



Re-assessing minimum-age standards for children's work

Michael F.C. Bourdillon

Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe

Ben White

Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands, and

William E. Myers

Department of Human and Community Development, University of California, Davis, California, USA

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to call for re-thinking of the universal minimum-age approach to problems of child labour.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors point out that there has been no serious policy analysis on universal minimum-age approaches, and question common assumptions concerning such policies by reviewing available knowledge on the impact of work on children.

Findings – Available research does not support a presumption that blanket minimum-age laws are beneficial. In some cases, it is clear that they are injurious to children, underlining the need for systematic policy analysis.

Practical implications – The promotion of universalized minimum-age policies should cease until their effect on children has been reliably assessed. In the meantime, more energy and investment should be devoted to alternative, proven ways of combating forms and conditions of work that are genuinely likely to cause harm, and to promoting access to education.

Originality/value – This paper contributes towards introducing more appropriate policy on children's work.

Keywords Children (age groups), Labour, Labour law, Education, Human rights

Paper type Viewpoint

This article calls for re-thinking the “minimum-age” approach to problems of child labour, exemplified in the ILO Convention Concerning Minimum-Age for Admission to Employment (No. 138 of 1973), known as the Minimum-Age Convention, and similar national regulations in many countries. We argue that a universalized policy of excluding children below a given age from “employment or work in any occupation” (article 2.1) is unjustified for at least the following reasons:

- Insufficient attempt has been made to determine its real impact on children, the intended beneficiaries.
- Existing evidence suggests that the policy often harms the children it claims to protect.
- The effort of enforcing blanket prohibitions affecting all work – even safe work – diverts attention away from the urgent need to intervene in forms and conditions of work that are genuinely harmful to children.

To the extent that public policy is accountable for its consequences and should be judged by them, the policy of excluding children from all work on the basis of age is open to challenge. We suggest that the international promotion of universalized minimum-age policies should cease until their effect on children has been assessed by research that meets accepted standards. In the meantime, more energy and investment



should be devoted to proven ways of protecting children who are threatened by work or by working conditions that are demonstrably detrimental.

To avoid possible misunderstanding or misrepresentation, the authors wish to state at the outset that we condemn all work that is harmful to children and adolescents, and we believe in their right to be protected from such work, as well as to be provided with quality education. Currently available evidence suggests, however, that ILO Convention 138 and associated national legislation neither protect children adequately nor promote their education. Our doubts pertain specifically to universalized policies that ban children below a given age from all forms of work; we do not dispute reasonable age limits carefully targeted to particular occupations and working conditions in which their usefulness as a protective measure can be demonstrated. We support the 1999 ILO Convention (No. 182) Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (referred to as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the so-called “International Bill of Human Rights” as sufficient and workable international legal foundations for policies and programmes protecting children from harmful or abusive forms and relations of work.

ILO Convention 138: an unreasoned hangover from history

The minimum-age approach derives from a historical legacy of romantic ideas of childhood seen against the treatment of children in industrial Europe. The ILO began in 1919 to set standards in relation to child employment with the prohibition of specific branches and forms of work, in particular factory labour. Fifty years later ILO’s Convention 138 expanded these selective sector-specific bans into an almost absolute prohibition on the employment of school-aged children in all forms of work, specifying a minimum-age of 15 years (or the age of completion of compulsory schooling, where this is higher) below which no child “shall be admitted to employment or work in any occupation” (art. 1)[1]. Work and school were thus presented as fundamentally incompatible in children’s development, distinctions between harmful and beneficial forms of work were neglected, and for the first time work itself became the thing to be abolished. In 1998, the ILO’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work included Convention 138 as one of seven “core conventions”, meaning that all member states must “respect, promote and realise” it, regardless of whether they have ratified it or not.

Convention 138 allows authorities to specify permissible “light work” for children as young as 13 (or 12 in less developed countries with poorer education facilities) that is part-time, safe and does not impede schooling, but not for younger children. The process of specifying and registering light work is usually so complicated that it is ignored (e.g. McKechnie and Hobbs, 1999, p. 94). So in practice part-time work, even an hour a week, remains technically illegal. “Work” is defined to include virtually all economic activities, paid or unpaid, in or outside the home, including many chores traditional for children and generally considered part of acceptable child-rearing practice. As a result, the policy needlessly affects many children whose limited part-time or seasonal work is not harmful and would not be characterized by most people as “child labour”.

Legal historian Marianne Dahlén has shown that between 1919 and 1973 the ILO’s Minimum-Age approach – originally inspired by the 19th century Factory Acts in various European countries – failed to adjust to the contemporary realities of working children, although “the members of the ILO knew a lot about the difficulties and

inefficiency of minimum-age legislation when Convention No. 138 was adopted". The global survey conducted by the ILO in preparation for Convention 138 provided ample evidence of the failure of previous Minimum-Age Conventions in abolishing child labour, and that the majority of child labour was performed in contexts of small-scale, informal sectors difficult to control by laws and labour inspection. The convention's approach, however, remained unaffected: "the minimum-age campaign suffered from a permanent 'hangover from history'" (Dahlén, 2007, pp. 287, 330-1; see also Woodhead, 2007).

In both rich and developing countries, many have found the provisions of Convention 138 so sweeping as to interfere with acceptable child-rearing. Several countries have pushed for a change of main strategic focus, and in the mid 1990s the ILO began emphasizing harmful forms of work, adopting in 1999 the "worst forms of child labour" Convention 182. This convention demands the elimination "as a matter of urgency" of "all work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children" (leaving only harmless work covered by 138 and not by 182). While this implicit differentiation between acceptable and unacceptable, benign and harmful work seemed to many a step forward, not everyone agreed. The ILO continues to espouse universal ratification and application of Convention 138 as an "overarching goal" (ILO, 2006, pp. 6, 23). To combat child labour's "worst forms" defined in Convention 182, and at the same time to insist on a universal minimum-age policy is an awkward pairing of "regulatory" and "abolitionist" approaches that are not easily compatible.

The need for policy analysis

Minimum-age policies reflect a paradigm that assumes that children benefit from being withdrawn or excluded from work. There is little empirical evidence to support this assumption and considerable evidence to question it. As already noted, minimum-age policy has yet to be subjected – internationally or nationally – to comprehensive policy analysis to determine how its legislation and enforcement affect both children and society, who benefits and who loses, and whether the benefits are worth the costs. Good governance normally submits social and economic policies to such rigorous analysis based on careful research, but this accountability has not yet been extended to child labour policies.

In the absence of comprehensive analysis, the research of several historians, economists, and social scientists provides a wealth of suggestive, though not systematic, evidence about the effects of child work, and interventions in it. For example, historians have considered how children of industrializing Britain fared under child labour laws of that time: they are sceptical as to whether such laws were of net benefit to children (e.g. Cunningham, 1991; Nardinelli, 1990, 2000). Economists have analyzed data in national Living Standards Measurement Surveys from various countries to determine the effects of work, schooling, poverty and interventions: they recommend economic incentives rather than prohibitions to improve the lot of working children (e.g. Grootaert and Patrinos, 1999). Many sociological and anthropological studies do not find work to be inherently negative, though it certainly may be harmful in specific contexts and conditions, and therefore question abolitionist perspectives (Nieuwenhuys, 1994, 2005; Mortimer, 2003; Leonard, 2003; Hobbes *et al.*, 2007).

This situation calls for research to determine how children fare under each policy approach, assessing and comparing their observed impact on children's safety, health, development, socialization and future prospects. The results should be used to ground

policy in what is demonstrably in the children's best interests. Meanwhile, in the face of evidence that the minimum-age approach as currently practiced drives child labour underground, offers no protection to children who are exploited, and interferes with useful child-rearing practices, we suggest that Convention 138 should for the time being be suspended.

Focusing on evidence

The minimum-age debate seems dominated, on the one hand, by largely normative assertions with little or no basis in research about the evils of child work and the virtues of minimum-age interventions, and, on the other, by empirically based equivocations and refutations. We sketch a few of the more important arguments, in each case questioning a common assertion in defence of minimum-age policies in the light of the weight of existing evidence. In this brief overview, we provide a few references as illustrations, not proof, of the points raised.

Child work and poverty

A frequent justification for excluding children from all work is the claim that child work perpetuates poverty. Although certain kinds and conditions of work may be so abusive as to damage children's health or deny them an education, this is not grounds for prohibiting all work. Much literature describes how, now and in the past, children's work has buffered them and their families against poverty (e.g. most recently, Aitken *et al.*, 2006); there is no comparable body of evidence demonstrating that safe work compatible with schooling (probably the large majority of child work today) causes or exacerbates poverty. It is well established that children are most likely to work when the incomes of poor families are unstable, as when they depend on seasonal work, or during family crises, such as the permanent or temporary loss of an adult breadwinner (e.g. Kabeer, 2003, p. 366; Chakraborty and Lieten, 2004, p. 156; Grootaert and Patrinos, 1999, p. 6).

Work certainly can rob children of opportunity, but it can also help them seize it. Many children work to help pay for their school expenses (e.g. Bourdillon, 2000a, 2006, pp. 58-62), which are a substantial obstacle for impoverished families, especially those with multiple school-aged children. If these children could not work, they, and often their siblings, would be unable to attend school. Combining work and school can be a good preparation for discipline in tertiary education (see Mortimer, 2003, pp. 187-188).

Policies providing income support to families in crisis protect children, and their education, far better than those that merely prohibit them from engaging in one of their few available survival options. Many programmes are now not insisting on the prohibition of work, but promoting education by reducing or subsidizing school expenses for poor families, and by improving the quality and availability of schooling. These programmes have often proved successful, even while some of these subsidized school-attending children continue to work part time (Rosati and Rossi, 2007).

Work and child development

A pervasive argument for minimum-age policy has been that engagement in work impedes young children's healthy development. We are not referring to arguments that certain "worst" forms of work threaten children's safety, health and education, but to a broader charge against children's work which holds that work beyond light home chores is inherently unhealthy and corrupting – even unnatural – for children. On this basis, ILO Convention 138 and its accompanying Recommendation 146 (article 7.1)

encourage countries to raise progressively the minimum-age for admittance to any form of employment or work to at least 16. The assumption is not only that children are more vulnerable to many hazards and abuses (which they are – not only in the workplace), but also that they develop better in a childhood environment free of the responsibilities of work and dedicated to schooling and play (which is highly debatable).

For well over a century, advocates for the abolition of child labour have claimed that work when young, and especially gainful employment, is associated with problematic behaviour such as smoking, drinking, truancy and delinquency. Statistical correlations between work and behavioural problems have been established in some cases (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1985), but the causal relationship has not been established. A reverse line of reasoning also finds support: in some cases, young persons unhappy in family, school, or other parts of their lives apparently seek relative satisfaction in work. When the progress of children is studied over sufficient time and when appropriate variables are taken into account, evidence that work induces behavioural problems tends to disappear (e.g. Mortimer, 2003, pp. 164-5, 169).

The vision of a workless childhood has been traced to ideas of the late 18th and early 19th century Romantic Movement (e.g. Cunningham, 1991; Zelizer, 1985), and is now widely viewed as a cultural artefact. Anthropological and child development studies demonstrate that children thrive in a great diversity of childhoods, including many that carry important work responsibilities. The unsupported idea that work itself distorts and corrupts children's development nonetheless remains popular among both the public and policymakers.

Contemporary theories of child development link the psychosocial development of children to a wide variety of social transactions, including work broadly defined, right from infancy (e.g. Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Woodhead, 1999a). In most of the world, children's participation in work is a common way of learning essential life skills, such as parenting, and major occupational skills such as farming. Many societies consider work to be integral to children's upbringing, and both children and their families view it as complementing schooling (e.g. Woodhead, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Mortimer, 2003, pp. 146-53). Some research suggests that children who work as teenagers are more likely to succeed as adults than are children who never worked (see e.g. Boyden *et al.*, 1998, pp. 91-2; Mortimer, 2003, p. 204-5). Certain kinds of work, such as market work, can teach children basic academic skills (Nunes *et al.*, 1993, p. 19). In sum, present-day social science understands work as a normal and valuable developmental context for children, albeit one that needs safeguards against abuse.

School and work

The relationships between child work and schooling are multi-directional, complex, and often specific to particular situations. In some places and circumstances, children who work are unlikely to go to school, whilst in others most children who work also receive a decent schooling. In many instances a third factor, such as poverty, independently generates both child work and low schooling rates, with work and school having little influence on each other (Guarcello *et al.*, 2005, p. 57).

Although education is a broader notion than formal schooling, discussions on child labour often conflate the two. School and work are widely perceived as incompatible, and the abolition of child work as necessary to permit all children to receive an education. Some advocates for abolishing child labour go so far as to call any child out of school a child labourer (e.g. Malhotra *et al.*, 2003, pp. 129-30). While ILO Conventions

have not always treated work and education as inherently incompatible[2], we have noted that Convention 138 assumes school and work to be mutually competitive. Many experts and scholars challenge that linkage while others defend it, and the relationship between working and schooling remains a matter of fierce debate.

While evidence is cited in support of both sides of the debate, careful research undermines the claims that work and school are incompatible, and that working normally leads to low attendance and achievement at school (e.g. Mortimer, 2003, pp. 138-9). Many quantitative studies show a statistical association between child work and low levels of school achievement, but they do not indicate what drives the relationship. The popular assumption has been that work is the causative factor that affects schooling, but studies indicate the reverse as well. In many cases, children are “pushed” into child labour by problems with the education system, such as inability to meet school expenses, unavailability of schools, chronic teacher absence and neglect, inferior quality of instruction, humiliation or other forms of abuse (e.g. Nambissan, 2003, pp. 124-31; Talib, 2003, pp. 145-55). Recent research suggests that when contextual variables are taken into account, work does not undermine schooling as a general rule. Work and school are often not in direct competition for time: both are more likely to impinge on leisure and other activities (Ravallion and Wodon, 2000, p. 172; Hazarika and Bedi, 2003, p. 55).

Campaigns to stop child labour have not reliably brought out-of-school children into school unless specific provision is made. In practice, children who are simply removed from their jobs often end up in worse situations and remain out of school for the same reasons that they were not in school before (see Boyden *et al.*, 1998, pp. 288-97). Nevertheless, when schools are improved and made easily accessible, there is commonly an accompanying decrease child work (e.g. CINI-ASHA, 2003). Children are best served when the policy focus is directly on the provision of quality education, including special provision for reaching children who work. For example, in 19th century Britain and elsewhere, mass education spread among the poor precisely because compulsory education laws permitted children to divide their time between school and a shortened workday. This enabled them both to work and to study without forcing an unnecessary choice between prosperity and literacy (Cunningham, 1991, pp. 169-70).

One facet of the debate relates to the responsibility of education provision for working children. Most school systems have inflexible calendars and hours; if working children cannot adjust their schedules to attend, work is blamed for their loss of education. Others argue, however, that school systems are responsible for educating all children, and have a duty to provide for working students at times when they can be available. Many school systems and non-formal educational programmes provide such facilities using a variety of models (Myers, 2001). By this reasoning, failure to reach school-age workers who wish to study before or after work is the fault of the school system rather than of children or their families. Most working children will make a strong effort to study if the facilities are adapted to their needs, and when given a chance they can succeed in school just as well as non-working children (e.g. Delap, 2004; CINI-ASHA, 2003; Rajagopal, 2003; Ramachandran, 2001). Successful experience in educating working children challenges the assumption of fundamental incompatibility between work – particularly part-time work – and education that underlies Convention 138.

In most countries, many children are out of school for various reasons by their early teens. Work can provide purpose for such children, with clear results in earnings or

other achievements, often under guidance and supervision. Minimum-age policy removes this opportunity, leaving them to find their own activities, which are sometimes destructive and violent.

Psychosocial impacts

Although abusive work can take a heavy psychological toll on children, in other contexts work can bring important psychological rewards. The growing literature based on children's views on work contains testimonies about how work contributes to their quality of life and builds their self-esteem (e.g. Liebel, 2003). This should not be surprising since it merely extends to children well-known findings about adult attitudes toward employment.

Although many children express considerable dissatisfaction with their work (as do adults), others find in it varied elements they cherish. For example, many children claim that moving from working at home to waged employment eases their workload. This is particularly true for girls, who often use employment to gain relief from traditional confinement and burdensome unremunerated work at home, which may be more exploitative than wage employment (Nieuwenhuys, 2000). Job-seeking is a strategy for some resourceful children to escape exploitation by elders at home (Nieuwenhuys, 2005, pp. 180-1), and for some orphans to gain more control over their families and their lives (Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen, 2003, p. 171). Escaping heavy duties at home was cited as a reason for working by girls in a Moroccan clothing factory (Zalami, 1998), and in another Moroccan case, some rural parents sent their daughters to work as domestic servants in towns to save them from heavy agricultural work at home (Sommerfelt, 2003, pp. 49, 55). Some children in Zimbabwean "earn-and-learn" schools, where children earned their school expenses and an income besides by working on the estate that ran the school, commented that they spent no more time working on the estate than they had previously spent working at home, and some pointed out that they were saved several hours of walking to and from school every day (Bourdillon, 2000b, p. 163).

Children often express frank enjoyment of their work, even in unlikely places. Child garbage pickers in the Philippines were reluctant to leave because, apart from the loss of income, they valued the excitement of the work and the friendships they made there (Gunn and Ostos, 1992). Urban children working on the streets regularly report enjoying the freedom of movement, social interaction, and income that work provides. In Nigeria, middle class children were found to participate in street work as much for fun and excitement as to earn their own pocket money (Oloko, 1991, p. 23). Many children value the practical and experiential nature of what they learn through work, which is different from what they learn in school and no less important. This pleasure in learning and achieving mastery is a benefit beyond the purely instrumental value of what is learned. In particular, young persons unhappy in family, school, or other parts of their lives may find relief and relative satisfaction in work (Call, 1996). A landmark cross-national study of the life perspectives of working children showed the importance of work as a psychic good closely related to children's views of themselves and their personal worth and well-being (Woodhead, 1998).

The discourse of universal minimum-age standards belittles the value of the work that young people do, and the responsibilities it often entails. Especially in Africa and South Asia, large numbers of children competently look after younger siblings and head households in the absence of adult support, a phenomenon quickly growing with the spread of HIV/AIDS (Bourdillon, 2005, p. 149; Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen,

2003, p. 169; Chakraborty and Lieten, 2004, p. 157). They achieve status and respect in their communities, and take pride in their accomplishment. It is unjust and insulting to treat their work as pathological or “improper” and to judge them as needing “rehabilitation”.

Another psychosocial concern is the impact on children of the criminalization of their work through Convention 138 and national laws based on it. Working children often complain that they are transformed from honest workers into criminals by legislation, and by association when their work is categorized as “child labour” together with forms of work that are criminal in nature. This also affects the way in which people regard them: children report that criminalizing their economic activity results in greater violence against them by the public, police and other authorities (Boyden *et al.*, 1998, p. 203; Ennew *et al.*, 2005, p. 33). It drives work underground, making it almost impossible to control and regulate (see Hanson and Vandaele, 2003, pp. 120-21). Less understood is the resulting pressure on children, many of whom cannot afford to stop working and now must deal both with their work and with the fallout of its illegality (such as increased job insecurity, exploitation, and hostility from various sources). Working children regularly complain about being denied respect as workers and citizens, and about extortion and violence they experience at the hands of police, labour inspectors, juvenile justice workers, and other supposedly “protective” authorities who regularly take cynical advantage of the children’s illegitimate status (see World Movement of Working Children, 2004).

The same prohibitions that increase working children’s vulnerability also deny them the normal avenues of working people for protection against abuse and exploitation. Most countries do not allow children under the minimum-age of employment to form or join legally recognised trades unions, the principal social mechanism of worker protection. Further, unions themselves are often reluctant to allow persons under the age of majority to join, even when they are legitimate workers.

The need for policy analysis on the impact of minimum-age policies on children

The questions raised above provide sufficient grounds to investigate rigorously the impact of ILO Convention 138 and the national laws deriving from its guidelines on children. Policy analysis should be broad-based and multi-disciplinary, investigating the extent to which the policy is achieving its purpose, distinguishing between “winners” and “losers” under the policy, and weighing its benefits against its costs.

Benefits and harm are not easy to measure. Ideally, long-term controlled studies are required to assess how work in childhood and adolescence affects adult lives. Too often harm is assumed when work challenges cultural ideals of childhood, or when adults’ interests are threatened. While assumptions can be counterbalanced by paying attention to the views and understandings of the children and adolescents concerned, such perceptions do not provide conclusive evidence of long-term benefits or harm. Although suggestions have been made for conceptualizing differences between the negative, beneficial, and neutral effects of work on children, and by implication the effects of interventions (McKechnie and Hobbs, 1998: especially 41; White, 1994; Woodhead, 2004), these have not yet produced the tools required to analyse efficiently the complexity of real-life child work situations.

The legality of minimum-age laws

A further serious challenge – seldom recognised – to ILO Convention 138 and national minimum-age laws is the strong, but so far untested, possibility that this convention

violates the fundamental human rights of children and is therefore open to formal legal challenge[3].

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 Covenants clearly articulate everyone's right, without qualification by age, to work and to join worker associations. The Covenants, and after them the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, do however provide for children's protection, which could perhaps be interpreted as permitting an abridgement of children's human rights in order to protect them. Superficially, this might seem to authorize a minimum-age policy that excludes children from the right to work.

However, abridging of children's human rights would be legitimate only if it were demonstrated to be *necessary* (that is, if there are no protective alternatives available that would impinge less on their rights), and to be *effective* in providing the intended protection. Convention 138 meets neither of these conditions; it has demonstrated neither that the minimum-age approach is the uniquely necessary remedy, nor that the approach achieves its protective aims. It is not clear, therefore, that the ILO or its member states can legally exclude children from rights plainly granted to all without exception in the "International Bill of Human Rights".

Furthermore, it is inconceivable that the fundamental human right of workers to organize could be legally denied to children in any circumstances whatever. Refusing them trade union protection is an egregious violation of their rights that has no defensible basis in human rights law. That such denial is based on an ILO international convention declaring that "underage" children should not be workers at all is inconsequential. The stronger human rights provision prevails. The policy analysis we recommend to investigate the impact of minimum-age policies on children should include these human rights issues.

In conclusion, we concur with Cunningham and Stromquist (2005, p. 79):

One challenge for the twenty-first century is to imagine a childhood as free as possible of the romantic conception. This will mean a childhood that does not place a taboo on productive activity, but at the same time ensures that the child worker is not exploited.

Notes

1. A lower age of 14 is allowed, as a temporary measure, in countries where the economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed.
2. For example, Minimum-Age (Agriculture) Convention 10 of 1921, Article 2 provides no minimum-age for agricultural work so long as the work takes place "outside the hours fixed for school attendance" and "is not such as to prejudice attendance at school".
3. There is some discussion of this issue in Hanson and Vandaele (2003, pp. 122-31).

References

- Aitken, S., Estrada, S.L., Jennings, J. and Aguirre, L.M. (2006), "Reproducing life and labour: global processes and working children in Tijuana, Mexico", *Childhood*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 365-87.
- Bourdillon, M.F.C. (2000a), "Child labour and education: a case study from south-eastern Zimbabwe", *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 5-32.
- Bourdillon, M.F.C. (2000b), "Children at work on tea and coffee estates", in Bourdillon, M. (Ed.), *Earning a Life*, Weaver Press, Harare, pp. 147-72.
- Bourdillon, M.F.C. (2005), "Translating standards into practice: confronting local barriers", in Weston, B. (Ed.), *Child Labor and Human Rights*, Lynne Reiner, Boulder, CO, pp. 143-66.

- Bourdillon, M.F.C. (2006), *Child Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe*, Weaver Press, Harare.
- Boyden, J., Ling, B. and Myers, W. (1998), *What Works for Working Children*, Rädda Barnen & UNICEF, Stockholm.
- Call, K.T. (1996), "Adolescent work as 'an arena of comfort'", in Mortimer, J.T. and Finch, M.D. (Eds), *Adolescents, Work, and Family: An Intergenerational Developmental Analysis*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 129-66.
- Chakraborty, S. and Lieten, G.K. (2004), "What do child labourers do? Details of a rural district in Northeast India", in Lieten, G.K. (Ed.), *Working Children Around the World*, IREWOC Foundation & Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, pp. 140-57.
- CINI-ASHA (2003), "Family adjustments for mainstreaming child labourers into formal schools in Calcutta: the experience of CINI-ASHA", in Kabeer, N., Nambissan, G.B. and Subrahmanian, R. (Eds), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia*, Sage, New Delhi, pp. 335-48.
- Cunningham, H. (1991), *The Children of the Poor*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Cunningham, H. (2000), "The decline of child labour: labour markets and family economies in Europe and North America since 1830", *Economic Historical Review*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 409-28.
- Cunningham, H. and Stromquist, S. (2005), "Child labor and the rights of children: historical patterns of decline and persistence", in Weston, B. (Ed.), *Child Labor and Human Rights*, Lynne Reiner, Boulder, CO, pp. 55-83.
- Dahlén, M. (2007), *The Negotiable Child: the ILO Child Labour Campaign 1919-1973*, Uppsala University, Uppsala.
- Delap, E. (2004), *Planning Working Children's Education*, Save the Children, London.
- Ennew, J., Myers, W. and Plateau, D.P. (2005), "Defining child labor as if human rights really matter", in Weston, B. (Ed.), *Child Labor and Human Rights*, Lynne Reiner, Boulder, CO, pp. 27-54.
- Greenberger, E. and Steinberg, L. (1985), *When Teen-Agers Work*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
- Grootaert, C. and Patrinos, H.A. (Eds), (1999), *The Policy Analysis of Child Labor*, Macmillan, London.
- Guarcello, L., Rosati, F., Lyon, S. and Valdivia, C. (2005), *Impact of Children's Work on School Attendance and Performance: A Review of School Survey Evidence from Five Countries*, International Labour Organisation, UNICEF, World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Gunn, S.E. and Ostos, Z. (1992), "Dilemmas in tackling child labour: the case of scavenger children in the Philippines", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 131, pp. 629-46.
- Hanson, K. and Vandaele, A. (2003), "Working children and international labour law: a critical analysis", *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 73-146.
- Hazarika, G. and Bedi, A.S. (2003), "Schooling costs and child work in rural Pakistan", *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 29-64.
- Hobbes, S., Stack, N., McKenchnie, J. and Smyllie, L. (2007), "Talking about work: school students' views on their paid employment", *Children and Society*, Vol. 21 No., pp. 123-35.
- ILO (2006), *The End of Child Labour: Within Reach*, ILO, Geneva.
- Kabeer, N. (2003), "Deprivation, discrimination and delivery: competing explanations for child labour and educational failure in South Asia", in Kabeer, N., Nambissan, G.B. and Subrahmanian, R. (Eds), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia*, Sage, New Delhi, pp. 351-93.
- Leonard, M. (2003), "Children's attitudes to parents", teachers' and employers' perspectives of term-time work", *Children and Society*, Vol. 17 No., pp. 349-60.

- Liebel, M. (2003), "Working children as social subjects: the contribution of working children's organisations to social transformations", *Childhood*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 265-85.
- Malhotra, R., Sachdeva, A.S. and Murthy, S.V.R. (2003), "Child labour in India: nature and policy options", in Lieten, G.K., Srivastava, R. and Thorat, S. (Eds), *Small Hands in South Asia*, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 127-45.
- McKechnie, J. and Hobbs, S. (1998), *Working Children: Reconsidering the Debates. Defence for Children International & International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*, Amsterdam.
- McKechnie, J. and Hobbs, S. (1999), "Child labour: the view from the north", *Childhood*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 89-100.
- Mortimer, J.T. (2003), *Work and Growing Up in America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Myers, W.E. (2001), "Can children's work and education be reconciled", *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 307-30.
- Nambissan, G.B. (2003), "Social exclusion, children's work and education: a view from the margins", in Kabeer, N., Nambissan, G.B. and Subrahmanian, R. (Eds), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia*, Sage, New Delhi, pp. 109-42.
- Nardinelli, C. (1990), *Child Labour and the Industrial Revolution*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (1994), *Children's Lifeworlds*, Routledge, London.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2000), "The household economy in the commercial exploitation of children's work: the case of Kerala", in Schlemmer, B. (Ed.), *The Exploited Child*, Zed Books, London and New York, NY, pp. 278-91.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2005), "The wealth of children: reconsidering the child labour debate", in Qvortrup, J. (Ed.), *Studies in Modern Childhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 167-83.
- Nunes, T., Schliemann, A.D. and Carraher, D.W. (1993), *Street Mathematics and School Mathematics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY.
- Nyambedha, E.O. and Aagaard-Hansen, J. (2003), "Changing place, changing position: orphans' movements in a community with high HIV/AIDS in Western Kenya", in Olwig, K.F. and Gulløv, E. (Eds), *Children's Places*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 162-76.
- Oloko, B.A. (1991), "Children's work in urban Nigeria: a case study of young Lagos street traders", in Myers, W.E. (Ed.), *Protecting Working Children*, Zed Books, London, pp. 11-23.
- Rajagopal, S. (2003), "Operationalising the right to education: the Lok Jumbish experience in Rajasthan", in Kabeer, N., Nambissan, G.B. and Subrahmanian, R. (Eds), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia*, Sage, New Delhi, pp. 304-20.
- Ramachandran, V. (2001), "Backward and forward linkages: case studies in primary education", Educational Resource Unit, Jaipur, unpublished.
- Ravallion, M. and Wodon, Q. (2000), "Does child labour displace schooling? Evidence on behavioural responses to an enrolment subsidy", *The Economic Journal*, No. 110, pp. C158-C75.
- Rogoff, B. (1990), *Apprenticeship in Thinking*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Rogoff, B. (2003), *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Rosati, F.C. and Rossi, M. (2007), "Impact of school quality on child labor and school attendance: the case of CONAFE compensatory education program in Mexico", Faculty of Economics, University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Rome.

- Sommerfelt, T. (Ed.), (2003), *Domestic Child Labour in Morocco*, Fafo Report 370, Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, Oslo.
- Talib, M. (2003), "Modes of learning-labour relations: educational strategies and child labour", in Kabeer, N., Nambissan, G.B. and Subrahmanian, R. (Eds), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia*, Sage, New Delhi, pp. 143-63.
- White, B.N.F. (1994), "Children, work and child labour: changing responses to the employment of children", *Development and Change*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 854-61.
- Woodhead, M. (1998), "Children's perceptions of their working lives: a participatory study in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua", Save the Children, Stockholm.
- Woodhead, M. (1999a), *Is There a Place for Children in Child Development?*, Save the Children, Stockholm.
- Woodhead, M. (1999b), "Listen to what the children say", *Childhood*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 27-49.
- Woodhead, M. (2004), "Psychosocial impacts of child work: a framework for research, monitoring and intervention", *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 321-77.
- Woodhead, M. (2007), "Developing policies on child labour: has research made a difference?" in Engwall, K. and Soderlind, I. (Eds), *Children's Work in Everyday Life*, Institute for Futures Studies, Stockholm.
- World Movement of Working Children, (2004), *Final Declaration of the 2nd Meeting of the World Movement of Working Children and Adolescents, Berlin, Germany, April 19th to 2nd May 2004*, available at: www.rb.se/NR/rdonlyres/F69FDA7D-6418-4DF6-A3C6-BB818A2A4EF3/0/WorkingchildrenFinalDeclarationBerlin2004.pdf (accessed 10 August 2007).
- Zalami, F.B. (1998), "Forgotten on the pyjama trail: a case study of garment workers in Méknès (Morocco) dismissed from their jobs following foreign media attention", International Working Group on Child Labour.
- Zelizer, V.A. (1985), *Pricing the Priceless Child*, Basic Books, New York, NY.

About the authors

Michael F.C. Bourdillon is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. Michael F.C. Bourdillon is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: mbourdillon@mango.zw

Ben White is Professor of Rural Sociology at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands.

William E. Myers is Visiting Scholar in the Department of Human and Community Development, University of California, Davis, California, USA.

© Global Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2012)iv. Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies. 7. Assessing safety from the perspective of gender, age, disability and diversity requires regular monitoring in all sectors. We should always maximise the positive impacts of sector programmes on people's safety. Here, we address three dimensions of safety in each sector: sector-specific safety issues; sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response and child protection; and Internal protection systems. 2. My state's child labor standards differ from federal child labor standards. Which standards apply? 3. What are the purposes of child labor laws? 4. What age groups are covered by child labor laws? 5. How old do I have to be to work? 6. Is the minimum wage for youth workers the same as it is for everyone else? 7. How many hours can I work as a youth employee? 8. Am I allowed to work the night shift as a youth employee? How many hours? 9. What kinds of work can a youth employee perform? 10. What types of jobs are considered "hazardous" jobs? 11. Do child labor laws apply if I w... Minimum standards for education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery. Mission Statement INEE is an open, global network of practitioners and policy makers working together to ensure all persons the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies and post-crisis recovery. www.ineesite.org. INEE's Working Group on Minimum Standards is facilitating the global implementation of the Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery. For copying in other circumstances, re-use in other publications, translation or adaptation, prior written permission must be obtained from the copyright owner. Designed by: Creatrix Design Group, Canada. Cover photographs: The International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Oxfam Novib. KEYWORDS: Child labour, Worst forms of child labour, Child work, Hazardous work; Minimum age, International Labour Organisation, ILO. Author: RA Mavunga. The actual effect on children needs to be assessed. Minimum age policies reflect a paradigm that assumes that children benefit from being withdrawn or excluded from work, yet there is little empirical evidence to support this assumption.[54] Child development studies demonstrate that children thrive in a great diversity of activities, including many that carry important responsibilities.[55] Many children value the practical and experimental nature of what they learn through work. The legal working age is the minimum age required by law for a person to work, in each country or jurisdiction, if they have not reached yet the age of majority. Activities that are dangerous, harmful to the health or that may affect the morals of minors fall into this category.