



Child Labour in the Coffee Sector of Guatemala

**The IREWOC Research Project on the
Worst Forms of Child Labour in Latin America**



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Chapter 1

Introduction

Research on the worst forms

In 1973, the ILO adopted its Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), which requires states to design and apply national policies to ensure the effective abolition of all forms of child labour and to set the minimum age of employment at 14. Despite widespread ratification and international attention the effective abolition of all child labour proved to be a difficult task. Two major considerations became apparent after ratification. First, research illustrated the extent of the child labour problem, which led to the realistic understanding that not all forms of child labour could be done away with instantaneously. Secondly, there was a growing understanding that not all forms of child labour are equally harmful. As stated in the 1997 UNICEF report on The State of the World's Children:

In reality, children do a variety of work in widely divergent conditions. The work takes place along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the work is beneficial, promoting or enhancing a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation and rest. On the other end, it is palpably destructive or exploitative. There are vast areas of activity between these two poles, including work that need not impact negatively on the child's development. ... But to treat all work by children as equally unacceptable is to confuse and trivialize the issue and to make it more difficult to end abuses. This is why it is important to distinguish between beneficial and intolerable work and to recognize that much child labour falls in the grey area between these two extremes. [UNICEF 1997:24]

These two realisations resulted in the decision to concentrate on the worst forms of child labour (as morally abhorrent situations under any circumstance or development condition), while continuing to pursue the wider goal of reducing child labour in all its forms and adhering to the age limits.

On 17 June 1999, a global consensus was reached to tackle and eliminate the worst forms of child labour. A new international human rights instrument, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182, was adopted by the ILO in Geneva. Convention 182 defines 2 categories of worst forms of child labour:

- The unconditional worst forms include slave labour, prostitution and pornography, participants in armed conflicts and illicit traders.
- The hazardous worst forms, which are all sorts of work that expose children to danger and jeopardise their physical and moral health, and all forms of work conducted by any child under 18 years of age that equals or exceeds 43 hours a week.

The Convention explicitly calls for immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of these worst forms as a matter of urgency. Because of their harmful nature both categories of work are prohibited for children under the age of 18.

In spite of the breakthrough of Convention 182, an overview of child-centred NGOs suggests that the majority of NGOs are working with children who perform light tasks for only a few hours a day, and who are involved in activities which seem to have no lasting negative consequences on the mental and physical development of these children and which are actually tolerated under the norms of the ILO Conventions. At the same time there seem to be significantly fewer NGO activities for children who find themselves in the worst forms of child labour as defined by ILO Convention 182 [IREWOC 2005]. This leads to the conclusion that for those children whose needs are most pressing, proactive policies are substantially lacking.

This relative absence of action is paralleled by a lack of information. While most countries have ratified ILO Convention 182, they have not (yet) all complied with their obligation of identifying the worst forms sectors and activities in their country, let alone produce statistical estimates on the number of children working in them. For a number of countries there is no information available at all¹; in countries where studies have been carried out, the numbers and estimates vary greatly². This appears to be due to a lack of a universal definition of child labour and the different methodologies of collecting data. Furthermore, official (governmental) surveys and other current methods, do not particularly lend themselves to finding the children in the informal or illegal labour sectors. Despite the unmistakable progress in enumeration, vast sectors are therefore structurally overlooked and understudied.³ Finally, the *qualitative* material in all studies is very poor. The perspectives of the child labourers and their parents themselves are excluded, thereby underestimating their capacity to analyse and voice their own needs and to propose solutions.

To bridge this lack of information and stimulate policy interventions the IREWOC Foundation proposed to undertake action-based research in the field of the worst forms of child labour.

We specifically decided to focus on the “hazardous worst forms” (the second category within the worst forms as defined by the convention). The activities included in the “unconditional worst forms” are universally accepted as detrimental to children’s moral and physical health, and are not under discussion here. The group of “hazardous worst forms” is, however, still in need of further specification. For example, the exact definition states that hazardous forms of child labour are those types of work that “by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried, is likely to harm the health, safety or morale of children” (ILO Convention 182, article 3d). However, the specific physical, psychological or social indicators, that should be used to determine whether or not a

¹ For Latin America country specific studies on worst forms of child labour have been carried out by the ILO in Guatemala (garbage dumps), El Salvador (sugar cane, garbage dumps), Venezuela (flowers horticulture) and Bolivia (mining, sugarcane).

² For example, when comparing results of UNICEF and World Bank surveys on child labour in Bolivia in the same year, it appears that World Bank statistics are one third higher across all age and gender based categories [Guarcello & Lyon 2004]

³ Children in domestic service, prostitution and armed conflict are particularly hidden from these common methods of data collection [U.S. Department of Labor 2006]

certain activity is hazardous, are not clear. By conducting a detailed research project in certain worst forms sectors, giving special attention to the physical and emotional consequences of the activities, we aim to add several insights to this specific discussion.

Specific research objectives and research countries

One of the central objectives of this IREWOC research was to map the working and living conditions of children who are working in specific economic sectors and what the consequences of this work are for their physical and emotional well-being. As a result of this analysis we hoped to identify several activities and/or sectors that fall within the group “hazardous forms of child labour”.

The second focus of the study was to investigate the reasons why children are working in these particular worst forms sectors. The research results were expected to give relevant insights into the currently polarised debate between those who state child labour is above all related to cultural considerations and those who state that economical reasons are fundamental to the phenomena of child labour.

The third objective, to accommodate policy making in the field of the worst forms, was to map the different policy initiatives for child labourers in the worst forms and to identify the best practices. In the face of challenges imposed by achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set by the United Nations, specific attention was paid to educational initiatives. Is education a useful tool to combat child labour, and vice versa, is child labour a significant obstacle to achieving universal primary education?

These research objectives have been translated to the following research questions:

- What are the living and working conditions of the working children?
- What consequences does child labour have for the working children?
- What are the main reasons for the children to work?
- Which strategies to combat child labour have been used by GOs and NGOs in the research communities and what are their successes and shortcomings?

The region chosen for this study was Latin America. In its latest global report on child labour the ILO states that child labour is diminishing, and even more so the children engaged in the worst forms of child labour: “The global picture that emerges is highly encouraging: Child work is declining, and the more harmful the work and the more vulnerable the children involved, the faster the decline” [ILO 2006]. This is even more so the case in the Latin-American context, which is mentioned as one of the continents where the decline has been the fastest: from 17.4 million children working in 2000 to 5.7 children working in 2004 [ILO 2006:8]. This decline even puts Latin America on a par with some developed and transitional economies.

Taking this promising picture into account, IREWOC decided to investigate some of the sectors in Latin-America where the worst forms do still prevail and find an answer to the question why children are still working there. Additionally, it was considered important to identify some of the initiatives that have been successful (and less successful) in getting children out of labour activities.

Research phases and methodology

Three countries were selected: Guatemala, Bolivia and Peru. These specific countries were chosen based on a combination of factors, of which the most important was the estimated incidence of child labour, as the numbers of working children in the selected countries appear to be on the rise⁴. Another selection criterion was the presence of initiatives to eradicate the worst forms of child labour.

To get a better overview of the specific sectors in which children are working and of existing child labour projects, a specific background mapping period was conducted in each research country. In the period October-December 2006, a total of 62 key-resource persons working for child-centred NGOs, UN organisations, research institutes and various ministries were interviewed. In addition, three fieldwork trips were carried out to mining and quarrying areas in different regions in the three countries. Based on this research period the following sectors were selected for this study: coffee plantations and stone quarries in Guatemala; tin/silver mines and sugar cane plantations in Bolivia; gold mines, waste disposal/recycling and fruit/vegetable markets in Peru.

The following research phase was a thorough anthropological study of all selected sectors. Most existing studies are from a macro-perspective, based on statistical and quantitative methodology. Although these methods are useful in getting an overall view of the problem, they are not particularly conducive for an in-depth understanding of local situations and of (cultural) views and motivations of local actors. Precisely this specific information is useful for policy making in a local context. Therefore, in our research project, we collected insights directly from the source, by doing detailed anthropological fieldwork in the communities and “on the work floor”, and by documenting the views and opinions of the children, their caretakers, as well as development workers.

Using participant observation to study the worst forms of child labour often meant enduring extreme situations: conducting fieldwork in icy mining shafts, on a glacier at an altitude of 5.400 meters in the Andean Cordillera, living with migrant labourers in desolate shacks on a sugar cane plantation in the lowlands of Bolivia, lacking all hygiene and privacy, or picking coffee for hours under the burning sun on coffee plantations in the Guatemalan highlands. Although they demanded the best from our researchers these experiences certainly brought us closer to our “informants”, obtaining their trust and confidence and allowing us to observe more than just the socially accepted answers and behaviour.

The study also involved more formal methods, such as structured interviews, and alternative methods, such as taking photographs with the children and filling in questionnaires in a playful

⁴ In Peru, according to the data of OIT and INEI, between 1993 and 2001, the amount of working children in the age category 6-11 increased from 2.5% to 21.7% and was expected to increase to 32% in 2005 [CPETI & MTPE 2005]. In 2008 a new census on child labour was carried out and although there is still no official publication, ILO personnel in Lima told us that statistics again show an increase reaching an estimate of over 2 million child labourers. In Bolivia, according to ILO, in the year 2000 there were 248,236 children between 10 and 14 years economically active [ILO 2001], while the national census of 2001 shows that 354,742 children between 10 and 14 years were economically active [INE 2003]. UCW also estimates that in Guatemala the amount of child labourers is on the rise, from 14% in 1999 to 20% in 2000 to 23% in 2003 [UCW 2003:2]

manner. The research revealed that these alternative methods in particular can lead to interesting additional information on how children perceive their living and working conditions.

Collaboration

To gain access to the different sectors, and to the children and their caretakers, we were thankfully helped by several local NGOs. They not only offered us their kind collaboration in making initial contacts, but were also willing to have their initiatives related to child labour scrutinised. We are greatly indebted to them. We would also like to express our gratitude to the working children and their families for their time and sharing of ideas. Their voices are at the core of this project. The recommendations that resulted from our research were discussed at several workshops in the research countries: at local presentations with the working children and their families, at national seminars with policy makers from governmental and non-governmental organisations, and at public meetings. A special thanks goes to the local NGOs that helped us prepare these meetings: Childhope in Guatemala, Terre des Hommes Netherlands in Bolivia and GIN in Peru. These workshops enabled us to evaluate our conclusions and recommendations and gave us the very special opportunity to discuss the policy implications of our research results with the most important actors in the field. We are also grateful to the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs in The Hague, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Kerk in Actie, ICCO, Stichting Kinderpostzegels, Edukans and Plan Netherlands for financing this research, and for their ongoing support and advice. By realising this research project in close collaboration with the funding agencies as well as with the local NGOs, we hope to bridge the gap somewhat that often exists between scientific research and policy implementation. Hopefully the results of our research project will have a direct impact at the local level for our “informants”.

August 2008

Marten van den Berge

Project coordinator

Chapter 2

General Background

2.1 Child labour in Guatemala

As in most countries, it is extremely difficult to find a record of the exact number of child labourers in Guatemala. Estimates vary between institutions, which base their calculations on different sources and definitions. The ENCOVI study (National Survey of Life Conditions), for example, claims that nearly one million boys, girls and adolescents are economically active or looking for a job. According to this survey 20.3 percent of the total working population consists of minors [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:1-2]. In their cooperative report “Understanding Children’s Work”, UNICEF, World Bank and ILO state that in Guatemala “One-fifth of total 7-14 year olds, over 500,000 in absolute terms, are engaged in work. Among 5-17 year-olds, 23 percent, or over 900,000 in absolute terms, are involved in work.” [UCW 2003:17]. Some NGOs though have the numbers rise as high as 2.5 million [ODHAG 2006:88]

Discrepancies may originate from the use of different definitions or ranges and the in- or exclusion of certain types of work, such as house hold chores. The exclusion of this specific activity results in an underrepresentation of girls, who traditionally are more involved in house keeping, in the official statistics⁵. The same is true for a hidden activity such as prostitution.

Despite some notable inconsistencies in exact numbers, some general tendencies within the child labour issue in Guatemala can be identified. The presence of indigenous children within the child working population is disproportionate; mention is made of twice as many indigenous children than non-indigenous children involved in labour. Also, three-fourths of child labourers are said to be from rural areas, whereas only two-thirds of child labourers work in rural areas⁶ [ODHAG 2006:87]. This indicates that a large number of rural children work in the cities.

A child works in a specific sector for a number of reasons, including his or her original location. The vast majority of rural children work in agriculture, whilst urban children are mainly found in commerce. Gender also affects the choice of work; boys tend to work more in agriculture (three-fourths) than girls (40 percent), whereas the latter are also frequently found in commerce (28 percent), manufacturing (20 percent) and personal services (12 percent) [UCW 2003:21]

⁵ According to ILO and UNICEF the prevalence of child labour is twice as high among boys than among girls [ODHAG 2006:87]

⁶ Guatemalan rural population is highly marginalised. According to the 2000 ENCOVI (National Survey on Life Conditions) the total rural population consist of 56.2 % of the 12.599.000 Guatemalans [UNICEF 2006]. 81.4% of Guatemalan poor are found among the rural population of which 61.4% is of indigenous origin [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:1-2]

2.1.1 Worst forms of child labour in Guatemala

In their interagency research report “Understanding Children’s Work” ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank Group identify the hazardous forms and the unconditional worst forms of child labour in Guatemala, the latter being sexual work, child trafficking and illicit activities [UCW 2003:27-28]. The Guatemalan Ministry of Labour composed a list of worst form activities in the Acuerdo Gubernativo 250-2006 (Governmental Agreement 2006). Instead of identifying worst form *sectors*, worst forms *activities* were listed, as a result of resistance from the coffee sector, among others [Van den Berge 2007, unpublished]. The list includes descriptions of types of activities that, because of their nature or conditions under which they are undertaken, must be considered worst forms of child labour.

According to IPEC, domestic labour should be considered a hazardous form of child labour because of its invisibility and the seemingly familiar relationship that evolves between employer and employee. This relationship may be fertile ground for physical, psychological or sexual abuse [ILO/IPEC 2005:50]. On the national worst forms list, domestic labour is categorised as a worst form in cases where the child sleeps at the workplace or spends significant time there beyond working hours. Domestic labour is one of the most common labour activities among young girls; almost 39,000 children, between 5 and 17, work as domestic servants. This number does not include those children who perform a significant number of tasks within their own homes [ILO/IPEC 2005:47]. 91 percent of these children are girls and the vast majority is from the Guatemalan countryside and of indigenous origin.

A less common, but physically more dangerous, activity is work in the pyrotechnic industry; this is a worst form according to both the ILO and the national list. The latter states that all activities that involve the fabrication of explosive materials are worst forms. It is estimated that about 5,000 children can be found performing activities within the production of so called *cohetes*. Another 3,000 children work in gunpowder production [UCW 2003:24]. These activities are dangerous by their nature and expose all labourers to intoxication, explosions and fires. Children are especially vulnerable to these risks. Firecracker production is concentrated in San Juan Sacatepequez and San Raymundo in the Guatemala department [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:51].

In the cities a typical hazardous form of child labour identified by the ILO and the national list is garbage picking. Young children spend many hours a day on garbage dumps under the burning sun, sorting through garbage. Exposure to decomposing rubbish makes children vulnerable to infections and diseases, and the fumes cause their eyes to burn. The unstable surfaces they work on result in fall-related injuries such as abrasions, cuts, and sprains.

National and international classifications also include mining and quarrying activities as hazardous forms of child labour. Quarrying is most common among children in the Retalhuleu department. Along the Samalá river many children can be found chipping and hauling stones, which can cause cuts, abrasions, sprains, fractures, burns and respiratory conditions [UCW 2003:26]. The children are also exposed to contaminated waters and solar radiation. According to the NGO CEIPA⁷ around

⁷ Centro Ecueménico de Integración Pastoral (Ecumenical Centre of Pastoral Integration) is the NGO that executed the ILO/IPEC project for the eradication of child labour in quarrying in the department of Retalhuleu.

200 families are engaged in these activities on the Samalá riverbanks. Quarrying is also common in the Quiché department, although not to the same extent and less concentrated. The nature of the work is also different. Children can be mainly found extracting sand and gravel. Although contrary to the children in Retalhuleu the children in Quiché do not chip stones, they spend more time in lonely, contaminated rivers and streams, using heavy spades to extract the material.

Agricultural activities are also listed as hazardous by ILO-IPEC. It is said that, “Children in agriculture can be subjected to hazardous working conditions.” [UCW 2003:26]. Guatemala is a country highly dependent on agriculture, and thus it is not very surprising to find a convincing majority of child labourers in this sector; almost two-thirds of 7-14 year olds workers work on family land or for a *finca* (plantation) [UCW 2003:21]. This sector is characterised by its informality, making labourers vulnerable to exploitation and instability [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:1-2]. According to the OPS (Pan-American Health Organisation) around one million workers from the Guatemalan Altiplano (highlands) migrate every year to the southern coasts to work in *fincas*, where they harvest several agricultural products, such as coffee and sugar cane. Between one-quarter and one-third of these workers is accompanied by family, resulting in an estimated half a million children migrating to the coast every year [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2001:8]. In the current context, though, this estimation seems too high. Many plantations did not survive the coffee crisis and there has been a decrease in the number of migrants (see paragraph 2.4).

The Ministry of Labour has not designated the agricultural sector a worst form. It does, however, list particular types of activities within the sector that are worst forms because of their nature or conditions under which they are performed. Among these activities are those involving the use of chemicals and manual hauling of heavy loads. The activities on the list that apply to the coffee sector will be discussed in detail in Chapter three and four.

The ILO mentions the coffee sector in particular, when discussing hazardous agricultural labour. “On coffee plantations, children - mostly boys - work picking, sorting and carrying heavy sacks of the coffee beans. Working and living conditions for these child workers are often dismal.” [UCW 2003:25].

This report aims to identify the exact risks involved with work in the coffee sector, and the risk perceptions of different parties involved, based on qualitative research.

2.2 Education

The official educational structure found in Guatemala consists of one pre-primary year, six years of primary education, three years of *basico* (secondary education) and three years of so called *diversificado*. This last stage involves general theoretical preparation or technical career (teaching, administration, nursing etc.), and provides access to higher education.

Between the primary and *diversificado* stages a significant decrease can be observed in school attendance. Whereas the net primary enrolment of 2004 approached 93 percent, in *basico* we saw an enrolment rate of only 31.33 percent. Of the students who completed *basico*, only 17.53 percent

continued into *diversificado* [ODHAG 2006:74]⁸. School dropout and repetition rates were also alarming. Of every 100 children enrolled in primary education in 2004 20 either dropped out or failed the grade. 31 out of 100 students completing primary school entered *basico*, of which only 16 successfully completed the first year [ODHAG 2006:74-75]. Although Guatemalan net enrolment rates have grown significantly since the 1996 Peace Accords, girls', indigenous- and rural children's participation within this growth has been disproportionate [UCW 2003:14]. Women, indigenous people and the rural population are also overrepresented among the illiterate. Illiteracy affects 31.7 percent of the population above 14 [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:1-2].

Statistics show that child labour has a negative impact on education. First, only 55.7 percent of child labourers between 5 and 17 years old are enrolled.⁹ Furthermore, in 37.7 percent of cases of school absence child labour is the main cause, and dropout is triggered by child labour 50.6 percent of the time [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2001:9-11].

2.3 International and national legislation

The Guatemalan government has ratified several international conventions concerning the wellbeing of children in general and of child labourers specifically, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 [ILO/IPEC 2000:67]. Despite agreeing to this convention, which defines children as every person under 18, the Guatemalan government considers children to be no older than 14, in accordance with its Political Constitution, which sets the minimum age for employment at 14. This, in turn, is consistent with the ILO minimum age convention 138, ratified by the Guatemalan state in 1990 [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2001:17].

In 1996 the Guatemalan State signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO, committing itself to put the ratified conventions into practice, by developing a National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour. Consequently the IPEC International Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour was established in Guatemala [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2001:1]. In 2001 the ratification of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour was realised and the Guatemalan government openly committed itself to prohibiting and eradicating the worst forms of child labour, which had yet to be defined in detail [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2006:2].

To some extent the ratified international conventions and the signed memorandum have had repercussions on national politics. In the Political Constitution the state is obliged to protect children and adolescents and provide them with alimentation, education and security. The constitution assigns children the right to education, which is obligatory until the last year of *basico*. The constitution prohibits anyone under 14 from performing labour activities, except in the situations defined by the Labour Code [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2001:17].

In this code it is also determined that no minors may perform activities inappropriate for their age, capacities, physical conditions and moral or intellectual development. Night work is prohibited for

⁸ Legally, education should be free and compulsory until the last grade of *diversificado* [Congress of the Republic of Guatemala 2003: art.37]

⁹ <http://www.ipec.oit.or.cr/ipec/region/paises/guatemala.shtml>, (14-01-2008)

all minors and for work under unhealthy or dangerous conditions the minimum age is set at 18. For children older than 14 the maximum working time is set at six hours per week [ILO/IPEC & INE 2003:5-6].

Although C182 was ratified in 2001, no list existed of the specific worst forms in Guatemala. By 2006 such a list had been composed by the Ministry of Labour in the Acuerdo Gubernativo 250-2006 (Governmental Agreement). In an interview a staff member of the Ministry of Labour explained that instead of pointing out worst form sectors, worst form activities had been listed: “In some phases of a production process we may find harmful activities, while in other stages activities may have no negative impact on the children.” A problem with the presented act is that it does not apply to children under 14, as any kind of labour is officially prohibited among this group. The list is therefore only valid concerning adolescents (14-18) [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2006:2].

This negation of the presence of children younger than 14 within the worst forms is only one of the discrepancies and pitfalls that make the actual implementation of child labour legislation open to debate. Moreover, setting 14 as the minimum age for employment contradicts compulsory education until the age of 15. Also, even though labour is officially prohibited under 14, the General Labour Inspector (IGT) from the Ministry of Labour may authorise a working permit for an under 14 child in some cases, as defined in the Labour Code: if the child is an apprentice, if extreme poverty makes the child’s income indispensable for its family, if the work is light in duration and intensity and under the condition that the work does not impede with compulsory education [UCW 2003:36]. Finally no explicit definitions are given for concepts such as “dangerous”, “unhealthy”, “extreme poverty” and “inadequate”. A representative of the Ministry of Labour explained:

“Some children under 14 request a working permit. Their situation must be evaluated. In order to get this permit they may not work in, for example, a liquor shop, or in construction. They cannot work for more than seven hours per week or during weekends. Their home situation is also evaluated. In this country economic and cultural circumstances may make a child’s contribution necessary. These are, though, very specific cases and I believe that this year only eight permits have been granted. Permits are only granted after a process of evaluation.”

The fact that only a few permits are granted per year contradicts with the fact that thousands of other children under 14 do work. The interviewed representative of the Ministry of Labour stated that inspectors are to identify these cases, warn the employer and return for a second visit. If children under 14 are found working again, sanctions will follow, but “there is a lack of inspectors, and there are too many companies to inspect. The budget is not enough and inspectors do not have access to the necessary means like adequate transport.”

A very important obstacle in the struggle against child labour is the fact that the Labour Code only applies to formal sectors in which there is a clear employer-employee relationship, whereas a lot of hazardous child labour takes place in informal sectors, like firecracker production and quarrying, where families often work on their own account. The informality makes children more vulnerable to hazardous conditions and legislation and intervention therefore more urgent.

National politics do not only lack precision and determination concerning content, they also fail when it comes to the identification of the most vulnerable groups. In addition, implementation and inspection leave much to be desired. Issues such as a lack of labour inspectors, an understaffed labour court system and arrears of unresolved cases are obstacles for putting into practice the designed legislation [UCW 2003].

2.4 The coffee market

Coffee is the second most traded commodity on an international level [Ponte 2002:4]. Over 90 percent of coffee is cultivated in developing countries, whereas the consumers are found mainly in the industrialised countries. Many producing countries are economically dependent on coffee. To millions of their inhabitants coffee is their primary mode of subsistence. Fluctuations on the international market have serious repercussions on all families depending on the commodity [Ponte 2002]. Analysing local labour in the coffee sector should then to some extent take international implications of the sector into account.

Historically the main coffee producing countries have been Brazil and Colombia. By 2000 Vietnam had replaced Colombia as the second most important coffee producing country. In 2000 Guatemala was number 8 on the list. The International Coffee Organisation distinguishes four categories of coffee: Colombian Milds, Other Milds, Brazilian Naturals and Robusta. Guatemala mainly produces “Other Milds”, namely mild Arabica coffee. This category has the second highest global market price [Ponte 2002]. Guatemala produces high quality coffee, mainly thanks to the high altitude and the accurate processing methods.

The coffee sector is characterised by very volatile coffee prices, caused by a high sensitivity to fluctuations on the supply side. These fluctuations may be caused by impacts of climatic events during harvest, technological evolution and improvements in processing techniques [Eakin et al. 2006:158]. In 1962 the International Coffee Agreement was signed by many producing and consuming countries in an attempt to regulate coffee prices. After the ICA’s breakdown in 1989 power relations on the coffee market dramatically changed, in favour of consuming countries. As a result prices have become more volatile and an even smaller part of the generated income is retained in producing countries¹⁰ [Ponte 2002].

Together with the boost of Brazilian coffee supply and the convincing entrance of Vietnam to the coffee market, the collapse of the ICA and the resulting concentration of power among multinationals ultimately led to an impacting coffee crisis at the start of the 21st century [Muradian & Pelupessy 2005:2029]. World coffee prices reached an almost hundred year low, affecting the small-scale coffee growers most of all [Murray et al. 2006:179]. In Central America revenue from the coffee export declined by 44 percent [Eakin et al. 2006].

For many farmers the Fair Trade system seems to have been a means of surviving the crisis. Coffee is the dominant commodity within the Fair Trade movement [Murray et al. 2006:181]. Up to 30 percent of the world’s small-scale producers are connected to the system. Fair trade is:

¹⁰ In the 1980s 20 percent of income was retained by producers, by 1995 this percentage had dropped to 13% [Ponte 2002:9]

“[A]n attempt to build more direct links between consumers and producers that provide the latter with greater benefits from the marketing of their products than conventional production and trade have allowed, while breaking down the traditional alienation of consumers from the products they purchase.” [Murray et al. 2006:180].

2.4.1 The Guatemalan Coffee Sector

After being introduced in Guatemala in the sixteenth century, coffee did not become an export commodity until the mid-nineteenth century. Before this the crop was only used as a medicinal plant. Since the introduction of Guatemalan coffee to the international market it has become one of the most important commodities to the national economy. In 1960 the Guatemalan government underlined this significance by establishing Anacafé (The Guatemalan National Coffee Association) to guard national production and export [Anacafé]¹¹.

National production takes place on three officially recognised levels: small-scale producers, secondary producers and large-scale producers. Small-scale coffee growers produce less than 40 kilograms of green¹² coffee and possess no more than 3 hectares of land. This category includes individual producers and producers organised into cooperatives. Secondary producers own medium sized family- or multifamily land, whereas large-scale producers possess the large multifamily *fincas*. The two latter categories are organised into regional and general coffee growers associations [Roux & Camacho 1992:3].

The recent coffee crisis was felt at all production levels, but it had a more dramatic impact among small-scale farmers, who faced a devastating collapse of their income. Many were forced to skip the harvest because they could not afford to pay for labour. Migrating to nearby regions in search of other work was for many the only option. Plantation owners faced production costs exceeding benefits and some were left with no choice but to deliberately lose the harvest. During the research many informants spoke about the crisis and its impact. Only a few of the large *fincas* are said to have survived the crisis. Others changed their coffee plantations into cattle grazing land or were forced to parcel their land for sale or to pay wages to their labourers.

Historically, most of the land apt for coffee producing was in the hands of the Maya communities. Around 1870, community land and land in hands of the Catholic Church was expropriated by the liberal government who wanted to introduce the capitalist system. As part of a privatisation policy the land was sold to wealthy people, who in many cases were European migrants. If at all, the indigenous were left with small parcels barely enough for their own subsistence. Most were left with no other option than to sell their labour to the large landholders [Argueta 2001:43-45]. The main source of labour for coffee production has always been the indigenous population, and up until the 1950's it was acquired by coercive means.

One way of obliging the indigenous to work was by forcing them to take an advance on their wage, thereby committing the labourers to redeem their “debt”. This method was known as *enganche*. On many occasions physical force was used. The use of coercive means was not a privilege of only the

¹¹ Website accessed June 2008

¹² Green coffee is an international commodity that still needs to be roasted in the consuming countries.

landholders; the state, consisting of course of many of the large landholders, used coercive measures through policies created to ensure a labour force for the economic development of the country. One of these policies was the execution of the so called “Laws of Vagrancy”, which obliged every person without enough property to work on someone else’s land [Argueta 2001:54-56]. By the beginning of the 20th century military battalions were assigned to forcibly assemble people for the construction of roads. This conscription could only be escaped by being a *colono*¹³, an indebted labourer or a contracted *finca* worker.

The cultivation of coffee in Guatemala has thus not only been fundamental because of its economic significance¹⁴, but also because the effects it has had on the rural population and on social relations.

2.5 The research communities

2.5.1 San Marcos department

The San Marcos department was selected for this research for several reasons. It is the only department in which a project has been executed that specifically targeted child labour in the coffee sector. In addition, it is one of the most important coffee regions in Guatemala, while at the same time it has one of the country’s highest poverty levels [ILO/IPEC 2004:13]. This contradiction is caused by the poor distribution of earnings from the sector; the few large landholders may profit from the market, while small scale producers can barely make ends meet and the mass of labourers earns not even enough to cover basic needs.

San Marcos department can be found in western Guatemala bordering Mexico in the north and the Pacific Ocean in the south. With almost a million inhabitants (836,000 in 2000) this department is the second most populated in the country [Funcede & Fundación Soros 2001:107]. San Marcos is characterised by a remarkable diversity expressed through its climate, landscape and its people. Near the coast one can find many sugar cane and banana plantations thanks to the tropical climate, which also attracts many tourists. The inland landscape becomes more and more mountainous, until reaching the Altiplano (highland) where temperatures at night can fall below 0 degrees. The San Marcos Altiplano is mainly inhabited by the indigenous Mam, who cultivate beans and corn for family subsistence. Another indigenous group here is the Sipacapense [ILO/IPEC 2004:13]. Between the Altiplano and the Pacific coast we find the Boca Costa with its moderate climate. Travelling through this area one cannot but notice the endless coffee fields and the people maintaining them.

San Marcos is one of the main coffee producing regions of Guatemala, and its economy is mainly based on coffee production. It is the primary source of income within the department. The cultivation is concentrated on large *fincas*, whose owners usually live in other parts of the country and entrust the administration of their property to local administrators. Nevertheless, 97 percent of producers are small-scale producers [ILO/IPEC 2004:23]. Labour in the coffee sector in San Marcos is more and more temporary and on a great scale migratory. Thousands of indigenous people travel to

¹³ A *colono* lives and works permanently on a *finca*; normally they are male, but can also be female.

¹⁴ In Guatemala over 1,700,000 people economically profit from the coffee sector [Roux & Camacho 1992].

the Boca Costa during harvest to work in the large *fincas*. The number of *colonos*, who may live permanently in a *fincas* and are bound to work there in exchange, gets lower by the day [ILO/IPEC 2004:13].

2.5.2 El Amanecer¹⁵



Photo 1: The housing area of Colono families in El Amanecer

The choice for the El Amanecer *fincas* was made because upon arrival in San Marcos in February it appeared that harvest had already finished on most other *fincas*; El Amanecer cultivates mainly Robusta coffee, known for its extended harvest period. El Amanecer may be categorised as a large *fincas* covering a surface of 20 *caballerias* or 900 hectare. It lies alongside the main road between two villages. El Amanecer has always been property of the same family. The current owner lives in Guatemala City and travels to El Amanecer every weekend to exercise control. His trustees are an administrator and a secretary, who organise labour in the *fincas*. The exact population is unknown to the administrator, but with 30 *colono* families inhabiting the plantation, one could estimate about 150 people. Most families have been living here for generations. Although these families are Mam descendants, they do not speak Mam and in general do not consider themselves to be indigenous. In

¹⁵ Fictive name

order to be assigned a house, at least one of the household members has to be officially registered in the *finca* records.

There is one evangelical Christian church on the plantation; most of the inhabitants are evangelical, but there is also a catholic minority. Problems between the groups are rare. In addition to the church there is a small primary school, also owned the *finquero*¹⁶. There are no health facilities.

2.5.3 Chipel

Chipel is one of the towns from which people migrate to the coffee plantations during harvest time; it is also one of the Altiplano target communities of the Funcafé project.¹⁷ This small village belongs to the municipality of Comitancillo and lies in the San Marcos Altiplano. Cultivating coffee is impossible because of the relatively cold climate. In 2006 Chipel had 831 registered inhabitants, all Mam. Although most people speak some Spanish and it is the official language at school, Mam is the language for everyday communication. Young children and many women understand and speak little or no Spanish, and so an interpreter assisted during this phase of the research.



Photo 2: View of Chipel

¹⁶ *Finca* owner

¹⁷ See Chapter 6 for a detailed description of this project.

Chipel, as other Altiplano communities, is highly inaccessible. No paved road leads to the village and transport is available to Comitancillo only on Sundays. On other days people usually walk, which takes about one hour. The village centre basically consists of a school, two churches (catholic and evangelical) and a medical post. Communications are limited to one or two phones for the whole village; there is no mobile phone reception or internet access.

People live in homemade adobe houses. Every family owns a parcel, which is used for the cultivation of corn and beans, the main components of daily nutrition. The fragmented land possession leads to a dispersed distribution of households within the Chipel territory. Distances from the farthest households to the village centre may take as long as 45 minutes to walk.

Officially Chipel falls within the administrative district of Comitancillo. For dealing with every day issues, however, a local mayor (*alcalde auxiliar*) is elected by the people every two years. He receives no payment, but if chosen it is considered an obligation to accept the function. The same applies to the members of COCODE¹⁸, the Community Development Council, who are assigned the task of representing the Chipel population in public matters and to take action for the development of the community.

2.5.4 Chanchicupe



Photo 3: View of the Tajumulco volcano from Chanchicupe

Chipel lies to one side of Central America's highest volcano, Tajumulco; Chanchicupe lies on the other side, in the foothills. Every morning a spectacular panorama of the volcano is revealed; this volcano is one of the reasons for the extremely fertile soil of its surrounding settlements, on which

¹⁸ The Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo are part of a government decentralisation strategy.

exclusively coffee is grown. Chanchicupe is just one of the many small-grower communities surrounding the volcano.

In 2006 this village, of the Tajumulco municipality, was home to 1743 people. Local authority is organised following the same principles as Chipel, with a mayor and assistants organised into COCODE. Although accessibility to Chanchicupe is also problematic, because of poor road conditions, several men own a car in which they transport people to the bigger villages on a daily basis. There are therefore more services than in Chipel. Besides the school, the evangelical and catholic churches and the health post, there are several stalls and a butcher.

Most inhabitants own a parcel on which they grow coffee, varying in size from 2 or 3 *cuerdas* to as much as 100 or more *cuerdas*¹⁹. The huge differences concerning landownership result in a highly marked social stratification within the community. Whereas in El Amanecer and Chipel living conditions are similar for all inhabitants, in Chanchicupe they may vary according to the size of one's land.

Research thus took place in three communities, each representing a different group of the coffee labour population: *colonos*, migrants, and small-growers. Each group has its own cultural and socio-economic structural implications and must therefore be evaluated individually to understand the child labour dynamics.

¹⁹ One *cuerda* is about 440 square metres

Chapter 3

Living and Working Conditions

3.1 Living conditions

Before analysing the causes and consequences of child labour it is crucial to understand the context in which the children's lives unfold. In this particular case this will also shade light on the complexity of the coffee sector and the different ways people may depend on it, therefore experiencing specific implications. The description of living conditions will be a first step towards the discussion of the causes of child labour in Chapter 5. The three research communities will be discussed separately as they have different structural, environmental and cultural backgrounds.

3.1.1 El Amanecer

Being in El Amanecer gives one a feeling of isolation, as if there were nothing but this specific place. Life outside the *finca* seems very far away. El Amanecer differs dramatically from the other research communities because it is someone's private property. This creates a very exceptional situation for the inhabitants of this large plantation and is essential in understanding social matters such as child labour. El Amanecer is inhabited by about 30 *colono* families, who have been living here for generations. Some women are originally from nearby villages and moved to the *finca* after marrying a *colono*. In some cases, families from nearby villages that sell their labour to the *finca*, eventually are offered one of the modest, wooden *colono* houses.

A few houses have access to water in the mornings, but most women have to go to the central water tank to wash clothes, dishes and often themselves and their children. They carry some water home for cooking etc:

Today I accompanied a woman to the water tank. She had her baby on her back, one bucket with clothes on her head, one under her left arm and a bucket with the dishes under her right arm. I offered to help her and looked after her baby. Many women gathered around the tank, with their babies on their backs. Older children either helped or played around. Everyone wondered who I was and carefully started to ask all about me. (Research diary February 20th 2007)

Sometimes water is scarce and the women have to go to the river to wash. A major problem according to the *finca* owner is the large amount of garbage in the *finca*. Domestic waste, plastic packaging from candies and drinks, are thrown all around the plantation as there is no place to deposit or collect it. The inhabitants themselves do not seem to experience this as a problem at all.

Everything on the *finca* is the owner's private property. This means the *colonos* own neither land nor the houses they live in. Although they are free to go whenever they like, for most of them this is

no actual option, as they have no means to survive outside the place they were born and raised and face all the uncertainties life outside the *finca* entails. For as long as they can stay in the *finca* they have a job²⁰ and housing, but one mother expressed her worries: “one of our biggest concerns is that we cannot save money to buy a piece of land. I feel very insecure about the future, as our boss can send us away at any moment.”

Most El Amanecer families are four- or five children nuclear families. Grandparents only share the same house if they are alone and in need of care, as young couples can easily be assigned one of the *finca* houses themselves. Unmarried daughters with children often live with their parents and there are also cases of children living with their grandparents after being left by their parents. A few families within the community enjoy a certain level of respectability. These are the families of the *caporales* (the work supervisors) and the *mayordomo* (the administrator). The *caporales* earn as much as the other workers and live more or less under the same conditions, but their tasks involve supervising the workers and ensuring that they do their work as they should. The administrator also lives on the *finca*, but in a much better house than the rest of the *colonos* and he receives a higher wage.

Gender relations in El Amanecer are very traditional. Women and their daughters take care of the household and the family. They get up very early, around four a.m., to prepare breakfast for all working family members. 16-year-old Veronica described an average day:

I get up at four o'clock to *tortillar* (make tortillas). I walk to the mill very quickly because it can get very busy sometimes. When I can't get up, my mother comes yelling at my bed until I react. My father gets up at 5:30 and leaves for work at 6. When there is work I leave with my mother right after him. We get back before twelve to make the tortillas for lunch. After lunch my father goes to sleep and my mother and I go to the tank to wash dishes and clothes. I prefer to do the dishes. Then I have to go clean the house and rest a little bit before the last tortillas have to be made. If I wouldn't help my mother, she would be making tortillas the whole day (laughing).

After breakfast many women leave for work on the plantation or stay home with the children to perform household chores like washing, cleaning, feeding the animals - they often have some chickens and a pig - and preparing food. At one or two o'clock people arrive from the plantation and have lunch. Men usually gather wood or rest after lunch. By the time men stop working, women's working day is not even nearly over. They are constantly busy with time-consuming chores such as getting water, cleaning the pigsty or making tortillas.

I asked several women whether they had to hand over their wages to their husbands. Concerning this, women appeared to be quite independent. They kept their wages to themselves to buy food and other household goods. According to them, men usually waste their money drinking. During interviews with couples, though, women were very timid and only confirmed their husbands' statements. Children also express great respect towards their fathers. The relationship between

²⁰ For most of the year there is plenty of paid work on the plantation, although sometimes women complain about lack of work for them, as most activities are done by men.

fathers and children seems to be distant. Interviews with fathers revealed that they know little about their children's lives. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, children are often treated heavily, more so in cases of alcohol abuse by their fathers, which is not uncommon. After they receive their wages, every two weeks, many men spend a considerable amount of money on alcohol. Several women expressed their concerns about their husbands' alcohol abuse and the pressure it puts on the family income.

Colono families are highly dependent on the coffee sector. Working in this sector is the only option they know, as their daily lives have always taken place exclusively in the *finca*. Decades after the involuntary incorporation of their Mayan ancestors to the plantation, *colonos* are still bound to El Amanecer. Although coercive means are no longer used and people are free to go whenever they like, this is no real option, coffee being the only thing they know.

The Labour Code assigns *colonos* certain rights concerning their living conditions. The patron must, for example, allow them to use wood from the plantation. In both plantations I visited this right was indeed granted. The Code also establishes that labourers can take all the water they need from the tanks. Even though theoretically patrons may acknowledge this right, in practice the water from the tanks may not be enough, as is the case in El Amanecer, and women may be forced to walk long distances to meet their needs [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social undated:33, Art. 61.l/m].

Education

The disadvantaged position of El Amanecer women is more evident concerning education. Illiteracy is greater among women than among men. Where many men have received at least a few years of education, most women have never gone to school. In El Amanecer there is a small primary school funded by the *finquero*, and is therefore private. Children are offered the first three years of primary school, all instructed by one teacher, who has not fulfilled a teacher's education. She is paid by the *finquero*, but has no right to extras, such as the December allowance, and does not receive wages during holidays. Only thirteen children from all thirty *colono* families were enrolled for the 2007 school year. Educational quality is not only low due to the teacher's lack of education, but the school also lacks sufficient educational materials. Although parents don't have to pay tuition, occasionally small unexpected costs can arise.

After finishing the third grade, parents send their children to one of the schools in the nearby villages, mainly to Las Estrellas; it takes children 30 minutes to walk to this school. This is a semi-private PRONADE school²¹. Two professional teachers are in charge of the six grades. Quality appears to be better than in El Amanecer, although the teachers did not mention any specific deficiencies of the *finca* school. All parents stated that an amount of 70Q (7 €) per year has to be paid. The teachers explained that this sum is a voluntary donation to replenish school funds. By the way parents spoke about this money it appeared, however, that they considered this amount to be

²¹ PRONADE (Programa Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Educación) is a government led programme to promote community participation in education and to increase enrolment and quality in rural areas. PRONADE schools are administered and managed by a community committee, which receives funds from the Ministry of Education to pay teachers' salaries and school materials.

obligatory. Some children from the *finca* also attend this school during their first three years of school, because parents have more faith in the quality of the PRONADE school than in the *finca* school.

All children in El Amanecer have attended at least the first three years of primary school. Third grade is considered the minimum a child should achieve. After these grades, drop out starts to become more common, especially among girls. Even so, a majority of children finish primary school in its entirety. Exceptionally few children proceed to *basico* and even less make it to a *diversificado*; those who do are normally the *mayordomo's* and the *caporales'* children, who may work, but only during school holidays. There are a few children who have a family member in the United States who may offer them the opportunity to continue schooling. Secondary and tertiary education entails not only tuition costs, but also transport costs, as the nearest options are in El Tumbador, fifteen minutes away by bus.

Health

Access to healthcare for the El Amanecer families leaves much to be desired. Within the plantation there are no health facilities at all. No one on the plantation has even a basic knowledge of first aid. The nearest facilities can be found in El Tumbador. Registered *colono* families can visit the IGSS health post (Guatemalan public healthcare institute), since a part of their wages is automatically deducted to pay for the IGSS service, which is better equipped and more professional than the health centre in El Tumbador, which offers free healthcare to everyone concerning pregnancy, family planning, vaccinations, tuberculosis, STD's, diarrhoea etc.. The contributions made to the IGSS cover costs made by the father, mother and children until the age of 5. The general health centre equipment is very basic and destined only to examine and treat the most common complaints and diseases. For emergencies people have to turn to the IGSS.

According to one of the doctors at the IGSS post the most frequent health problems among *colono* families are skin diseases and respiratory infections. The Las Estrellas teachers stressed that there is a certain level of malnutrition among the plantation children: "Poverty affects a lot. We sometimes have to act as the children's father. Some children do not get breakfast, at school they ask for food." The IGSS social health promoter confirmed this statement when I asked him about health problems among children from the *fincas*:

In the *fincas* you see a lot of cases of malnutrition. This may be caused by the poverty; there is more poverty in the *fincas* than is the case in other communities. Rashes are also very common, because children are in a constant unhygienic situation. There is a lot of dust in the communities causing respiratory infections. Concerning water there exists a precarious situation. Some families drink contaminated water from the tanks. In some communities there is no sewage, or even latrines."

Pit-latrines are present in nearly all the houses in El Amanecer, but a sewage system is absent. When pits become full they are closed up, and a new pit is dug elsewhere.

3.1.2 Chipel

Where El Amanecer can be described as somewhat socially isolated, Chipel is characterised by its geographical isolation. The family of Don José and their daily concerns may serve as an example of a typical Chipel family, originating from the small village and cherishing many of the ancestors' traditions, like growing corn and bathing in the traditional sweat baths. Don José, his wife Rosa and eight of their nine children live in the village centre, near the school and the health post. He owns a small parcel of land on which he grows corn and beans. The youngest child is just one year old, the oldest is twenty and was at the moment working in Guatemala City. All the school aged children are in school. The oldest girl is in the second year of teacher training.

The living conditions of the family are very humble. Food lacks variety and is not very abundant. The basis consists of beans, corn and eggs. Doña Rosa spends most of her time in the smoky kitchen making tortillas and tamalitos. The kitchen is separate from the two-room living area. Outside there is a latrine, but no drainage. They are one of the only families in the village to have electricity and potable water, although it can be unavailable for several days a week. On those days women have to walk to the nearest river to wash clothes and themselves and to carry water home for cooking.

Don José travels to a coffee plantation every year to earn the money they live on. He takes two of his sons (12 and 16) and his two daughters (14 and 18) with him. Doña Rosa stays home with the youngest children, who maintain the land and take care of the animals like they always do. Gradually Don José has found several alternatives to replenish the household income. As many men in the community do, he acquires some additional income as a construction worker. He also funded a small stall where they sell bread, which is run mainly by Doña Rosa and the children. On Sunday Don José bakes bread for the stall. The whole family is engaged in maintaining the land and Doña Rosa and the girls feed and look after the cats, chickens, turkeys and sheep, in addition to performing the daily household chores.

Chipel families are considerably bigger than the families in El Amanecer. An entire family in the *finca* may have five children, but many Chipel families have as many as ten. Joint families are also more common, as are unmarried unions, which are culturally valued equal to an official marriage. Divorce is more common in Chipel than it is in El Amanecer; so are female headed households.

Carrying responsibility for a household is quite a challenge in this inaccessible mountain village, especially for single women. There are very few possibilities to generate an income in the village; there are barely any services, corn and beans are cultivated only for family subsistence and infrastructure is very poor. Besides working on family land men sometimes are offered work on neighbours' land. Construction work is also commonly carried out on neighbours' land; when a house has to be built family members and neighbours are expected to assist.

Some families own a small stall that provides them with additional income. Every Sunday they go to Comitancillo, the municipal capital, to buy merchandise. Also, there is a small group of families who derive an income from small businesses like bakeries, tailor shops, potteries etc.²². A few men own a truck which they use to transport people to the village on Sunday. On other days they work transporting goods around bigger villages. Owning a truck is a status symbol in Chipel. These

²² Most of these families received training by Funcafé

families are considered to have better opportunities and a better economic position. All families have to generate additional income, as the corn they grow on their small parcels is not enough to feed the entire family. Don Francisco stated:

I live with my wife, my three children and my parents. It is difficult to find money to sow more corn, the corn we have now will not be enough for an entire year. We don't have enough ground. We always have to buy more corn.

Some women now and then earn a little money with weaving, or they economise on household expenses by making their own and their children's clothes. Girls help their mothers in any household activity, while boys are engaged in whatever work their fathers do. During weekends many boys go to Comitancillo to shine shoes, whereas girls go there to work in housekeeping.

Girl (13): "On Sunday I go to the house of a lady to give water to her plants. I am always happy when it is Sunday, because I get to go to the village."

Boy (13): "I go to shine shoes on the market in Comitancillo every Sunday. Sometimes, though, there are too many shoe shiners, so then I sell jewellery."

Within the family all options to generate money are explored, because outside the coffee and sugar cane harvest seasons, money is scarce. It is thus not surprising that during the harvest period the family labour force is exploited to the maximum to build up some reserves. These may be spent on corn after the family stock has been diminished or on clothes. Often, though, it is invested in a small piece of land or the purchase of animals, such as sheep, turkeys and chicken.

Besides money, land is also very scarce. After the death of the parents, land has to be divided among many children. Each one is left with only a small parcel barely big enough to feed a family. Young couples often worry about how to acquire more land both to feed the family and to ensure an inheritance for their children. This was pointed out to be one of the greatest family problems, besides income acquirement and alcoholism.

Women are in a highly dependent position. They have even fewer productive options than men, as they cannot participate in, for example, construction. Women's dependency is further intensified by their educational deprivation. While most men at least learn how to read and write, a majority of women is illiterate and speaks little or no Spanish. This makes them less mobile and limits self-esteem. Despite their unequal position, women appear to be very able to sustain the family on occasions when their husbands have migrated alone or when there is no man at all. Women are often considered when making important decisions.²³

Education

Inequality between men's and women's educational level is more pronounced in Chipel than it is in El Amanecer. This was obvious in every day communication with the local men and women. Having a

²³ Don José, for example, consulted his wife about my request to live with them and about how much I would have to pay them for doing so.

conversation in Spanish with a male is easier than with a female. Many women have never received proper education and have thus never been taught Spanish. Interviewing men in Spanish was possible in most cases; interviewing women was a challenge even in the presence of an interpreter. Although illiteracy is high among both men and women, it is much more common among the latter.

In El Amanecer the gender imparity is not questioned and is reproduced in new generations (see Chapter 5). In Chipel, however, there are signs of changing gender relations. Parents underline the importance of education for both their sons and their daughters. It is rare for girls to drop out of primary school. Doña Marcela explained to me how she would have wanted to finish school; her husband confirmed that she feels bad about her lack of education, he feels bad for her too. Some women in the village have completed a literacy course offered by an NGO.

There is much more consciousness of the purpose of education in Chipel than in El Amanecer. According to parents and teachers in Chipel this is as a result of the awareness raising activities of Funcafé, which are to be discussed in Chapter 6. In El Amanecer, however, people have never been convinced of the benefits of education, nor have they experienced them²⁴. In the highland community, Chipel, people aspire to primary school at the least; nevertheless many boys and girls do not complete sixth grade. The local primary school has a 200 children capacity. The eight teachers are from other villages. Although they do speak Spanish and they ought to use this as the official language in school, Mam is their mother tongue and they frequently use it to explain things to the children, for whom communicating in Mam is much easier. This results in a gap between the children's actual command of Spanish and the level required in secondary and especially in tertiary education.

Even though there is a local secondary school, which makes Chipel an exception in the area, only a few local children make use of it. The nearest place to attend tertiary education is in Comitancillo, the municipal capital. Only a few children have the chance to do so, since few parents have the economic ability to pay for this education.

Health

Healthcare in the village is very basic. There is a small health post to which people can turn for basic, free services such as prenatal and postnatal care, vaccinations, family planning and general illnesses such as the flu etc. Basic medication is distributed free of charge. The post is financed by the municipality, but is officially owned by the Ministry of Health, which is in charge of delivering medication. The post consists of one small consultation room with no more than basic equipment to examine patients. Care is provided three to four days a week by a nursing assistant from the municipal capital; there is no presence of any professional. For emergencies people must turn to the Comitancillo health centre, half an hour away by car, or to the nearest hospital in San Marcos, almost two hours away. According to the local nurse assistant the most common illnesses among both children and adults are skin diseases, parasite-related problems and respiratory infections caused by excessive dust in the village. Among children diarrhoea is very common.

²⁴ Views of *colono* families on education will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

3.1.3 Chanchicupe

Chanchicupe is completely different from El Amanecer and Chipel in many aspects. A clear difference is in the composition of the population. Whereas in Chipel and El Amanecer all inhabitants are indigenous, in Chanchicupe some *ladinos*²⁵ are also part of the community, although in official statistics the entire population is considered indigenous. Also, families are considerably smaller, consisting of two parents and no more than four children. It is more common for people, especially women, to originate from other villages. There still are a few old men and women who speak Mam; the language is, however, not passed on or used in daily communication.

Although the coffee sector is also the main income generator in Chanchicupe, it is so in a very different way than it is in the other research communities. People do not primarily sell their labour, but work on family property. The size of the property may vary between 1 *cuern* and 100 *cuern*, and therefore income varies too, resulting in a highly marked social stratification, expressed partially through the quality of the houses - some are made of wood and others of brick - and the access to basic services like water, drainage and electricity. Having a family member in the United States also plays a large role in defining one's socio-economic position. Many brick houses have been financed by the 'famous' *remesas*²⁶ from the north. Twelve year old Eloida explained this to me:

I have four brothers and sisters. To feed us my father has to go to Tapachula to work in *fincas*. During holidays we help him by working here with our neighbours. We have no land. I believe that those of us who have no land suffer more, we work more. Life is also easier for those who have a family member in the United States.

The income generated during harvest may not suffice to cover all annual costs or the land may not be large enough to provide a family with labour for the whole year. In these cases, men and boys may sell their labour to neighbours or to a nearby *finca*. Many even migrate to *fincas* in Tapachula Mexico for several months a year. During a conversation with two teachers one of them explained: "They cannot survive on coffee. Most fathers have to travel on occasion to Tapachula to work not only on coffee farms, but also on papaya-, tobacco-, or sugarcane plantations. They only bring the oldest children, if they are not in school. They may come home every two weeks." Migration of the entire family, as is the case in Chipel, is not common. There is no such tradition and it is not considered an option to withdraw the children from school. It does not mean though, that the children who stay behind do not work. While their father is away they might work with one of the neighbours, outside school hours. In the highland community generally only the smallest children stay behind, they are too young to work, and there are not many labour opportunities.

²⁵ Ladinos are people of mixed racial ancestry, normally of European (Spanish) descent, with Spanish as their maternal language. They commonly enjoy a higher social standing than indigenous groups.

²⁶ This term refers to the money sent by relatives in the United States. *Remesas* are a significant contribution to household incomes all over Guatemala.

All land is used for growing coffee²⁷; no crops are grown for family subsistence. Although Chanchicupe is quite inaccessible due to its mountainous location and the poor condition of the road, transport to the nearby villages San Pablo and Malacatán is available every day for a limited number of hours, making access to all kinds of goods and services possible. This makes Chanchicupe more apt for commerce. Only a few people though make use of this option and sell fresh products such as meat and vegetables.

Education

Social stratification is also defined by education. In contrast with the other two research communities, the educational level in Chanchicupe is significantly higher, though differences between people are also more marked. According to the acting school principal an estimated 99% of children complete primary education, for which they have to pay 20 Q a year, and about 95% proceed to the local *basico*, which also has a 20 Q monthly expense. Some even go to Malacatán or move to San Marcos to complete tertiary education. This is more common among the larger land holders' children, whereas many small producers cannot afford this.

Differences between large landholders and farmers with only small parcels also exist in the amount of time their children spend working. Whereas large landholders' children may not work at all, other children may even work on a daily basis before school. The difference between families with small parcels and those with middle sized parcels are not very remarkable. Children of both families may work. A difference is that the children of the former may work more frequently on someone else's property, while the children of the latter work primarily on the family land.

Differences in school participation between boys and girls' are not notable in primary education, but they do become obvious in secondary school. There is a relatively big primary school in Chanchicupe, with one teacher for every grade. Teachers complain about the lack of materials, inventory and the absence of electricity in school. In addition they think the school environment is not adequate for the children, as there is no garbage disposal and waste simply lingers around the school.

Health

As in Chipel, Chanchicupe also only has one small official health post (*puesto de salud*). However, unlike the health post in Chipel, the Chanchicupe health post is staffed by a professional nurse. The post is completely financed by the Ministry of Health. Free services and medication are offered on a daily basis to people from four communities. Due to the concentration of residences, everyone lives near the health post and there is thus no distance barrier to find basic health care. For more urgent and serious issues people do have to travel a long distance. The nearest hospital is in Malacatán, more than an hour away. Skin diseases are most common, and are caused by poor hygiene. Among children, respiratory infections and diarrhoea are most common.

²⁷ The region around the Tajumulco volcano is known nationally for the illegal growing of poppies. During my stay in Chanchicupe I did not notice such activity.

The local nurse explained how present health care is not satisfactory: “The health post is not enough, because people from many *caserios* (small villages) make use of the services as they have no health care at all. We get medicine according to the last year’s annual report, this causes shortages.”

A few essential and specific characteristics of each community stand out. In El Amanecer living conditions are closely related to the fact that people live within the boundaries of a coffee plantation. This also lays serious restrictions upon people’s daily options and abilities to earn an income. They very much depend on the decisions of someone else. The situation also has its effects on child labour, and must therefore be taken into account.

In Chipel, on the contrary, daily life has little to do with coffee. There are neither plantations nor other work opportunities in the area. In combination with the geographical characteristics of the zone, Chipel is a village with quite harsh living conditions, forcing people to look for ways of survival in more prosperous regions.

In general, living conditions in Chanchicupe are better than in the other two research communities. Education is of a higher quality and the schools are better equipped. There is also better access to healthcare and there is greater variety in income generating opportunities. Whereas in the other two communities living conditions are similar for the entire population, in Chanchicupe there are marked differences. The quality of living conditions depends highly on the position one has on the social ladder, this position being mainly derived from the size of one’s land. Although child labour among the poorest families and families with middle-sized parcels has different characteristics, it is very common among both.

3.2 Labour activities

Our morning cup of coffee is the outcome of a highly labour-intensive production process. Taking the number of people involved it is a mystery as to how everyone along the chain is supposed to be paid from the 2 euros that we pay for a pack of coffee. The coffee chain has a local, a national and an international dimension. The analysis here is limited to the local and initial part of the coffee chain, as it is the level in which children participate. The data presented here is derived from visits to a San Pedro Yepocapa cooperative in the department of Chimaltenango and to El Eden plantation in San Pablo (San Marcos)²⁸, and from fieldwork experiences in El Amanecer and in a community of small coffee growers in Chanchicupe in the municipality of Tajumulco.

Differences may of course exist between the methods used and between the division of labour in different places, but the process described here is generally representative for other farms and communities. Moreover, Guatemalan coffee is known for its high quality, partly derived from its accurate processing techniques, which implies general differences with other countries’ coffee chains. The description will reveal in what parts of the chain children may be found. Not all

²⁸ The cooperative and plantation were visited for only one or two days; no extensive fieldwork was carried out here.

activities were witnessed during the fieldwork, because some take place at other times of the year, so much of the information was derived from children's and adults' personal accounts.

3.2.1 Children's participation within the coffee production chain

The long and complex chain of coffee production starts in the *almacigo*. This is where the coffee seeds are planted in small plastic bags and where they germinate, after which they are transplanted to the fields. Working in the *almacigo* demands precise knowledge of seeds, germination and seedling care, and so it is uncommon for children to work there. In El Amanecer most of the *almacigo* workers are women. In the *fincas* children are occasionally found in the *almacigo*, but only to accompany their mothers, not to work. Some small-growers though, have their own small *almacigo* where the children sometimes help with filling the plastic bags with soil.

After the seedling has been transplanted to the fields it takes about three years for it to flourish and four to be productive. To ensure a good harvest, the coffee plants demand intensive care, and a wide range of activities are involved. One of them is weeding. This has to be done several times a year, usually by the men and their sons (from about eight years) using a machete. In the *finca* only boys were observed to be carrying out this activity. In Chanchicupe, the small-growers community, some girls do so too. In El Amanecer, as well as in Chanchicupe, many children mentioned the cuts they suffer from using the machete.



Photo 4: Coffee flowers



Photo 5: Coffee cherries

There exists a great misconception, and in some cases ignorance, among *finqueros*, *finca* administrators and institutions about the activities that children participate in. Many testified that children only participate during harvest; the owner of the El Eden plantation said: "Children only help their parents during harvest and gathering wood to increase family productivity. Other activities cannot be performed by them, they are too difficult. Even during coffee picking one has to look after the children, for them not to pick bad or green cherries."

The reality, however, is more complex. Throughout the year children help their parents with all kinds of work; gathering coffee is only the most visible activity they perform²⁹.

Estuardo (11), Chanchicupe:

During harvest is when we work the most, but before the cherries are ready, a lot has to happen. We have to prepare the ground, we have to plant, a lot of things. But harvest is of course the most important. When we harvest, we also have to carry the coffee and dry it. Me and my brothers are always happy to help my father.

Less visible is the children's participation in fertilisation. Different kinds of fertilisers are applied several times a year in the *finca*, mainly chalk and urea. The use of *gramoxon*, mentioned by a few workers was not confirmed by the *finca* administrator and denied by the *finca* owner, who told me he stopped the use of this chemical a few years ago because of its negative impact on the environment and the risks involved for his workers. In the *fincas* fertilising the land was rarely mentioned as children's work by children, parents or proprietors, but in El Amanecer several boys and girls were observed spreading chalk and a small group of boys were seen to be spraying urea on the coffee plants.

The spreading of chalk around the coffee plants entails removing the leaves and branches lying around the plants for greater effectiveness. This means that the children assume a bent over position for several hours and that they are vulnerable for scrapes and animal bites. Subsequently the chalk is spread on the soil around the plant. The chalk is delivered to the workers in sacks of one *quintal* (about 45 kilograms), which have to be carried into the fields by the workers, sometimes boys as young as twelve. Carrying heavy loads is considered to be inappropriate for girls, and they only do this if there are no males around. During observations, no children were seen to be working without at least one adult nearby.

One twelve-year-old boy in El Amanecer explained that he had dropped out of school a year before so that he could work fulltime - seven days a week. At that moment he was busy with the spreading of urea. This was the only case of a child under fourteen not going to school and working fulltime that was encountered, and so he was observed for a full day in all his activities. At 6:15 a.m. he was brought to one of the farm's most distant fields by a tractor that also transported all the equipment.

Spraying urea is done by a small group of men. One dilutes the urea with water in big barrels and stays near the motor, which used to pump the urea solution through rubber tubes. Two men or boys (per tube) go into the field; one sprays the urea, the other guards the tube so it does not get twisted.

²⁹ Often within the *fincas* not only coffee is grown. A part of the territory is dedicated to macadamia nuts and rubber cultivation. Children are sometimes found collecting macadamias. Outside the sector children perform all kinds of jobs. Boys are sometimes found in shoe shining and commerce. Girls help their mothers with the laundry, to get water, cleaning, cooking and other household chores.



Photo 6: Boys travelling by tractor to go and work in the fields

Though it is not common for children to be doing this work, three boys aged 12-15 were observed. This was the one occasion that children were found working without one or more family members. One of the boys talked about his work:

“We come by ourselves; we have learned to be responsible and independent. It is nice to be with the other men, we laugh a lot. The work can be a little heavy and sometimes our skin gets irritated. I always wear a long sleeved shirt to protect my arms.”

Despite the irritation that urea can cause, there are no clear measures taken to prevent this; besides long sleeved shirts they do not wear special clothing, gloves or facemasks.

In the small-growers community it is more common for children to engage in fertilising activities. Because of the costs of chemicals farmers usually use coffee pulp as a fertiliser. The coffee growers' children usually help their parents to spread the pulp. Several mothers mentioned the fact that this fertiliser causes irritation and fungus on feet and hands. Some, but not all people use gloves for protection.

Other important maintenance activities include *deshijar*, or debudding. This involves the removal of a select number of buds from each plant, allowing the best to develop. This is mostly a women's

chore. It demands insight and precision. According to some informants, young children are rarely found doing this activity.

Trimming the coffee plants (*podar*) and the other trees in the coffee fields (*desombrar*), which regulates the shade, are crucial activities. In the *fincas* everyone agreed that no children under 16 do this type of work³⁰. On the one hand it is said to be difficult, because exact knowledge of how and where to cut the trees and plants is required, on the other hand climbing the trees (often using a ladder) and cutting the branches is considered to be dangerous and to demand strength. For the same reasons, women are not involved in *desombrar*, but can be found in *podar*. In Chanchicupe, however, boys from about 12 years do help their fathers with trimming. They climb the trees and cut the branches with a machete, but it is not one of the most common activities for children and only a minority of boys mentioned it as one of their tasks. This job is never done by girls:

Girl (15) El Amanecer:

“No, we never help trimming; that is a men’s job. When my father and brother have to go trimming I just stay home with my mother and sisters. There are enough jobs around the house. My brother is always very tired after trimming. When they come home we serve them *almuerzo* (lunch).”

Chopping and carrying wood are the most common activities for all children; within the coffee sector as well as outside it, as a great majority of Guatemala’s rural population uses wood for cooking. On the *fincas* (El Eden and El Amanecer) the workers have the right to gather wood from the plantation (the branches cut during trimming), though in El Eden they first have to gather the best wood for the patron, who either sells it or uses it as fuel for the coffee drying machines. The wood lying on the ground is chopped into smaller pieces with a *cuta* (a special machete), so that it can be easily carried on the back. Chopping wood in the *fincas* and in the Altiplano community of Chipel is mostly done by boys, but in Chanchicupe it is also common among girls. Carrying the wood is something all children do, and it is a very important task within the family. The stumps are tied together with rope, after which the package is placed on the back, often supported by the forehead with a *mecapal*. The smallest children may carry one or two stumps; their older brothers and sisters may carry a considerable amount of wood.

Then of course there are the harvesting activities. The season starts in September-October and ends around January, the exact time depends on the type of coffee and the altitude at which it is cultivated (the higher the later the harvest). Picking coffee cherries is the most labour intensive activity in the coffee chain. The pickers have to cover the same territory several times, picking only the red, ripe cherries and leaving the green ones to ripen. Stripping the whole branch at once is therefore not an option. When the season comes to an end they cover the territory one last time, and pick all remaining cherries, including the green ones. After picking has been completed the green and red cherries are separated; all children help to do this. Sorting the cherries is a very social activity. People may help each other after having finished their own work and women and

³⁰ Indeed, during the research no children below 18 were found doing these tasks.

girls may offer to help the men. For good quality coffee the cherries have to be ripe, so the green cherries are left to ripen for a few days in a reservoir before processing.

While picking, the workers carry a plastic basket around their waist in which the cherries are collected. A full basket weights around 13 kilograms. Once full, the basket is emptied into a burlap sack to be carried later to the delivering point. A full sack contains one *quintal* (45 kilograms)of cherries. Coffee picking is a family activity. Children participate on a big scale during harvest, always accompanied by both or one of their parents or in some cases by another adult family member. From about 7 years onwards children start helping. Only among the small-growers community do children above 12 go picking coffee by themselves, although it is not common:

During harvest I like to work with my neighbour. He is very nice to me and likes how I work. My father only lets me work with him after we have finished our own parcel. Then I work for my neighbour and he lets me go by myself. I don't mind working by myself, it is very relaxing and you feel free.



Photo 7: Young girl picking coffee cherries



Photo 8: Brother and sister taking care of their younger siblings

Among the three populations the smallest children are also taken to the field; they mostly sit on the ground and play. One of the tasks of the older children is to look after their younger siblings. Some mothers carry their babies on their back while picking. The children also have to guard the picked coffee so it isn't stolen.

I spoke to a woman whom I found picking with her four children, the oldest girl was seven years old. She was very busy picking coffee with her own small sack around her neck, taking care of her smaller siblings and carrying the collected cherries. She seemed to like what she was doing. The other children were playing and running around barefoot and also looking after each other. The six-year-old boy made the baby's bottle, who seemed very happy on his sister's back. They enjoyed me taking pictures of them. (From research diary)

The Robusta plant, which is grown in El Amanecer, is much higher than other types of coffee. Some of the cherries cannot be reached, so the branches are bent down, sometimes by children climbing the tree. Many children, mainly boys, are also found carrying the coffee sacks to the delivering point. It is not rare to see a twelve-year-old boy carrying one *quintal*.



Photo 9: Boy climbing in a coffee plant to bent it

The process used here is the wet or “washed” method, rather than the dry method in which the cherries are left to dry in the sun for a number of weeks. The wet method causes less damage to the bean. After the ripe cherries having been picked they have to be processed within 24 hours³¹. The skin and pulp is first removed in a *pulpera*³², releasing two coffee beans that are left to ferment for a few days. A small amount of fermentation does not damage the beans, but does help to loosen any remaining pulp and skin. The beans are then washed and left to dry. The beans are at this point still covered by two thin membranes; the stage they are at is known as *pergamino*. This is the stage at which they are sold and transported; the remaining membranes are peeled off elsewhere.

³¹ The cherries that were picked when green are left to ripen and then undergo the same process.

³² Pulping machine

In the small-growers community children help throughout this process by placing the cherries in the *pulpera* and spreading the beans out on the patio for drying. In the *finca beneficio*³³ and the Yepocapa Cooperative *beneficio* I found no children or women working. The following testimonies represent the characteristics of the participation of children within the coffee chain in each of the three communities. A few important differences stand out.

El Amanecer plantation (ten year old boy):

I have two brothers and one sister, I am the youngest. Every Saturday and Sunday I go to get wood. Last Saturday my brother cut himself with a machete. My sister works every day, she never went to school. I only work in the weekends cutting wood, picking coffee, weeding and spreading chalk. I like all the work I do.

Chipel migrant community (mother):

I have five children. Three of them are in school. I want them to go to *basico*. Here it is difficult to acquire money. We only make money when we go to the *fincas*. With that money we often buy ourselves some animals. We all work in the *finca*, but the smallest children only play around. Last year we left in November and returned two weeks after school had begun. When the children come home from school they go to get wood and they take care of the animals. When the winter starts they have to maintain the *milpa* (corn). All this work is just as important as education.

Chanchicupe small-growers community (father):

I have four children; they are 17, 15, 14 and 12. They all are in school. One of them is studying in San Marcos. I want my children to live better than I do. I only completed fourth grade, my wife did not go to school at all. I am a construction worker in Tapachula, I always have plenty of work. I don't have property to work on. My greatest concern is what I will leave my children after I die. My children do work, but they never fail school. They sometimes work in the morning, before going to school. They go to trim the plants and trees, to do whatever chore. It is not dangerous, they only work on nearby and flat fields. But homework comes first, than labour. The kids give the money to their mother, they work to collaborate, but also to pay their school costs. It is good for them to learn how to work on the fields, but we do not force them to.

When dividing the coffee chain into the three stages of maintenance, harvest and processing, it becomes clear that the presence of a child in these different stages depends on whether he or she comes from a *colono*, a migrant, or a small-growers family. While *colono* children participate in the two first stages of the production process, the highland children participate principally during harvest. The children of small-growers families on the other hand are involved throughout the chain; they also help to process the coffee. *Colonos* deliver the unprocessed cherries to the *beneficio*, but small-growers often own a small *beneficio* themselves where they process the

³³ The place where the coffee is processed further the same day after having been picked

cherries within the family context until *pergamino*. Small-growers' children also tend to participate on a great scale in maintenance activities. More often than the *colono* children they help with fertilising, *podar* and *desombrar*.

Differences between boys' and girls' participation in the coffee sector are most obvious among *colonos*. The basic activities during harvest are carried out by both sexes, with the exception of carrying the heavy sacks of coffee, which is done more by boys. When it comes to other activities differences are more notable. Girls generally don't work with machetes, so they are not found weeding. Migrant boys and girls are both equally involved in picking and carrying coffee, although boys carry considerably greater amounts. In Chanchicupe, the small-growers community, girls also perform activities that are considered unsuitable for girls in other communities, like those involving the use of machetes.

3.3 Labour conditions

3.3.1 The *colono* families

Except for the work in the *beneficio*, all work in the *finca* is done in the morning. The workers leave their houses around six, but due to the large size of the *finca*, they often have to walk long distances to get to the relevant piece of land, sometimes for more than an hour. Children rarely go to work by themselves, and commonly accompany their fathers or mothers. Before work, they eat breakfast in the coffee field, which consists of beans, eggs and tortillas. Most people stop working around twelve, before the hot afternoon sun. Though adults rarely take a real break, children may sit down or play when tired.

In El Amanecer there are about thirty household heads who are official *colonos*; they are registered in the plantation administration and they have right to a house and a pension after they turn 65. Part of their wages is also deducted for the IGSS medical care. Women and men who are not registered, but who want to work, can sign up and are put on a list. There is a list of workers for each activity that has to be performed. The labourers on such a list have no contract and therefore no rights, even though the law says they do. In the Labour Code, day labourers are defined as official labourers and being put on a working list is an official agreement; so too is a verbal accord. Both are official contracts, according to Guatemalan labour law, and assign labourers basic labour rights. There is lack of knowledge about this among the plantation inhabitants and they are not part of a labour union that could help them claim their rights.

Some activities, like those performed in the *almacigo*, the *beneficio* and by the *caporals*, are paid per day. The male *jornaleros* (day workers) receive around 30 Q per day (3 Euro). Women, though, are paid only half that amount. All other jobs are paid per *tarea*, per unit. Trimming and weeding is paid per *cuerda*, cutting wood per square meter of collected wood, spreading chalk is paid per sack used (12 Q/1.2 Euro) and picking coffee per *quintal* collected (30 Q/3 Euro). Being paid per unit entails no strict working hours. Everyone though starts early so that they are ready before the worst heat of the day.

The registered *colonos*, the household heads, have some additional income:

We are very lucky to be *colonos*, because we get a bonus in December and we have the right to vacation. We also are allowed to collect the cherries that have fallen on the ground and sell them on our own account. Normally we deliver our coffee to the *beneficio* and get paid every two weeks. When we get paid we go to El Tumbador to buy groceries.

Three children were found to be officially on the pay list, and were paid to spread urea. The owner of El Amanecer was genuinely surprised to hear that boys as young as twelve were on the pay list for this activity, but he then went on to explain that he did not want the boys to be left without a job. The boys work officially and do the same work as their older colleagues, but they get paid only half. Children who are not on any list and just help their parents do not receive payment at all. Their parents receive money and if they are lucky they might get a few *quetzales* for their help:

Boy (8), El Amanecer:

My father does not earn enough to pay me, but when I have helped him a lot I get 5 *quetzales* (fifty cents) after the *quincena* (two weeks), when he gets paid. I use the money to buy candy and drinks. I also buy some for my little brother.

The Labour Code states that any child or woman who works with the patron's approval, even if their labour only consists of helping the household head to perform his work, is officially an agricultural labourer and is connected to the patron by a labour contract [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social undated:63 art.139]. This means that children who are not on the pay list have the same rights as their parents who are. Although patrons do not officially approve of the participation of children, they do not officially disapprove either, and certainly don't do anything to prevent it.

No special clothes are used during labour on the plantation. Many children are even found in the working in the fields barefoot. Only during fertilisation activities may some precautions be taken; when spreading urea labourers use plastic shoes to protect their feet from getting wet and irritated and most of them use long sleeve shirts to protect their arms from the irritation caused by the urea. These measures are taken by the labourers themselves; there are no safety rules and special clothing or protection is not available.

During harvest working hours differ a lot per family. This is the time to earn more money, so some families extend their working day to take full advantage of this. One woman spreading chalk usually uses one or maybe one and a half sacks per day. This means she will earn no more than 16 Q (1.6 Euro). During harvest one woman can pick almost a *quintal* of coffee a day, this means she will make almost 30 Q. It is thus more lucrative to take the kids along during harvest. An entire family can earn up to 120 Q (12 Euro) per day.

3.3.2 The migrants

Migrating families have somewhat different motives to work in the coffee sector and their participation has different characteristics and implications. When the harvest period starts *contratistas* (contractors) go to the Altiplano villages to take workers back to the *fincas*. Everyone can sign up, pack their belongings and leave immediately. Entire families, with children of all ages come along. During the harvest time many trucks full of people leave to the Boca Costa every day.

These trucks cannot be considered an adequate way for transporting people. Some of them are open and people run the risk of falling out. There is also an excessive amount of dust because of the poor condition of the roads.

These migrant families thus find themselves in a very different position than the *colono* families, for which the *finca* is their every day environment. For the so called *cuadrillas* (migrants) the *finca* is nothing more than a working place. Their only reason for being there is earning money, which they do the best they can. To exploit their time to its fullest, they work as many hours as they can every day. They may leave at five in the morning, and continue to work until five or six o'clock in the evening. All children come along and children from about 7 years onwards participate in picking coffee. The *colonos* frequently expressed their admiration for and astonishment of the *cuadrillas'* hard work and persistence, even during bad weather:

They make very long working days and have their breakfast and lunch in the coffee field. Women often carry their children on their chest while picking and continue doing this when it rains.

Their children are with them at all times, and thus spend extremely long days in the fields, occasionally exposed to poor weather conditions.

The price *cuadrillas* get per *quintal* depends on the *finca* food policy. They may earn a little more than *colonos* if their patron does not provide them with food³⁴. As is the case within the *colono* community, children are rarely officially on the pay list, but they get a few *quetzales* from their parents as a reward for their help.

Most notable are the living conditions of the families during the months they stay on the farms. Children are especially vulnerable to this precarious situation. They are housed in wooden sheds with no windows, sometimes with up to ten other families. Beds are absent and people sleep on planks or on the bare ground. There are often no sanitation facilities, resulting in very unhygienic situations in which people have to defecate in the coffee fields or even around the shed. Rats and bats are common around the sheds and sometimes found within it:

Single mother:

I have four children and no help at all from their father. I have to go to the *fincas* every year; that is my only mean of subsistence. I bring all the children with me. This year they missed two weeks of school. Only the two oldest (12 and 10) help me picking, the little ones just come along. We start picking at about six in the morning and continue until five or six in the afternoon. It is very unpleasant to be in the sheds. We have no latrines, it is dark and there are too many people, but what can we do?"

³⁴ The *contratista* usually assigns one couple the job of preparing the other workers' food. In the morning they carry breakfast to the coffee field where they gather the *cuadrillas* and distribute the tortillas and (usually) beans among them. The same practice is repeated at lunch time. After lunch the *cuadrilla* families continue their work. Breakfast and lunch are usually the only breaks they have, except for the children who are allowed to rest more frequently.



Photo 10: Migrant shacks

Few migrants have a contract; they are simply added to the list by the contractor. By signing on, the worker commits to selling his labour to the *finca*. Their commitment theoretically awards them with certain rights concerning labour and living conditions, but few workers are aware of these rights. As formulated in article 145, labourers that live on the plantation have the right to accommodation under hygienic circumstances [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social undated:65]. This right is obviously violated, as is the right to decent sanitation expressed in article 197.i [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social undated:78]. Moreover, plantation owners with over thirty female employees are legally bound to realise and finance a place where mothers can feed their children and where they can leave them during work hours. However, observations in both El Eden and El Amanecer, and testimonies of migrants, make it clear that these rights are not put into practice. All mothers take their children to the fields during harvest, mainly because they have no place to leave them.

3.3.3 The small-growers

With respect to working conditions and performed activities there are some similarities between the small-growers and the *colonos*. They have to work throughout the year in all sorts of activities and

more or less follow the same roster. One important difference is of course that the small-growers are generally their own bosses; they own a piece of land and great part of their and their children's labour is dedicated to it. They do not have to take some patrons' demands into account. However, peasants who own just a small parcel often work with their neighbours after having finished work on their own lands, just as the landless must always do. During harvest heavy rains may force the peasants to extend their working day and hire extra workers (neighbours) to prevent the coffee cherries from falling and spoiling:

Girl (13), Chanchicupe:

I always go picking coffee with my brothers. When it is raining a lot we have to pick the cherries very fast, before the rain makes them fall. Sometimes my father asks some neighbours to come to work, because we can't do it alone.

Some farmers finish their work soon. This leaves them time to look for work in a nearby *fincas* or even in one of the big *fincas* in Tapachula, Mexico.

Children help their parents with all activities within the production chain throughout the year and may also work with their neighbours. Some boys noted that they often go to work on their father's land by themselves. This is unique to the small-growers community; in the other populations children never work alone in the coffee fields. The children of small-growers are also engaged in a wider range of activities, including the most hazardous. Because the parcel is hardly ever near the house, the children have to walk large distances to get to work, often through steep terrains and rivers, risking falls and drowning. A teacher commented on the problematic working conditions of the children in Chanchicupe:

About half of the children do not work on family property, but on someone else's. Families with no property suffer the most. The children who work most are the orphans. They work with other families. They get paid about 5 Q a bucket. The biggest problem is that children have to carry the coffee for long distances. They sometimes trip. Coffee is people's only hope. Some children go to work by themselves. That is a problem; children going to work without their parents.

Payment among the small coffee growers is different from payment among the other communities. Because people primarily work on their own land, they receive no direct payment. The owner earns from the sales of his *pergamino* coffee beans, and goes without pay until sales have been completed. When they work on their neighbours' land they receive a wage per unit. Children working on their father's land do not get paid a wage, but may be given a reward. They do receive money when working with one of their neighbours. One teacher explained:

Children as young as eight already know the ins and outs of money. When they reach the age of 12 they start working on their own in *fincas* or on someone's property, they are not interested in the children's age. Their wage is considerably lower than that of an adult.

In the case of farmers who work on their own parcels there is no employer-employee relation and labour has an extremely informal character. Labourers are themselves responsible for their labour

conditions. The fact that small coffee growers have no certainty about income and that they must do anything to reach a good harvest means that they are somewhat indifferent towards working conditions; as one 13 year old boy stated:

It doesn't matter whether it's raining or not, when the cherries are ripe they have to be picked soon. If we lose the harvest we will have no money. That is why we sometimes work until six in the afternoon.



Photo 11: Young girl carrying a heavy sack of coffee cherries

3.3.4 General conditions within the coffee sector

Some of the precarious labour conditions among the three research communities are distinctive of the coffee sector and agriculture in general. To begin with, small farmers have no rights regarding their labour conditions, as they create the conditions themselves. This gives their work a highly informal character, which makes interventions targeting labour conditions and child labour very difficult. Despite the fact that migrants and *colonos* do have rights, they have little knowledge of them. In El Amanecer there are no active organisations or labour unions that can make people aware of their rights. This makes them very vulnerable to the volatile sector and to the patron's whims. The labourers' ignorance of their rights is unfortunate, but so too is the failure of the state to guarantee them their rights.

Income in the coffee sector highly depends on the efficiency of one's work, making weaker persons less profitable than others. Another important characteristic of labour in this sector is that there

are no rules or control of working hours. People may work for as long as they like, resulting in extended working days, especially for the migrant families.

Colono families are particularly vulnerable to the insecurity of the sector and the patron's actions as they not only depend on the *finca* for labour, but also for housing. Additionally there is great emotional and psychological dependence, as the world vision of these people is closely bound to life on the plantation.

Migrants may not be as dependent on a specific *finca* or patron, but do experience the hard circumstances of moving temporarily to a place where living conditions are worse than at home, and of leaving everything behind, often for several months. The migratory nature of their work and their presence in different plantations throughout the years makes it difficult to control their labour conditions and to implement long term interventions. It also makes their participation in a labour union less probable.

Small-growers families may seem to be more privileged, but they are extremely vulnerable to the ups and downs of the sector and to natural disasters, which are not uncommon in the region. Whether they receive payment or not and how much they receive depends not even on the amount of work they have accomplished, but on the quality of harvest, which reacts strongly to weather conditions and to the intensity of maintenance dedicated to the crop. They also have to wait months before they can profit from their work and have no legal rights as they have no contract.

Many of the labour conditions among the three research populations apply to both adults and children. Some, though, create a delicate situation especially for children. One of them is the fact that they have to carry heavy loads and use tools like machetes, which are designed for an adult body and are therefore not suitable for children.

And if payment is uncertain and low for adults, it is unlikely and negligible for children. As they are rarely on the pay list, they rely on the consideration or capacity of their parents, who often leave them with no more than one quetzal a day. Migrant children are even more vulnerable to the living conditions on the plantations than their parents. The children of the small-growers are often put into the most precarious situations as they sometimes have to work alone. A more detailed analysis of the risks children are exposed to will be given in Chapter 4.

3.4 Worst form?

The participation of children in the coffee sector undeniably conflicts with national legislation. The government has set the minimum age for employment at 14, consistent with the ILO minimum age convention, and in fact no children under 14 are allowed to perform any kind of labour activity. These children are allowed to work if they have managed to obtain an official permit from the Ministry of Labour. Even with such a permit, he or she is not allowed to perform hazardous activities, may not work for longer than six hours a week and the work may not impede compulsory education. For work under unhealthy or dangerous conditions the minimum age is set at 16. All these limits are crossed in the coffee sector; as I have argued throughout this chapter, most children in the research communities start working when they reach the age of 7, no working children in the research communities below 14 possess a work permit and many children below 16 are involved in unhealthy or dangerous work. It is clear that a great gap exists between legislation and reality.

Thus, is the coffee sector a worst form of child labour? One of the objectives of this research is to answer this question by taking into account not only the national and international frameworks, but also the opinions of parents, teachers and of course of child labourers themselves. The existing debate is an intense one because the coffee sector is of great economical interest to Guatemala. Many people profit from the well being of the sector and therefore try to protect it against any negative attention. This was an important reason for the Guatemalan government not to present a list of worst forms *sectors*, but rather of worst forms *activities*.

Moreover, the recognition of the participation of children within the sector is often minimised to picking coffee. Since this is generally not considered to be a hazardous job, representatives of the sector, NGO workers and even teachers do not identify child labour in the coffee sector as a worst form. But in reality children can be found performing a wide range of activities within the chain. Even if picking coffee is the most common activity for children, and is not considered to be hazardous, we still have to take a closer look at all the other jobs that children carry out.

Miriam de Celada from IPEC-Guatemala identified only one item on the national worst forms activities list that she felt would apply to child labour in the coffee sector:

Jobs and chores that entail chronic or intense exposure to chemicals (chlorides or phosphors), fertilizers (containing nitrogen, phosphor and potassium), pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and nematocides; the use of fuels (carburant, inflammables, irritants and corrosives); gasses such as methane; carcinogens such as lead and asbestos; and all kinds of chemical products, even when adequate equipment is provided [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2006].

The fact that only one objection was made in reference to children's work in the coffee sector proves that more qualitative research is needed. There is very little knowledge of the reality in the coffee fields. According to the qualitative data presented in this chapter the following should also apply:

Jobs performed at heights above 1.8 meter that entail the use of a ladder (as is the case when children help with trimming trees); activities that, because of their conditions are dangerous and unhealthy (this applies, for example, to picking coffee in the rain or hot sun or during an extended period of time, as migrant children do); all heavy lifting and carrying of heavy loads. [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2006:5]

Based on this, one could come to the conclusion that child labour in the coffee sector is indeed a worst form. However, the research here calls that statement into question. The participation of children within this sector is characterised by a great diversity in activities. Some of these activities are harmful by nature, such as weeding, trimming, fertilising and carrying heavy loads of wood or coffee. These activities should not be performed by children, in any case. Other activities are harmless by nature, but may be harmful depending on the conditions under which they are performed; these include picking and sorting coffee, filling bags with soil and drying coffee beans. There are cases in which the working conditions make these activities hazardous. Working in the rain, under the hot sun, for extended periods of time or unaccompanied, makes these activities

unhealthy or even harmful. In the case of migrant children the living conditions on the plantations alone make this sector hazardous for them.

On the plantations and in the small-growers communities a lot of children can be found, for example, picking coffee for just a few hours a day, with their parents, and only under normal weather conditions. The position of these children is very different from that of children who have to work every day under whatever conditions, alone and who also perform activities such as trimming. These differences must be taken into account before making conclusions about the coffee sector being a worst forms sector. The participation of children is not homogenous and treating these children as one group is a significant obstacle towards effective action.

Chapter 4

The Consequences of Child Labour

Chapter 3 discussed the activities in which children participate and the labour conditions applicable to them. This chapter will consider the consequences that these activities and conditions have for children's health, education and family life. It will conclude with if and how these consequences can determine whether we can or cannot consider the coffee sector a worst form of child labour.

4.1 Health consequences

Physical health

The most obvious consequences labour in the coffee sector has for children are those concerning their physical health. These are the most recognisable for the subjects themselves, as they are visible and concrete. During the research it became clear that the perception of risks differs between, for example, the ILO, the researcher, the subjects and the actual consequences that could be observed and identified. The ILO states [UCW 2003:24]:

With long working days under a hot sun, carrying heavy loads, and risking cuts from sharp knives, these children are highly susceptible to injuries and disease. Plantation living often means little or no health care, cramped housing in mere shacks (*galeras*) made of palm leaves, tin and wood, lack of potable water and sanitation, poor treatment or abuse from plantation managers. Common illnesses among these children include respiratory infections, intestinal infections and parasites, malaria, dengue, insect and snake bites. Injuries such as fractures, cuts, loss of eyesight and limbs are not uncommon, not to mention death from disease, malnutrition and injury.

All of the above may indeed occur, but reality in the research communities appears to be less extreme than this citation suggests. This research cannot confirm cases of snake bites, loss of eyesight or limbs, or deaths caused by the work children perform in the coffee sector. No one mentioned any such case. A ten-year-old child in El Amanecer said: "we are afraid of snakes and we sometimes find them in the field, but no one has ever been attacked by one". Respiratory and intestinal infections on the contrary are very common, sometimes caused by working conditions, but often a consequence of general living conditions. According to the nurse in the small-growers community, "during harvest there is more parasitism and pneumonia. Mothers become more inattentive and they leave their children home or take them to the coffee field. The fact that harvest takes place during the rainy season also contributes. But the increase is not very significant."

One of the doctors of the El Tumbador health centre, to which *colonos* from El Amanecer have to turn for basic medical assistance, distinguished some hazards applying especially to the migrant children, who during harvest also have to rely on the medical help from the centre:

What we see a lot among children working the fields are skin diseases caused by insects and the pulp that is spread as fertilizer. Cuts from machetes are also very common and on occasion we deal with animal bites. Things like diarrhoea and respiratory problems caused by excessive dust are more frequently identified in *cuadrillas* (migrant families).



Photo 12: Father and son cutting wood

Nearly all the children from the research communities who participate in activities involving the use of machetes, such as weeding, trimming and cutting wood, confirmed to have suffered cuts on one or more occasions. They exhibited their recent cuts and their scars. The nurse in the small-growers community Chanchicupe stated that almost all the wounds he treats on children older than ten are caused by work. Although the children admitted that they experienced pain from these cuts, they did not see the risk of cutting themselves as a real problem, neither did their parents. Because in practice cutting oneself generally has no lasting consequences, the possibility is seen as an inevitable thing and is accepted as one of many risks one is exposed to in daily life, much like we perceive the possibility of cutting our finger during cooking:

Father (Chanchicupe):

Almost everything involves risks. Here there are snakes, stones on the road, children trip, children pound. They carry heavy loads. They should not be working, but it is because of the situation. Working is also good for them, so they do not hang around looking for problems with neighbours.

From this father's and many other parents' accounts it shows that for most of them the economic benefits of letting their children work surpass the risks their children may run. One mother in EL Amanecer appeared to be very aware of the risks her four children were exposed to during work. She takes her children to the field during harvest and after that to spread chalk and to do other maintenance activities. Although the risks are obvious to her, she emphasised that the consequences are not very outrageous and that she can easily do something to alleviate them:

I feel happy about my children helping me, although I hand the money we earn over to my husband. One of the dangers is that they can hurt their feet on branches, as they walk barefoot through the field and they sometimes get fever caused by a *chilicate* (caterpillar). But whenever they feel pain I give them a pill, or water of apasote. When they have a wound, they have to be stitched.



Photo 13: Mother and daughter (17) carrying heavy sacks of chalk

Other harmful activities are those involving the carriage of heavy loads and activities that imply working in positions that may cause biomechanical damage. This applies to activities such as delivering coffee, carrying and spreading chalk, cutting and transporting wood. Adults who have

been working in the sector for decades underline the effects these activities have had on their bodies. They complain about head- and backaches and damaged joints.

Children also complain about pain after carrying loads. In El Amanecer and in Chipel the children made drawings about the activities they performed, and were later asked questions about them. The majority of the children found carrying heavy loads out to be the most difficult activity. They confirmed feeling pain in their backs, waists and feet afterwards. One doctor from the IGSS in El Tumbador explained that these activities cause more damage to the immature bodies of the children than they do to the stronger full-grown adults. Although parents recognise the negative effects these activities have and they do take into account the age and physical structure of the children, they above all argue that the economic situation forces them to make their children perform these kinds of jobs.

The seriousness of the consequences does not necessarily determine people's feelings about having to perform an activity. For example, the relatively harmless possibility of being stung by an insect is what the children complain about most, whereas the very harmful activity of carrying wood and coffee, which can cause physical development problems, may not be bothered about much. Apparently, the probability of being exposed to a painful or dangerous situation, which in the case of working with machetes and carrying loads is considerably high, does not say anything about whether or not people experience this as a possible motive to prevent them from doing or making their children do these jobs. This position is further strengthened by the fact that, for example, machete cuts rarely have real long term consequences and the consequences of carrying heavy loads are not immediately visible and only appear in the long term. In contrast, the probability of being bitten by a snake or getting fever from a caterpillar is not very likely, but is experienced as a real threat and an obstacle to carry out work, mainly by children. During the fieldwork a number of unsafe and unhealthy situations were observed, such as children climbing high into trees and running around alongside trenches in the coffee field. These situations seemed not to alarm the mothers. They did, though, on many occasions warn their children for snakes and scorpions, even though they could not remember a case of anyone being attacked by one of those.

The discrepancy between what parents and children consider harmful or dangerous and what children may experience to be fun is also remarkable; this applies especially to Chanchicupe, where children perform a wider range of activities than in the other communities and where child labour is very culturally rooted. Eleven-year-old Marcela, a very spontaneous girl who visits church on every occasion, expressed her feelings about the work she was doing at the moment:

During this period we cut wood. We get very tired from carrying the wood and cutting the wood can be dangerous, I have cut myself more than once. We may also cut ourselves when there is glass in the coffee field. But I like the work. I only get sad when I have to go to the Vega, that is a very steep field. One girl once fell there, she tripped over one of the stones.

Some children though, express very negative feelings towards their work. Twelve-year-old Justo from Chanchicupe wants to be a teacher, like his older brother. He is a very expressive boy and has high hopes for his future. He wants to make use of the opportunities he has been offered, mainly by

one brother who is in the United States. His mother and father only got the chance to finish third and sixth grade respectively:

I like to go to school, because they teach you to respect and love your fellow human beings. On Saturdays and during holidays I also work. Picking coffee is beautiful, but there are a lot of wasps and snakes. Carrying wood is very heavy. I feel bad about doing that, because my back hurts and I have to lay down for it to stop. I have cut myself during weeding. When this happens I get mad and sometimes I even cry. My mother disinfects the wound with alcohol and uses a cloth to stop the bleeding, then she starts to grumble. But working is beautiful; I have to work because you learn from it.

Risks and consequences of the work are taken for granted, motivated by an economic need for children to participate and contribute, and by a number of cultural factors, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Workers feel they have no other option but to carry out the work and deal with the consequences as they arise. Children have very much incorporated the idea that working is useful and positive, like Justo above. On the one hand the work is heavy and he admits to feel bad about doing it, on the other hand he concludes with describing work as beautiful and useful. Eber from Chipel was also able to mention the bad conditions, but generally experiences labour in a positive way, because he earns money performing it. Eber is 13 years old and likes school very much; he wants to be a teacher:

Every weekend I work shining shoes in Comitancillo. I save the money I earn to pay for my education. I like to go to the *fincas* because you can earn lots of money and the work is good and not tiring. In the *fincas* there are many snakes and plants and people we don't know stay in the same *galera*. Faeces are all over the coffee field and sometimes around the *galera*. But earning money is important.

Parents and children in Chipel agreed on the fact that living conditions in the *fincas* are very poor. They expressed their displeasure about them, but also explained why they just have to put up with them:

Father:

We have to sleep in *galeras*, on the floor, like animals. Most *fincas* do not have latrines, so we get diarrhoea. We also get the flu, rashes and fungus more often when we are on the *finca*. Most migrants want to work for as long as they can, we leave for work at five, as we sometimes have to walk for more than an hour, and work until five or six. The rain we often have to endure causes headaches. Food is sometimes scarce.

Besides infections and other diseases sexual abuse may be one of the consequences of living in the *galeras*. Although I never heard of a specific case concerning sexual abuse of children, this possibility was mentioned by Roberto Jordán from Funcafé and by two mothers in Chipel.

Emotional health

Besides physical hazards involving child labour in the coffee sector, emotional or psychological hazards may be distinguished. A number of different techniques were applied to determine how

children themselves feel about their work. In Chipel children filled in a form about how they feel about particular activities. They were first asked to list the activities they perform throughout the year, and then to identify a number of emotions or conditions experienced during their work. Each child was then asked to associate each activity with one emotion/condition by marking it with a cross. The results can be found in table 1.³⁵ I did this with boys and girls separately. The results are not an exact representation of reality, but do act as additional qualitative information. In the field the results served as a framework for further questioning.



Photo 14: Children filling in the matrix

Even though many children expressed some negative feelings towards work, it was remarkable as to how many children generally considered their labour activities very positively. Girls showed a preference for coffee related activities compared to household chores. Even though an outsider may consider carrying coffee a more harmful and heavy activity, the girls do not. The boys' results show the same preference for coffee related activities.

Children's evaluation of work is not necessarily derived from the nature of the activity or the consequences it might have. Other factors, like material benefits can play a significant role. In

³⁵ The numbers in the cells correspond to the amount of crosses. 12 girls and 12 boys participated. Each child was allowed to make one cross under each activity.

Chanchicupe adolescents may work to earn money to buy clothes. Others, like thirteen-year-old Elisa from Chipel, like to earn money to pay for school; “I like to work on the *finca*, because when we go we earn a lot of money. I don’t have to hand it over to my father. I save it and use it to pay school. At home I do all sorts of jobs, but I don’t get paid, I just have to do them. I get bored.”

Table 1: Girls’ identification of activities and associated emotions/conditions

	Sweeping	Making tortillas	Washing clothes	Doing dishes	Cleaning house	Picking coffee	Sorting coffee	Carrying coffee
Happy	10	7	5	7	7	8	6	7
Tired	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
Bored			1	1	1		2	1
Amused			1	2	1	1		1
Sad	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	1

Table 2: Boys’ identification of activities and associated emotions/conditions

	Shining shoes	Cutting wood	Carrying wood	Selling	Picking coffee	Carrying coffee	Herding animals	Sowing corn
Happy	4	5	6	9	7	7	5	6
Tired	5	2	3	2	3	1	3	2
Bored							3	2
Amused						3		
Sad	3	5	2	1	2	1	1	2

The children were asked, in relation to the results, why they like picking coffee; they agreed that it was because they earn money. In the highland community, the idea that the children earn money themselves - most children get an amount from their parents to save or to pay for their education - is important in explaining why children like to work in the coffee sector. The children living on the plantation, on the contrary, do not feel that they are earning money themselves, since they get no more than a few quetzals of the money earned. For them it is more a sense of contributing to the subsistence of the family that gives them a positive attitude towards work:

Elias (12):
 Working is nice. When I go to the field with my parents I feel happy because I am helping them, just like they help me. All children should help their parents, because life is very expensive. I know a boy that is very lazy and doesn’t want to help. That is no good.

Furthermore, several girls stated that they like going to the field because they get to spend time with their parents; they do not like to be home alone. For many it is the nature of the work that makes them enjoy it. Ten-year-old Sofia commented, “when my brother got sick I had to help my mother during harvest. I like picking coffee because you can hear the singing of the birds. I love

birds.” Eleven-year-old Ludwin added: “I like picking coffee. I always look forward to going to the *finca*. It is so different from Chipel. I think it is very beautiful”.

Because of the lack of recreational alternatives for the children in the research communities, children feel that working keeps them from getting bored; and as is apparent from the above statements, children enjoy the recreational aspects of the work.

4.2 Educational consequences

Contrary to the consequences of child labour in the coffee sector concerning health, those concerning education are very different for each of the research communities. The differences are explained by the varying dynamics of the children’s participation within the coffee chain. This section looks at whether or not work acts upon school enrolment, how work influences the amount of time spent in school and if or how work affects school results.

El Amanecer

At primary school age work in the coffee sector is not an obstacle for school enrolment among El Amanecer children. All children enrol in primary education, although mainly girls may be withdrawn before concluding it. This is, though, better explained by gender rather than labour related factors and is also stimulated by the negative vision people have of education and the prospects it offers. After having finished primary or even secondary school, it is not probable that young people will find a job outside the coffee sector. Since *colonos* don’t have the ability to send their children to tertiary education, they feel the opportunities their children will have will be the same with or without primary and secondary education³⁶. The extreme low enrolment in secondary education is also related to economic factors. Expenses of secondary education are considerably higher than for primary education; a monthly fee is charged and transport costs are inevitable.

Child labour in the coffee sector does have an impact on the amount of time children spend in school. All children work during the harvest from September to February. School holidays start mid-October and end mid-January; meaning that the harvest overlaps with schooldays. School absence is very high during the harvest period. Some children are absent a few days a week, others don’t go to school at all until the harvest is completely over. During the rest of the year, children who attend school only work during the weekends. They do whatever job their father or mother is doing, during any given period. One teacher in Las Estrellas said, “they work most frequently during the weekends. During the first weeks of the school year some children come to school only three times a week, the other days they pick coffee.”

During the fieldwork there were school children working in the coffee fields at all times. Even though the school year had started they kept going to the fields. Eight-year-old Maria was seen in the coffee fields on the first day of school, picking coffee with her aunt. Her aunt explained that Maria was actually enrolled in school, but just didn’t want to go that day. A week later she was in the fields again; her teacher explained that Maria had missed three days of school the week before. These absences lead, according to the teachers, to disinterest in school and educational

³⁶ The vision on education in El Amanecer is discussed in Chapter 5

deprivation, which can cause children to repeat grades and to finally drop out. The fact that the majority of children work during weekends is not seen as a problem by the teachers:

That has no consequences for school results. They do go to work during the weekend, but they bring back homework. In cases they don't, it is because they are a little lazy, as they do have time to make homework; they start work at six.

Both Las Estrellas teachers agreed that work during the weekends does not act upon the educational achievements of the children. None of the parents had an opinion about this.

Chipel

In the Altiplano community the impact of child labour in the coffee sector on education is more obvious. If children work in the sector, they travel to another region and are thus separated from their school; there is no possibility for them to work and to go to school during the same period. A majority of the families that travel to the *fincas* leaves before school holidays start or come back weeks after it has ended. This means that a lot of children miss out on several weeks of education. One teacher of the local school estimated that this applies to 20 out of 200 children and added:

Many leave after the September 15 festivities, one month before the end of the school year. They do not finish their work. We often feel pity for the children so we pass them to the next year anyway. We know that if we let them repeat the year, their parents might not send them to school again. We do not want the children to be left without education.

The school principal stated that from each grade about three to four children enter school in March, even though the school year starts in mid-January. He has noticed that these children fall behind other pupils and start feeling bad about this and even leave school because of it. Three fourth grade boys (aged 11-13) had just returned from the plantations, and had missed one and a half months of school. All three had once failed a year as an outcome of working on the plantations. Two of the boys are brothers; they have to work to help their father pay off his debt. Because of their late return they were told to stay inside during the breaks and catch up with the rest. One of the boy's father claimed that he had told his son to go to school, but "my son just didn't want to go back to school. I told him to go, but I can't force him. I still don't know what made him change his mind." It is very common for parents to hold their children responsible for the choice to work, or for not going to school. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.

The secondary school principal, who is also a teacher in the primary school, explained that in *basico* children do not drop out or fail classes because of their work: "These children are older and not so easy to manipulate as the young ones. They are also more dedicated to school and therefore not willing to sacrifice it for work." Children who do drop out during *basico*, do so because they cannot afford to pay the monthly 20 Q (2 Euro) fee and to buy books and school gear. "This is also the reason why only one third of sixth grade pupils proceed to secondary school", the principal concluded.

Besides falling behind other pupils, returning late from the plantations has a second, more social consequence for the children concerned. One teacher mentioned that they are isolated by other

children during the first weeks of school. The social structure of the class has already been defined and the newcomers do not yet fit in. "Within weeks, though, this problem is solved" said this teacher. Other teachers had never noticed this and claimed that no discrimination of the latecomers takes place. Several children agreed that there was no unfairness or bullying whatsoever. 16-year-old Eber told of how he had missed almost a month of school. He had been at a plantation with his father, little brother and two sisters, and they stayed there for one and a half months: "I caught up with the rest. I don't mind, I do it so I can pay for school. Most children go to the *fincas*, the ones who don't, don't bother and don't say anything about it. They never make me feel bad." Working on plantations is generally accepted and common. Most children have done the work themselves, and do not make others feel bad about it.

Chanchicupe

The small-growers community exhibited a very particular consequence of child labour for education. In order to prevent working children from falling behind, teachers have partially adapted the school cycle according to the harvest period, and they are more flexible when applying the rules. This flexibility is only possible in official schools and not in PRONADE schools, like the one near the El Amanecer plantation. In PRONADE schools an evaluation takes place right after the beginning of the school year. If the number of children in school is too low, one or more teachers may be sent away, creating a deficiency in teaching personnel once all the children arrive.

Third grade teacher:

The situation forces us to make exceptions. Up until March we receive children for the new school year. Per grade about four to five children are enrolled late. Children do fall behind. We sometimes have 15-year-olds in fifth grade. We have to try to adapt to reality; that is why we do the final exams two weeks before October 15, which is the normal date. We want to give children the chance to finish the cycle. I do not see this as a problem.

Second grade teacher:

Child labour is most noticeable during the last days of September. It is also difficult to start in January. We try to adapt to the local situation and to harvest, so we start classes around January 25th instead of 15th. Even then about eight children out of thirty are still absent. Around the 15th of February all children are in school. I think this is a problem. It is obvious that the children fall behind. But it is not a very big problem.

This adjustment, however, means that all the primary school children are missing out on almost a month of education. The children, who cannot even complete the adjusted cycle, are missing even more. The effects of this shortcoming may not become visible within a year, but is accumulated throughout the years and may cause frustration among the children and serious damage to a child's educational development. It may also put pressure on the teachers, as they have to do their best to curtail their subject material and to help the children who are behind to catch up with the rest.

This problem only applies to primary education, since school hours coincide with working hours. In secondary education another problem appears. Classes take place in the afternoon, after most

people have finished their working day. This opens possibilities for the combination of labour and education. Three boys in the second grade of *basico* commented on their lives and work. The 14-year-old Felipe explained:

We work from six in the morning until one o'clock. We sometimes stay up until late studying, sometimes until three in the morning. On occasion we have no time to make homework, but we make it the other day. The work just has to be done. Almost all the boys in our class do this. And even girls.

One of the secondary school teachers argued that the children who combine work and school, according to him a majority, experience a negative impact on their academic development. Outside school hours, labour is the most important thing to them. Children start to lose interest in education and get used to earning money. Chapter 5 shows how this is an important cause of labour among adolescents.

4.3 Family consequences

In all research communities child labour is seen as a contribution to family life. Helping to increase the family income is considered the responsibility of all capable family members. On the plantation, for the Altiplano families and for the owners of small parcels in Chanchicupe the income generated by children is indispensable and an important economical input. In this respect child labour has a positive effect on family life. It helps families to survive. Children feel good about helping the family. For the children in El Amanecer and Chanchicupe work also appears to be a chance to spend time with the family. This is one of the reasons why children say that they like to work. When asked about situations that make them feel sad, a great majority of children said they disliked being alone; they long to be anywhere their family is.

The same is true for the Altiplano children. Here, however, child labour has more profound consequences on family life. Firstly, many families interrupt their daily lives by leaving with all their members to the coffee plantations for several months. The private and familiar home is substituted with a shack which they have to share with tens of other families. This entails a complete disruption of normal family life. Secondly, some migrated families are split because some family members stay home. Husband and wife may be separated for some while, as are children from at least one of their parents.

4.4 Worst form?

The Labour Code determines that no minors may perform activities that are harmful to their moral or intellectual development, no children under 16 may perform unhealthy or dangerous work and work may in no case stand in the way of compulsory education³⁷. The data presented here has shown how working in the coffee sector does in fact have negative consequences for the children's health, intellectual development and access to compulsory education.

³⁷ See Chapter 2

The most significant negative effects on children's health are of a biomechanical nature. In addition many children suffer machete cuts and are exposed to unhealthy climatic and hygienic situations, which make them susceptible to diseases. No specific negative effects on the children's emotional health were observed during the research. In El Amanecer child labour may have negative effects on the intellectual development of children in cases when children miss classes because of work. In Chipel this problem is even bigger as children who miss classes, do so for several weeks or even months. Finally, in Chanchicupe *all* children miss out on several weeks of school, since the school cycle is adapted to the local harvest season. Moreover, adolescents combine school with labour and their intellectual development is thus vulnerable, since results may be influenced by the work.

Considering the consequences that working in the coffee sector may have for a child labourer, it follows that several descriptions of activities from the national worst forms list apply to the coffee sector:

Those activities or occupations that may cause serious damage to the physical health and integral development because of the way they are performed or organised, or because of the labour exigency and duration of the job, without the actual nature of the job being dangerous (as is the case with activities that cause biomechanical damage)

Activities that hinder the right to obligatory education (this applies to all the research communities in the cases in which children fail classes)

Activities that bring along risks of violence, psychological damage, unjustified detention, physical, sexual or psychological abuse and predisposition to obtaining non-social conducts³⁸ (circumstances in the *galeras* make children vulnerable to sexual abuse) [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social 2006:5]

Again, one could conclude that child labour in the coffee sector is indeed a worst form. After all, many of the activities performed within it are described in the national list of worst forms activities. The category "worst form", though, does not mean anything to the subjects of the research. They do not derive their value of work from the consequences it has for their children's health or education, but from the possibilities it offers to make ends meet and to survive. Children experience positive feelings towards work when they feel they are contributing to family subsistence. Although both parents and children may be aware of the risks that come along with some of the jobs they carry out, these are not a motive to not do them. Even though they do experience risks, they see few of the long term consequences.

This means there is a gap between conclusions an outsider might draw and the actual experience of the research subjects. Considering the views of the informants and the observations made during the fieldwork, with respect to the severity of the consequences of the activities, it is arguably not

³⁸ See "Reglamento para la aplicación del Convenio 182 de la OIT sobre las peores formas de trabajo infantil y la acción inmediata para su eliminación" for the total list.

adequate to categorise all labour within this sector as a worst form. Parents and children do not experience it as such and exaggerating consequences that in reality might not be more than exceptions (such as snake bites), leads to a blurred view of the problem. GO's and NGO's should concentrate on those activities that are really harmful (such as carrying heavy loads and working with machetes), even if these are not the most visible, and on the effects on education, keeping in mind that the children and their families working in the coffee sector are extremely dependent on the work and that, in the case of *colono* families and small-growers families, this sector is part of cultural heritage. The Guatemalan government's alternative of using a list of worst forms activities could be taken into consideration. This should be driven, though, by more legitimate motives than the protection of the sector's economic position. Such a list should also be more specific and based on qualitative research.

Chapter 5

Why Do Children Work?

To implement successful projects to improve the situation of working children and their families you must, in addition to knowing what children do, how they do it and what consequences this may have for them, explore the reasons *why* these children work.

5.1 Structural and economic reasons

The most obvious reason for children working is the need for additional household income. This also applies to the three research communities, although it is most significant among the migrant families. The highland community has few income generating opportunities and the family properties are rarely able to provide a level of subsistence. There are thus few options other than migration, and for the research community it is specifically the coffee sector that is attractive. Because most money during the year is made at harvest time, all family members are expected to contribute, and to make the most of the time they have in the coffee plantations. This is most significant for female headed households and for families in debt. A single mother commented on her economic situation:

My husband left me with four children. I have no choice but to go to a *finca* every year. We only have one piece of land, but the corn is not enough. The money my children and I earn during harvest, is the only money we will see throughout the year. Last season we returned two weeks after the beginning of the school year. The two oldest children help me picking, the other two just come along.

People thus consciously make the choice to go to a coffee plantation in order to earn money. For those who already live on a plantation there is only one choice of occupation. They are in a relationship of dependency with the plantation owner; they stay on the plantation because they are guaranteed housing and a job, but the environment does limit their choices. By living on the plantation they have no other income generating activities, and so they expect their children to participate to get the most out of the coffee activities as possible. Wages are low, and they don't own their own land on which to cultivate subsistence crops. The money that the children earn with their participation is added to the household income. The local teacher commented on ways in which families use their money:

Every two weeks I am reminded that it has been pay time. The children tell me that they have received one quetzal, some have received five. Others tell me that they have eaten bread the day before, or meat. It breaks my heart when I hear all this. Unfortunately money is often used for means other than food, health or education. It is sad because besides the poverty of the families, they have to deal with things like

alcoholism. Alcoholism leads to the malnutrition of children. People earn very little, so when the money is used to buy alcohol, children become the victims.”³⁹

In Chanchicupe some families also have their children work for economic reasons. This is usually the case for people with little or no land. When income is low children go to work with neighbours or on nearby plantations to make ends meet. Many of them also work to pay for their own education. Within families who have more land or a family member in the U.S. sending them money, girls seem to work less and participate only during harvest.

In both Chipel and Chanchicupe, adolescent boys were found working not only to help their parents, but also to earn their own money and to be independent. Thirteen-year-old Elias from Chipel, in the last year of primary education and very positive about school, commented: “I want to be a teacher. I go to Comitancillo every weekend to shine shoes and I go to the *fincas* every year, because I earn a lot of money there. Money is important. I save it to pay for my study in the future.” One of the teachers in Chanchicupe pointed out that many young boys work so they can buy new clothes that their parents cannot afford to give them: “They like to be fashionable.”

5.2 Tradition

For the migrant families economic motives are most relevant for having their children work. However, in both the *finsa* and the small-growers community traditional ways of viewing children, education and child labour are at least as important.

5.2.1 Children’s responsibilities

What people think is best for children and how their lives should be, can serve to legitimate the existence of child labour. In El Amanecer people believe that children should contribute to the family’s subsistence; this is considered one of their responsibilities and it motivates child labour. This idea is partially created and reproduced by the structural situation of dependency in which families find themselves, and which requires their children’s contribution. The teacher of the plantation school stated that parents may want their children to study, “but once they are old enough the parents prefer the children to help them and they start to leave the children without education.”

In addition to their financial responsibilities, children are also expected to be docile. Parents are known to teach them this the hard way; verbal and physical violence against children is common. A mother was heard apologising to the teacher for her son’s late arrival, and promised she would beat him for it; the teacher said: “Did you hear the mother threaten to beat her son and to tell his

³⁹ In El Amanecer and Chanchicupe alcohol puts pressure on some families’ budgets. This problem indirectly contributes to the presence of child labour. In Chipel mention was made of cases of alcoholism, but it was difficult to discuss this theme as most people are evangelist and alcohol is a taboo among them. In the other two communities people seemed to be a little bit more open about this (the percentage of evangelists is lower).

father? That is the way parents correct their children, that is how children are raised. Sometimes with the bad vocabulary one has, all this traumatises the child.”

Twelve-year-old Lina, who is in sixth grade of primary school and who is not going to proceed to *basico*, commented on things that made her feel sad: “I don’t think picking coffee is very hard, but when I do not want to work my father beats me. I feel sad when he beats me. I also feel sad because he does not want me to go to school anymore. He wants me to help. The day I have children my own, I want them to help me too.”

Lina’s statement not only shows that children are dealt with harshly, it also reveals that ideas are reproduced; she indicates that she would expect the same from her children as her parents expect from her.

In Chanchicupe things are somewhat different. Violence against children appeared to be less common, even though children are viewed as disobedient and in need of a strict education. Parents are preoccupied by the idea that it is easy for children to get off track. Therefore, they must learn to be responsible:

Father:

It is good for children to work. They have to learn all kinds of jobs, not only the things they learn in school. If a child’s only occupation is school, it might get off track; a child always has to be busy.

The local nurse supported this idea. He argued that on the one hand people really want their children to study. Child labour is therefore no problem, since it is not used to exploit children, but to keep them off the streets: “At a certain age child labour is good. If responsibility is not drummed into children’s heads, they can go to the street. But they should not be exploited.” The third grade teacher affirmed that: “The main idea about *la niñez* is that it should learn to be responsible.” By working, children are believed to learn how to be responsible and to make the right choices in life.

In El Amanecer ideas of what children are supposed to do contribute to the existence of child labour because children are expected to contribute. Additionally they are not considered to be vulnerable creatures who have to be constantly taken care of. They are expected to obey and to be strong. In Chanchicupe, on the contrary, parents believe that their children have to be protected from negative influences. The best way to do this is by teaching them responsibility through work.

5.2.2 Education

Education does not necessarily prevent child labour, many children combine work and school. In fact, it can be said that certain negative attitudes towards education can stimulate the existence of child labour, or at least indirectly increase the probability.

It is remarkable how El Amanecer inhabitants recognise that education is good for children, but simultaneously do not believe that education will truly change their futures. People are aware of their reality and do not see alternative options coming out of it. Soila, the daughter of one of the supervisors, serves as an example. She has one 10-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son. She is a 27-year-old single mother, who lives with her parents and sisters:

I never went to school, so I never learned how to read and write. My father used to drink a lot and there were just too many kids. Because I never went to school, I want my children to do so. Nevertheless I don't know if I will be able to send them to school after sixth grade, it depends on our economic situation. My daughter wants to study and work in the United States some day, so she can help me. I don't think her dreams are realisable though. I would like to encourage my daughter to study, but I just don't think it is in store for us.

There is indeed a tendency for the inhabitants to succumb to their situation and not believe in alternative options for them and their children. This is also reflected in how children consider their futures. When asked to draw who they would want to be in the future, a few children drew a teacher, but most of them drew someone picking coffee, collecting macadamias and in some cases they drew a *caporal* (work supervisor) or *mayordomo* (plantation administrator). Children unconsciously limit their dreams to life on the coffee plantation. The drawings the children made are an indisputable reflection of the restraints of plantation life. Children in the highland community drew teachers, nurses, administrators and even doctors. In Chanchicupe children want to be university graduates, doctors and soccer players.



Drawing 1: Mariana from El Amanecer (10) pictures herself picking coffee in the future.

The lack of faith in education to ensure an improved future makes dropout and withdrawal relatively plausible in the *finca*, and children who are not in school are expected to work. Another important factor that contributes to withdrawal is the ignorance of parents concerning education. Since most of them have enjoyed, if at all, no more than a few years of education, they do not really seem to know what children learn in school, besides how to read and write. Some decide that once their children have learned this, they can stop going to school and start working fulltime. Lack of involvement and familiarity with the educational system are also relevant problems.

It is crucial to recognise that these negative ideas and ignorance about education originate in a situation of lack of possibilities and perspectives that has been experienced by many generations in the plantation. People's idea that they are doomed to stay in the plantation forever, like the generations before them have, leaves them with no expectations of the role that education can play in their future. Labour is seen as a more lucrative investment than education. Leaving the plantation is not considered an option as people see and hear that many outside the plantation are in the same situation of poverty and lack labour possibilities, even after having completed secondary education.



Drawing 2: Cleotilde (13) from Chipel wants to be a nurse.

In Chanchicupe people are more positive about the impact of education. There have been some success stories in the community that appear to serve as examples for both parents and children. 13-year-old Marcela sees her brother as an example: “My brother is a teacher. I want to be a teacher or an administrator. My parents tell me that it is important to go to school, because wherever you go, you will find work. I think school is also important because you are told how to behave.”

In general, teachers in Chanchicupe experience a positive attitude from parents towards education. One teacher explained that if a child is not in school it is due to his or her own lack of dedication and not because of the parents' attitude. A secondary school teacher stated that: “All children go to *basico*. Money doesn't matter. Everyone wants their children to go to school. This is caused by the bad economic situation, out of which people want to escape.”

On the one hand the probability of a child working in El Amanecer is increased by the negative attitude towards the purpose of education, on the other hand a positive attitude towards education in Chanchicupe does not prevent children from working. The same is true concerning gender. In El Amanecer the idea that girls will find a husband to maintain them and that they will end up in the kitchen leads parents to deny their daughters education and to put them to work. In Chanchicupe the fact that there is actually more equality between both genders, does not mean that girls are not put work. The opposite is in fact true; they work a lot and on occasion perform activities that in El Amanecer are not considered appropriate for girls.

The following statements of a father and his daughter illustrate the disadvantaged position of girls on the plantation. The father only went to school for one year and is illiterate; he is also very unaware of what his daughter learns at school.

Angelica (14):

I would want to be a teacher, but I realise this will never happen. Most girls get married when they are about fourteen. I won't, though, because my parents do not want me to. I do not want this either; I am still too young I think my father is more concerned about my brother's education. Girls leave anyway and will be maintained by their husbands, while the boy will have to maintain a household himself.

Father:

I will send my son to *basico*, but not my girls. The girls will get married and then it would be a meaningless expense. A boy can always continue to go to school; with girls you run the risk that they get pregnant. I hope my son will work in a shop some day.

There is also a tendency of parents to place the responsibility for school enrolment and attendance with their children. On the plantation, as well as in the small-growers community, parents whose children fail school or are not in school at all, feel that it was their child's decision. This was given by parents as an explanation every time a child was seen in the coffee fields instead of in school. They may claim to take no responsibility in their children's attendance, but the presence of their children in the fields also happens to benefit them, giving them little motivation to insist on their children's attendance. This became very clear during an interview with a mother in El Amanecer. She has five children:

I never went to school; I don't want that for my children. I advise them and want them to continue, that would make me proud. But it won't happen because the children say they do not want to study because of the costs. So, what can I do? I am also glad that they work to help us. Our children do all kinds of work in the field. They help us out.

Two teachers in Chanchicupe summarised this issue well:

Parents' attitude, although they do think education is important, is a little indifferent. This is because they did not go to school themselves. They do send their children to school, but when the child says he does not want to, it suits them better anyway to have him work. It is lack of concern; children decide whether they go to school or not.

Many parents do not know how to raise their children. Many use the excuse that the child does not want to go to school whenever they are short of money or when the children's help avails them.

Parents who find themselves in a precarious economic situation focus more on direct benefits, than on benefits for the future. This is an understandable, though concerning situation, as it often leads parents to accept or even provoke a child's absence in school and its presence in the coffee fields.

5.2.3 Child labour

One could approach child labour from the perspective that it is harmful and that it should not occur. When it is part of every day life, however, other ideas may exist. These ideas may not only justify the existence of child labour, but they may also promote it. In the El Amanecer plantation the dominant vision of labour in general and of child labour specifically is that "it is just something we have to do." People do not experience child labour in the coffee sector, or adult labour for that matter, a choice. It is part of reality and it is not questioned; it is just there. The following statement of a father whose son works fulltime clarifies this attitude: "Why the children work? We just happen to live here; there is work to be done. I feel happy about my children working."

This is in accordance with the total vision people have of life and all it entails: education, work, the future etc. People are very bound to the reality on the plantation and they do not envision themselves stepping out of it. Children are no exception, as their drawings about their future dreams showed above. A majority of children wants to work on the plantation in the future. In order to be able to do this kind of work, they say they have to learn to work the land from an early age. Eight-year-old Gudiel drew his father to represent his wishes for his own future: "I want to be like him, because he works. I always ask him to take me to work on Saturdays, because I want to learn all about the coffee and the macadamias. I will be a very good worker when I grow up."



Drawing 3: Gudiel drew his father collecting macadamias.

Parents' views of their children's future are also limited to the limitations of the plantation: "Education is good, but children have to be interested. Work, though, has got many benefits too. Children learn a lot and parents can teach them how to work. That is good for the future, so they will know how to do their work."

This father visions his children performing the same work he does in the future, even though he agrees on education's benefits. He, like many other parents, expects their children to stay in the plantation forever, like he has. The idea that children will have to work in this sector in the future motivates parents to let their children work, as they have to become familiar with all kinds of activities.

The vision on child labour, of the children in El Amanecer, is largely based on their feelings of responsibility. They see working as one of their self-evident duties and as a way of taking care of their parents and siblings. Fourteen-year-old Luzmila was one of several girls in the plantation that described labour as a way to return to her parents what they have given her. She was withdrawn from primary school after the fifth grade and she felt very sad about it. She would have wanted to finish school and continue studying to go to work in the capital some day. Despite her disappointment for not being in school, she was glad to help her mother:

Because I am working with my mother every day, she gets more money to buy food. It also helps her to pay for the education of my younger sister and my brother, who is in *basico*. I want them to stay in school. It is my responsibility to work. Children have to help their parents; they cannot just feed and dress you without you having to do anything. I hope that my children want to help me too, when I have them.

In Chanchicupe people also experience child labour as part of their reality; not only of the family unit, but of the countryside in general and even of Guatemala:

Father:

I don't think it is bad for children to work. They have to learn that it is part of the country's culture.

Mother:

Here, labour is as important as education for children; in the cities it is different.

Third grade teacher:

The situation in Guatemala is different from other countries, so they just have to work. I think through labour children acquire a lot of knowledge.

In the Chanchicupe area coffee is omnipresent and it is therefore obvious that children have to learn about it. Child labour is above all a way of maintaining family traditions in a small-growers community. The coffee field is not only a workplace, but a heritage as well. One day the children will inherit their parents' land and they will have to know how to maintain it. In addition, some villagers who have studied, but are now unemployed, encourage people to teach their children about working on the land, in case they will find themselves without a job some day.

Child labour is also seen as a way to prevent children from veering off track; parents and teachers claim this to be the main reason for child labour:

School principal:

Children have to be busy so they will not take the wrong path. Child labour is only a problem when children stop going to school. In this community child labour is seen as something positive because children are learning something.

Father:

Children have to work to stay off the streets. Work is not dangerous for them and it is not bad.

Teacher:

If children do not work, they become lazybones and slackers, like a tree that is not straight.

Children themselves pointed out that boys who do not work get themselves into trouble and that doing nothing is no good. During a group conversation three adolescent boys underlined this:

José:

There are a few boys who just hang around after school.

Miguel:

They have family in the United States and they always wear fancy clothes.

Mario:

They are not used to work and later, when they are on their own, they will get in trouble, because they don't know how to work. How will they support a family?

Miguel:

Working is not always fun, but at least you can be proud, because you are doing something.

When children are not in school at all or when they just have some free time, they are supposed to do something useful. This argument was unique to Chanchicupe, possibly because children in Chanchicupe are more exposed to outside influences and more up to date than are children in the other two, more isolated, communities. In the small-growers community there is more communication with the outside world, making parents more aware of and concerned with problems like youth gangs, which is a great problem throughout Guatemala.

5.3 The demand side

Plantation patrons also play a role in stimulating child labour. First, they have a vision of child labour that justifies it. Funcafé director Mynor Maldonado argued: "The participation of children in

work is part of Guatemalan culture. It is the way we all were raised. I, for example, was a working child. I always used to pick coffee. And you see that it has not harmed me.”

The owner of the El Eden plantation shared this opinion:

Parents are the ones responsible for sending their children to work. I think it is good, though, because children get to spend time with their families and do not hang around alone. They also learn to work and to carry responsibilities. It is beautiful that children help their parents. It is not dangerous.

Finca owners do not feel responsible for the fact that children are working their lands. During a dinner with the El Amanecer owner, and a number of other plantation owners, child labour was discussed. They all agreed that they could not do anything about it and that it was really the responsibility of the parents. They are aware that children work, but they say that they are not the ones sending them to the field and that they do not hire them (only the parents are contracted).

Even though the plantation owners do not directly send the children to work, they do not realise that they create the conditions for the parents to do so. In El Amanecer, for example, one has to promise to work on the *finca* to live in one of the *finca* houses. Every man under 65 who lives there is obliged to work on the field. During harvest everyone is bound to work, pregnant women included. Though this officially applies only to adults, in practice it means almost all children are taken to the field, because they, according to the *finca* rules, cannot be left “hanging around” alone. The plantation policy is thus part of the problem.

It is also part of tradition and of the way the sector has been working for decades. Patrons are born into a family and just happen to inherit a coffee plantation. They are familiar with the way their parents have run it and continue to do the same; they have people living on their property in exchange for labour; they contract highland families to spend weeks or months on it during harvest, knowing that they will bring their children. So these large landowners may deny or be unaware that they facilitate child labour, but in fact that is exactly what they do.

According to the Labour Code, children helping their parents are official workers and have a contract, whether or not the patron has approved their participation [Guatemala Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social undated:63art.139]. By arguing that it is the responsibility of the parents not to bring their children to work, and that in fact there is nothing wrong about children working, patrons indirectly give their approval to the situation. They definitely do not disapprove.

This chapter presented factors that facilitate or cause child labour throughout the three research communities. In Chipel, the highland community, child labour in the coffee sector has no particular traditional reasons. Parents take their children to the field because they need their economic contribution. In El Amanecer and in Chanchicupe child labour in this sector has, besides economic reasons, many traditional implications.

Persistent traditional beliefs about what children should do and learn during their childhood stimulate child labour. The belief that education is unlikely to change reality and future prospects and parents’ tendency to assign responsibility for education to their children also act upon child labour. Moreover, in the plantation people experience child labour as an unquestionable fact of life

and use it to prepare their children for a future on the plantation. In Chanchicupe, it is also considered as a part of life and a preparation for the inheritance of the land. In addition, child labour is often seen as keeping the children on track, keeping them occupied in positive activities. Finally, the mentality and policies of plantation owners contribute to and facilitate the existence of child labour in the coffee sector.

Chapter 6

Strategies to Combat Child Labour

In Guatemala only one NGO project has been implemented to benefit child labourers in the coffee sector. This project was carried out in San Marcos, by Funcafé and the ILO, and targeted plantation communities in the coffee regions, as well as migrant communities in the Altiplano. The real focus, though, was on the latter. First a description of the project and its results will be presented, then a discussion of how certificates from a coffee cooperation can influence the presence of child labour.

6.1 The project

The International Labour Organisation has developed a programme for the elimination of child labour in the coffee sector in Central America and the Dominican Republic. The main objective was the prevention and elimination of child labour in the coffee sector in these countries. In Guatemala this led to a collaboration with Funcafé⁴⁰, who was put in charge of the execution of the National Project for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour in the Coffee Sector in the San Marcos department. Through this project an attempt was made to “progressively prevent and eliminate child labour in the sector, promoting the return of girls and boys to the classroom. Thereby, the project’s actions aim primarily at preventing, withdrawing and rehabilitating children from working in the farms” [ILO/IPEC 2004:1].

In practice Funcafé appeared to have put things more into perspective, and adjust to the reality in front of them. Although the official focus of the project was child labour and the existence of children working in the coffee sector was indeed recognised, Funcafé director, Mynor Maldonado, prefers to speak of “the participation of children within the coffee sector”. Speaking of the prevalence of child labour in the sector may cause undesirable damage to the sector, as has been the case many times, according to the director. In addition Roberto Jordán, also of Funcafé, reasons that they do not want to block child labour entirely:

We do not want the children to substantively change their way of living. We just have made people aware that education is the only way of breaking the circle of poverty. We do not want to state that work in the *fincas* is humiliating or dangerous; we only want children to be able to grow to other levels and for agriculture to not be the only option. Formative labour has become part of life in Guatemala.

⁴⁰ Funcafé, formerly known as Funrural, is part of Anacafé, the National Coffee Association. It was funded in 1994 by coffee growers. It is a private, non governmental organisation and is entrusted with social development issues concerning rural Guatemalan areas, mainly those to which coffee is an important income generator.

The discrepancies between the ILO's paradigm (which is adopted in official publications by Funcafé) and the issues Funcafé was confronted with in practice, became clear throughout this research. The Funcafé staff would, for example, not recognise the coffee sector as a worst form. Roberto Jordán said:

In Guatemala the worst case scenario would be if coffee did not exist. Classifying the coffee sector as a worst form would deny the good things it has brought, such as labour and support for many families. Personally I don't think this would be fair. The conditions under which children work determine whether a labour is a worst form or not. The crop should not be classified a worst form, but the way a person is treated.

Director Mynor Maldonado prefers to speak of worst form activities, but underlines that most children are found in picking coffee, which he does not consider a worst form. As argued above, representatives of the coffee sector, GOs and NGOs tend to limit child participation in the sector to the activity of picking coffee. Yet, this research has proven that children perform all kinds of activities, many of which can be considered hazardous.

After a base line study⁴¹ carried out by the ILO in 1999 the target communities and populations were identified. Children of indigenous migrant families, working on the *fincas* during harvest, proved to be the most vulnerable⁴² [ILO/IPEC 2004:4]. Although these children indeed find themselves in a very vulnerable position, this IREWOC research suggests that the situation of *colono* children is more complex and in some facets more precarious. Child labour in *colono* communities takes place throughout the entire year, it is barely visible and the families live in a structurally dependent position that culturally justifies child labour and a negative view of education and prospects. Interventions on plantations are more difficult, because they are private property, but nonetheless very urgent.

The project's underlying principle was the theory that child labour in commercial agriculture has three main causes: lack of education, inadequate socio-cultural attitudes and low family income. In an attempt to tackle these causes, the theory was translated into an integral project comprising three components: education, awareness raising and productive alternatives. A health component was added in order to increase access to health services by child labourers.⁴³ The implementation of the four working areas was, according to Funcafé, realised in cooperation with several actors, such as: *finca* patrons and administrators, local authorities, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, GO's and NGO's [ILO/IPEC 2004:4].

⁴¹ This study revealed that the greatest problems families experienced were related to health and clothing, besides food. Prices of medicine were too high as well as clothing expenses, especially for girls. These appeared to be reasons to put their children to work.

⁴² 16 Altiplano and 6 Boca Costa communities were targeted.

⁴³ It had been observed that a large proportion of family income was spent on health care; the project aimed to alleviate these costs.

The main objective of the San Marcos project was to contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labour⁴⁴ in the coffee sector in the communities of Comitancillo, Sipacápa, San Miguel Ixtahuacán and El Tumbador. Five specific goals were formulated:

- The withdrawal of 4400 children from child labour and their integration and retention in school.
- The prevention of child labour among 1000 children under six years old.
- The integration of 850 adolescents in formal education.
- The improvement of producing, value incrementing and commercialising capacities of 2100 rural families from the target population.
- The mobilisation of key actors and the community in San Marcos to combat hazardous child labour in agriculture.⁴⁵

Concerning education several actions were planned. The primary school system was to be altered, making changes towards more participative methodologies such as ERA (Educación Rural Activa/ Rural Active Education). Funcafé also aimed at opening pre-primary education centres and the distribution of 200 adolescent scholarships and 4000 so-called Peace Scholarships (Becas para la Paz) among primary school children. The latter initially were handed out in cash. It soon became apparent that the money was being spent on alcohol or used by the parents for other means than the children's education, such as fertilisers and for paying off debts. This led to the decision that scholarships had to be granted in kind. Boys received shoes, trousers and a blouse and girls got shoes, a *huipil* (blouse) and a traditional skirt, *corte*. Finally, the establishment of institutes for teacher education based on intercultural participatory methodologies was planned.

6.1.1 ERA

ERA is a teaching methodology derived from the Colombian Escuela Nueva. The basic points of departure are the participation of children within the learning process, the expectations and needs of the parents and children and hence the improvement of educational quality. Unlike traditional methodologies ERA is flexible and offers opportunities to respond to the realities in rural communities, as is the case in communities of migrant families [Jordán & Leiva 2004:10].

ERA was considered relevant in the Altiplano target communities because it offers opportunities for evaluation throughout the year. To complete a grade a child has to finish six workbooks. If a child does not accomplish this, he/she may finish the remaining tasks during the next year, without being held back a year. This should prevent children from having to quit school or repeating a year after returning from the *fincas* and having missed out on several weeks of school.

⁴⁴ Funcafé officially defines child labour as being any paid or unpaid activity performed by children under 14, which: hampers the child's access to education, damages his/her health or harms the child's physical, moral or psychological growth due to the nature of the activity or the environment in which it is unfold (Funcafé power point presentation)

⁴⁵ Information from Funcafé power point presentation.

Teachers are also supposed to benefit from ERA. Many of them are assigned a great number of pupils of different grades. Because ERA depends above all on children's individual participation, teachers are expected to fulfil a guiding role more than merely passing on knowledge. This makes it easier to work with large groups of children from different grades. Central to the innovations is the participation of children and the stimulation to make them generate learning processes by themselves, for example by interviewing their parents on local history or by searching information in the school libraries provided by Funcafé. Teachers have to play a crucial role in achieving this by setting aside authoritative attitudes and permitting their pupils to participate and express themselves. This should lead to greater motivation among children [Jordán & Leiva 2004]. Teachers in the target communities received retraining courses by Funcafé technicians.

Part of the ERA strategy involves the school governments and boards. Through the school governments children are further encouraged to participate in school activities and to develop responsibility towards the school environment. The elected members of the government are also expected to carry out teacher assisting tasks, such as controlling the class during the absence of the teacher. To also promote parent participation school boards were installed and charged with the task of managing the money assigned to the scholarships and distributing them.

Besides a focus on education Funcafé underlined the necessity of attention to production and made a plan to provide families with more means of production in order to prevent child labour. The intention was to organise workshops on administration, commercialisation and added value, and to capacitate parents in productive alternatives, such as carpentry, tailoring, electricity and bakery. Education and *opciones productivas* were respectively executed by Funcafé and the San Marcos factory. In cooperation with the Guatemalan Journalist Cooperative, Funcafé also took action to raise awareness about child labour in different sectors of society through investigations, workshops, forums, seminars, television, radio etc. Assemblies were organised in the communities to inform parents about child labour. During the implementation of the health component Funcafé worked together with Hope. The total project staff comprised 20 persons, of which 6 came from Funcafé.

In 2001, when the project gradually started with the awareness raising programme among parents and teachers, parents assumed that Funcafé's intention was to force children out of the labour process and were afraid that their children would fall into evil ways if this were true. Funcafé also met with resistance from teachers. They were against the methodological changes promoted by ERA. According to Roberto Jordán this opposition was overcome though and in 2002 the project officially started in the realms of education, awareness raising, production and health.

A few family features were selected to identify the target families. First, a family had to participate in migrant labour. Second, the most vulnerable families were chosen, on the advice of teachers and community leaders. Finally, the families had to fill in a survey, which further revealed which households were to be targeted. Only one child per selected family was considered for the scholarships. The scholarships were handed out to the children who had not failed the year and who had the lowest level of school absence, to stimulate attendance. Notwithstanding, all families within the communities are said to have benefited from the project through the increased quality of education.

After the 2003 evaluation by IPEC important results were observed, but the impact of the health component on the child labour incidence was not obvious. As a result the health component was

eliminated, to Funcafé's astonishment. During the last three years of the project Funcafé was the executor of education and productive alternatives as well as of the awareness raising assemblies. In 2006 the project officially ended, although Funcafé continues to work in the realm of education, distributing scholarships and promoting ERA and is still participating in the established Child Labour Round Table in which several regional organisations participate. Roberto Jordán argues that through this round table Funcafé has succeeded in putting child labour on the agenda of the participating organisations and created a tangible space in which to discuss it. To also put the issue on the agenda of judges, who often have no knowledge of international conventions or even the national legislation concerning child labour, Funcafé organised an informative meeting with 29 judges in San Marcos.

6.2 Results

According to the ILO, the project led to irrefutably positive results in San Marcos. The organisation states that thanks to the project fathers, for example, do not take their children to the *fincas* anymore, instead they travel alone. In addition, awareness raising workshops have provoked an important change in young people's attitudes towards education, motivating them to finish school and preventing them from starting a family at a young age. The ILO also argues that the project brought about qualitative improvement in education through ERA and provided many families with other labour options than agriculture.

The specific results are discussed below, as presented by Funcafé in relation to the results experienced by parents, teachers and children⁴⁶ in Chipel, one of the twenty target communities, and the results observed during the IREWOC fieldwork period in this community. The discussion of the Funcafé project concludes with a brief analysis on the ways this project has contributed to combating child labour in the coffee sector.

6.2.1 Education

One of the most significant results, according to the project director Roberto Jordán, is that 5400 children were registered and retained at pre-primary and primary school and that the percentage of children completing primary school increased. In total, 7128 children and 2005 adolescents were given access to qualitative education through ERA. "This educational system has changed traditional ways of teaching to significant, active and participative learning".⁴⁷ This led to a declining amount of dropouts, further encouraged by the distribution of 4,000 scholarships.

These results were by all accounts caused by a change in attitude among children and their parents. For them it was no longer enough to study until the third grade of primary school. Finishing primary school is now considered to be the least children should attain (Roberto Jordán). Concerning child labour Jordán states that fewer parents take their children out of school to work in the *finca*. "Whether or not children are taken to the *fincas* during school holidays, we cannot control. But

⁴⁶ Most children did not have an opinion about the project or the changes it might have brought about. They did not seem to be familiar with the notion of "the project".

⁴⁷ Information from Funcafé power point presentation.

there has been a change in people’s way of thinking: child labour is no longer considered to be normal”.

In Chipel both statistics and teachers’ testimonies are convincing. The amount of children in the last year of primary school increased from 10 in 2001 (one year before the project started) to 20 in 2005. In 2001 16 children were held back a year and 20 out of a 175 school population dropped out of school. In 2005 18 children were “in progress”, meaning that they did not complete the workbooks within one year, but were catching up with the others during the following year. Of the 212 school population 15 children had dropped out.

Table 3: School statistics, Chipel

Year	Total population	Held back/in progress	Dropped out
2001	175	16 (9%)	20 (11%)
2005	212	18 (8%)	15 (7%)

Teachers confirm these statistics underlining that all children in the community at least attend primary school. This is above all ascribed to the scholarships. This was pointed out to be the most successful aspect of the project. A child would only get a scholarship if he or she completed the school year without major absences. This conditional aspect of the scholarships was evidently necessary, according to several teachers and parents. One father stated:

There are fewer cases of entire families who travel to the *fincas*. During harvest there are hardly any empty houses in the village. Often, the mother stays home with the youngest children. On the one hand Funcafé tried to make people change their minds, on the other hand there was a little bit of compulsion, but that was good. People did not get a scholarship for their kids if they would take them to the plantation. The children were rewarded based on their school attendance.

In general, parents were less explicit about the project’s impact than the teachers were. Some of them, above all the ones who lived far from the village centre, could not remember the NGO’s name, but did know about the scholarships. Others confirmed that the scholarships had been a motivation to send their children to school. A mother of six children who used to bring all of them to the *finca* every year remarked:

I went to the Funcafé meetings; they talked to us about children having the right to go to school. These talks took place once every two or three weeks. Before Funcafé arrived I did not want my children to study, but Funcafé really made things change. They handed out scholarships so we would bring our children to school. The scholarships were conditional. If the distribution of scholarships would end, I would be displeased.

Now this mother stays home with the smallest children, while the oldest travel with their father to a plantation. They return, though, before school starts. Letting part of the family stay home is now considered an option. This option is in fact effective in combating and preventing child labour, as

the children who stay home are not exposed to or familiarised with the work on the plantation. In some cases these families have been offered alternative income generating activities in order for the women to get by while their husbands are away. In other cases women use the reserves they have to manage without the household head.

Despite the growing number of families that partially stay at home and the efforts of some to return from the plantations before school starts, most children still miss a few days or weeks of school. During an interview a mother of four children admitted that they still returned after the start of the school year, but before they were not receiving education at all:

The greatest change is that now I feel satisfied for having my children in school. Two of my children received a scholarship, they got new shoes. They got the scholarships because I sent them to school every day and they completed the cycle. They would have never done so without the scholarships.

One would think that the value of the scholarships would never compensate for the income loss resulting from the withdrawal of children from migratory labour. In many cases, however, it does. Parents explained that they had to take their children to work so they themselves could earn the money for clothing. Bearing in mind that they buy clothes only once a year and that this is considered a major expense, parents are evidently willing to send their children to school in order to get free clothing.

The school principal listed the effects of the educational input by Funcafé: higher school retention, fewer dropouts, and a decrease in the amount of people travelling to the *fincas*. Not only the numbers changed; the participation of the children during classes also improved, as the majority of teachers expressed. Thanks to ERA, teachers experience more significant participation of their pupils and a tendency towards more independency and less timidity. “The school government has made the children more participative and more responsible. From a young age children are taught to have more responsibility”, said a fourth grade teacher. Part of the ERA strategy is the introduction of school boards and school governments to encourage students’, parents’ and teachers’ participation. 20 school boards and 20 school governments were established in the entire target area.

In the beginning teachers were against ERA. However, according to the Funcafé staff they soon discovered that this new methodology was helping them, especially the multi-grade teachers, who have up to 70 children in one classroom. In Chipel teachers were indeed enthusiastic. Although there was no consensus on the question whether ERA had made things easier for them or not, the Chipel teachers agreed that quality of education had improved. The third grade teacher, who was working in this school even before Funcafé arrived, stated: “Using the workbooks is difficult for us because pupils do not progress at equal speeds. But this is good because children get to work at their own speed. I think the quality of education has improved.” According to one teacher the fact that children are often asked to interview their parents, thereby involving them in education and convincing them of its purpose, has also been of utmost importance. Parents’ attitude towards education has changed positively according to the teachers.

Contrary to the teachers the parents had no clear opinion about the quality of education. They are barely engaged in their children’s education and do not know much about it. Often the same goes

for the children, who have not consciously experienced the changes. In some cases though, they did confirm their parents' argument that without the scholarships they would probably not be in school. The teachers state that even though much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. They mention material issues, such as a lack of workbooks, as well as qualitative issues, such as training and parent-teacher communication. Also, they agree, there continue to be children who drop out of school without completing primary education. The only mistake they directly assign to Funcafé is that the organisation was unable to distribute the 2006 scholarships.⁴⁸ According to all the teachers this led to a decline in school attendance during that year.

6.2.2 Awareness raising

According to Funcafé the awareness raising workshops in San Marcos reached 2100 parents and 202 teachers; 230 GO's and NGO's were mobilised against child labour. In Chipel the awareness raising campaign involved five parent assemblies a year. During these assemblies parents received information on child labour and education and were motivated to stop taking the children to the *fincas*, especially outside school holidays. These assemblies were attended by the parents, mainly mothers, of the children who were to receive a scholarship. Spanish was the official language during the assemblies. Translation into Mam was carried out either by the mayor or by one of the COCODE members.

The principal of the secondary school argued that the awareness raising programme had made a great impact within the community, even though parents failed to realise this. The principal was not surprised to hear that most people were unfamiliar with the name Funcafé:

There are different reasons for that. Maybe you asked the mother when it was the father who attended the meetings. Also, there is great illiteracy and many people have not received education. This causes them to easily forget things told during the meetings.

This was underlined by two mothers who said that they had attended several meetings but did not remember the exact content. One of them said: "I did go, but I am not smart enough to remember what they told me. Sometimes I left the room before the meeting was over." The secondary school principal argued that the disability of people to understand and remember the content of awareness raising meetings was a great obstacle for NGO's wanting to work in Chipel. Don José, the head of one of the research families, claimed that many people can hardly understand, let alone express themselves in Spanish, it would be better thus to lead the assemblies directly in Mam⁴⁹. Besides the language barrier, other factors, such as wrong use of methodology by Funcafé, could have led to the ignorance of many parents about the workshops.

⁴⁸ In previous years the scholarships had been covered by ILO funding, but in 2006, ILO's participation in the project ended, and the government was to take over financial responsibilities. Unfortunately, payments were delayed and scholarships only resumed in 2007.

⁴⁹ This is a challenge, because there are few people who command both Spanish and Mam.

The fathers and mothers who were aware of Funcafé's role and who could remember what was discussed during the assemblies were very positive about the way they had changed their way of thinking. Don José was one of the villagers who had the most knowledge about the work of Funcafé. He himself had received a bakery course and had participated in many assemblies. He has nine children, of which five are in school:

One of the things that prevented me from migrating with my entire family was the fact that we would not get the scholarships if we did so. Another thing was the change of mentality we had. Funcafé made us realise that children should be going to school, I agree with that now. Education is important, not only to escape poverty but also because it makes people respect you and recognise your rights.

Although the positive attitude towards education within the community was remarkable, it was almost impossible to identify the causes of such a positive mentality and very difficult to define whether it did or did not exist before Funcafé arrived. Teachers recognise a positive change and ascribe it to the awareness raising campaign of Funcafé. They also underline that it has become more common to question child labour. Funcafé's presence started a process in which people have begun to recognise certain activities as child labour: "We teach the children that the work they do should not be harmful, but formative. There must be differences between adult labour and child labour."

6.2.3 Income

In order to provide families with productive options besides agriculture forty-nine productive units were established throughout San Marcos, such as bakeries, tailor shops, barbers and chicken farms. In Chipel eleven people participated in the offered courses; two in bakery, one in electrical works, three in chicken farming, two in tailoring and three in weaving. This component is seen as a very important part of the project by the teachers and the participants. In Chipel the courses were first offered to an organised religious group. Only one man and an adolescent boy from the group participated:

Don José:

In the beginning many were interested, but when they discovered they had to go to another village to do the course they withdrew. Only the two of us accepted the offer. Funcafé then approached me to look for more participants among people outside the group. Most people were not enthusiastic. They were not prepared to leave their houses for two weeks and miss out on the income they might generate during those days.

This was confirmed by another participant. According to this man many people were suspicious of the project, thinking it might have something to do with a large mining development in San Marcos⁵⁰. One man admitted that he was asked, but just didn't have time to participate.

Don José had great difficulty finding people for the courses. Finally the participants turned out to be several of his family members and some friends. Some courses, though, remained vacant. One of the teachers criticised Funcafé for not having invested more energy into reaching the most needy people. Instead the most expressive were approached to participate. Estela Leiva from Funcafé admitted that mistakes had been made in this area and that a greater effort to reach more people had been necessary. Nevertheless the people who did participate were very optimistic about the help they got, even if it had not changed their lives dramatically. 21-year-old Fausto received a tailoring course in 2004. He was one of the two members of the religious group who agreed to participate. He did finish primary school but started working in agriculture after that:

The course was wonderful. We had to go to San Marcos for twelve days. At the moment I am not working with what I learned, but I do practise it. In the future I hope to have a better machine so I can do more things. Most people here work on the land. The problem is that there is nothing else, but Funcafé changed that somehow. People can practise some crafts now. Before I did this course I never imagined myself learning this kind of things. I have one son; I want him to learn many things, as I hope to still learn many things myself.

Three sisters who received the tailoring course were a little more critical:

Mayte:

Only one of us was supposed to participate. There was, though, not much interest among other families, so all of us could go. The three of us wanted to learn something to make a living. We had to go to Quetzaltenango. We didn't have to pay anything and got two machines.

Maria:

But we do not stitch every day. Sometimes we get an order, but most of the time we make things for ourselves.

Mayte:

It would have been better though if the course had been completed. We were promised to be taught how to work on computerised machines, but only learned to work manual machines. We would have wanted to learn more so we would have better working opportunities.

Justa:

⁵⁰ Our research was also hindered by this same suspicion from some people in the village, they were at times afraid to speak their mind.

We cannot completely depend on this work. It does not bring in enough to live on.

The example of the three sisters illustrates how poorly the distribution of the courses was among the community, but also how difficult it is to commercially benefit from the acquired skill. A combination of factors led to poor distribution; firstly, there are many obstacles to get people involved with something unknown (this was also experienced by this IREWOC research; most people are weary of speaking to strangers). Secondly, Funcafé should have been more involved in recruitment and should not have left the responsibility to someone from the community. Many people claimed they had never been offered a course or had never even heard of this possibility; thus the courses had never been promoted well among the community. Another difficulty, confirmed by Estela Leiva from Funcafé, was that those people with the task of distributing sewing machines, ovens, or other tools, tried to benefit personally, by charging the villagers for what should have been free.

6.3 Sustainability

The awareness raising programme was implemented in the hope to ensure the project's sustainability. It is difficult though to conclude whether the observed changes, such as an increased number of children in school, can be attributed to increased awareness among parents, to the distribution of scholarships or to other unknown factors. If the second were true the sustainability may be questioned; what will happen once Funcafé stops distributing scholarships? In 2006 teachers witnessed a decrease of enrolments; they say this was due to the absence of scholarships that year. If this was indeed the reason, then on the one hand the awareness raising programme had not been enough to ensure sustainability of the project, and on the other hand material assistance is crucial in getting children to school.

The primary school principal believes that after Funcafé's withdrawal from the community the number of children in school will decrease slightly, and more children will go to the *fincas*:

Parents would feel lost, like a herd without a shepherd. But the number would not go back to the time before Funcafé. More children, though, would go to the *fincas*. There is still lack of consciousness among parents. They have to be conditioned, because for them it would be better if there were no classes at all.

To prevent this from happening teachers agree that another awareness raising campaign is necessary. One of them stated that Funcafé had not had enough presence in Chipel. They underline that more assemblies will be needed to change people's way of thinking in a more sustainable way: "It is necessary for more Funcafé instructors to come and to improve communication with parents. A new project should strengthen the awareness programme and the scholarships."

The persistence of the improved educational quality experienced by teachers may also be questioned. Although during the execution period several ERA workshops for teachers were organised, new teachers are no longer trained in the methodology; the current second grade teacher has never even heard of ERA: "I never heard of ERA. I just started to work with the workbooks, but was never told how to do so. I never received training."

With regard to the income generating alternatives some sustainability has been achieved. The majority of the participants are still involved in the acquired craft. Some express, however, that they lack the ability to commercialise their products and that they cannot sustain their families by only doing these jobs. After completing the courses the participants were not given any further support and a few abandoned their economic alternative. This is the case in all the alternatives involving the breeding of animals.⁵¹ A greater focus on the support aspect would have significantly increased the project's sustainability. Also, teachers, parents and adolescents themselves are convinced that teaching adolescents a craft is the best way to achieve community development and to prevent child labour; as one young father argued: "A good project has to concentrate on the youth, on teaching them a craft for them to find work and not to have to send their children to work later on."

This project component had great potential. It offered people alternatives to increase their income, thereby reducing the necessity to migrate or at least creating possibilities for the migration of only part of the family. By offering these kinds of courses to adolescents they are given options other than agriculture and also confidence and motivation to create a stronger basis on which to build a family. This is an effective way of preventing child labour. Although the amount of courses should be limited, due to the restraints of the local market, the few educated persons seem to be an example to the rest of the community. This results, according to several teachers and community spokesmen, in motivation and change of mentality throughout the community. People look up to those who have had education and want the same for their children.

Miriam Rodriguez from IPEC Guatemala expressed her opinion that the project had not been very sustainable:

Funcafé has not made alliances with governments. Although communal penetration was good, many participants did not know what was being done, they were lead by the direct benefits the project had for them. There was no unity with local governments, with the COCODE.

This is a great hindrance for the ability of communities to prolong the benefits of different project components, after an NGO has left. In Chipel the local government seemed to have no idea about the work Funcafé had done, let alone that they were doing anything to continue the work or to find ways to keep profiting from the positive project outcomes. The cooperation Funcafé claims to have had with local governments, was clearly not visible almost one year after the end of the project.

Judging by the opinions of local teachers and parents, the Funcafé project has contributed in different ways. In education the scholarships have been a great impulse for children's education. More children are in school and fewer children drop out. According to teachers the quality of education has also improved through the implementation of *Educación Rural Activa*. Thanks to the awareness raising workshops teachers experienced a positive change in people's attitudes towards

⁵¹ People who receive animals may use them for family consumption or to generate income in case of emergencies, before they were able to reproduce..

education, accompanied by an increased sense that labour may be harmful for children. In addition, people who participated in the courses on offer increased their income generating capacities and serve as examples for the rest of the community.

There is some concern, however, for the sustainability of the project. A first worry is the continuation of the scholarships. As these have been a major motivation for parents to send their children to school, what would happen if the distribution of scholarships were to stop? Teachers worry that the mentality change has not been enough to make up for the loss of scholarships. Although the awareness raising campaign has had results, they may not last. Also, positive changes brought about by ERA may not be sustainable as the training of teachers has not continued and the acquired knowledge is not passed on to new teachers. Productive alternatives have been somewhat successful, but the sustainability is again fragile. Participants of the courses have not received support and have in some cases abandoned their activities.

The probability that the project will be continued by the community itself is very small. Ever since the project officially ended in 2006 (despite Funcafé's continued efforts for some components), no actions have been undertaken to increase the successes. Teachers and parents feel abandoned and are convinced that further action is to be led by Funcafé. They do not believe it to be realistic that anyone from the community itself is able to take over responsibilities.

When talking about the results of the project, project coordinator Roberto Jordán constantly underlined the educational statistics, which undeniably showed good results. Greater participation of children in education does, however, not necessarily mean that the number of child labourers has dropped or even that the children work less. In the case of Chipel, this research was unable to observe the actual migration and thus count numbers of children leaving to the plantations. However, based on interviews, a majority of children still travel to the plantations and many of them still miss a few weeks of school during coffee harvest. Not one single family testified to not travelling to the *fincas* anymore thanks to Funcafé's project. Nevertheless, it has become a real option for people now to have the mother stay at home with the youngest children, whilst only the father and older children migrate. This change was facilitated by the introduction of new income generating activities for the mothers in their own home villages. Unfortunately though, a direct impact of the economic alternatives on school participation and attendance could not be identified.

Funcafé's response to the question if the project had enabled the eradication of child labour is that they are not so much concerned with the work that children perform on the plantations, but much more about the impact this has on their education. In a discussion about the worst forms of child labour it is important though to take into account the nature of the activities children perform and the conditions under which they do this.

The Funcafé project specifically targeted migrant communities in their home villages. No action was undertaken among small farmers or to establish relations with *finca* owners and to try to change their ways of thinking concerning child labour in order to change not only the situation of one of three groups within the sector, but of the entire sector and of the place where the labour actually takes place. However, whereas the project can be repeated in different highland communities - they share their position within the coffee sector, they are all families that have to migrate to the coffee plantations, because there are no alternatives in their home region, and the interventions are of a very general nature and do not depend on local factors - it is definitely not replicable in

colono or small-growers communities. Any intervention on a plantation must include a dialogue with the patron, for whom it is not profitable to provide his labourers with something like labour alternatives. Small coffee farmers with their own land may prefer to invest in their existing livelihood rather than in a new skill. Furthermore the causes of child labour on plantations and among small farmers involve many cultural implications that would have to be taken into account, as would the different position of the working children within the sector.

6.4 The Chanchicupe Coffee Cooperative

In 1995 29 Chanchicupe coffee growers came together to find a solution for the low coffee prices, and a cooperative was born. The basic principle was to achieve a better price for their product. A second objective was to grant low-interest loans to its members. The president argued that: “A cooperative has more credibility in the eyes of credit lenders.” They made all the official arrangements and in 1996 the cooperative became official. Efforts were made to find exporters to whom they could sell their coffee directly, without the interference of intermediaries (*coyotes*); this is one of the ways in which farmers can receive a better price. The coffee is sold to Fedecocagua.⁵²

Meanwhile, the cooperative has built up a capital that is used to give loans to the 77 members, of which 27 are women.⁵³ The cooperative is allowed to make a little profit, but the interest rates of all loans must remain low. To apply for a loan a member has to present an investment plan and have collateral, which is normally land. The loan may only be used to invest in land or in the maintenance of the crop. Obtaining a loan is considered to be the main reason for joining the cooperative.

In 2006 the board started to make arrangements to achieve an Utz Kapeh⁵⁴ certification to acquire better prices⁵⁵ and to answer to the consumers’ demand. The president explained: “One of the conditions to obtain the certification is that the land has to be clean. Also, there are many rules about the use of chemicals. First Mayacert⁵⁶ will come to see if we meet the conditions, then a certification commission will be elected.”

⁵² Federación de Cooperativas Agrícolas de Productores de Café de Guatemala (Federation of Agricultural Coffee Cooperatives of Guatemala)

⁵³ The president of the cooperative estimates that there are around 300-400 small coffee growers in Chanchicupe. Non-members receive a price of approximately 600-650 Q per *quintal* of *pergamino* coffee, whereas members may receive 675-700 Q.

⁵⁴ Utz Kapeh, meaning “good coffee” in Maya-language, is a global certification programme that determines the standards for the production and maintenance of coffee in a responsible way, guaranteeing social and environmental quality.

⁵⁵ The price for the certified coffee would be 800-900 Q per *quintal*.

⁵⁶ Provider of certificates in agriculture.

6.4.1 Possibilities for combating child labour

In the case of Chanchicupe the cooperative seems not to have had an impact on child labour. No one in the community could identify a relationship between the two and the president was sceptical about the possibilities:

We try to have a focus on child labour. We tell the members to minimise it and to bring their children to school. It might have had some impact, but it is a very difficult problem. It is hard to control child labour. Awareness has to be raised among people, or it will continue to exist. It is a *costumbre* (a tradition) that has to be broken.

Nevertheless, there are possibilities for local cooperatives to positively contribute to the child labour issue. In the first place they may offer families a better economic position, this could be a step towards reducing the number of child labourers in, for example, cases where children work to pay their own school expenses, as is often the case in Chanchicupe.

Other activities of the cooperative may also have an influence on the child labour problem. Once every two months the cooperative organises gatherings about themes such as gender and self-esteem. The cooperative focuses on social development and thereby on education, health etc. Every year an annual report has to be presented in which the activities of the cooperative have to be shown. A focus on child labour could be employed. Another goal of the cooperative is to play a key role in the evolvment and financing of community projects, like it has done in the case of the school sports field: “We try to canalise the benefits throughout the community to make non-members benefit too”, said the president. The participation of the cooperative in community projects specifically targeting child labour is a realistic possibility and an opportunity to achieve local ownership of such projects.

According to one of the female members the cooperative is slowly changing gender relations: “The cooperative is obliged to include women on the board, and these women serve as an example for other women in Chanchicupe. The participation of women is promoted.” To confirm this statement research on gender would be necessary, but it indicates the possibilities of a cooperative in changing cultural patterns. This might also be the case concerning child labour.

Certification of coffee through a cooperative could be a framework for combating child labour in the coffee sector. The Utz Kapeh code of conduct defines that in order to qualify for certification coffee growers have to respect ILO conventions 138 and 182 [Utz Kapeh Foundation 2006:30]. Marjoleine Motz, business consultant for Fair Trade, argues that:

The contribution of a label to the struggle against child labour is above all economic. You force the sector to think about where profits stay and about how to divide them in a fairer way. On the producer side this means that the price they get is more favourable and that there are more possibilities for sending the children to school.

There are, however, some limitations to how coffee cooperatives can ameliorate the situation of child labourers. In Chanchicupe, the most concerning economic situations are generally found among the people who have no or little land. They do not benefit directly from the cooperative as they have no access to it. In order to become a member one has to pay 500 Q (50 Euro). This is a

first barrier. Then, one has to own at least eight *cuerdas* to serve as collateral in order to get a loan. This rule excludes many poor farmers. In addition, when one sells his/her coffee via a cooperative, one has to wait up to several months to receive the money. For many farmers this is not an option as they have no savings and need their income instantly. They therefore prefer to sell their coffee to a *coyote* on the regional market, even if this means receiving a lower price.

Cooperative member:

For those of us who own only a few *cuerdas* it is not lucrative. Your coffee has to meet many standards; it has to be high quality coffee. It is better for them to sell that little bit of coffee they have in the market in Malacatán. Of course they do not get good prices. The *coyotes* know that people have to sell their coffee the same day, as they otherwise have to pay to transport it back home, so they take advantage of this. No, the ones who really benefit from the cooperative are those who already have good *pulperas* (de-pulping machines) and own a patio.

The standards that have to be met by farmers in order to be accepted in the cooperative are too high for many of them; they are not allowed to use certain fertilisers and they are expected to invest more time in their crop etc. For some this means that they would have to hire extra labour and spend more money on fertilisers. They do not consider this an option. Marjoleine Motz explained that the absence of farmers from cooperatives can sometimes be partially explained by a lacking entrepreneur mentality: “They do not understand entrepreneurship. They think in the short term, not in the long term. Their income strategy is a strategy of survival.”

In order for cooperatives to have an impact on child labour, its existence will have to be recognised by organisations such as Fedecocagua. During an interview a representative of Fedecocagua denied the existence of “child labour” among small coffee growers and underlined that it is only common on large scale plantations. He did acknowledge that children perform certain activities on their parents’ land, but did not label this child labour or harmful:

Child labour as contracted labour does not exist within the cooperatives. Children perform some activities, but they mostly just spend their time in the fields, playing and entertaining themselves, with their parents. It is most of all a form of accompanying their parents; most see it as a game.

He suggested that in order to speak of child labour, children have to receive remuneration, which is hardly ever the case in the coffee sector, and their labour must interfere with education. Furthermore he expressed that child labour is a heritage of colonial times and that all Guatemalans have worked at some point during their childhood. He said: “I am a product of child labour too. If there had been no work, who would have fed me?”

Coffee cooperatives can be important catalysts of community development and may therefore play a role in child labour issues. This would have to be, though, through a specific plan that focuses on child labour and that recognises its existence and negative impacts on the children’s wellbeing. Also, ways would have to be found to include all the villagers and not only those who are already slightly privileged.

Finally a certification, such as Utz Kapeh, is only a framework. It will depend on the significance that is given to the code of conduct on a local level, whether child labour is addressed or not. There would also have to be knowledge and control among the certifiers of the local child labour situation. At the moment there is great lack of both. Inspections are carried out during two day visits to a village and concentrate on the quality of the coffee, more than on labour conditions etc. Fedecocagua agronomic engineer Edgar Lopez confirmed this and said: "I have the idea that the supervision barely focuses on child labour. Mayacert comes only once a year to evaluate." Edgar Lopez guides cooperatives towards certification. He was not very optimistic about the role certification can play in the child labour issue.

Moreover, in practice it appears to be very difficult for certifiers or organisations such as Fair Trade to substantiate claims. On the one hand, stated Motz, consumers in the West expect the labels and Fair Trade to guarantee that no child labour has been used in the production of their products. On the other hand though they are confronted at the local level with a reality within which child labour is not only accepted, but often also necessary. This results in a nuanced approach at the producer level, within which more is accepted than adopted norms suggest.⁵⁷ This leads to ambiguity about what is and is not acceptable, questioning the ability of labels and organisations such as Fair Trade to see to it that rules concerning child labour are complied with.

⁵⁷ Fair Trade employs the ILO conventions as a guideline.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This report has shown the implications of child labour in the coffee sector in the San Marcos department of Guatemala. The research questions were as follows:

- What are the living and working conditions of the children working in the coffee sector?
- What consequences does child labour in the coffee sector have for the working children?
- What are the main reasons for the children to work in the coffee sector?
- Which strategies to combat child labour in the coffee sector have been used by GOs and NGOs in the research communities and what are their successes and shortcomings?

In El Amanecer living conditions are mediocre. Basic needs such as water and sanitation are present, but far from satisfactory. Healthcare is absent and education very basic. To get access to healthcare and secondary education distance becomes an obstacle. Children participate in the maintenance and harvesting activities in the coffee chain. Although they may work throughout the year, a peak can be observed during harvest. The most concerning labour condition that applies to the children is the absence of direct reward. Yet, what affects these children the most is the nature of some of the activities they carry out, like weeding and carrying heavy loads. The education of children is also harmed; many of them miss out on time in school, especially during harvest time. Being exposed to little else than coffee activities and becoming familiar with the labour activities from an early age onwards leads to the limitation of prospects, or perceived prospects. This is experienced by both children and parents, and is one of the reasons for child labour in this community. Parents believe that their children are destined to work on the plantation forever, like they are themselves. Child labour is seen as an inevitable fact and as a self-evident way in which a child contributes to its family.

Children of the highland community, Chipel, find themselves in a very different situation. The reason they have to work is exclusively economic. Their families depend on income derived from the coffee harvest for subsistence throughout the year, as life in the home village lacks income generating possibilities and is characterised by a shortage in all basic needs. The more family members that engage in harvest, the more security the family will have the rest of the year. Migrating to a coffee plantation affects children's wellbeing in particular ways. Even if the children participate only during harvest and they primarily are found picking coffee, which is a relatively harmless activity, they do so under precarious conditions. They sometimes work for twelve hours a day, regardless of harsh weather conditions that often lead to illness. During harvest they have to live with many families in inadequate *galeras*, exposing them to disease and to abuse from adults. The temporary move to an unfamiliar and inadequate environment also causes the disruption of family life and the educational cycle.

In the small coffee growers' community, Chanchicupe, we find yet another situation. Living conditions are generally better than in the other two communities, but they may vary according to the economic position of a family, which depends to a great extent on the amount of land the family owns. Landless families and families who own just a small parcel are the most vulnerable. In this community child labour is very acceptable, not only for its economic benefits, but also for its potential to keep children from going off track. It is also a way to guarantee the continued existence of the family tradition to cultivate coffee and a way of preparing children for the work they will have to do once they inherit the family land. As families are responsible for all coffee-related activities, including actually selling it, children are found in most activities in the chain. They participate in planting, trimming and are also found drying coffee, contrary to the children in the other communities. When children work on the family land they do not receive payment, but they are held responsible, and it is not uncommon for them to work alone. This makes the children more vulnerable to possible labour hazards. Both boys and girls are exposed to the serious health consequences that carrying heavy loads and activities such as trimming entail. Educational limitations are less obvious than in El Amanecer and Chipel, but all children in the village miss several weeks of education, since the cycle is adjusted to the harvest period. Adolescents may even combine school with education, often jeopardising their educational development.

Only one initiative has been undertaken to ameliorate the situation of families working in the coffee sector. Funcafé executed the ILO project for the eradication and prevention of child labour in the sector. The previous chapter discussed some of the project's successes and shortcomings. The major success has been the distribution of scholarships; this has led to greater participation of children in education and fewer dropouts. Also, an improvement in educational quality has been experienced by teachers. An awareness raising campaign has made parents' attitudes towards education more positive and questioned the casualness of child labour. Moreover, some persons received courses that provided them with alternative income generating options. Despite this, it is not probable that the positive effects will be reproduced, as the community has not been equipped to continue project activities after its completion. Also, even if the project has decreased the amount of time that children work and increased school participation, it seems not to have significantly contributed to the absolute withdrawal of children from the sector. The project was directed towards migrating populations, leaving the situation of small-growers communities and *colonos* unchanged.

Worst form?

It is clear that the participation of children within the coffee sector is not in accordance with Guatemalan legislation. Several arguments can also be used to justify designating child labour in the coffee sector a worst form. Within this sector children carry out activities that put them at risk of hurting themselves and that have serious health consequences. In the case of the migrant children, work also exposes them to hazardous living conditions on the plantations. In addition, working in this sector has negative consequences for the child labourers' educational development.

However, the points of view of the people concerned must also be taken into account. These reveal that they do not see child labour in the coffee sector as a worst form and that they rationalise its hazards. This research revealed that although some activities come with risks and harmful

consequences, others do not. When the nature of an activity is not harmful, the conditions determine whether it has the potential to be so. When the conditions are not precarious, an activity may have no negative consequences for a child. A balanced consideration that weighs in the legislative frameworks, the subjects' views and observations from this research leads to the conclusion that defining the entire coffee sector as a worst form of child labour is not in accordance with the many ways in which children are able participate within it. It generalises the possible hazards and puts the focus on children who are the most visible, but in fact not the most vulnerable. It would be more appropriate to compile a list of the specific hazardous activities, including those of which the conditions give rise to their harmfulness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and taking lessons learned from the ILO/Funcafé project into account, a number of recommendations can be made for future GO and NGO interventions.

Living and working conditions

- Future interventions should take into account that some of the problems children experience are not caused by child labour, but by the general living conditions of the community, including poor access to education and healthcare. When improving general living conditions, cooperation with local and regional governments is crucial. They will have to be motivated and forced to take responsibility⁵⁸. The quality of health centres would have to be improved and access to water and sanitation has to be granted to all community members. Investments would have to be made to provide schools and teachers with the necessary materials, in order to ensure good quality education.
- Special attention should be given to the living conditions of migrant communities in the plantations. A first step has to be addressing plantation owners, as they are responsible for the living conditions on their plantation and they are obliged by law to provide the migrants with hygienic housing. Private houses with sanitation and access to potable water would have to be created. The most hazardous labour condition for migrant children is the living situation on the plantation⁵⁹. Improving the living conditions would make the work of these children less hazardous.
- The living conditions of *colonos* would have to be improved. Plantation owners have to be forced by labour inspectors to take responsibility and to meet the rights of their labourers to have hygienic housing, healthcare etc.
- Activities that involve the use of machetes and carrying heavy loads should be discouraged by making children and parents aware of their hazards. The General Labour Inspector

⁵⁸ The evaluation of the CEIPA project targeting child labour in quarrying has showed that stimulating local governments to take action and making alliances with regional governments are very effective in improving the living conditions of communities [Quiroz 2008]

would have to carry out inspections and sanction patrons and parents who allow the children to perform these kind of activities.

- Among children of migrant families the emphasis should be on working conditions, such as working hours and exposure to hazardous climate conditions. Allowing children to work alone should be prevented in the small-growers' communities. Both goals are to be reached by awareness raising campaigns.
- All labourers should be informed about their labour rights and their admission to labour unions should be encouraged and made possible. Where there are no labour unions, their establishment should be promoted. Managing *finca* personal and the owners also need to be educated on the laws established in the Labour Code that assign the workers certain rights.
- The Ministry of Labour should increase its budget to carry out inspections of living and working conditions.

Consequences

- Informing parents, children, teachers and plantation owners about the health consequences of child labour in the sector.
- Stimulating school participation by providing scholarships. This must be done holding in mind family needs, like Funcafé did in Chipel. Providing the scholarships under certain conditions proved to be effective in Chipel, but only in combination with an increased educational quality.
- Organisations should consider that education alone does not necessarily prevent child labour. Many children combine work in the coffee sector with education.

Causes

- In migrant communities income generating alternatives should be promoted; family incomes would have to increase and income generating activities developed in order to prevent migration.
- Coffee cooperatives in small coffee growers' communities can play a role in combating child labour. Cooperatives can inform people about the hazards of child labour and discourage it, for example by the acquisition of a certification that prohibits hazardous forms of child labour, but offers better prices and other benefits. Inspections from the certifier would have to be more frequent. By setting an example a cooperative could be important in changing cultural patterns that encourage child labour.
- A project in a small growers' community should help the farmer to create such a cooperative or to strengthen existing ones.
- Cooperation with plantation owners has to be started in order to create more openness in the communities and make intervention possible. The vision of patrons on the child labour issue needs to be changed through information and awareness raising campaigns, in order for them to start taking responsibility.
- They also have to be made aware of their responsibilities concerning the rights of their labourers and the role they play in the existence of child labour.

- Local plantation schools should be developed and professionalised. Inclusion of parents should be motivated and they would have to be informed about the contents of education and its benefits. Intensive communication is needed in order to change cultural patterns that limit the possibilities people experience.

In general, cooperation with other organisations, employers, labour unions, and local, regional and national governments should be a priority. Moreover, a unified methodology that targets living and working conditions, consequences and causes is most effective.

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