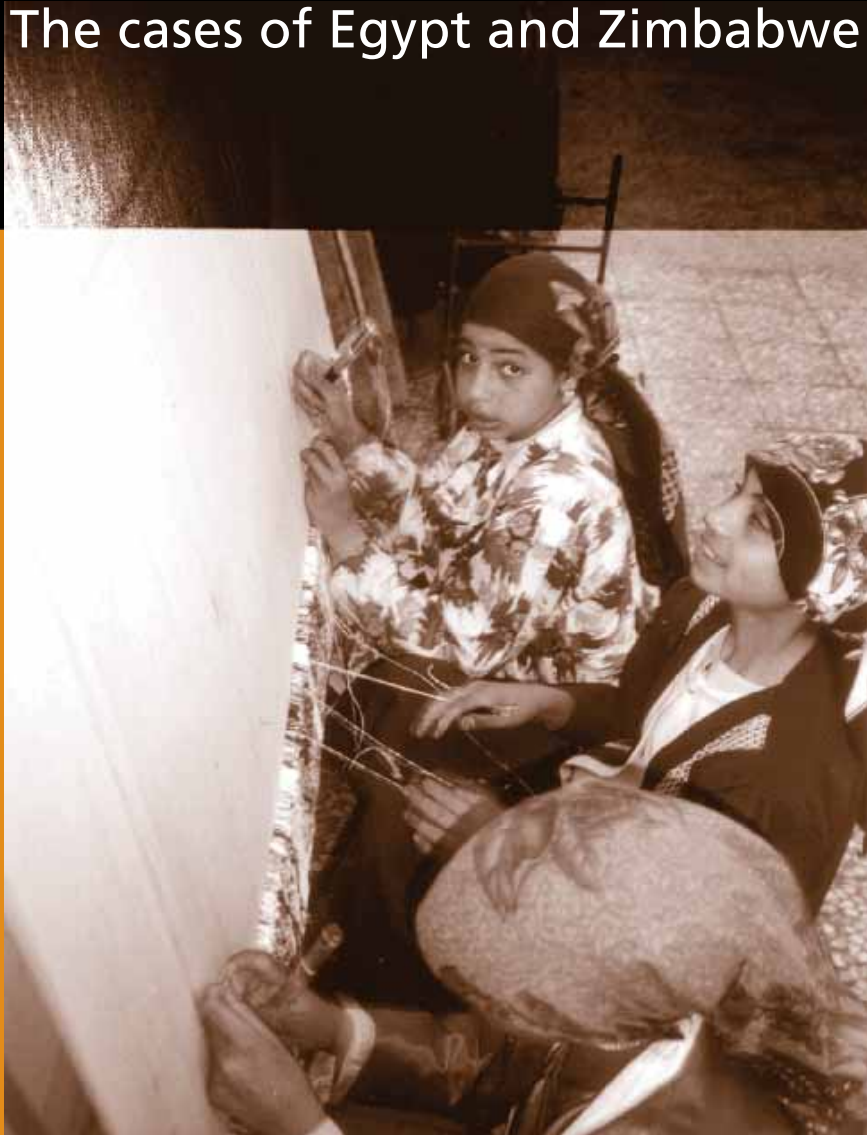


Bjørne Grimsrud and Liv Jorunn Stokke

# **Child labour in Africa: Poverty or institutional failures?**

The cases of Egypt and Zimbabwe





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# 1 Introduction

Child labour is a significant and growing social problem in the world today. Based on different definitions and sources, estimates range between 100 and 200 million child labourers globally. Both historically and today child labour is linked with poverty. It is estimated that 95 percent of child labourers live in developing countries. A majority of these are to be found in Asia, but the highest relative number is to be found in Africa. Studies of child labour also show that a large variation exists in the number and scope of child labourers between countries at the same level of development, based on different institutional settings. Widely known examples are Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Kerala both are on a low level of economic development and have been able to significantly reduce the extent of child labour. In this report we will look for such non-economic or institutional differences in contemporary Africa. The objective is to identify and describe these links between institutional settings and the existence of child labour

There are two reasons for looking for and understanding why institutional differences have an impact on child labour in Africa today. Firstly, to see if we actually do find the same pattern as previously found in similar studies from other continents and to identify any particular African pattern. Secondly, if we find considerable differences in child labour based on different institutional settings, this will widen the room for political actions. In particular it could form a basis for a wider range of action against child labour from the African governments themselves. In developing «Political Plans of Action» against child labour one could say that it is equally as important to understand the variation among countries at the same economic level as it is to understand the general correlation between a country's level of economic development and the extent of child labour.

In order to carry this out we will examine the cases of Egypt and Zimbabwe. We have in this survey focused on institutions that are believed to have the most impact on child labour, including the level of primary school attendance and the legal regulations for child labour. In addition we will consider the importance of the underlying informal structures, such as cultural or religious norms. This study is based on quantitative information already in existence. This has turned out to be a limiting factor for our analyses, as there exists a general lack of data on child labour in Africa.

Two major international conventions, ILO Convention 138 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), set out the basis for a world-wide definition of child labour. Basically two conditions have been set forth. One is an age limit that may differ depending on the kind of work, whether it is a developing or industrial country and on the age at the completion of primary education. The other is the qualitative condition that any work being undertaken should not be hazardous or interfere with the child's education or be harmful to her or his health or physical, mental, moral or social development. This means that not all work done by children is to be considered as child labour<sup>1</sup>. It is sometimes difficult to draw this line for example between children's work and domestic duties as a part of the socialisation process, and child labour. A main indicator will always be if the work is at the expense of the children's education both in cases where children are kept entirely away from school and where children combine work and school in such a way that their school performance suffers. In this document the term child labour will be used to describe activities that are understood to be harmful to the child in line with the definition given in the two above-mentioned Conventions. The term child work will be used to describe all kinds of work done by children, both legal and illegal.

## 1.1 Analytical framework<sup>2</sup>

Starting with the assumption that child labour is linked excessively with poverty and that all changes in or different levels of child labour can be explained by changes in or different levels of economic development, child labour becomes only an outcome or measure of the general level of poverty. Poverty eradication will then be the only remedy in fighting child labour. Our assumption is, however, that also in

<sup>1</sup> This also leads to a discrepancy between the definitions of being economically active or part of the labour force, according to the ILO definition, and being a child labourer. A child may be economically active and not a child labourer. On the other hand it is evident that many child labourers do not figure in official statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Not all would agree with the usefulness of looking at child labour in an institutional setting or model with child labour as an operational term based on the definitions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A new school of relativists such as the Dutch anthropologist White (1995) looks at this from a different angle stating that: «For the great majority of child workers the priority should not be to remove but to improve (the working conditions of child labourer).» Melchior (1996) adopts a more neo-classic approach regarding child labour as being linked to the early industrial stage of economic development and economic growth as the main remedy.

contemporary Africa, for every level of economical development you will find a potential range of outcomes with regard to child labour, depending on the different institutional settings. As described above we wish to explore in this study the range of different institutional settings through the following lines of analysis:

- Firstly we need to identify the economic development of households in order to be able to trace the existence of child labour and the changes in level back to changes in household economy. We have to identify this in order to neutralise these effects in our analyses.
- Secondly we will need to identify the institutional settings most likely able to explain the differences not explained by the economy. This will give us what can be called political room in the fight against child labour.
- Next we will try to analyse the effects of any observed changes in the institutional settings. The data available may put a limit on this. Ideally one would like to have as laboratory-like conditions as possible, where one for example could observe changes in household strategies on changes in macro-economic policy. One example would have been to examine a group of representative households before and after the introduction of compulsory education.
- Finally we will look for possible reasons for the present institutional settings. Development theory offers several explanations for the existence of such settings which can, for example, be due to a lack of full information about the consequences of different policies or market failure. But it might also be that the present state of affairs serves particular interests or groups who have the power to maintain the situation.

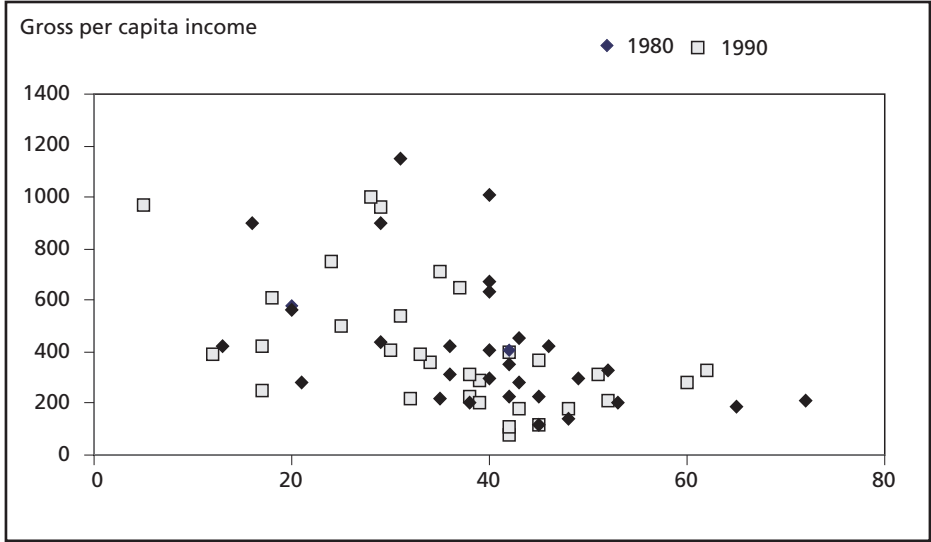
### **What types of institution?**

The concept of institutions are defined differently in different literature. One definition of institution is given by North (1990): « Institutions are the rules of the games in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions». Institutions reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life. For North, institutions include any form of constraint, both formal and informal, that human beings devise to shape human interaction. They are created by people in order to deal with the complexities and uncertainties associated with decision making. North makes a distinction between institutions and organisations. On the basis of the institutional framework organisations, everything from a local sports club to a state-structure, evolve. Institutions represent the rules, while organisations represent the players. For others like Elster (1989) what North calls

organisations are the institutions or «rule enforcing mechanisms». Rodgers (1994) combines the two perspectives and talks about two classes of institution, where rules, norms and constraints (formal and informal) form the basic institutions, and organisations make up a second level of institutions. It is this latter definition that will be used throughout this document.

A first general overview tells us that our assumption about non-economic explanations for child labour is useful. Looking at Africa one finds a large variation between the amount and scope of child labour and the level of development (as shown in figure 1.1). This figure shows the male labour force participation rate in 31 African countries in 1980 and 1990 compared with the Gross per Capita Income in US\$. As one can see there is a wide difference in performance even for countries at the same economic level. The variable quality of the data used and the difficult question of comparing statistics from different countries will explain some of the differences, but the main pattern remains evident both for 1980 and for 1990. A comparison between the preferences of the individual countries between 1980 and 1990 shows the same variation pattern. Some countries had managed to reduce the number of male children participating in the labour force despite economic decline, while others showed no improvement despite economic growth.

Figure 1.1 Male children aged 10 to 14. Participating rate in the labour force compared with Gross per Capita Income in 1980 and 1990



Sources: ILO Bulletin of Labour Statistics 1995-2 and World Development Report 1982 and 1992.

As mentioned in the introduction, the project will concentrate on institutions that are believed to have the most impact on child labour, such as primary school attendance and legal regulations of child labour.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Selection of countries

To analyse the impact of institutional settings on child labour the cases of Egypt and Zimbabwe have been singled out. Several factors have determined our selection of these two countries. ILO has particularly mentioned Africa and the Middle East as areas that should be examined more closely. This is underpinned by the fact that Africa is the continent with the highest incidence of children in the workforce. Furthermore the Middle East is one of the least documented regions in the world. The main factor is, however, that the countries concerned have, in different ways, undertaken changes in their macro level policy and/or undergone other institutional changes over recent years. In the 1980's Zimbabwe had a drive to improve education while in the 1990's it cut back on its primary education budget and introduced school fees. During the last decade Egypt has expanded its primary education considerably. Zimbabwe has recently introduced new legislation regarding child labour. Both countries have gone through structural adjustment programmes. The two countries chosen are among the more developed on the African continent. They do, however, include the range of different economic sectors found in all African countries from the most traditional agriculture to the advanced industrial and service sectors. The two countries also have experienced of moving from a traditional economy to a highly industrialised one, which other African countries can learn from.

<sup>3</sup> Several studies, both historical and contemporary, conclude that the way to reduce child labour is to increase access to basic *education*. Myron Weiner (1991) points out in his book «The Child and the State in India» the importance of primary education. He documents this by a historical and contemporary comparative study of the situation in different countries. He notes that a number of countries, both in the past and today, developed a system of basic education prior to industrialisation. As a result of this, child labour has never been as widespread during the early industrial era in these nations as it has been in other countries. The effect of *legislative measures* has also been important in studies of child labour. ILO in particular has elaborated this. In addition the work of the Indian National Labour Institute (1994) could be mentioned. General bans and restrictions are necessary in order to eliminate child labour, but they are not necessarily sufficient in themselves. As long as there are strong financial incentives for the existence of child labour, it can be difficult to enforce such bans effectively. Several papers conclude that legal measures must be combined with economic changes that remove the basis for employing children.

There are notable cultural differences between the two countries that might have implications for how children are treated by their families. Egypt, which has a unique geopolitical position both in Africa and in the Middle East, has thus been influenced both by the Middle Eastern and the African cultures. Furthermore, in Egypt, Islam's values and laws play an important role in how families treat their children and in who is responsible for them. According to Islamic law, the family or relatives are expected to take care of, for example, very poor children or orphans, and this is more or less the case in Egypt also. We do, however, also find children in Egypt who are left on their own, and then are more prone to different types of exploitation e.g. child labour. The problem of children being left on their own is much more notable in Zimbabwe where family structures are much more loose and the health situation is poorer, and where it is not obvious who is responsible for the children. In those cases where households are very poor, many of these children are sent out to support themselves. Furthermore, in Egypt female children are kept more in the private sphere than male children who are allowed to take part in everyday life to a much larger extent, and this fact has an effect on where e.g. children work. This is due to both religion and traditions. In Zimbabwe the gender difference is not as notable as in Egypt, although we find also here differences between the two sexes as concerns what type of work they are engaged in.

We also believe that the choice of Egypt and Zimbabwe helps highlight a concern raised by ILO (1995a) that recent statements from African leaders and politicians seem to indicate that the notion exists in Africa that child labour as defined by the ILO and UNICEF does not sufficiently take into account the specific African context. Such statements mostly focus on traditional African qualities, for example that the child is expected to help out in the agricultural family undertaking. While this is a valid concern, it overlooks the important fact that most of the child labour that occurs in Africa is non-traditional and the result of profound changes in African economies in the last decade. Child labour in Africa is characterised by its widespread presence in society rather than an exaggerated sectional exploitation. Regarding child labour in Zimbabwe, ILO states something that can be said to be globally true:

«It is believed by some that child labour today is a natural extension of what children have always done in Zimbabwean society. Traditionally children looked after cattle, foraged for food, looked after younger children and worked in family fields. Children were socialised from an early age towards playing a productive role in society. While this has historical relevance, it is generally agreed that the current socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe has changed the context, demanding a re-evaluation of the positive and negative effects of children's work». (ILO, 1992).

## **2 Zimbabwe**

### **2.1 Economic development, job opportunities and poverty**

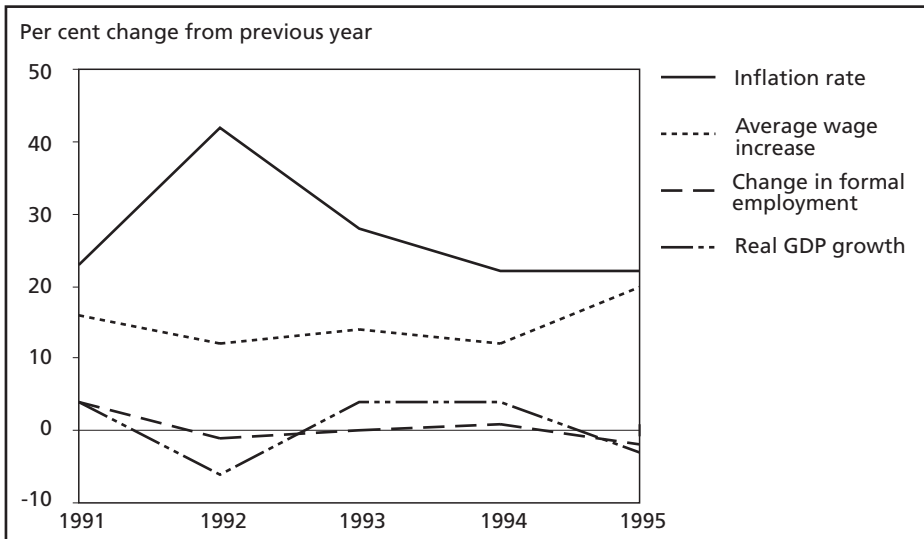
The recent history of Zimbabwe can be divided in three distinctive phases with different economic and labour market policy. The first period stretches from the unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 to the liberation in 1980. This period saw the development of a muted offspring of the apartheid South African social formation. Like that of its more robust ally in the south, the Rhodesian socio-economic formation was purposively and «rationally» organised to guarantee the availability of cheap labour to the merging formal market economy (Mhone, 1994). Internationally this regime was met with UN imposed trade sanctions. The second phase starts with the liberation and the election of the ZANU government with a radical programme aiming to end the structures of apartheid and redistribute wealth. Until the end of the 1980's this was done through strict economic regulations. The regulation policy led to structural difficulties in the economy. A third phase starts in the beginning of the 1990's. Supported by the World Bank and the donor community Zimbabwe embarked on the so-called Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The main targets for the ESAP were: to reduce the government budget deficit from the then current level of 10 per cent of GNP in 1990. The combined effect of ESAP and drought produced a declining GNP as its first result. The overall economic performance in the post- independence period can at the best be characterised as modest. Poor households have suffered greatly from the increase in inflation and the consecutive hikes in basic commodity prices. The GNP per capita was in 1995 was US\$ 540 according to the official exchange rate or US\$ 2,030 measured by Purchasing Power Parity. The estimates for economic growth in 1996 and 1997 indicate, however, that the economy is picking up.

#### **The labour market**

The total population of Zimbabwe was 11 million in 1993 (World Development Report, 1995). The present annual population growth rate is 2.2 per cent. The urban population has grown from 25 per cent to 32 per cent of the total population during

the last ten years. The labour force made up approximately 5 million, of which forty-five per cent is female. The labour force has been growing by 3.1 per cent annually in the first half of the 1990's. About one fifth of the labour force is employed in the formal sector and about three fifths in the communal agricultural sector. The remaining one fifth is to be found in the informal sector, which together with the communal agricultural sector absorbs the surplus of labour unable to find employment in other sectors. In the «Framework for Economic Reform» issued by the government of Zimbabwe in 1991 total unemployment was estimated to be between 26 and 37 per cent of the labour force.

Figure 2.1 Nominal average wage increase and inflation rate 1991 to 1995



Source: Central Statistical Office, Quarterly Digest of Statistics)

Already after the 1982 devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar, formal labour market real wages started to fall. In 1990 the average annual income in the formal sector was approximately Z\$ 8,000, in the informal sector approximately Z\$ 1,000 and in the communal agricultural sector below Z\$ 1,000. (ZiCTU, 1996). As can be seen from table 4 wage increases have not kept pace with inflation in the 1990's either. From 1990 to 1995 one saw a decline in real wages of 35 per cent (ZiCTU, 1996). By the end of 1993 real wages had dropped below the 1975 level according to the ILO (1995a). The average minimum wage of the 41 sectors observed was Z\$ 702 (ZiCTU, 1996) The official poverty line for an urban family was around Z\$ 1,500 in 1995. In 1991 the lowest 20 per cent of the population received 4 per cent of all income, while the highest 20 per cent received 62 per cent of all income,

which represents a more unequal income division than in many other African countries (World Development Report, 1995). In 1990, sixty per cent of the rural population lived under the official poverty line (ILO, 1995a).

### **The legal framework**

Labour legislation in Zimbabwe has, since 1980, moved slowly away from a very regulated and centralist system towards a system where there is recognition of the need for the two major players – workers and employers – to work through negotiations to resolve labour issues, leaving the government in the role of arbitrator of last resort.

Zimbabwe has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child but not ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age. Complying with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child the Legal Age of Majority Act 1982 defines any Zimbabwean below the age of eighteen years as a minor. Similarly, consistent with ILO Convention 138, the Labour Relation Act defined child employment as that below sixteen years of age and stipulated that no contract of employment shall be enforceable against any person under the age of sixteen years, whether or not such person was assisted by his or her guardian. In the Guide to Labour Relations issued by the Ministry of Labour the clause is interpreted that «child labour should not be encouraged unless it benefits the child». This Act's regulation cannot be considered as a regulation of a legal minimum age of employment. It is only a provision that children cannot be held to contracts. The Children's Protection and Adoption Act from 1972 provides conditions for protecting children's education in the event of child labour. The Act also prohibits certain types of street trading and vending by children under 16. The Act used to make it an offence for a person to employ a child if this resulted in the child being absent from school in terms of the Education Act, which at that time only applied to white children. This was replaced in 1979 when the Education Act was amended to apply to all racial groups (Loewenson, 1992).

The enforcement of the different labour regulations and child protection legislation is also constrained by a number of factors such as the ambiguity or limitations of powers in the law itself, lack of labour inspectors, lack of knowledge of legal rights in the affected communities and non implementation of legal rights by the affected workers due to fear or to socio-economic pressures such as risk of dismissal (Loewenson, 1992). ILO also points to the cumbersome system for dealing with complaints and appeals as adding to the enforcement problem (ILO, 1992)

ILO stated in 1992 that «The provisions in the Labour Regulation Act 1985, the Children's Protection and Adoption Act 1972 and the Factories and Work Act

1984 do not provide an adequate basis for enforcement or guidance for the various interested parties including parents, employers and workers not to mention the courts. If Zimbabwe is to therefore seriously address the problem of child labour, a first and essential step is the adoption of a comprehensive legislation concerned with the employment of children and child labour. Such a national law should clearly specify a minimum age for admission to employment, which may be set at 14; a higher minimum age for admission to hazardous employment or work which may be set at 16 and a lower minimum age for light work carried out under regulated conditions which may be set at 12. In view of the fact that children are employed in a variety of work settings, national legislation should cover all sectors, industries and occupations.» (ILO, 1992)

A new Labour Relation (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulation under the Labour Relation Act was introduced in February 1997. It defines a child as any person under the age of sixteen. This regulation bans all employment of children under the age of 12 and all employment of children between 12 and 16 years of age not specifically permitted in the Act as light work. Such light work, however, must not take place during school terms unless the Ministry has approved the contract of employment. This applies to young people between 16 and 18 years of age as well. The legislation includes special provisions for apprenticeship and vocational training for children between 12 and 16 years of age. It is worth noting however that this type of combination of school and work requires the school or training institute to be primarily responsible. The legislation also empowers the child by making a contract of employment obligatory. Violating this new legislation could lead to fines of up to Z\$ 2,000 or imprisonment up to 12 months. It should be noted that since this new regulation has only just been introduced, it has not had any impact on the figures presented here. The situation described below is the one which existed under the previous regulation regime and with no clear minimum age legislation.

## **2.2 The education system**

Over the two last decades Zimbabwe has achieved a transformation of the education system from a racially divided, fragmented one that enrolled less than half the potential school enrolment, to a non-racial state-supported primary education system. Reforms started after Independence in 1980. In the first Five Year National Development Plan 1985-90 the major aspects of the policy were to abolish racial discrimination in education, establish free and compulsory primary education for all children, make provision for all children to acquire post-primary education and

to establish state support for programmes of non-formal and adult education including literacy.

Massive rapid progress was made with respect to human resource development in the post-independence period. Enrolment at primary school level doubled from 1.2 million in 1980 to 2.4 million by 1993. The effect was one of the highest rates of education expansion in the world in the 1980's. The number of primary schools was expanded by 43 per cent and the number of pupils enrolled in primary education increased by 72 per cent from 1980 to 1990. Female primary school enrolment increased to almost parity. The new primary curriculum was altered to include not only preparation for secondary education but also to include production oriented skills.

Secondary education saw an even faster expansion in the 1980's. Enrolment rose almost ninefold and reforms of vocational training and the apprenticeship system were undertaken. The drop-out rate between primary and secondary remained substantial, probably increased by the effects of the fee barrier.

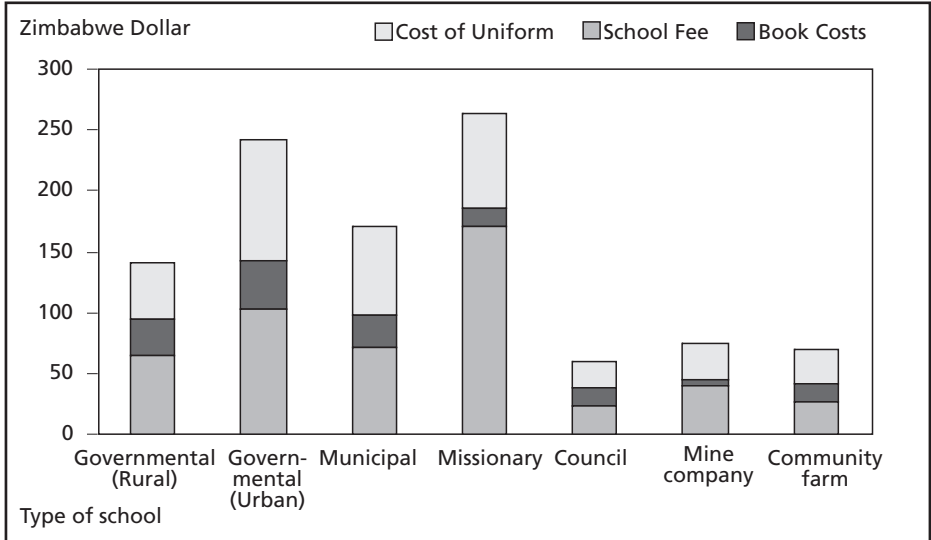
Some areas and sectors did however not show the same positive results as the general trend. This includes overcrowded suburbs, large-scale farms and refugee camps. There were about 400,000 school age children and only 332 registered schools on the large farms in 1992. Only about 10 per cent of the farms have registered schools. An unknown additional number have unregistered schools (Amanor-Wilks, 1995). In some schools, child labour is used as a means of fee payment. Sachikonye (1989) reported from one tea and coffee estate where children pick from 05.30 to 11.00 before attending school. Children are also reported to work during their holidays, with the school year adjusted for the agricultural seasons. The latter might not be characterised as child labour if within certain frameworks and limitations, but the problem is that this seems more to be a way out of school and into full time employment for several children. Examples have been recorded of children not fulfilling their minimum tasks having to stay on or come back to the fields in order to do so (Loewenson, 1992).

In the second Five Year National Development Plan the government aimed at consolidating its educational efforts and improving educational quality. Compared to an annual growth rate in primary education of 15.9 per cent in 1981 to 85, the second five-year plan projected an average annual growth in enrolment of 1.8 per cent in primary education. To introduce «efficiency» in the provision of education services, the government introduced cost recovery measures. It is believed however that the change in politics was more due to economic pressure and running huge public deficits than to pedagogic concerns, in order to achieve the targets on reduced public deficit under the ESAP. The idea was to shift from a system of blanket subsidisation towards target assistance for the poor through the Social Dimension of Adjustment Programme. From 1990 to 1994 public expenditure on

education in Zimbabwe declined by 30 per cent leaving a gross enrolment rate in primary education of approximately 70 per cent. The budget for education was reduced from 9.2 per cent of GDP in 1990 to 8.7 per cent in 1995. In this respect one saw a number of tasks including support for education for the poorest household taken over by International Aid Agencies and NGO's. Evaluating this process Tvedt (1995) notes that there is no evidence to suggest that the Zimbabwean consumer (at least not in the poor rural households to which the NGO's direct their attention) have opposed what the state has provided or that they have preferred relations with NGO's. It is primarily the World Bank and other donors that have been dissatisfied, and their leverage changes the environment and space for both indigenous and international NGO's.

Even where primary schools continue to levy no fees, parents are expected to contribute by way of books, building levies, transport and school uniforms. As schooling costs increase, it is possible that unaffordable costs and labour shortage in rural areas will combine to pressure households to withdraw children back into agricultural and domestic work. If, as research indicates, female children provide a more reliable labour source, it would not be surprising to find that female children, the last to go to school, are also the first to be withdrawn when households experience economic and labour shortages (Loewenson, 1992).

Figure 2.2 Mean Education Costs in Z\$ by type per term per child depending on type of school (source CSO Indicator Monitoring Survey 1993)



Half the of children, go to council schools followed by 22 per cent in urban government schools and 8 per cent in rural government schools. In addition to the schools in figure 2.2, 2 per cent of primary school children in Zimbabwe attend private schools with high fees where costs exceeded Z\$ 1,000 per child per term in 1993.

## **2.3 Child labour in Zimbabwe**

Child labour is widespread in Zimbabwe. Accurate systematic data is, however, lacking but scattered evidence and causal observations indicate both that the incidence of child labour and the number of child workers are quite high (ILO, 1992). Child labour is found in several sectors including large commercial farms, traditional farming in communal areas, domestic work, small-scale mining and gold-panning operations, micro industries and the informal sector. To a large extent, child labour occurs in the most socio-economic marginalised communities in which monitoring of workplaces is already weak.

It seems, however, to be a clear long-term tendency towards reduced number of child labourer in Zimbabwe. The number of children between 10 and 14 in the labour force was estimated in 1994 to be around 29 per cent of all children in this age group, which is a reduction from previous years. In 1950, 51 per cent of males and 46 per cent of females between 10 and 14 were in the labour force. The drop in the labour market participation rate is highest among boys between 1970 to 1980, four per cent, and for girls between 1980 to 1990, six per cent. We have not been able to obtain information on the short-term changes in the 1990's. The 1991 Economic reform policy document made by the Zimbabwe government states in relationship to unemployment: «A frightening trend, closely linked to the prevalence of unemployment, is the growth of child labour, particularly in urban areas». As can be seen from the elaboration below it is difficult to draw a clear picture, but several examples of a negative trend appear to be documented.

### **Traditional farming in communal areas**

Agriculture is the most important sector in Zimbabwe both regarding the total employment and for formal sector employment. No figure for the extent of child labour in this sector exists, but some micro studies have been undertaken showing that children in the communal farming areas are involved in a variety of tasks helping in household production, including agricultural work such as herding, weeding and

planting, and domestic work such as fetching water, foraging for food, fetching wood and child care work. Reynolds (1991) found that children's work in the traditional agricultural sector is closely linked to that of female labour and to peaks of seasonal labour demands. At these peak periods children over ten years of age can contribute about a third of the labour input. They provide the «adjustable labour» during periods of intense farm activity, and women depend at these times on children's assistance.

Reynolds found a clear gender division of labour in traditional farming. Male children spend less time on farm work than females, and with reduced domestic tasks, spend much less time overall working than female children. Female labour was persistent throughout the year, as it includes domestic and childcare work, while male work was more seasonal, being agriculturally based. Women appeared to be less able to demand labour of their male children than their female children, with an overall consequence that male children had more leisure time than their female children did.

### **Large scale commercial farming**

Zimbabwe's 4,500 commercial farms contribute 40 per cent of foreign exchange earnings and 15 per cent of GDP. According to the 1992 census about 1.18 million people or 11 per cent of the population live on the 4,500 large farms in 279,178 households. This produces an estimated 800,000 children living on large-scale farms (Loewenson, 1992). The formal employment in agriculture stood at 331,000 in 1994. In the 1990's permanent employment in the large scale commercial farms has decreased, while casual employment has increased according to ZiCTU (1996) from about 55,000 to more than 100,000. Of these, roughly half are women. When men are employed as farm workers, their wives provide a handy on-call labour pool for contract work «easily hired and easily fired», with no benefits normally associated with an employment contract (e.g. pensions, leave provisions, sick leave etc.) (Amanor-Wilks, 1995). Farm workers are the lowest paid in the formal employment sector, the majority living below the poverty line. The Agriculture Plantation Workers Union was formed when agricultural workers were finally included in the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1979. Today collective agreements are negotiated industry-wide, but for the non-permanent workers individual agreements are made directly with the employers. Industrial Agreements outline the nature of employment contracts in their industry, but the Agriculture Industry Employment Regulations do not apply to contract workers. Contract workers are employees specifically employed in piece-work, the rate for which has been negotiated directly with an employer. Most children employed in the agricultural sector are contract workers and their employment contract thus provides no entitlement to protective

clothing, benefits during sickness, holidays and vacation leave and hours of working other than specified in their individual agreed contracts if they have one. The old system of «Ticket Workers», workers who are only paid if the task assigned is completed during that day, is still in operation in some places despite the labour legislation ban on such arrangements (Amanor-Wilks, 1995).

For crops demanding seasonal labour peaks, such as cotton, coffee, tea and tobacco, children of the farm workers provide a captive labour group. Most children are employed on a piece or task wage basis. In a survey among union health and safety representatives in 1992, it was indicated that children were working under both direct and indirect contracts of employment, doing general work, picking cotton, removing insects from tobacco leaves, and loading and off-loading tobacco, spraying pesticides, herding animals and doing household work (Loewenson, 1992). Children were reported to be working for four to twelve hours a day in the peak season, earning, if employed directly, «child» wages far below the minimum wage and even less per piece than adults. A survey from 1990 in one large scale farming area in Mashonaland Central indicated that one in every eleven children between five and fifteen had done some form of labour in the employer's fields in the past year. With about half the children on farms in this age range this would imply that about 35,000 children have worked if the figures from this region are representative for the country at large (Loewenson, 1992).

Children are causally hired and just as causally fired. Even when working on a piece rate, which should neutralise any less productivity for children, they are sometimes paid a «children's wage». Girls are the most vulnerable children on commercial farms. Very few girls on farms complete their primary schooling. Among poor households a pattern evident on many commercial farms consists of parents selecting perhaps two boys to attend school. When girls are sent to school it is often only for two years, up to Grade 2, while boys may stay up to Grade 4 (Amanor-Wilks, 1995). Loewenson (1992) describes the institutional setting in which most of the child labour takes place on large scale farms in Zimbabwe (and elsewhere). With the farm workers' minimum wage well below the poverty line, households on large scale farms wage a constant struggle for survival. The involvement of children is stimulated through piece wage practices for adult workers, particularly female casual labour. Contract labour, commonly seasonal, but increasingly common throughout the year, is generally done on a piece wage rate. Male workers recruit women to increase output and women recruit children, so that the employer formally employing and paying one person may actually be paying for the labour of three or more. When adults and older children are out doing piece work, small children take on household tasks, for example, carrying water, collecting firewood and looking after even smaller children. The trade union GAPWUZ is negotiating

a clause aimed at preventing women from bringing their children into the fields to help with piece-work.

### **Domestic labour**

There are both a formal and informal domestic labour market in Zimbabwe. The number of workers is not known, but it is estimated to be 100,000 in the formal labour market alone (Loewenson, 1992). The domestic workers union in ZiCTU does actually organise children down to 10 years of age, and address the problem in their activities. In 1994 the Domestic and Allied Workers Union reported that child labour had become rampant in domestic service (Sunday Gazette, 1994). Children are included both in the formal and informal market, although more often the latter. Work in household includes cleaning, taking care of children, cooking, gardening and errands. The daily working time can reach 15 hours starting when the household wakes until it retires.

Children in the domestic sector suffer the problems of wage rates that are below the agreed levels in the industrial agreements, excessively long hours of work, prejudice against schooling due to non-attendance, to fatigue or to lack of time to do homework and the occupational hazards of domestic work (Loewenson, 1992). Some children are not paid at all, as they are seen to have been the favour of accommodation, food and residence in town. Child domestic workers suffer poor conditions and job insecurity, with little effective protection. There are also reports of child abuse including sexual harassment of girls by male employers (Loewenson, 1992).

### **Urban informal sector and street children**

The urban informal sector in Zimbabwe has historically been relatively small both in terms of size and role and status in the economy, especially when compared to its role and status in other African countries. However, the economic hardship in Zimbabwe have led to a growing informalisation of the economy with increased immigration to the urban centres. The informal sector are comprises the self-employed, those who run small businesses and their employees. The total number of people working in this sector is about 200,000, out of which two-thirds are women. A national survey of the informal sector in 1984 found that although a major source of employment, the informal sector suffered low labour productivity, a lack of infrastructure such as industrial estates, marketing facilities and inadequate capital and skills (Loewenson, 1992).

The extent of child labour in the informal sector is unmeasured, and the nature and conditions of employment largely undocumented (Loewenson, 1992).

The informal sector in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, has not been regulated by laws governing labour relations, working conditions and occupational health. There are often no defined workplaces or contracts of the employment. Labour may be contracted out to domestic based workplaces, where the extent of the involvement of children is unknown. Sachikonye (1989) found most children to be engaged in petty trading mostly in urban centres, trading goods, e.g. vegetables, fruit, eggs, cigarettes, sweets, firewood's, cloths and agricultural implements selling at markets, bus stops and from roadside stalls. Most child traders were found to be between 9 and 13 years of age. The children worked for 9 to 12 hours a day, and only a third attended school, about half were dropouts and the remainder had never attended school. Many children indicated that their meagre earnings went towards payment for clothes, school fees and other basic needs.

Street children include both those permanently on the street and totally dependent on their own earnings and those living within the family whose earnings contribute to household survival. The first group was found to make up 15 per cent of those children in urban centres in a study from 1991 (Loewenson, 1992). Over half the children said they were on the streets because of poverty or destitution. Most children used their money to buy food, clothes and to pay school fees, if attending school.

There are indications that the number of homeless children and children without parents is increasing in Zimbabwe, with an increased number of Aids orphans. In 1994 it was estimated that 17 per cent of the adult population are HIV infected. Some estimates from WHO have estimated the number of Aids orphans in Zimbabwe in the year 2000 to be 600,000. If so, this will be an obvious problem and a potential reason for increasing numbers of street children.

### **Manufacturing and mining sector**

About 59,000 found employment in the mining sector in 1995. Following the unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 and the subsequently imposed sanctions by the United Nations, Zimbabwe developed quite a diversified industry. Employment in the manufacturing industry amounted to approximately 187,700 in 1995.

In a recent survey by the African Community Publishing and Development Trust (1996) it was found that only a few children at large mines fail to go to primary school. On the other hand very few children from small scale mines are able to attend school. The only children who go to school are those who are fortunate enough to live near a government school or those who are sent away from the mine to grandparents so that they can go to school in the communal area. Access to schooling would be equally limited for the gold panning children. Although some

children put themselves through school from their earnings from gold panning, it is more common for gold panning children to help with production and miss out on schooling. Gold panning communities are isolated and move frequently, so it is very difficult for gold panning children to attend school regularly, even if their families could afford the fees. (African Community Publishing and Development trust, 1996)

Employing of children on a direct wage in the formal sectors is rare in Zimbabwe. It is more common for children to be used as labour in informal sector micro-factories and small mines linked to large formal sector concerns. Children are engaged in micro-industries including welding, door frame and furniture manufacturing, fence and tin making, basket weaving, carpentry and bicycle repair work. In 1984 the Ministry of Labour reported on middlemen for large mining concerns purchasing chrome from small mine workers at a rate so low that women and children were drafted into the mines for the household to increase output. The chrome was sold on by the middlemen at approximately a 300 per cent profit (Loewenson, 1992). Other examples of children working on the rim of the formal industrial sector include reports from the brick-industries where children are employed as brick loaders.

## **2.3 Summary**

Zimbabwe seems to be a well chosen candidate for our study, but due to lack of data only more general assumptions can be made. At the macro level however one can see that in a period of declining or stagnating economy in the 1980s, Zimbabwe was able to decrease the general level of child labour through a drive on primary education. In the 1990s, however, the situation have been stagnating or decreasing enrolment rates in primary education and probably as a result an increasing number of child labourers. The different elements will be analysed in Chapter four.

## 3 Egypt

### 3.1 Economic development

The latest census in Egypt (1996) found the population to be 61.4 million; in 1986 the corresponding figure was 48.3 million (Central Agency for Population Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) 1991).

In the fiscal year 1991/92 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 125.5 billion Egyptian pounds. The Gross National Product per capita was USD 610 in 1991 (World Bank 1993). Measured by the per capita income adjusted for PPP in USD, the Institute of National Planning (1994) reported this as USD 2278 for Egypt as a whole, and for urban and rural areas the figures are respectively USD 2624 and USD 1879. Upper Egypt's rural governorates had the lowest at USD 1619, and Port-Said, one of the urban governorates, had the highest at USD 4004.

Administratively Egypt is divided into 26 governorates, four of which are totally urban (Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez). Nine are to be found on the Nile Delta (Lower Egypt) which extends from Cairo to the Mediterranean Sea, and eight are located in the Nile Valley (Upper Egypt). An additional five frontier governorates are found on Egypt's western and eastern borders. There are large regional differences among the governorates when it comes to most socio-economic measurements.

Upper Egypt is the poorest region in the country together with Kalyubia, Gharbia and Munufia governorates in the Delta region. Thus, there is a considerable number of poor people in Egypt, and women and children are among the most vulnerable groups (World Bank 1991). Poor children are in particular exposed to difficult living conditions, e.g. malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy and child labour.

Poor households in the rural areas are mostly found among farmers who own no or very little land and among agricultural labourers. In urban areas, poor households are found among those in industrial employment and services, including a notable number of government employees. Also among the urban self-employed poverty can be found, and in particular among the low-skilled and those with marginal activities. The World Bank (1991) has also defined an *ultra-poor* group claiming that 10-13 per cent of Egypt's population belong to this group. Those classified under this group are widows, the elderly, the sick and the disabled.

## The labour market

We can see from Table 3.1 that traditional sectors such as agriculture/fishing/hunting and industry have reduced from 1976 to 1986, while construction, transport etc., finance/insurance and other sectors not classified elsewhere have increased. The agriculture/fishing/hunting sector is still the largest in Egypt with the social service sector in second. Although we have no figures for the informal sector of the economy, there are indicators that this sector is not noteworthy, and that many of the child labourers are found in this area.

Table 3.1 Employment by sector of economic activity, 1976 and 1986, total and per cent

|  | 1976       | Per cent | 1986       | Per cent |
|--|------------|----------|------------|----------|
| Agriculture, fishing, hunting          | 4,881,009  | 47.6     | 4,566,945  | 37.6     |
| Mining                                 | 33,831     | 0.3      | 52,769     | 0.4      |
| Industry                               | 1,369,482  | 13.3     | 1,475,608  | 12.1     |
| Electricity                            | 61,761     | 0.6      | 91,077     | 0.3      |
| Construction                           | 425,084    | 4.1      | 817,644    | 6.7      |
| Trade, hotel, restaurants              | 861,286    | 8.4      | 852,124    | 7.0      |
| Transportation, communication, storage | 482,253    | 4.7      | 640,827    | 5.2      |
| Finance and insurance                  | 88,392     | 0.8      | 224,061    | 1.8      |
| Social services                        | 1,868,289  | 18.2     | 2,614,477  | 21.5     |
| Other (not classified elsewhere)       | 186,438    | 1.8      | 811,089    | 6.7      |
| Total                                  | 10,257,825 | 100      | 12,146,621 | 100      |
| Other (not classified elsewhere)       | 186,438    | 1.8      | 811,089    | 6.7      |
| Total                                  | 10,257,825 | 100      | 12,146,621 | 100      |

Source: World Bank (1991)

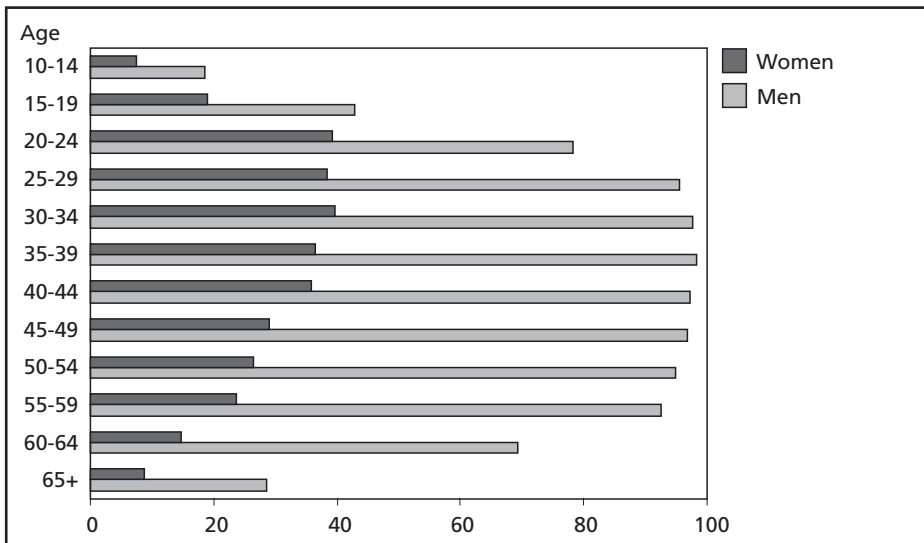
Table 3.2 Labour force participation rates by age (6 years and above) and sex, 1960-1986, per cent

|       | 1960 |        |       | 1976 |        |       | 1986  |        |       |
|-------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
|       | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male  | Female | Total |
| 6-14  | 21.3 | 7.6    | 14.7  | 27.3 | 7.2    | 17.2  | 15.9  | 7.4    | 11.8  |
| 15-19 | 68.4 | 8.6    | 39.5  | 49.8 | 5.1    | 29.1  | 39.4  | 8.8    | 23.3  |
| 20-29 | 91.1 | 5.9    | 46.8  | 81.5 | 11.6   | 46.0  | 73.0  | 15.7   | 44.1  |
| 30-39 | 97.9 | 4.4    | 50.2  | 97.6 | 6.67   | 41.4  | 79.2  | 13.1   | 45.8  |
| 40-49 | 97.8 | 4.8    | 52.0  | 98.0 | 4.0    | 51.55 | 89.7  | 11.8   | 51.4  |
| 50-59 | 95.6 | 4.1    | 49.8  | 96.1 | 3.0    | 50.4  | 100.0 | 8.9    | 59.2  |
| 60-64 | 85.1 | 3.1    | 42.1  | 76.7 | 2.2    | 39.0  | 81.4  | 5.2    | 43.0  |
| 65+   | 62.5 | 1.8    | 30.0  | 40.9 | 1.0    | 20.4  | 84.4  | 20.0   | 52.2  |

Source: Handoussa (1991)

We can see from Table 3.2 that the percentage of children aged 6-14 in the labour force is notable: In 1986 11.8 per cent of the children in this age group were working; for 1976 the corresponding figure was 17.2 per cent, and for 1960 14.7 per cent. There has been a reduction of children in the age group 6 to 14 participating in the labour force from 1960 to 1986, however not of a gradual decrease of children in this age group working, since the peak occurred in 1976 at 17.2 per cent. Figure 3.1 confirms that in 1990 also children between 10-14 were involved in economic activities, with as many as 18.6 per cent for boys and 7.5 per cent for girls.

Figure 3.1 Labour market participation. Rates by age (10 years and above) and sex, 1990. Per cent



Source: ILO (1995b)

These figures (from Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1) relating to the age groups under 15 do, however, not necessarily represent a problem as long as the working children in this age are 12 or over and they do not work more than six hours (not more than 4 consecutive) a day (between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.). If this is not the case, their work is in violation of Egyptian labour law concerning child workers.

### Legal framework

Egypt has ratified Convention 29 and Convention 105 concerning the abolition of slave and forced labour. The labour law of 1981 (Number 137) set the minimum age at 12 for entering into employment, and 15 years for working in factories. When it comes to work in dangerous occupations the lowest age limit is 17. Children

between 12 and 15 years of age can work six hours a day, but not after 7 p.m. and not before 6 a.m. This labour law classifies as «young» those persons aged between 12 and 17, and strictly prohibits the employment of children under 12 except in the agricultural sector.

The Government of Egypt has not ratified ILO Convention 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment nor either of the ILO Conventions concerning the minimum age of admission to employment in industry (Number 5 and Number 59).

### 3.2 The educational system

The educational system in Egypt has evolved over a long period of time. There have been many changes, especially in the number of years of compulsory schooling. Currently, basic education is compulsory for the first 8 years, starting at the age of six, of which 5 years are primary and three preparatory. A further three-year period, known as the secondary stage, is not compulsory. Although many students pay to attend private schools, particularly in urban areas, public education at all levels is guaranteed free by Egypt's constitution.

Compulsory primary education is one policy instrument by which a state effectively can reduce the amount of children in the labour force. Having said that, it has to be stressed that compulsory education is not a satisfactory instrument on its own; in addition the educational system has both to both maintain a certain quality and, not least, be applicable to pupils/students in the future. If the primary education system maintains both appropriate quality and is applicable both to

Table 3.3 Gross enrolment rates by different educational levels, 1950-1990, per cent

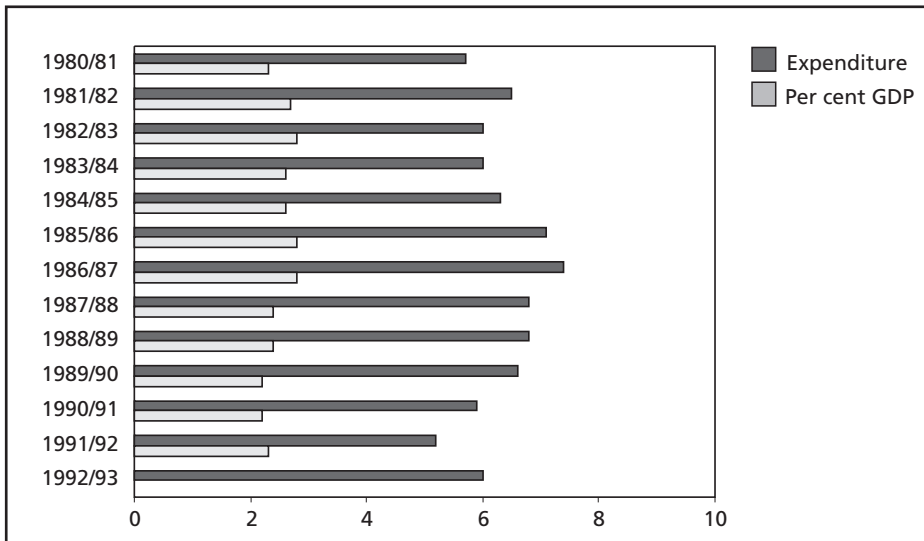
|         | Primary:<br>6-11 years | Preparatory/secondary:<br>12-17 years | Intermediate/University:<br>18-21 years |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1950    | 41                     | 17                                    | N/A.                                    |
| 1955    | 52                     | 16                                    | N/A.                                    |
| 1960    | 66                     | 16                                    | 4.9                                     |
| 1965    | 75                     | 26                                    | 6.8                                     |
| 1970    | 69                     | 32                                    | 7.9                                     |
| 1975    | 72                     | 40                                    | 12.5                                    |
| 1989/90 | 79                     | N/A.                                  | N/A.                                    |
| 1990    | 97                     | 66                                    | N/A.                                    |

Sources: Abdel-Fadil (1982); El Baradei (1994); Institute of National Planning (1994)

parents and pupils, the former will be more likely to send their children there. This is in particular important for parents and children from poor households because if they find that it is not worthwhile giving priority to education, these children will be more likely to take up work. How does the Egyptian education system rate when evaluated?

Table 3.3 shows the results of the priority Egypt has given to education policy since 1950. The enrolment rates<sup>4</sup> have increased at all levels: the increased primary enrolment rate has gradually been transferred also to higher levels. We can also see from the same table that there was a notable increase in the enrolment rate from 1960 (66%) to 1965 (75%) at all levels. The enrolment rate for the age group 6-11 did, however, drop again in 1970 to 69 per cent. Due to possible methodological differences in the various sources of data in Table 3.3 care should, however, be taken in direct comparisons. The Egyptian government has put even more money into education during the last two decades, namely 6 per cent of the GDP (Financial Times 1997); despite this, many public schools lack the necessary resources to perform their duties. Very often the schools operate on a shift schedule where up to three sets of children attend classes for approximately four hours each. This in itself makes it easy for children to have employment in addition to attending school.

Figure 3.2 Pre-university education expenditure, percentage of the GDP and of total public expenditure, 1980/81-1992/93



Source: El Baradei (1994)

<sup>4</sup> Gross enrolment ratio measures the number of pupils at a certain stage of education divided by the size of the total population in the age groups that correspond to the respective age limits.

We can see from Figure 3.2 that public expenditure on pre-university education was 2.3 per cent of GDP, and 5.7 per cent of total public expenditure in 1980/81. The highest figure (2.8% of GDP) for expenditure on pre-university education was found in the budget years 1982/83, 1985/86 and 1986/87. Peak expenditure on education, when measured as a percentage of total public expenditure, occurred in the budget year 1986/87 at 7.4 per cent. We can also see from this table that the figures are lowest at the beginning of the 1980s, highest around 1985-86, decreasing thereafter at the beginning of the 1990s. Despite the decrease, these figures show clearly that Egypt gave priority to education in the mid 1980s. El Baradei (1994) claims, however, that this spending on education suffers from major shortcomings which have severe consequences for both the quantity and the quality of the educational opportunities offered.

Although significant improvements have been made over the past two decades, universal compulsory education has not yet been attained. El Baradei (1994) claims that the Egyptian education system is characterised by low external efficiency, namely to what extent it improves the pupils'/students' employment prospects and productivity. He states further that it also has a low internal efficiency, i.e. to what extent educational goals are achieved with the given resources. Thus, there is a distortion of the relationship between education and the labour market. The following figures illustrate this: The numbers of unemployed increased from 7.7 per cent in 1976 to 14.7 per cent in 1986: For those with an intermediate certificate it increased from 20.6 per cent in 1976 to 28.7 per cent in 1986, while for those with university or other higher education it increases notably; from 11.3 per cent in 1976 to 25.2 per cent in 1986. El Baradei (1994) concludes that the increase in graduate surplus is a waste of the financial resources spent on educating those very graduates. It has, however, to be mentioned here that Egypt has cut back on expenditure in the public sector over the last few decades since the country has adopted the World Bank's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). As a result of this new policy, many with a university education have lost opportunities to obtain a position in the public sector.

Thus, it seems there is a problem both with the quality of the education given and the applicability of it (Financial Times 1997). This is not only a problem for those finishing their studies. It will also have an effect on those starting primary school. If there is a commonly held view that education does not maintain a high standard and is not applicable, this will affect children coming from poor households whether their families find it worthwhile spending their children to school or not. Many poor households will probably be more likely to keep their children at home, either to help or so that they can bring home a small amount of money from work outside the home.

Table 3.4 Distribution of population (10 years of age and above) by educational level. Per cent

|                           | 1960  | 1976  | 1986  |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Illiterate                | 70.5  | 56.5  | 50.0  |
| Read and write            | 24.2  | 25.1  | 26.9  |
| Intermediate Certificate  | 4.4   | 16.2  | 20.0  |
| College or high education | 0.9   | 2.2   | 3.1   |
| Total                     | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: El Baradei (1994)

We can see from Table 3.4 that half the population 10 years old and above were illiterate in 1986. In 1993 the World Bank reported that as many as 62 per cent of the female population were illiterate and that the corresponding figure was 38 per cent for the male population. This illiteracy rate is higher than the average in low income economies, which Egypt belongs to and which amounted to 40% in 1990 and 52 per cent for female illiteracy (World Bank 1993). Table 3.4 also reveals that there was a notable reduction in the illiteracy rate between 1960 (70.5%) and 1986 (50.0%).

El Baradei (1994) claims that as many as 37 per cent of Egyptian children do not complete their basic education. He states further that the majority of these children probably are girls from the poorest groups in Egyptian society. Zaher (1994) estimates that in 1987/88 25 per cent of the children aged 6-15 years were absent from school, while El Baradei (1994) for his part claims that this figure could be as high as 37 per cent due to an overestimation of the enrolment ratio and the high drop-out rates at a very early stage. The children who are not at school constitute a continuous inflow to illiteracy on the one hand, and a source of many social problems such as delinquency, street children, child labour on the other (El Baradei 1994).

Drop-outs constitute one of the most important aspects of educational wastage and one of the main reasons for illiteracy (El Baradei 1994). The main reason for school drop-outs is not necessarily learning difficulties among the children but rather poverty. Most of the children that drop out of school come from the poorest socio-economic stratum of Egypt. Among these households education is considered very costly, since the children could be working instead and bringing in money to the household. El Baradei (1994) writes the following: «It is obvious that there is a great amount of waste in human resources, which amount to 775 670 children in 1989/90» (see Table 3.5). «These children can relapse into illiteracy; they can be encouraged to child labour, and the amount of unskilled workers will increase in the future. Thus, economic factors seem to be very important for children dropping

out of school. Furthermore, since these children have limited access to education, many of them are put into work at a young age.

Table 3.5 Numbers and proportions of wastage at the primary level in 1989/90

|               | Numbers | Proportions                                    |
|---------------|---------|--|
| Non-enrolment | 17,062  | 1.2% of total children age 6 years (1,370,000) |
| Failures      | 670,098 | 10.9% of total children enrolled (6,155,100)   |
| Drop-outs     | 87,910  | 1.4% of total children enrolled (6,155,100)    |
| Total         | 775,670 | 12.6% of the supposedly enrolled (6,155,100)   |

Source: El Baradei (1994)

Table 3.5 shows that 1.2 per cent of children aged 6 are not enrolled in the educational system. The main reason for this is probably that their families move from one place to another and then the families fail to register the children, but also other factors like traditions and communication might play a role. So far as traditions are concerned, female children can be kept at home rather than be sent to school, because it is not considered appropriate to send them to school; or as concerns communication, physical distance from the home of the child to school might also play a role here. Table 3.7 also shows that almost 11 per cent of the children enrolled in schools fail, and 1.4 per cent of them drop out.

Table 3.6 Primary enrolment rates by region, urban/rural and sex, 1986/87

|                  | Male |     |     | Female |    |    | Total |    |    |
|------------------|------|-----|-----|--------|----|----|-------|----|----|
|                  | U    | R   | T   | U      | R  | T  | U     | R  | T  |
| Lower Egypt      | 91   | 100 | 97  | 91     | 84 | 86 | 91    | 92 | 92 |
| Upper Egypt      | 94   | 90  | 91  | 89     | 59 | 65 | 91    | 73 | 79 |
| Frontier Govtes. | 82   | 126 | 102 | 79     | 69 | 75 | 81    | 98 | 89 |
| Egypt            | 95   | 96  | 95  | 93     | 71 | 80 | 94    | 84 | 88 |

Source: El Baradei (1994)

If we look at Table 3.6 we can see that the situation for enrolment is particularly bad in Upper Egypt which is also the poorest area of Egypt as we have mentioned above; it is particularly bad for females in the rural parts. The mean years for schooling (of those 25 years and above) in 1986 was 1.3 years for girls and 2.9 years for boys in the rural part of Upper Egypt (Institute of National Planning 1994). We can also see from Table 3.6 that enrolment rates as a trend both for boys and girls are lowest in the rural areas of Egypt.

Table 3.7: De facto household population aged 6-24 enrolled in school, by age group, sex, and urban-rural residence, per cent, 1992

|       | Male  |       |       | Female |       |       | Total |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | Urban | Rural | Total | Urban  | Rural | Total | Urban | Rural | Total |
| 6-10  | 92.5  | 86.0  | 88.7  | 92.0   | 68.1  | 78.2  | 92.2  | 77.0  | 83.5  |
| 11-15 | 83.6  | 73.6  | 77.9  | 84.0   | 56.1  | 68.3  | 83.8  | 65.1  | 73.3  |
| 6-15  | 88.1  | 80.0  | 83.5  | 88.2   | 62.5  | 73.6  | 88.2  | 71.4  | 78.6  |
| 16-20 | 58.3  | 43.8  | 50.4  | 53.4   | 23.3  | 36.7  | 55.8  | 33.3  | 43.5  |
| 21-24 | 19.4  | 10.4  | 15.0  | 12.9   | 2.4   | 7.7   | 16.0  | 6.1   | 11.1  |

Source: El-Zanaty et.al. (1993)

Thus, about 50 per cent of children between 12 to 15 years old do not attend school, and are therefore most likely to be working. We can see from Table 3.7 that in all age groups males are more likely than females to be enrolled in school, with the largest difference in the age group 16-20. Furthermore, the sex differences are most noticeable in rural areas. In the age group 11-15, 56.1 per cent of females in rural areas of Egypt are enrolled in contrast to 73.6 per cent of the males in the same age group in rural areas. It is also important to keep in mind that some of the factories for example carpet factories (see section 3.3), that employ children define the work the children do actually as training or even education (US Department of Labor 1994). Thus, actual child labour is hidden as training or education.

Public primary education is perceived by much of the population to be ineffective (El Baradei 1994), since private lessons are regarded as essential if a child is to successfully complete the exams required for admission to secondary school. The lessons, which must be paid for, are often given by the same person who teaches the child in the public school. Although, public education in principle is free of charge, this is not the case in practice. Depending on the number of children<sup>5</sup> in the household, the cost of education can amount to one fourth or even one third of total household income. Private teachers, offering private lessons, as mentioned above, even make the cost of education higher. During the last ten years their number has increased, and they have reached a remarkable level. In addition, modern fees are collected from the pupils at all levels (ranging from 20-38 L.E.). Thus, both current fees and private lessons in public schools have become a «must» for successful performance. The poor learning conditions, the low standard of textbooks and low quality of teachers make private lessons – as well as «outside helping textbooks» –

<sup>5</sup> In 1992 the total fertility rate (TFR) of Egypt was 3.93. There is, however, a notable difference between urban and rural areas with a TFR of 2.92 in urban areas and 4.91 in rural ones. Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt have respectively a TFR of 5.18 and 3.72.

crucial in educational achievement. The private lessons bill was estimated in 1988/89 at between 400 and 800 million L.E. (Zaher 1994).

It is also important to keep in mind that non-enrolment is not necessarily to be equated with child labour. In rural areas of Egypt, as we have mentioned above, small societies can be very traditional when it comes for example to whether girls should be given education or not, and the family might decide to keep the girls at home. Physical distance from the children's home to the school can also be an important factor for explaining some of the non-enrolment.

We know that children kept out of school come from the poorest areas of Egypt, Upper Egypt and some parts of Cairo. The opportunity costs of sending a child to school are quite high in poor households, since it means a lost source of income which is badly needed. Thus, some poor households prefer to send their children to learn a skill or to work rather than to go to school. Case studies in this field revealed a positive relationship between the level of the household's income and the amount of care and supervision given to the child in its formal education.

### **3.3 Child labour in Egypt**

In this section we will summarise the main findings from surveys conducted into child labour in Egypt.

A government survey from 1988 found that 1.4 million children between the age of six and fourteen are working in Egypt (US Department of Labor 1994). Abdalla (1988) for his part, claims that, «in Egypt working children participate in all types of economic activity in both the rural and urban sectors. In the latter, child employment rates are particularly high in repair workshops, in craft shops such as those of the Khan El-Khalili district in Cairo and in industries such as brick making and textiles located on the outskirts of Greater Cairo, or leather-tanning workshops situated in the heart of the capital».

El Baradei (1994) claims that child labour increased for the 6-12 age group from 3.5 per cent in 1979 to 5.3 per cent in 1980, and to 7 per cent in 1984. He goes on further to say that the number of working children recorded in the age group 6-12 amounted to about 257.251 children. Young boys especially make up a large proportion of the labour force in the country's multitude of small informal workshops, while young girls tend to work in the home, out of the public arena. Child labourers in Egypt are almost always underpaid and sometimes unpaid.

## **Informal Sector**

Child workers are found working at home as unpaid family workers, as maids, and in the informal part of the economy for instance making carpets at home which the family sells to local factories. The latter situation is mostly found in rural areas, and these child labourers are often young girls. Since this type of work takes place mostly in the informal part of the economy, it is hard to find reliable figures to shed light on the quantity, moreover, as hardly any research has been conducted that can help us.

Child workers are also found in the agricultural sector, both as unpaid family members and also as ordinary workers.

## **The Carpet Market**

Carpet making is a traditional craft in Egypt, and here child workers are to be found, in particular girls. These children have often learnt the craft at home from older family members. Child workers are also found in the carpet industry, in particular in the western suburbs of Cairo, close to the Pyramids. These carpets are mainly sold to tourists, or exported to Western countries. Children between 10-14 years of age are found working on the looms. An interview with an owner of such a factory revealed that

«young girls start as trainees at the age of seven or eight, and it takes one to two years for them to learn how to make the knots and how to work from a printed pattern. For another year or two they work on practice looms and their product is not sold. By the time the girls are approximately 10 to 11 years old, they start working on professional looms.»

He also stated that the girls attend school for half a day and would work in either the morning or the afternoon, depending on their school shift, for up to three hours. Some of the child workers were also interviewed and they said that not all of them attend school and some even work a full day from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in contravention of Egypt's labour law. Furthermore, these children stated that they earned approximately USD 20 a month at the start, rising eventually to USD 60 or more per month.

## **Leather Tanning Industry**

In 1985 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conducted a survey of the leather tanning industry in Cairo, and they found that most of the child labour in the industry was concentrated in small enterprises that producing for domestic

consumption (Abdalla 1988). The survey covered a total of 50 child workers (48 boys and 2 girls), who were interviewed at the work-site along with their employers. Children were found working at cleaning, preparing material and packaging. Thus, child workers are engaged in unskilled manual activities, which are essential for the production process. Those children who were working in larger workshops generally enjoyed better working conditions.

The average age of the children working in this industry was 11.7 years, and they worked on average 12.8 hours a day (Abdalla 1988). Of these 50 children, 14 were between 4,5 and 10 years of age; 21 were between 11 and 13; and 12 were 14 years old and 3 were 15 years of age.

This study confirmed the general assumption that such children come from poor households who depend on their children to bring in income. The parents of these children were asked whether they allowed their children to work rather than send them to school, and here is how they answered:

- 90 per cent of the parents said that the household needed the income,
- 56 per cent mentioned that their children's income was irregular,
- 48 per cent could not afford the cost of schooling,
- 20 per cent gave the unemployment of the head of household as a reason.

Although the contribution to the household's income is important, only 2 per cent of these child workers were the sole income earners in the household.

The employers reported that the main reason for employing these children was that they cost less than adults. Moreover, they are flexible, an important factor in an unstable market. Children are well suited to meeting the fluctuations in labour demand since the supply of child labourers also varies between summer and winter, and many are also available for part time work.

Abdalla (1988) writes that education is holy throughout Egypt, even among parents who send their children to work. The field surveys showed that while households whose children exclusively attend school are fairly common, very few exist where the children are engaged in labour to the exclusion of education. Thus, it seems that many child workers combine work and education; some children from 10 to 14 years of age work irregular hours for «pocket money», and most of these attend school and work either before or after classes.

### **The Textile Industry**

Egyptian children are also found working in the textile industry. In 1993 ILO conducted a survey together with a non-governmental organisation of 100 small fac-

tories (less than 100 workers) and of even smaller family operated workshops in one region of greater Cairo, of which half produced textiles. The survey revealed that 25 per cent of the workers in these firms were children under the age of 15. As many as 60 per cent of the children worked for employers who were not personally known to the parents, and half worked outside their immediate neighbourhood. Seventy three per cent of the children worked in excess of twelve hours a day, and earned an average of USD 8 a month. The study concluded that working hours are without doubt a gross violation of the labour law which prohibits children working after 7 p.m. and before 6 a.m. with a minimum of six hours, provided this is interrupted by a break, and it is prohibited to assign children to work for more than four consecutive hours. In factories which base their production on a shift system, the study found one third of the children also worked the night shift. Most of the children reported that their work consisted of cleaning up and carrying tools around the factory, and acting as attendants for the weaving machines. Again, we see that children also in this type of industry do manual work which is important for the production process.

### **3.4 Summary**

We have seen in this chapter that Egyptian children do work, and they do so in contravention of the country's labour law which is not enforced. Child workers are found in different types of industry, such as the textile, carpet and leather tanning industries, and in the informal part of the economy. The work these children do consists of unskilled manual activities which are important for the production process (or they work in the households). We have seen that the combination of work and education is not an unusual one among Egyptian children. Thus it is often not a simple choice between the one or the other. Education is frequently offered on a shift basis, making it even easier for the children to combine work and education. Although, this might seem to work well for most of the children involved, it does most likely hinder these children in their learning activities.

Another serious aspect of child labour in Egypt is that in many cases it is not perceived as labour at all, but disguised as some form of apprenticeship or training/education. This makes it even more difficult to combat.

Despite the fact that public education is guaranteed free of charge to all children, moderate fees have been introduced at all levels. Furthermore, in order to succeed in the Egyptian education system, children have to take private lessons, very often from the same teachers who teach them in the public schools. These two factors have made public education costly, and this does have an effect in particular

on children coming from poor households; education becomes too expensive for them. In addition, it appears that part of the education system does not maintain an appropriate level of quality; neither does it seem to be applicable to the labour market.

The reasons for a high incidence of child labour in Egypt are complex and multifaceted. They include overpopulation, resultant notable economic differences between the many poor and the rich; a high rate of labour migration abroad; the failure of the Egyptian education system to provide schooling for large numbers of children, and an increasing number of school drop-outs. It would appear that the current problem of child labour can only be solved by major transformations in Egypt's economy, at best as a long-term prospect. In the meantime, greater attention should be paid to the improvement of the education system so that children from poor households can afford to attend school; the newly introduced fees should be removed together with the «irregular» payment teachers receive from private lessons and additional textbooks. In addition more stress has to be placed on the enforcement of already existing laws for the protection of children against child labour.

## 4 The impact of institutions and the room available for change

As mentioned in Chapter one, if the existence of child labour can be explained by the economy of the household only, then child labour becomes a measure of the general level of poverty with poverty eradication the only remedy. The link between poverty and child labour is quite evident in this paper. Children from the poorest households are the most likely to be working, either unpaid in the family or in a job outside home. The economy explains some of the internal differences in child labour both in Egypt and Zimbabwe. Poor households are over-represented in households where child labour occurs. This applies to less developed Upper Egypt, to the rural areas in Zimbabwe and the poor urban areas in both Cairo and Harare.

Among the examples given in the analyses is the survey of the leather industry in Egypt which confirmed that child labourers come from poor households who depend on their children to bring home income. Loewenson (1992) refers a study made by social welfare officers in Zimbabwe, concluding that household poverty and the cost of living were two of the most commonly noted factors leading to child labour. In poor households the extra money or productive labour brought in by children may represent a household's «survival strategy».

Poverty not only leads to strategies aimed at increasing income by way of child labour but also at diminishing or eliminating expenditure wherever possible including expenditure on children's education. For a poor family even a relatively minor expense such as the purchase of a school uniform can eat into a household budget. As mentioned in the analyses, despite the fact that public education is guaranteed free of charge to all children, moderate fees have been introduced at all levels in Egypt. Furthermore, in order to succeed in the Egyptian education system children have to take private lessons, very often from the same teachers who teach them in the public schools. In Zimbabwe, school fees have been reintroduced. These two factors have made public education costly, and this does have an effect in particular on children from poor households: Education becomes too expensive for them.

## 4.1 Institutional differences

Our assumption was that in Africa today you would find for every level of economic development a potential range of outcomes regarding child labour, depending on the different institutional settings. The analyses of the two countries do support this and offer several clear examples.

There exist informal cultural institutions which explain both differences between the two countries in for example on how children are treated by their families, and between groups within the countries, e.g. gender differences. According to Islamic law, the family or relatives are expected to take care of very poor children or orphans, which is more or less the case in Egypt. The problem of children being left on their own is much more evident in Zimbabwe where family structures are much more loose and the health situation is poorer, and where it is not obvious who is responsible for the children. Furthermore, in Egypt female children are kept more in the private sphere than male children who are allowed to take part in the public on to a much larger extent, which has affected where children work for example. This is due to both religion and traditions. In Zimbabwe, the gender difference is not as notable as in Egypt, although we also find differences here between the two sexes in connection with the type of work they are involved in.

During the period concerned both Egypt and Zimbabwe have had relatively weak legal protection of children in the labour market. Counter to this general trend we observed differences in the use of child labour in different sectors that could not be explained by either demand or supply of child labour, but rather seems to derive from either different legislation in the different sectors or differing enforcement of the law. One particular example is the strong regulation of street vending in Zimbabwe. The type of employment contract for the head of household is yet another legal setting influencing the amount and structure of child labour. An example is the shift from permanent to more casual employment in Zimbabwes agricultural sector, made possible by changes in labour legislation. With shorter periods of labour, households suffer greater economic insecurity and are thus pressured into household labour, including children, during peak seasonal periods of available employment to maximise earnings during these periods.

Loewenson (1992) highlights the fact that in most sectors of child labour there is a close link between children's work and labour status of females. This applies to traditional farming where women provide the main labour input. Labour shortages are met by children in the peak sessions. In large scale farming women often are temporary piece-wage earners who bring along their children to assist in order to increase their earnings. In the informal sector women receive low earnings and thus involve children to support the income of the household. Furthermore the lack of childcare services for working women can result in the employment of children

as domestic labourers. Loewenson (1992) also points out the fact that trade unions are weak in the sectors where child labour exists. This is the case in both the agricultural and domestic workers sectors, where trade unions were only formed less than a decade ago. It also applies to the informal sector where no labour organisations exist at all.

Differences in child labour resulting from the differing availability of education are the case in several areas. The lack of educational facilities on the commercial farms in Zimbabwe is one example. A survey in mining areas in Zimbabwe provides yet another example. It found that only those children who are fortunate enough to live near a school or who are sent away to grandparents in the communal area go to school. Access to schooling was equally limited for the gold-panning children. Gold-panning communities are isolated and move frequently, so it is very difficult for gold-panning children to attend school regularly, even if their families could afford the fees.

Child labour is also associated with various types of migration. An instance is the influx of people to suburbs without sufficient public services and educational facilities; they may have a household income lower than expected, leading to children dropping out of school and seeking work in the informal sector both in Cairo and Harare. The same applies to refugees. In 1992 Zimbabwe hosted over 100,000 Mozambican refugees, 58 per cent of them children. The primary education facilities for refugees are even less than those in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. School attendance is not compulsory and only a few receive more than a few years of primary education. A last group of itinerant people, perhaps not so large in Egypt or Zimbabwe but still significant in Africa, is pastoral nomads. Bringing education to the children of nomads is both difficult and expensive.

There is widespread evidence of the influences on child labour from both formal and informal institutions, as one can see. But how important is this effect? The analysis below of the observed effects of changes in some of these institutions provides an indication. But it would require a much deeper study going beyond the ambitions of this paper to obtain a more exact answer. It would, for example, be necessary to analyse the connections described above in a much more complex way. Nevertheless the results support the initial assumptions and paves the way for a wider debate on how to combat child labour.

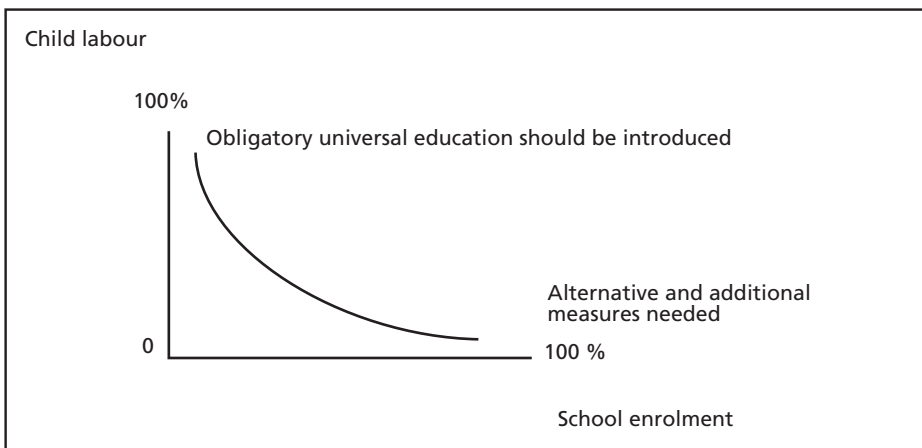
## 4.2 Institutional changes

In our analyses we particularly looked for the effects of any observed changes in the institutional settings. We have analysed two countries that during part of the review period, the 1980's, experienced low economic growth. This differed somewhat between different households, but less than the explanations for differences in child labour. In Zimbabwe one can see that, in a period of declining or stagnating economy, the country through a strong drive on primary education in the 1980's was able to decrease the general level of child labour. In the 1990s however the situation seems to have turned around with increasing growth, but at the same time with stagnating or decreasing enrolment rates in primary education, probably a result of increasing child labourer.

### Education

Today it is particularly in Africa and South Asia that we find countries which do not offer basic education to all citizens. In the case of India, UNICEF has claimed that most parents would send their children to school if only schooling were offered. A researcher, Neera Burra (1995), assumes that the introduction of compulsory schooling in India would result in a 70 per cent reduction in the current number of child labourers. For the remaining 30 per cent other additional initiatives would be required. In both Egypt and Zimbabwe we see that child labour has been reduced in parallel with a considerable increase in primary school enrolment in the 1970's and 1980's. But we did not find a linear connection between increased educational

Figure 4.1 The linear-curve connection between child labour and primary education opportunities



opportunities and a decreasing amount of child labour. The general drive for wider education both in Egypt and Zimbabwe seems to have had most effect in the early stages. It must also be noted that the analysis in the previous chapter shows both in Egypt and in Zimbabwe that school fees and other costs of sending children to school do considerably influence the actual performance. Ignoring school fees and only looking at the effect of offering the opportunity of primary education to children who previously did not have such a choice, one can possibly speak of a linear-curve connection of the type shown in figure 4.1 at the macro level.

The conclusions to be drawn from this are that one should start with a general strategy at first including compulsory primary education and supplementing this with a more special target initiative afterwards. In figure 4.1 an increased enrolment will have an almost one to one effect on child labour decline in the beginning but as the increase continues its relative effect will decline. Both Egypt and Zimbabwe are in need for more special target initiatives.

Special areas such as the large-scale farms in Zimbabwe should be brought into the mainstream school system. Children born into the farm environment face a never-ending cycle of poor education, poor health and a disturbing lack of alternatives. The defencelessness of children makes them especially easy to exploit. Limited career prospects mean that many children end up working on the same farms as their parents. The best hope for children is that increased educational opportunities and the enforcement of compulsory schooling in commercial farming areas will provide more opportunities for children to attend school, thereby limiting their availability for farm work (Amanor-Wilks, 1995).

## **Legislation**

The connection between legislation and child labour is a much more complex one, but again we can make some analyses, based on the experiences of Egypt and Zimbabwe. There are three possible principals to follow in regulating child labour:

1. Set a general minimum age for all type of labour.
2. Define different age limits for different industries, and
3. Define different age limits for different types of work.

Most child labour legislation is a combination of all three. Zimbabwe has historically had legislation based on the second principal, but not necessarily so that the most dangerous types of work have been the most regulated. Egypt has had a combination of the first and the third. The Zimbabwean experience is quite common. It is based on the historical development of the majority of labour legislation. It started in the industries where the workers had been able to force changes, and then

gradually expanded to other industries. In Zimbabwe the last important step in this process was the inclusion of the agricultural workers in the labour code

Legislation based on type of work reflects the fact that not all types of work done by child is to be regarded as child labour. This type of legislation is, however, extremely difficult to enforce as can be seen from the example of Egypt. The industry specific legislation is normally based on the existence of trade unions able to monitoring enforcement, To monitor if children do not take part in dangerous work is sometimes easy, for instance by enforcing a general ban on working at night. However, in most cases it involves individual judgements taken at the workplace in practice left to the employer and the children themselves.

The minimum age approach need to be accompanied by a definition of what should be recorded as child labour and what should not. In reality such a definition would be rather general and open to question, but as described above alternative legislation would be even harder to define The minimum age approach, given the existence of birth certificates, provides at least one general guideline. All industrial countries have therefore chosen this type of legislation. Newly adopted legislation in Zimbabwe also follows these principals.

Community groups, employers, trade unions and NGO's play an important role in creating support for the protection and defence of children. Perhaps their greatest contribution would be to press for and generate change on behalf of children through public awareness and educational campaigns.

In studies of the Indian legislation the National Labour Institute (1995) in India has argued for such connections between weak legislation and difficulties with its enforcement. ILO (1992) concludes for Zimbabwe that clear legislation is needed. Legislation that should be anchored unambiguously in law, the government's aspirations for children, which helps to define and send a clear signal about what is permissible and what is not. In addition a basis should be established for legal action taken by governments, parents or other interested parties. Such legislation would provide a framework for conducting public awareness campaigns against child labour and for taking action on behalf of children working in abusive conditions, facilitate and promote the formulation and design of programmes and projects for working children, and provide a basis for monitoring and assessing progress in the attainment of the objectives of the effective abolition of child labour.

## 4.3 Reasons for inferior settings

The final thing we have looked for is possible reasons for the present institutional settings. Child labour as a phenomenon can only exist because either the negative effects on the child are not seen or understood by the family or society, or there exists institutional limitations for change. Development theory offers several explanations for the existence of such settings. It can, for example, be due to a lack of full information about the consequences of different policies or market failure. It might also be that the present state of affairs serves particular interests or groups who have the power to maintain the status quo. A development towards more efficient institutions to replace less efficient, ones might not take place if this is inconsistent with the interests of those in power.

### Different return to investment in education

In studying education and child labour several people have pointed out the problem that occurs if the value of education is different, or judged to be different between households and society. For society education is of basic value. Several studies describe this, among them two by the World Bank: The first study concerns agricultural workers and shows that four years of schooling produce a ten per cent increase in employee productivity. The second concerns South Korea; here the World Bank believes that investment in a public school system yielded a 1.4 per cent higher rate of growth in the period between 1960 and 1985 (Grimsrud 1996).

As described in the analyses from Egypt for households it might look different. Not all households' lack of interest is necessarily due to the fact that they fail to see the opportunity of achieving an increased return on labour in the future. Rather, it is simply because families live on the minimum of subsistence, which means it is impossible for them to make the savings and investments required to provide their children with an education. Yet the problem is significant and well known also from the history of industrial countries. Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* (cited in Weiner, 1990) state that a public benefit exists beyond the individual and private ones of education, and hence the state should take an interest in providing education.

All industrial countries without exception have solved this problem by introducing compulsory education. Once the private responsibility of the family, education has become a public issue in all modern industrialised countries, with the authorities requiring that all children, regardless of their parents' income and background, receive a minimum basic education.

When education made compulsory, it follows suit that it must be free of charge. A compulsory school which is not free is difficult, since that would in a way criminalise the fact that you are poor.

### **Powerful groups**

As mention above the present state of affairs might serve particular interests or groups who have the power to maintain the status quo. This is of course very difficult to assess. The situation on the Zimbabwean commercial farms seems to indicate the existence of one powerful group i.e. the owners of the commercial farms, with the ability to influence national policy in their own interest by suppressing the interests of other groups. Beverly Grier (1994) shows how the commercial farms of colonial Zimbabwe were historically helped by legislation and arrangements dating from the colonial administration for maintaining the use of child labour. The carpet industry in Egypt could be another example where child labour in many cases is not conceived as labour at all, but is disguised as some form of government approved apprenticeship or training/education scheme.

### **International pressure**

In the agricultural sectors in Egypt and Zimbabwe this study shows the existence of the same wage and contract structures as are found in this industry world-wide with the pattern of children accompany their parents, who work for a piece-wage. A report from a coffee plantation in Kenya describes the dilemma within this industry. Today piece-rate wages are so low that the whole family is forced to work. Without child labour the family would be unable to survive on the current rate of pay. At the same time, it is clear that without child labour the plantation owners would have to offer a level of pay for adult workers which would sustain the whole family (IWGCL, Kenya report, 1995). If this only happened in Kenya, it would lead to higher export prices and a lower share of the market.

This may explain why governments of the third world are not always eager to regulate child labour. That such a desire exists to only a limited extent, or at least has only to a small degree been translated into practical policies, might be due to the fact that individual nations can easily lose out when they abolish child labour if other countries fail to follow suit. Multinational regulations backed by the credible threat of sanctions may be one solution that would benefit all producer countries. International awareness may also play a role.

## **Structural adjustment**

Under the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) Zimbabwe re-introduced school fees for part of the primary education. Loewenson (1992) states that this is one of the most important factors contributing to the pressure for child labour. Poor access to schooling, inadequate schooling or the inability to afford schooling results in dropout, usually in those households most in need of children's work to supplement incomes.

There are several indications that the result of the increase in school fees was reduced attendance by poor households in both rural and urban areas. Children from households with a monthly income of less than Z\$ 400 can apply for funds to pay their school fees (but not other costs such as uniforms, books and building levy). Head-teachers are supposed to identify children in need and refer them to the Department of Social Welfare. During 1993, the Social Development Fund (SDF) paid the fees of almost 130,000 school children (UNICEF, 1994). It is widely believed that this is insufficient, and ILO estimates that the component of the Social Development Fund assisting those who cannot pay school fees covered only one-eighth to one-tenth of the target group; UNICEF estimates that 20 per cent of the target group were reached (UNICEF, 1994).

However sufficient data has not yet been published to measure the total effect of the introduction of school fees in Zimbabwe. The case should therefore be studied further in order to learn more about the effects of raising the costs of primary education. With proper data one could, study possible different responses from different households, for instance, whether non-economic differences such as region or the child's sex influenced the decisions for investing in education. ILO states in a comment to the re-introduction of school fees in Zimbabwe:

«It is now generally recognised that the introduction of school fees, the levy in education and various expenditures ranging from the costs of uniforms to contribution to the school building fund have significantly increased the cost to low-income families of educating a child - and thereby contributed to uneven access among different socio-economic groups and regions as well as to the unacceptably high drop-out rate in Zimbabwe.» (ILO, 1992)

## **4.4 Conclusions: The political space**

As mentioned in the introduction, child labour is a significant growing social problem in the world today. With estimates ranging between 100 and 200 million child labourers globally, a gross number of 80,000 new children will be recruited into

child labour every day. In other words if one were able to stop the recruitment of child labourers one would «rescue» 80,000 children daily. The material analysed in this report supports the assumption that institutional settings matter, in particular primarily education. What is evident, however, is that a set of strategies is necessary. One needs to think both of long-term prevention and short-term rehabilitation. Both general and special measures targeting the most exploitative forms of child labour are needed. What is also clear from the analyses of Zimbabwe and Egypt is that different national and international policy measures have effects both in the short and long terms. Hence it is possible to reduce the number of child labourers within the framework of the present economic situation, but only a long-term economic growth coupled to the right policy will provide possibilities for the elimination of child labour.

Two main factors can be said to describe the African continent in particular. The first is that lack of resources might be as big a problem as disagreements over strategies in fighting child labour. Secondly the continent is less industrialised and less urbanised than the other continents. The first indicates the desire for and willingness to take the necessary step, but the chance may be more present in all parts of the society, but it also implies that institutional changes might not solve the problem alone.

Given the above analyses, how could one maximise the use of institutional effects or what we at the beginning called the political space in an African setting? Two basic institutions should be developed as the first part of any strategy. One is legislation for a general minimum age, the other is compulsory universal primary education. These two institutions must be designed to support each other. The minimum age must be equal to the age of ending compulsory education. A discrepancy here will undermine both institutions.

Education must be compulsory, given as described above the inadequate household assessment of return to investment in education. A compulsory school system will also, as seen in many countries, be the most efficient inspector of violations of child labour legislation. The school must be of relevance and quality and it must be free both nominally and in practice.

Enforcement of minimum age legislation could be assisted in the formal labour market by trade unions and labour inspectors. There is no way that these types of organisations could effectively influence the informal market. The only exception, but an important one, is the extent to which especially trade unions could help in formalising the informal parts of the labour market. The importance of this can be seen from the example of the commercial farms in Zimbabwe. Historically this has also been the major strategy and contribution from trade unions globally. One task for trade unions could be to change all industrial agreements to make piecework illegal.

Our analyses have also shown that underlying institutional factors such as traditions, gender perspective and religion influence the amount and scope of child labour. Trade unions can together with NGOs and others help in altering this through public awareness raising to change attitudes in the household.

The above description should maximise the effects of legal institutions, education and awareness raising in fighting child labour. But it will not eradicate child labour. A group of children from the poorest households working in the informal sector will always be left and will need to be addressed through economic incentives. African countries would need assistance from donor countries with this. One possible area could be to help extend programmes for school meals. The income of a child labourer is relatively small, sometimes as little as the equivalent of the food the child consumes. In several countries, such as South Korea and Sri Lanka, therefore, the provision of a free school meal has proved effective in getting children from the poorest families to attend school. In terms of the household budget, schooling will then change from being an expense to being a form of income.

Some researchers and NGO's have raised their voices in favour of changing the institutional settings so that working children are allowed into the formal labour market and consequently abandon compulsory education. This would in our mind only lead to two things, firstly an increase in the number of those children needed to be targeted by special economic incentive, and hence a reduced ability for the African countries to tackle the problem of child labour. Secondly the institutionalisation of child labour through formal institutions, and legislation allowing for some sort of work and undermining compulsory education. In the best cases this would prolong the phenomenon of child labour.

Clear political priorities can reduce the extent of child labour. Development aid, either alone or in combination with trade policies, can help to support or create such priorities in the recipient country. If the recipient country lacks political priorities in respect of the abolition of child labour, development aid alone will not necessarily alter this situation. The evident lack of investment in basic schooling and the lack of legislation against child labour, regardless of the countries' level of development, may indicate that it is precisely a lack of political priorities that is sometimes the fundamental problem.

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# **Child labour in Africa: Poverty or institutional failures?**

There are considerable differences in the incidences of child labour between different countries at similar stages of economic development. This report examines non-economic or institutional differences in contemporary Africa, with the objective of identifying and describing links between institutional settings and the existence of child labour. It is the hope that this analyses will help to create space for a wider range of action against child labour by African governments as well as within development aid strategies by donor countries.

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