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## **ABSTRACT**

Child labor remains a widespread problem in the world today. Although child labor can have positive effects, in some situations it has negative effects on health and development of the children. It is mainly a problem in developing countries, but it is possible to find child workers in developed countries, some of them, working in hazardous activities. In this paper we describe the child labor profile in developed and developing countries, and the principal occupations and its hazards. In addition, we summarize the epidemiologic evidence of the greater impact of some occupational exposures on child health when compared to adults, and the theoretical concerns about the impact of child labor on health. Furthermore, we describe policies that can be used to combat harmful child labor.

Key words: child labor, developing countries, developed countries, occupational health

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Child labor remains a widespread problem in the world today. There are at least 250 million working children between the ages of 5 and 14 in developing countries, but due to imprecision in the estimates some authors believe that this number could be much higher, reaching 500 million children. The majority of the child workers live in the developing countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, but there are also pockets of child labor in many industrialized countries. (Parker, 1997), (ILO, 1998)

There is a consensus that work can have positive effects on children such as the development of discipline, responsibility, self-confidence and independence; teaching children how to manage money; and providing valuable models to teach them work skills. On the other hand, it can also have a negative impact on health and development of the children. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

The plain fact that the children are working is not a concern in itself, but it is the type of work they perform that will determine whether work is harmful to them. Child labor will be more harmful if it interferes with school, recreation and rest; the younger the child is; the worst the nature of the work schedule, the longer the hours or the frequency of the nocturnal work; the more hazardous the occupation and the lower the wage (Figure 1). (UNICEF, 1997)

Some child labor is clearly light, as the activity performed by a child delivering newspapers for two hours a day. This work is not likely to harm the child's health or development, or reduce his attendance in school. But even in this situation there is some level of exploitation in the fact that the child probably receives a lower wage than an adult would receive to perform the same job. There are also some socially or morally intolerable forms of exploitation, such as child prostitution, which most people would agree is necessary to eliminate. Even so, it is very difficult to get consensus on how to address this problem. However, the majority of these occupations are not extreme situations like the ones above and in these cases it is necessary to balance their beneficial and harmful aspects to define which occupations are appropriate for children. (UNICEF, 1997)

In most countries of the world it is possible to find children working in very hazardous conditions, but is difficult to find good data about the impact of child labor on health to evaluate its harmful aspects. Some environmental epidemiologic studies and research on young workers suggest that children could have higher health risks than adults have when exposed to some hazards. Moreover, several theoretical concerns about the impact of occupational exposures on child health still need to be studied. (UNICEF, 1997), (Parker, 1997), (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

In this paper we intend to describe the child labor profile in developed and developing countries, to summarize the epidemiologic evidence of the greater impact of some

occupational exposures in child health when compared to adults, and the theoretical concerns about the impact of child labor on health. Furthermore, we will describe the policies that have been used to combat harmful child labor.

We consider child labor the activities performed by persons of less than 18 years of age that contribute to the production of a marketable product, good, or service, whether that activity is done for pay or not. This includes household work performed in the parents home, in situations where such work can be assimilated to an economic activity as, for example, when a child must devote his or her entire time to that work so that his or her parents can be employed outside home and is therefore deprived of the possibility of going to school. We are also using child work as a synonym of child labor. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

## **2 THE CHILD LABOR PROFILE**

It is very difficult to estimate the number of child workers in the world. The definition of child labor varies a lot in terms of the ages and activities covered by the statistics preventing comparisons. Moreover, child labor has a hidden nature, as great numbers of the children are working in the informal sector and some are in illegal situations, making very hard to generate reliable national statistics. (ILO, 1997)

The available statistics indicate that around 96% of the child workers are in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America. It is important to consider that these regions have 87 percent of the children under 18 years old of the world. Considering the child workers between the ages of 5 and 14, Asia makes up 61 percent of child workers in developing countries, while Africa has 32 percent, and Latin America 7 percent. Thus, while Asia has the highest number of child workers, Africa has the highest prevalence of child labor (40 percent), and in Latin America, one child in five works. (OMS, 1987), (ILO, 1998), (UNICEF, 1997)

Though primarily a developing country problem, child labor is emerging in many East European and Asian countries, which are in transition to a market economy. When considering all forms of child labor, the prevalence in developed countries is surprisingly high. (ILO, 1997), (ILO, 1998), (UNICEF, 1997)

A study in United States found that 80 percent of the high school students report that they hold jobs during the school year at some point during high school. Other research in the United Kingdom showed that between 15 and 26 percent of the 11 years old and between 36 to 66 percent of the 15 years old were working. It is known that some of these workers are engaged in hazardous jobs. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (UNICEF, 1997)

Therefore, in addition to the differences in the size of the problem, there are also differences in the shape of child labor between developed and developing countries. In developing countries the children start to work at a very young age, some are

malnourished, work for long hours in hazardous occupations, and frequently do not attend school. They receive very low wages or are unpaid workers and their income or help is usually essential for family survival. They are mainly employed in the informal sector and bonded labor stills a problem in several places. Most part of the children works for jobs addressed to the internal markets. It is estimated that probably less than 5 percent are employed in export industries. (UNICEF, 1997), (Forastieri, 1997), (Parker, 1997)

The developed countries were apparently able to eliminate bonded labor and street work; moreover, the informal sector is much smaller than in the developing countries, and child workers generally attend school. Some relatively wealthy children work for discretionary money. But child labor, including the hazardous form of it, can be found in most rich countries and very poor people, especially ethnic minorities and migrants, can face similar child labor conditions as in developing countries. (UNICEF, 1997)

As it was convened in the ILO Convention 182, the worst forms of child labor should be prohibited and eliminated. The worst forms of child labor includes all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities and the work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. This will be a challenge for the governments that need to prepare themselves to offer a reasonable alternative to child labor. Some of the alternatives are discussed in the section "Interventions to Combat Child Labor". (ILO, 1998; International Labor Conference, 1999)

### **3 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES AND THEIR HAZARDS**

Many of the working children labor in very dangerous or hazardous occupations such as agriculture, manufacture, construction, retail and marginal activities. A quick overview on the characteristics and hazards of these activities are described in this section.

#### **3.1 AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture is the most common child occupation worldwide, and employs more working children than any other sector. This activity is consistently ranked among the most hazardous industry for mortality and morbidity. (Cooper and Rothstein, 1995), (Landrigan, Pollack et al., 1995), (Wilk, 1993)

But, despite its hazards, agriculture is one of the less-regulated sectors and it is among the sectors where the existent laws are very difficult to enforce. (Wilk, 1993), (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

Moreover, most farms are not family units anymore where the children are helping their parents with the daily chores and learning their future job. There is an international trend for the introduction of mechanization, specialization (monoculture) and technological advances in the fields. These process are followed by the decrease in the numbers of

farms, especially small family farms, a decrease in the numbers of workers employed with an increase in the size of the farms and in productivity. Thus, there are fewer children and adolescents of the owners working on farms, and higher number of adolescents hired as farm-workers or farm-workers' children that are working alongside their parents in the fields. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (Wilk, 1993)

The children generally start to work in agriculture at a very young age and usually work for long hours for little or no payment. The seasonal characteristics of the work, the long hours required, the distance from school and the lack of schools with higher grades in the rural areas are some of the reasons that reduce school attendance. (Wilk, 1993)

In agricultural work children are exposed to dangerous farm machinery, which is a common cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries, whether they are operating it or working near these machines. Children are also exposed to strenuous labor, like carrying or lifting heavy loads and working in uncomfortable positions such as stooping in the same position or bending very frequently, which could affect the musculoskeletal development of the children. Other hazards present in the fields are pesticides and the weather, especially the heat, which can be particularly dangerous for children. Poor field sanitation contains its own hazards facilitating the transmission of communicable diseases and worsening the pesticides and the heat hazard due to the lack of water. Migrant workers can be particularly at risk since their housing conditions are frequently inappropriate. (Wilk, 1993), (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

### **3.2 MANUFACTURE**

Very often manufacturing uses the child-labor workforce, but the types of industry vary widely from country to country. Most of these children are employed in small workshops or in home-based work. They seldom work in medium-size or large enterprises, but such establishments sometimes contribute indirectly to child labor by subcontracting out certain production tasks to small workshops and home-workers that make extensive use of child labor and generally are not covered by child labor national laws. (UNICEF, 1997), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998), (Forastieri, 1997)

Industry has specific hazards linked to each production process that are specific to the tasks performed. On the other hand, there are some general hazards that arise not from the production process but from uncaring management. Examples of these problems are naked electric wires, lack of first aid facilities, poor ventilation, lack of sanitation, lack of sufficient light, heavy lifting, exposure to loud noise, proximity or operation of dangerous machines, and the lack of protective equipment. In some cases physical punishments are frequent. (Bequele and Myers, 1995)

Specific hazards vary according to the industry type. Thus, child workers will be exposed to high temperatures, high risk of accidents caused by cuts and burns at the brassware and glass-bangle industry, to silica dust at the earthenware and porcelain

factories, and to chemical hazards and risk of fire and explosion at the matches and firework workshops. (UNICEF, 1997), (Forastieri, 1997)

Child workers are also exposed to important hazards in the export sector. In the carpet industry in India the children are exposed to repetitive movements, chemical hazards, inhalation of wool dust contaminated with biological agents and inadequate working postures. In the production of soccer balls in Pakistan, children are exposed to inadequate working postures, and in the shoe industry in Portugal, Italy and Brazil, children are exposed to glue. (Forastieri, 1997), (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996)

Manufacturing is a very hazardous sector and the subcontracting practice is an issue of high concern. This practice discharges the medium-sized and large-enterprise industries of the hazardous activities, by out-sourcing this type of work to small workshops and home-based work that are frequently exempt from the existing legislation. Moreover, even if these establishments were covered by the law, they are much more difficult to monitor and have less economic capacity to work towards higher standards. (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

### **3.3 CONSTRUCTION**

Even for adults, the construction sector is one of the most hazardous working environments with regard to the risk of accidents. Despite this fact, this sector employs a considerable number of children in several parts of the world. In Brazil, four percent of the workers between the ages of 10 and 14 and eight percent of those between 15 and 17 work in the construction sector. In the United States 2.5 percent of teen workers are employed in construction although this sector is responsible for 22 percent of the fatal work-related injuries in workers younger than 17 years. In addition to the risk of accident, there are exposures to noise, silica, asbestos, harmful dust, heavy loads, etc. (Fausto and Cervini, 1996), (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

### **3.4 RETAIL**

The retail sector employs half of the working teens in the United States for the most part in restaurants. Retail is responsible for half of the non-fatal injuries and twenty percent of the fatal injuries. Although this type of work seems to be safe some tasks can be very hazardous and forbidden by law to be performed by teens such as working with hot grease and slicer machines. Since job titles may not reflect the nature of the tasks performed, it is difficult to divide the activities that are according to the law and the ones that are in violation. Also, these sectors often require long hours of work and changing schedules, which can be related with leave the work late at night and difficulties to combine work and school. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

## **3.5 SERVICES**

### **3.5.1 Domestic Services**

The informal and hidden nature of the domestic work makes it difficult to estimate the number of domestic workers around the world, but it is one of the most common forms of urban child labor in developing countries and employs mainly girls. In Brazil eight percent of the workers between the ages of 10 and 14 were domestic workers. (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

It is very difficult to study domestic workers since it is hard to contact them in order to get an interview. But it is known that domestic service does not need to be hazardous, although frequently it is. Workers often live at the workplace, are expected to work at all hours of the day with few days off, and are deprived of attending school. Far from their own families, they are very vulnerable and can receive harsh treatment from their employers, sometimes suffering physical, mental, and sexual abuse. In some cases they lack an appropriate place to sleep and do not receive sufficient food. They usually receive low or no wage; bonded labor is very common in some places. (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998), (UNICEF, 1997)

### **3.5.2 Commercial Sex Workers**

Child prostitution has been defined as “the act of engaging or offering the services of a child to perform sexual acts for money or other consideration...”. This definition stresses that child prostitution is not committed by children but by the adults who engage in prostitution or offer a child’s sexual services to others. (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

NGOs estimate that at least 1 million girls worldwide are lured or forced into this scandalous form of child exploitation. Child prostitution is more frequent in developing countries such as Brazil where 200,000 children are exploited, but it can be found in developed countries such as the United States, which has at least 100,000 child prostitutes. Although girls are the most frequent targets, boys are also often exploited. There are documented cases of children as young as six or seven being exploited in Brazil. While this huge problem may be widely visible to child-prostitution exploiters, it remains virtually invisible to the people who could help these children. (UNICEF, 1997), (Bequele and Myers, 1995), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1996)

Commercial sexual exploitation frequently involves trafficking of children whether they are kidnapped or sold by their parents. The children are often recruited under the false pretense of marriage or a good job in the city. While the main media focus is sex tourism, in which persons from developed countries travel to developing countries in search of sex with children, it is important to keep in mind that local persons also exploit these children. But the new face of exploitation is transnational, with criminal networks that take place not only in neighboring countries but also across the globe. (Bureau of

International Labor Affairs, 1998), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1996), (UNICEF, 1997)

Child prostitutes suffer extreme physical and mental abuse, making this form of exploitation one of the most hazardous. They also risk drug addiction, early and unwanted pregnancies, and HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. (UNICEF, 1997), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

The process of rescue and rehabilitation for these children is very complicated. They are frequently prosecuted by the system that should be protecting them. Even if they manage to return to their homes, they often face stigma and rejection by their families and communities. (UNICEF, 1997), (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

### **3.5.3 Street Workers**

With its high level of urbanization, Latin America has the largest number of street children. In the Russian Federation after the transition to a market economy, street child labor is a growing problem. Many of them are not street children in the strict sense since the majority of these street workers return home each night and provide critical financial support for their families. (UNICEF, 1997)

These children shine shoes, wash and guard cars, carry luggage, sell goods at the traffic-light intersections and scavenge and pick up rags. They struggle to legitimize their work on the streets. (UNICEF, 1997)

Street workers are mainly exposed to street violence. Many are lured to drugs, prostitution and illegal work (thieving, trafficking drugs). They often need to defend their space on the street and can be prosecuted by the police (in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for example, three street children are killed every day, many by the police). They are also exposed to traffic accidents and extreme weather conditions and seldom attend school. (UNICEF, 1997)

Scavenging is one example of a very hazardous street work. It adversely affects the child's self-esteem; moreover, it is very unhygienic. (UNICEF, 1997)

### **3.5.4 Work for the Family**

While working for their families, children can learn from a reasonable level of participation in the household chores that can develop a sense of self-worth. But sometimes, working for the family is essential to enable the parents to work outside the home. (UNICEF, 1997)

This is a hidden form of exploitation that affects mainly girls and it is often not even considered work. In Brazil four percent of the children between the ages of 10 and 14 and nine percent of the children between 15 and 17 perform exclusively household activities without attending school. (Fausto and Cervini, 1996)

Work for the family can demand long hours, thus preventing the children from going to school or doing well in school, perpetuating the poverty cycle. It also includes some heavy chores as taking care of siblings and carrying heavy loads of firewood and buckets of water. (UNICEF, 1997)

## **4 EXPOSURES PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS FOR CHILDREN**

Children are susceptible to all of the dangerous exposures faced by adults when placed in the same environment. However, children differ biologically from adults in their anatomical, physiological, and psychological characteristics because of their process of growth and development. Thus, exposure hazards that affect adults can affect children much more strongly. (ILO, 1998), (Bequele and Myers, 1995), (Forastieri, 1997)

In this section we examine the epidemiologic evidences and the theoretical concerns for exposures that could be particularly dangerous for children.

### **4.1 Epidemiologic Evidence:**

The impact of child labor on injuries has been studied largely in the United States. These studies show that children have a higher risk of injuries than adults. In a study in the United States, teens between 15 and 17 have an injury rate of 4.9 per 100% full-time equivalent workers, while in the group of 16 years of age and older this rate was 2.8. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

There is also evidence that heavy loads can be more dangerous for children the smaller they are. Parker et al. found that back injuries were more common in smaller workers than in larger workers. (Parker, Carl et al., 1994)

The other epidemiologic evidence that highlights dangerous exposures for children come mainly from studies of young workers and from environmental studies. These studies show that children have higher susceptibility to lead, silica and benzene. In addition, children are more susceptible to noise, heat and ionizing radiation. (Bequele and Myers, 1995), (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

### **4.2 Theoretical Concerns:**

#### **4.2.1 Work environment**

The IOM report raises concerns that inappropriate assignments for children to perform tasks for which they are developmentally incapable of undertaking result in hazardous activities. The inappropriate structure of difficult work schedules (long hours, early/late hours with frequent changes) and the lack of supervision could increase the risk of work-related injuries and illnesses. Also, such characteristics of children and adolescents as inexperience, lack of physical and emotional maturity, adolescent sleep

needs and the need to balance school and work would require work environments to structure and to minimize the risks to which young people are exposed. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

#### **4.2.2 Ergonomic Factors**

The report also focuses upon the developmental factors that could put teens at a higher risk than adults. Childhood and adolescence are periods of rapid growth in a young person's life. Thus, they could be at particularly high risk of injuring ligaments and damaging bone-growth plates. Although little research has been done on the long-term consequences of premature exposure to heavy work and to repetitive back-straining movements, ergonomic factors, nevertheless, remain a concern. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

#### **4.2.3 Carcinogenic Exposures**

Expert panels have hypothesized that children are particularly vulnerable to potential carcinogens due to their rapid cell growth. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

#### **4.2.4 Chemical Exposures**

There are concerns that chemical exposures could have adverse effects on normal hormonal development of adolescents, altering the delicate balance of hormones and their feedback loops. Chemical exposures could result in devastating effects, given the importance of the endocrine system during this life period. Some authors also believe that exposures to toxic chemicals at a very young age could alter the body's response to future toxic exposures. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (Forastieri, 1997)

#### **4.2.5 Long Latency Period**

Rapid cell growth could strengthen the exposure effects, thus shortening the latency period of some diseases. Even in situations where it does not happen, children have longer periods of exposure to cumulative hazards. Precocious exposure might predict that children become ill in young adulthood instead of at an older age. (Forastieri, 1997)

#### **4.2.6 Machines, tools, work furniture and personal protective equipment are not designed for children**

Children using machines, tools and work furniture (seats, workbenches, etc.) designed for adults may develop musculoskeletal disorders such as chronic repetitive-strain injuries, repetitive-motion trauma, back problems, tenosynovitis, vibration-induced disorders and white-finger syndrome. They could also be at higher risk for injuries due to fatigue.

Moreover, personal protective equipment frequently does not fit children. Thus, they often have to work without it or use alternative devices that do not provide real protection. (Forastieri, 1997)

#### **4.2.7 The appropriateness of permissible exposure limits for children established for adults**

Since children respond differently than adults to physical and chemical exposures, the permissible exposure limits (PEL) established for adults might not be sufficiently protective for children. If they are allowed to work in places where these types of exposures exist, permissible exposure limits should be evaluated according to the child's age. (Forastieri, 1997)

## **5 INTERVENTIONS TO COMBAT CHILD LABOR**

Although most people agree that harmful child labor should be eliminated, controversy nevertheless remains about the possibility of going in this direction without eliminating poverty. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996), (UNICEF, 1997)

Of course, the reduction of poverty, one of the prominent causes of child labor, is a very important issue and should be addressed. But child labor can also perpetuate the poverty cycle, and children, however poor their families might be, should not be harmed by work. (UNICEF, 1997)

Thus, the goal must be the elimination of harmful child labor, realizing that it will not be eliminated overnight. In this process it is important to establish priorities and try to offer as much protection as possible to child workers. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996)

The priorities also seem clear and they should include the removal of child workers from hazardous work and bonded labor and the prevention of child labor at a very young age. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996), (Fyfe, 1993)

In this section we will discuss the main types of interventions that could be used to combat harmful child labor.

### **5.1 Child Labor Law and Enforcement**

Historically, an important response to child labor has been the adoption of legislation to regulate the admission of children to work and the conditions under which legislation is undertaken. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996)

Legislation needs to be updated and it is necessary to develop efforts to enforce it. Otherwise, large child-worker concentrations in the informal sector and agriculture indicate that this initiative needs to be articulated with other mechanisms that can support and complement the law enforcement. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996)

## **5.2 Education**

### **5.2.1 Primary education**

Schools can play a major role in the battle against child labor. Make primary education universal is still a challenge for developing countries, but reaching this goal can have an immediate impact on the reduction of child labor. (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1998)

A great majority of countries have laws establishing compulsory education. But the existence of this law is not sufficient. Many developing countries have a long way to go before they can provide enough schools within a reasonable traveling distance for all children, and free-of-charge for the poor. Moreover, it is necessary to improve the quality of the public schools. To be attractive to working children, the schools need, at least, to make a difference in the chances to get a better-quality job. Also, it is necessary to remember that working children frequently are living in extreme poverty, often to the point that in many cases, schools will need to provide minimum conditions to make it possible for children to learn: books, meals, and flexibility in the school calendar in order to accommodate their seasonal work. As we have seen, children's income is very often essential to family survival. Thus, once enrolled in school, working children will need to work less or stop working. In many cases outside financial support will have to be provided for the family as for example scholarships. (ILO, 1997), (UNICEF, 1997)

### **5.2.2 Education on Child Labor**

Developed and developing countries need initiatives in the education of children, parents, teachers, physicians and employers about child labor and its hazards. Once enlightened about the problem, they can make a difference in the decision whether or not to start to work and in the type of job chosen.

### **5.2.3 Education on Occupational Health and Safety**

Knowing that there are hazards in most jobs, it is important to educate young workers on occupational safety and health. This initiative should raise awareness about workplace hazards and ways of preventing illnesses and injuries; raise awareness about their rights on the job and resources available to assist and encourage them to be active participants in creating and maintaining safe and healthful work environments. (Children's Safety Network/MA Dept of Public Health, 1997)

### **5.2.4 School-to-Work Programs**

Vocational education teaches knowledge and skills for employment in specific fields. This type of training can qualify the teen jobs and build a bridge between the school and the work environment, which sometimes appear to be very disconnected of the real world and future adult jobs. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

### **5.3 Market-based Initiatives**

The market-based initiatives had been playing an important role in raising the public awareness particularly in developed countries and it is a strategy that can be explored in developing countries. These initiatives include a variety of product labeling schemes and/or corporate codes of conduct designed to inform consumers that the goods they are buying are not made or processed by children. However, to avoid the migration of the child labor to more hazardous, more hidden and worst paid jobs, these policies should be complemented by investments in schooling and the inclusion in the codes of conduct the payment of decent wages for adults, so that the need of the families to rely on child labor may be reduced. (ILO, 1997)

### **5.4 Long-term initiatives**

Poverty alleviation programs that generating income and employment can also have a long-term impact in the reduction of child labor. (Fyfe and Jankanish, 1996)

Government's challenge, then, is to articulate different policies and to provide reasonable alternatives to child labor; meaning that, the primary education should be universal and should have good quality and, that for families who depend upon child labor to survive, other sources of income will need to be provided.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Probably it is good to work, for teens, in a non-hazardous job, in low or medium intensity. It is better as higher the quality of work and as more related with the future career it is. But the child labor can have a major impact on health and development, so it is important to combat the child work in hazardous activities, the bonded labor and the work of the children in a very young age.

The information system on this subject is very rudimentary. Thus the system should be built in a way that it includes the agricultural sector and the informal sector the major child employers. Also, some research is necessary to evaluate the illegal child labor, as the work of the very young and the ones in illegal activities as prostitution and drug traffic.

The impact of the child labor on health is an issue that needs further research. It is known that the children are exposed, at least, to the same exposures as the adults when performing the same activities. There are also epidemiological evidences that the children can be more susceptible to some exposures than adults are. But there is a lot to be known in this subject, many theoretical concerns about the higher child susceptibility to exposures need to be studied.

The shape of child labor is very dynamic and changes in time. The new trends need to be examined to establish its impact on health. Things that already happened in developed countries start to happen in the most developed areas of the developing

countries. More and more the children combine school and work, so if on the one hand the work is not depriving the school attendance, on the other it can be creating a great burden in terms of the time consumed with both activities, reducing the time to rest and play. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (Fausto and Cervini, 1996)

Another trend is the exclusion of the very poor from the market. It is already established that the very poor work in more hazardous jobs than advantaged children. Moreover as the markets become sophisticated, the very poor, which are the ones in most need, have difficulties finding a job, once they do not have the minimum necessary skills. This trend reinforces the importance of the primary education as a way to decrease the number of excluded people and minimizes social inequities. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998), (Fausto and Cervini, 1996)

Some advantaged children had been working for discretionary money. It is a relatively large amount of money to buy superfluous things without any familiar compromises or any savings addressed to future big expenses. Some authors have questioned whether it is beneficial to promote money management skills, since it could generate subsequent dissatisfaction with their living standards when they need to deal with general expenses of the real life. (Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor, 1998)

The developing countries have some particular subjects that need to be studied. Most of the child workers in these regions are very poor and an excessive number are malnourished. Thus it is important to evaluate the impact of work exposures on malnourished children as a way to support the need of policies addressed to the adequate food intake of workers in general and child workers in particular, as the meal provision at work.

Some activities that occur just in developing countries also need to be evaluated. The bonded labor is not justifiable in today's world and needs to be a priority in every place it exists. The huge informal sector is a phenomenon of current economies. In a small city in the south of Brazil 85 percent of the child workers are in the informal sector. Thus despite the difficulties to access data on it, the informal sector with its more visible and more hidden child labor activity, street workers and domestic services, needs to be studied and covered by the policies to combat child labor.

Another hidden activity in developing countries that can not be forgotten is the exclusive household activities without attendance to school. Almost nothing is known on the impact of this type of work on health. The work at home usually has a poor status, is unpaid, often is not recognized as work and besides depriving children from education, mainly girls, could also have important health consequences.

The policies to combat child labor should be as comprehensive and articulated as possible and great care should be taken to avoid undesired consequences, as the migration of child workers to the worst types of jobs. The priorities and the goals should be established according to the size and shape of the problem in each place. But it

seems reasonable to say that, for the developing countries, the single most effective policy to combat child labor is the universalization of a good quality primary education. On the other hand, for developed and developing countries, the combat of the illegal child work and the promotion of good quality teen job, as apprenticeships for future careers are probably policies that should be applied.

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**Figure 1- Child Labor: Harm vs. Benefit**

