

## **An Overview on child Labour Determinants**

### *The Portuguese case*

#### **Abstract**

On studying child labour, most efforts have been dedicated to focus on developing countries as they face the most severe realities. This has currently led to the negligence of similar realities in the so-called First World, endangering youngsters. In this paper, I go through the main child labour determinants and analyse its relevance for the Portuguese case. I conclude that child labour in developed countries is still mainly linked with the economically, socially and culturally less privileged, in spite of being less deterministic than the developing countries' reality.

**Keywords:** child labour, development, socio-economic determinants, Portugal.

**J.E.L. :** D1, I2, J4, J7.

By Pedro Goulart

(Supervision: Prof .Margarida Chagas Lopes)

Lisbon, December 2002

(On behalf of CISEP's research scholarship programme)

## Index

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Definition and considerations over child labour.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. The Portuguese case.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. Child Labour Determinants.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4.1 Economic Determinants.....</b>	<b>4</b>
4.1.1 Economic development of the country.....	4
4.1.2 Income distribution.....	5
4.1.3 Economic status of the household.....	5
4.1.4 Economic shocks / distresses.....	5
4.1.5 Existence of an informal economy.....	5
4.1.6 The economic determinants in the Portuguese case.....	6
<b>4.2 Labour Market Determinants.....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.2.1 Unemployment.....	6
4.2.2 Demand for unskilled labour and labour-intensive activities.....	6
4.2.3 Opportunity costs of schooling / returns to child labour.....	6
4.2.4 Returns to schooling / effects on the potential wage.....	7
4.2.5 Difficulties on the enforcement of the law .....	7
4.2.6 Labour market determinants in the Portuguese case.....	7
<b>4.3 Institutional Determinants.....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.3.1 Education.....	8
4.3.1.1 Its importance.....	8
4.3.1.2 School enrolment and attendance.....	8
4.3.1.3 Education nowadays.....	8
4.3.2 Existence of safety nets.....	9
4.3.3 Enforcement and respectability of laws. ....	9
4.3.4 Civil society.....	9
4.3.5 Institutional determinants in the Portuguese case.....	9
<b>4.4 Social and Cultural Determinants .....</b>	<b>10</b>
4.4.1 Culture.....	10
4.4.2 Gender issues.....	10
4.4.3 Geography.....	10
4.4.4 Education of parents.....	10
4.4.5 Cultural and social determinants in the Portuguese case .....	11
<b>4.5 Demographic Determinants .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.5.1 Life expectancy of children .....	11
4.5.2 Composition of the household.....	11
4.5.3 Correlation between the fertility rates and child labour .....	12
4.5.4 Migrations and urbanisation.....	12
4.5.5 Demographic determinants in the Portuguese case.....	12
<b>5. Conclusions and policy implications.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## **6. References.....14**

### **1. Introduction**

Child labour is a problem which is spread all over the world, strongly affecting children involved but also all society. If children lose their youth and their chances of studying, and compromise their health and their future this means society will be deeply harmed.

The reality is not the same in all countries. Especially in developing countries, the situation is dramatic. If there is not much data available, the estimated numbers are alarming: estimations in 1997 pointed to 400 million all over the world. But the most frightening is the indifference or the still slow growing in terms of awareness of this phenomenon by the world institutions, governments, media and even a great part of society.

However, child labour is not an exclusive problem of developing countries. Also in several developed countries this is a reality threatening children. It is more associated with the countries of Southern Europe as child labour is mainly linked to poverty. But even in Europe this phenomenon has not been studied as it deserved to be.

In Portugal, the first national survey was only made in 1998, despite several NGO's and International Institutions had already called the attention to this problem. Civil society has a main role in fighting against this calamity<sup>1</sup>. In several developing countries there have been various studies and surveys. Despite this, there are not enough research studies providing reliable information about numbers, age and gender on child labour.

Analytically, child labour is a consequence of a complex system of interconnected causes. It follows my embracement of child labour study with a holistic perspective. My approach tried to be exhaustive, joining the several contribution along the years, but also innovative. I hope this work can contribute to further research over this issue, being aware that other research can lead to different findings.

Firstly, I speak about the definition of child labour and make some introductory considerations. Secondly, I give a brief description of the Portuguese reality. Thirdly, I go through the several determinants of child labour gathered from the relevant literature I had access to. I chose and distributed them into a new taxonomy, which seemed more logical, adding also my contributions. Then, I analyse their relevance to the specific case of Portugal, being probable some determinants to vanish or fade away their influence. Finally, I present my conclusions, pointing also to some policy implications.

---

<sup>1</sup> Even in cinema there has been movies on child labour: Solveig Nordlund in "Até amanhã, Mário" portrayed Madeira, Portugal and the street children; "Jaime" tells the story of a child in Oporto who had to work.

## **2. Definition and considerations over child labour**

Child labour is present in a wide range of activities. Either taking care of his/her brothers and sisters, manufacturing the official balls of World Championship of football or even slavery, a rather extreme but, unfortunately, not rare example.

In child labour issues a differentiation often made is between children's work and child labour as Boyd (1994) notices. The former is related to all activities performed by children, which can be justified for children's socialisation: an "acceptable" activity for the society. Child labour, or more precisely exploitation of child labour, occurs when children have to prematurely lead adult lives, working long hours for low wages under damaging conditions to their health and to their physical and mental development.

Srivastava (1992) differentiates two kinds of arguments in the debate about child labour in India, which can be used for the rest of the world. One is the regulationist argument, the supporter of the distinction between child work and exploitation of child work, analogous to the relationship between children's work and children labour made above. They argue that the need for extra income by poorer families is unavoidable, the work performed within the family is part of the training process of a child, preparing him/her for an adult life. For this reasoning, child work should be regulated and the exploitation of child work prohibited.

The opposite view, the abolitionist one, argues that recognition of poverty situation must not serve as a pretext for inaction. Until now, and despite numerous voices against it, the regulationist has been predominant. Other problem accrued to this is the definition of the minimum age for entering the labour force. There is no unanimity, each country fixing in different ages. Range normally goes from 13 to 18 years, according to beliefs and traditions. European Union is planning that in a near future children should have compulsory school until their 18 years. Still, just in the United Kingdom there are thousands of seventeen years old soldiers.

## **3. The Portuguese case**

On studying child labour, most efforts have been dedicated to focus on developing countries as they face the most severe realities. This has currently led to neglect similar realities in the so-called First World. If child labour phenomenon in the Third World can reach a rather extreme character as in the cases of prostitution and slavery, we should not ignore other forms of child labour, which can deeply harm youngsters. As said, child labour in developed countries is mainly linked with the less privileged, contributing most of the time to the increase of a dangerous phenomenon: the widening of relative poverty within these countries.

Portugal is one of the poorest countries in the European Union and has been frequently accused of being one of the developed countries with most worrying figures on child labour. During the last years, the government finally recognised the problem, taking action against child labour with the promotion of surveys, studies and propaganda. Some results soon appeared: 1998's survey (PEETI 2000) indicated 43213 children performing economic activities (illegally) and some 83037 were performing domestic work. Among the latter, the most referred activities were cooking, doing the laundry and taking care of younger brothers/sisters. The results of a 2001's similar survey present a steady decrease on terms of domestic activities to half of the 1998's figures<sup>2</sup>, although economic activity do not significantly change. In these years, much has been spoken and written on child labour if we compare to the past, but much has still to be said and done in the future.

In spite of the Portuguese late action, other countries preferred inaction. In many developed countries there are common reports on child labour, Portugal being the only one with a complete national survey on this issue. Furthermore, other problems commonly arise from the different child labour concepts referred in chapter 2. In Portugal, the regulationist view is predominant and the minimum age was fixed between 15 and 16 years, depending on the cases, but always with the compulsory schooling completed. Other problems are linked to the very specific Portuguese reality. This way, explaining child labour is far from being simple.

### *Dualities*

Portugal cannot then be considered as an homogenous country. There is not one reality, there are many of them. It can be easily seen the dualities between urban/rural, male/female, modern/traditional sector, coastal/interior areas, north/south, among others. One of these faces is the interaction between First and Third World realities, so many times side by side. This complex reality makes its analysis a difficult task. Reality must be decomposed in its smaller realities for an exhaustive and coherent analysis.

In the urban areas, mostly located near the coast, there may be found the most populated and richer areas, in spite of the perseverance of poor neighbourhoods. The population density is higher, reinforced by rural migrants across the decades. In these areas child labour is mainly linked to the informal sector, being now camouflaged with subcontracting methods. The minor may receive a monetary compensation/"salary", in kind or even nothing. The latter cases are called non-paid family labour. Parents working at home may earn for each piece and any extra hand is helpful. There is a common acceptance, although tending to change, that it is better to work than "having nothing to do". A particular case in the Portuguese child labour typology is Algarve where most child labour is linked to tourism and adjacent activities.

Rural areas have seen their population depart, looking for better opportunities in other countries or in the urban areas. This process was stronger in the 50's and 60's, but still continues. Migrants are mostly young people, reducing human resources but also the

---

<sup>2</sup> The perception that in 1998 the minors had severely overstated domestic activities practice led to a change in terms of 2001 enquiry, ..... In this sense, this change may be considered rather artificial, justified by the enquiry authors as an improvement of measurement. However, this practice deserves considerable reservations.

possibilities for human reproduction. In recent years, some rural areas have seen immigrants flow in as an answer to the shortage of labour supply in agriculture. This is due to the fact that migration of Portuguese is not linked to the mechanisation of agriculture; instead these migrants look for a better job in the urban areas. Even though, much is concentrated in the urban areas of Lisbon and Oporto. In rural areas, the most usual form of child labour is done in agriculture, very often “conciliated” with school, especially in the North and Centre of Portugal where small land ownership predominates. This kind of child labour has a strong component of socialisation and is clearly embedded in community culture.

#### *Education and labour market*

A problem that fosters child labour is the average low level of educational attainment among the Portuguese population. The almost five decades of dictatorship left a country traditionally poor under these records even farther from its fellow European countries. With the end of the dictatorship in 1974, one of the prime goals was to provide literacy to adults and guarantee a generalised education for all. Many transformations have been achieved as the nine years’ compulsory school, but it cannot be expected to compete with the more than a century obligatory educational legacy of other European countries. In the recent years, the pre-primary school has been in focus, with the enlargement of its network, still far from covering all children. A heavy burden from the past is also present in the relationship among the different agents at school, as teachers and parents. An unofficial enquiry points to teachers not knowing the situation of the working children, an indicative of the low preparation and motivation of many of them. On the other hand, some families have a low perception of school value for the minor’s future, accepting child labour as a positive feature. Even minors may face a dilemma when confronted with all the commodities available and increasingly seen as indispensable.

Taking these remarks into consideration, many dropout youngsters are condemned to face low-skill job opportunities. Most of the corresponding labour market vacancies are in the informal or semi-legal economy, with a strong seasonal component, becoming difficult to regulate them. If minors’ work inspection is relative easier in textiles, construction and shoemaking factories, subcontracting and labour shift from factories to family homes are strong opponents to it. Furthermore, agricultural labour is virtually impossible to verify, leaving few chances for coercive measures. A recent introduction of the Minimum Guaranteed Income has given a complement to households’ income, allowing children to go to school – it is one of the requirements. However, one of the main features of both survey results is precisely that child work does not necessarily oppose to school, being needed to estimate what is the extent of such an effect. In sum, Portugal’s characteristics generate a still favourable environment to child labour, even if improvements have been clear. This leads to unfortunately high child labour records in spite of normally advanced laws there is a failure in their accomplishment.

## **4. Child Labour Determinants**

Child labour has many determinants due to its complexity. I will try to go through the most important of them.

## **4.1 Economic Determinants**

### **4.1.1 Economic development of the country**

The economic development of a country is a strong indicator of the rate of incidence of child labour. Historically, the development of countries has been associated with a long-run decline in child employment<sup>3</sup>. Nowadays, it can be seen the difference between developing countries and developed countries regarding the incidence rate of child labour. It is important to state that this is also a determinant of most of the other determinants of child labour.

### **4.1.2 Income distribution**

The model of development has many times been associated only with economic growth and can be measured by the Gross National Product per capita, as it is suggested by Bequele and Myers (1995). Although there is a negative correlation between the GNP per capita and the incidence rate of child labour (at least within the more developed among the developing countries and the so-called First World), growth in GNP does not automatically decrease child employment. Several authors as, for example, Bequele and Myers (1995) point out that much depends on the distribution of income.

### **4.1.3 Economic status of the household**

This points to low income / financial constraint as a reason for child labour. It is connected with parental unemployment, low salaries and migration from rural to urban areas (caused by rural poverty). The employment of children in agriculture should be faced as a strategy to allow adults getting higher paid non-agricultural seasonal work or avoid hiring workers outside the household. The use of children in domestic activities must be seen as a way of freeing extra-labour for the labour market. A study made in Chile in 1960 came to stress that the labour force participation of children between 12-14 was negatively related to male wages. Chagas Lopes and Goulart (2003) analyse the relationship between income available for the household and child labour, an extension of the traditional labour supply model.

### **4.1.4 Economic shocks / distresses**

Households refer the instability of income as an important cause for child labour in several surveys addressing this problem. This is due to the kind of activity normally performed by the most unprotected household: unskilled work, with no contract security and having always other persons available for replacement. Furthermore, in the case of agriculture risk is always present and rarely there is protection for it. The consequence to these households is a

---

<sup>3</sup> However, there are several authors who refer how industrialisation has increased this phenomenon as compared with rural societies. This is also based upon the discussion about the difference between child labour and its exploitation, but also on the modes of production. For this, with the industrialisation of rural societies, it can be argued that child labour can be increased. The lack of available data does not allow the corresponding evaluation.

huge vulnerability to problems in world economy and recessions, being the income volatility one of their most important problems.

#### **4.1.5 Existence of an informal economy**

The existence of an informal economy means that a part of the economic relations escape from basic rules, as laws and other regulations. Because governments do not have official knowledge of the activities or just close their eyes to it, this makes more difficult the enforcement. Some examples of marginal and semi-economic activities are: selling newspapers, “looking after” cars, shoe-shining, selling sweets and other small items, running of errands, the sorting of garbage for usable objects, theft, courier of drugs and prostitution. This world growing apart legality makes children in need an easy prey for unscrupulous entrepreneurs.

#### **4.1.6 The economic determinants in the Portuguese case**

Portugal can be considered as a developed country, although many regions and layers of the population still live within frameworks usually found in developing countries. These multiple realities have been explained before. In terms of income distribution Portugal is one of the most unequal societies of the European Union countries. This is maybe due to lower social benefits available and an unfair and inefficient redistribution throughout income taxes. Child labour also seems to be related to the economic regional situation: the working children are more common in the poorest regions where opportunities of a certain kind of employment are available. These families are normally more vulnerable to economic shocks / distresses, although this may not be so relevant as in developing countries. On the existence of an informal economy Portugal stands once more between First and Third World. If the last decades have meant a strong reduction in the Portuguese informal economy, there is still significant minors' work in this sector compared to the EU partners<sup>4</sup>.

### **4.2 Labour Market Determinants**

Labour market has a strong influence upon child labour. Here are several features that should be highlighted.

#### **4.2.1 Unemployment / employment opportunities**

When unemployment is extended to a large part of the labour force, this will mean a reduction in households' available income thus favouring child labour. This trend gets reinforced when one considers the phenomenon of migrations from rural to urban areas and the possible non-existence of safety nets. Also relevant is the fact that it can decrease the returns to schooling by reducing the chances of employment. By the other hand, as adults are unemployed they may take care of tasks, which otherwise would be a burden on children, namely several domestic activities. It can also reduce the opportunity cost of studying / not working, even in a highly segmented labour market. The result is uncertain as these two effects are contradictory. Still, several surveys refer that the predominant effect will be the one that increases child labour.

---

<sup>4</sup> A relevant issue to be mentioned here is that some other E.U. countries have regulated and accepted more child labour activities than the Portuguese legislation. Furthermore, legislation is not always known and implemented in Portugal.



#### **4.2.2 Demand for unskilled labour and labour-intensive activities**

The structure of labour market in developing countries often paves the way to child employment. In developing countries there is a considerable higher participation of unskilled labour than in developed ones. Jobs where menial tasks reign and skills are quite low, intensify the use of child labour. Labour-intensive activities are often associated with unskilled work, although unskilled work is more embracing. In the international division of labour, the more labour-intensive sectors are normally allocated to developing countries, once more increasing the job opportunities for children. Employment opportunities for youngsters raise child labour, decreasing school attendance as pointed out by Evenson and Rosenzweig (1977).

#### **4.2.3 Opportunity costs of schooling / returns to child labour**

These returns are a function of the expected income but also of the full income accruing in subsequent periods, attributable to labour force experience as child worker. Especially in rural societies, the accumulated experience in farming can be decisive for an increase in personal income. However, it often happens that economic alternatives for children can be non-existent and children have to do a particular heavy job and/or without a future. The study made in Chile in 1960, already referred, came to confirm that the labour force participation of children was positively related with the female wage rate, used as a proxy for the child wage rate. Furthermore, the opportunity costs of schooling may be too high, linked to the direct and indirect costs of studying, but most importantly the potential forgone wage because of not working. These effects must be always compared to the next ones, for an informed decision on the study-work trade-off – information very difficult if even possible to get.

#### **4.2.4 Returns to schooling / effects on the potential wage**

Returns to schooling may be undervalued because of the lack of perceived value in schooling, which, joined together with poverty and opportunities for child employment, can induce an early dropout from school. However, as Rodgers *et al* (1981) state, it can be argued for rural societies that “the net return to schooling might even be negative, in that the skills the peasants need for survival are those learned by doing rather than in through schooling”. Actual education may not always drive to better earnings in the future, depending of the labour market. In more developed countries, with sectors that need more qualified labour, returns to schooling and the effects on the potential wage are necessarily higher.

#### **4.2.5 Difficulties in enforcing law**

Even when governments are concerned with the problem and try to enforce the law (see point 4.3.3), the unregistered and unregulated nature of child labour makes it difficult. This is mainly due to its invisibility as the Portuguese common say “out of sight, out of mind”, although the activities of street children and others are performed at public’s sight. An example is the phenomenon of subcontracting and outworkers. Outworkers, states Goddard (1985) “are the last link in the chain of subcontracting, whereby industries or commercial enterprises hand out all or part of the process of production to smaller units or individual workers who provide goods or services in their homes. This system operates world-wide...”. This means that it is very difficult to inspect if children are working or not, namely when the place of work is at home.

#### **4.2.6 Labour market determinants in the Portuguese case**

Despite unemployment is registering low figures in Portugal by now, in some areas it can be a very significant phenomenon, being one of the consequences the need for child labour’s extra income. However, child labour would not exist if the conditions were not suitable for it. The demand for unskilled labour and labour-intensive activities in Portugal on agriculture, some kind of factories or subcontracting in textiles and shoemaking provide the possibilities for the employment of youngsters. Furthermore, labour market in Portugal (with subcontracting and other schemes, especially in shoes-industries and textiles or farming) is difficult to inspect, and it can easily deceive authorities or create too many difficulties to the enforcement of the law. Most of these activities are performed under a strong seasonal component, specially the ones linked to agriculture and tourism.

In certain regions of Portugal the opportunity costs of schooling / returns to child labour are high and the returns to schooling / effects on the potential wage are low. The labour market reality certain populations actually face, is in the majority not a high-skilled one, thereby conditioning their expectations and leading to an intergenerational reproduction of poverty, under certain educational, cultural and others variables. In these conditions many may “choose” to work earlier. Opposing to this comes the increasing need for skilled labour in certain regions and sectors.

### **4.3 Institutional Determinants**

#### **4.3.1 Education**

##### **4.3.1.1 Its importance**

Education is a key factor for the existence of child labour. Schooling has greater importance in countries with a better-defined labour market. Rodgers *et al* (1981) distinguish two different functions for education: socialisation and providing the main labour market skills. These authors also refer that “in almost all labour markets, schooling is a means of selecting workers, schooling credentials being a signal not only of a capacity to acquire technical skills but also of a malleability to the concentrated discipline of wage jobs”. Another reason is the major role of education in the development of family planning. Last but not least, it must be referred the fundamental role developed by education for the development of complete citizenship.

##### **4.3.1.2 School enrolment and attendance**

School enrolment and attendance should be the largest possible. Historically, the solution appointed, although most times not accomplished, has been a compulsory, free, public schooling<sup>5</sup>. If applied over a wide age range, it would delay the entry of children into the labour market and increase children's costs, in terms of schooling but also foregone income in a way that the number of desired children would decrease. Despite these proposals, in reality we can still verify in almost all countries different school enrolment rates across social groups. This is due to: high direct and indirect costs; the need for the income that children might be able to earn; a low perceived advantage from schooling. Distance and difficulty of access to school is also a problem.

#### **4.3.1.3 Education nowadays**

The growth of a labour market and of jobs requiring literacy, particular skills and training leads to an increase in schooling importance. However, in several low-income countries more schooling has just been associated to a more educated unemployment, due to the mismatch between supply and demand in terms of more high-skilled jobs. One of the most important questions is to provide education according to the needs of the labour market. Developing countries with many underdeveloped sectors have a long struggle to play. Still, with the high rate of youth unemployment in some countries, a curious phenomenon happens: the probability of returning to school. This may be seen as the emergence of more frequent trajectory reversibility along the active life cycles<sup>6</sup>. Two examples stated by various authors are Colombia and India. To face the poorer countries' financial constraints, several authors propose a non-formal or informal education to answer the qualification needs. In developed countries a strong debate on education issues has led to homogenisation efforts, especially in EU countries. As in most countries generalised school is already a reality, actual concerns focus on formation programmes coordination given the constant technical breakthroughs. Long life learning is one of the key concepts for the next few years.

#### **4.3.2 Existence of safety nets**

By safety nets we mean the structures that give support to people relating several levels. Normally, it refers to social security and health policies, not only under the kind known in developed countries, but also some possible substitutes. It can be family solidarity as social security and child-care services, which can be broken with the migration from rural to urban areas, and alternative schemes to support health. With the latter ones, the existence or not of these alternative schemes of health is more relevant within the poorer countries because of their financial constraints, namely the one of international commitments towards debtors, as in parallel to education. It is also important for the existence of family planning and the availability of contraceptives. In developing countries, if the public sector is financially constrained, individuals usually have not the resources for these kinds of goods. It is already sufficiently hard to make ends meet. In terms of developed countries, they are facing many challenges to secure their social security and health policy due to the ageing process. This process is even clearer in European Union countries as they are also trying to meet with the Euro goals.

---

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion and evidence for the different implication for intra-household and extra-household child work in Bedi and Hazarika (2002).

<sup>6</sup> See Chagas Lopes (2001) for further insights on the issue.

### **4.3.3 Enforcement and respectability of the laws**

It is fundamental for a Government who legislates not only to regulate the behaviour of business and industry, but also to be able to implement it. For this, it is needed an efficient and diligent Justice. However, obstacles are many and very powerful: companies which search for cheap labour, families who need money and, more often than the admissible, even Government. It is important to analyse the law system and the minimum age for start working. On this subject, however, there is no consensus on the matter.

### **4.3.4 Civil society**

The potential influence of civil society is tremendous. Relatively to fighting against child labour, the majority has assumed a very passive posture but we cannot ignore its power. A small indication of what it may do is the example of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), whose role has been growing in the last years, denouncing this phenomenon.

### **4.3.5 Institutional determinants in the Portuguese case**

Since 1974, Portugal has been facing many transformations regarding institutions. Much has changed, but much more still has to change to reduce the gap towards the other European countries. Education in Portugal has to improve its network in terms of quality and extension. Important breakthroughs were made on issues like schools for children between 3-5 years old or the nine years' compulsory education. School dropout has been partially tackled, but school attendance effectiveness must still improve. Sometimes, children are actually in school but they are not learning... Another common accusation is that school's curricula are too much theoretical, not teaching the effective skills children will need in the future.

In the Portuguese case there are different kinds of safety nets. In spite of the improvement in the formal social security system compared to the period of dictatorship, many Portuguese still suffer from poverty and social exclusion. The introduction of the Minimum Guaranteed Income was effective in helping many families<sup>7</sup> (Farinha Rodrigues 2001). Family planning and contraceptive availability must be improved, but these areas still face obstacles related to a very traditional society. In terms of the enforcement and respectability of laws, Portugal has a tradition of very advanced legislation, which often is not applied in practice. Civil Society has not always been very active in this issue. CNASTI, an organisation joining unions, religious groups and others, developed a seminal work in terms of denouncing child labour. More recently, and due to Government's campaign, there is an increased awareness in the general public.

## **4.4 Social and Cultural Determinants**

Social and cultural frameworks constrain the way under which child labour is faced.

### **4.4.1 Culture**

---

<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding, there is a more recent proposition according to which only the 25 years and older would be eligible to the now called Minimum Insertion Income. Giving the difficulties relative to the youngsters' first employment, one may doubt on the adequacy of this changing.

Values inherent in certain societies can support child labour in the sense it would be considered as an essential part of socialisation: personality development, role acceptance and the internalisation of social norms. It is of special importance for agricultural and even traditional industrial activities. In most Europe, if the participation of children in the labour force is generally disapproved, the same does not apply to housework. This is a common practice at least in several European countries, deserving special attention its sex-differentiated incidence.

#### **4.4.2 Gender issues**

Gender issues are much linked with the cultural values prevailing in society. In the most traditional societies, independently of the religious framework, the roles of male and female are clearly established. This affects the kinds of work “adequate” for women and men, deciding the activities they might or might not follow, even during childhood. Most societies take their girls sooner out from school, for marriage, domestic work or economic activity purposes. Even tradition relative to the decision on who will stay after marrying with the parents – the son or the daughter - matters a lot in the decisions of the household. Furthermore, in some societies the youngest daughter has to stay at home to take care of her parents as in most places there is no social security or pensions. Gender imparts children entry in the labour force, which kind of activities will be performed and even the maintenance at school.

#### **4.4.3 Geography**

The rural/urban duality means differences in the activity sector but also in the way of thinking. This naturally reflects in the way of facing child labour. In rural areas, the use of children in agricultural work is an important part in the process of socialisation, but it also allows not to hiring labour outside of the household. In urban areas, child labour is less accepted, although it remains still common in some of the poorest layers of the urban populations. If we analyse the types of activity in these two areas, they will be different: when in rural areas the most important activity is farming, the urban household that comprises child labour usually performs a larger diversity of tasks. Children will work more in trade and services, in artisanal manufacturing, running errands, fetching and carrying, looking after goods for short periods, marketing domestic produce. In urban areas, they work mostly in the informal economy.

#### **4.4.4 Education of parents**

It is more or less consensual the importance of parents' education on child labour. This influence has to do with earned income and the perception of the importance of children's education. Peek (1978) states that children's paid work is inversely related to household income and to the father's schooling. Also, in empirical studies we can verify this negative correlation as in Ard-am and Richter (1990)<sup>8</sup>. The education of parents has greater importance when we consider family planning and household health.

#### **4.4.5 Cultural and social determinants in the Portuguese case**

Portuguese culture and history still make child labour quite an acceptable thing, although with differences across rural/urban areas, north/south, among others. Even the farmer's

---

<sup>8</sup> For a special survey, see Vlassof (1979) in which the results contradict common sense.

confederation president said he employed youngsters, as it was better for them than having nothing to do. Still, some mentalities are changing with the recent campaigns and child labour is becoming much less acceptable for most people. The problem is when it is perceived as a fatality... In geographic terms, Portugal is heterogeneous not only in rural/urban realities, but also as to north/south features. It is mostly in the north that child labour occurs, with the exception of Algarve where tourism and other activities seasonally require a reinforcement of labour supply. During the dictatorship, access to education was rather restrained and, for this, most parents have got poor education attainments. The consequence is parents started to work early, thereby for them working is natural even in childhood. Still, in the last decades many progresses were attained related to school enrolment and the numbers of schooling years. On gender issues a change was made: women were taken out from school sooner and now they are the majority at university. Gender also matters for the kind of work developed. Domestic activities are mostly reserved to women, even if most are enrolled in the labour market. In this sense, Portugal has a high female participation rate compared to other countries regarding full time jobs, still more linked to necessity than true emancipation.

## **4.5 Demographic Determinants**

### **4.5.1 Life expectancy of children**

There are two features that should be considered in this point. Firstly, we just cannot consider the same minimum age for start working for any two countries, supposing that the life expectancy for one is 70 years and for the other is 45 years. The level of maturity in the latter has to be reached sooner as the life cycle is dramatically shortened. Secondly, high mortality reduces the expected returns to schooling favouring an earlier entry in the labour force.

### **4.5.2 Composition of the household**

A significant determinant of children's activities is household structure, measured by such variables as the number of working adults and the number, age and gender of the children. Division of labour differs for older and younger children, as the former have more probability of performing child labour, but also for gender, in respect to domestic work and type of work outside home. Furthermore, the degree of family breakdown or special casualty within the family is important variables. Single parents will face more difficulties. An example of the influence of family composition is the Kenyan study performed by ILO. The absence of the father is considered to be a current background and it is reported by nearly half of the children interviewed. Also in Mexico 10% of the children referred to this feature. Nowadays, this factor has got huge dimensions if we look over the spreading of AIDS and the heavy loss of adults, especially in Africa.

### **4.5.3 Correlation between fertility rates and child labour**

There are several authors referring to the positive correlation between these features. Going back again to the study made in Chile, it came to confirm that the labour force participation of children between 12-14 was positively related to fertility. Srivastava (1992) "refute the argument that having a large number of children is an economically rational proposition for the low-income parents". He quotes the outcome of a seminar organised in 1986 in India to stress "that children work because people have children, rather than people have children

because children work". A study in rural India by Vlassof (1979) even showed that "most rural men expressed concern about the disutility of large families", although he recognises that it is not an universal law.

#### **4.5.4 Migrations and urbanisation**

Migrations from rural to urban areas are very common, namely in less developed countries. They are caused by rural poverty and by the pursuit for a better life. Migrations cause family distress and no support of extended family or kin networks as in rural areas. Furthermore, in most cases they will not be luckier in urban areas, just switching their previous way of living into slums and jobs in the informal market. A most striking feature is the migration of children alone going to find work and/or quite often to become street children. The latter were estimated around 31 million. Ard-am and Richter (1990) found a statistical link between child labour and the composition of family. Their study on a Thailand's province indicated that extended households with working children are less likely to contain a grandparent and more likely to include other relatives like aunts, uncles, sons- and daughters-in-law. They suggest this may reflect differences in length of residence or in assets.

#### **4.5.5 Demographic determinants in the Portuguese case**

Portuguese life expectancy is mostly similar to European standard, meaning longer adolescence than in most developing countries. In terms of the household composition, the number of children per couple has been decreasing and the Portuguese population faces a severe ageing problem. Still, the Portuguese reality is also asymmetric on this issue, being it more severe on the interior areas. There is a certain degree of family breakdown due to the internal and external migrations along various decades, which induces some disarticulation in the familiar safety nets and the impossibility of the grandma effect<sup>9</sup>, although many times it made possible the survival through remittances. In the Portuguese case, remittances offset the other emigration outcomes. A particular case is the result of the immigration from the Portuguese ex-colonies, by which population got mostly concentrated in the outskirts of some urban centres. They live in worse conditions than most Portuguese in semi-slum neighbourhoods, still there is no strong evidence of child labour in these communities. The recent immigration from Eastern Europe is mostly an issue of male adults, being less relevant for studies on child labour. As immigration and these communities are such a specific subject and need specific studies, I will not further address this issue.

## **5. Conclusions and policy implications**

In the end of this paper I must conclude that child labour is essentially an historically and socially constructed phenomenon. It can be partially understood when considered as part of a household survival strategy, which includes many decisions about the division of labour, investments in education and living arrangements. The involved agents' preferences are based on their cultural and social framework. This leads to a variation in child labour, even within the same country. A survey conducted in Nigeria found considerable farming being

---

<sup>9</sup> The grandma effect refers to the possibility of the grandmother or both grandparents staying with children during the parents' job schedule.

done by children aged 7 to 15 years, although there was an expressive variation by village and by season. The range of hours worked per week by children went from four hours/week over the whole year in one village, to 45 hours/week in the busiest five weeks of the year, as is stated in Upton (1967).

However, those decisions are by no means “free”. The household is largely constrained in the process of decision making, not only by the values embedded in its socialisation process, but also by the surrounding environment. This strengthens the argument that child labour is a structural problem and cannot be fought just by means of patch measures. For this, it has to be understood that most child labour’s causes are directly or indirectly connected with poverty. Even in developed countries, child labour is still mainly linked with the economically, socially and culturally less privileged, in spite of being less deterministic than the developing countries’ reality.

For the resolution of the problem of child labour there should be made interventions in three levels: international, national and local. There is a need to expand the knowledge through more studies on this issue, namely the rural/urban disparities, the regional and continental disparities in terms of cultural and economic differences, access to services, among others. A clear definition of what is child labour and exploitation of child labour, the age effect, conditions and activities allowed may be then easier to establish. A campaign calling attention to the problem and indicating solutions should also be intensified. This ought to be done at all the three levels.

The next proposals need to be implemented in a national/local level. I would start proposing integrated social and economic measures for alleviating the present situation and trying to create foundations for a better future. An example of these measures maybe the Guaranteed Minimum Income – albeit it would be too soon to know its long term effects, it allowed a new hope in the near future (Farinha Rodrigues 2001) – or employment policies. Another desirable policy would be to redesign education for a better job matching and especially closely addressed towards the student’s interests, thereby increasing the efficiency in the learning process and promoting academic success. Last, but not least, I would stress the strong need for effective implementation of anti-child labour law and regulations.

## **6. References**

Ard-am, Orathai and Kerry Richter (1990) Determinants of Supply and Demand for Child Labour in Thailand’s Fishing Industry, *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp 29-50, National University of Singapore.

Bedi, Arjun S. and Gautam Hazarika (2002) Schooling Costs and Child Labour in Rural Pakistan, *ZEF Discussion Papers on Development Policy*, No.52, October 2002, Bonn.

Bequele, A and W. E. Myers (1995), *First Things First in Child Labour. Eliminating Work Detrimental to Children*, International Labour Office, Geneva, Child Labour Collection.



Boyd, Rosalind *et al* (1994), Child Labour, *Labour, Capital and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2, November, 1994, Centre for Developing-Area Studies, McGill University.

Chagas Lopes, Margarida (2001), Dinâmica da qualificação e contingências de emprego, in *Episteme*, no 7, 8, 9, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa.

Chagas Lopes, Margarida and Pedro Goulart (2003) Portuguese data on child work: what does it encompass?, *CISEP working papers*, ISEG, Lisbon.

Evenson, R. and M. R. Rosenzweig (1977), Fertility, Schooling and the Economic Contribution of Children in Rural India: An Econometric Analysis, *Econometrica*, July 1977, Vol. 45.

Farinha Rodrigues, Carlos (2001) Anti-poverty effectiveness and efficiency of the guaranteed minimum income programme in Portugal, Working paper, ISEG-UTL, Lisbon.

Goddard, Victoria (1985), Child Labour in Naples: The Case of Outwork, *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 1, No. 5, October, 1985, Royal Anthropological Institute.

Peek, P. (1978), The Education and Employment of Children: A Comparative Study of San Salvador and Khartoum, in Standing and Sheehan (eds.).

PEETI (2000), *Trabalho Infantil em Portugal – Caracterização social dos menores em idade escolar e suas famílias*, Grupo de Trabalho integrado no âmbito do PEETI, Cadernos PEETI, Volume 3, Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade.

Rodgers, Gerry *et al* (1981), *Child Work, Poverty and Underdevelopment*, in Rodgers, Gerry and Guy Standing (eds), International Labour Office, Geneva.

Srivastava, S. P. (1992), Child Labour in India – Some Critical Issues, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp 405-417 Ethnographic & Folk Culture Society.

Upton, M. (1967), Agriculture in South-Western Nigeria: A Study of the Relationship between Production and Social Characteristics in Selected Villages, *Development Studies*, No. 3, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Reading.

Vlassof, M. (1979), Labour Demand and Economic Utility of Children: A Case Study in Rural India, *Population Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, pp 415-428, London.