

**A RAPID ASSESSMENT ON THE WORST
FORMS OF CHILD LABOR IN SURINAME**

Final Report

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PREFACE

This Report on child labor in Suriname was commissioned by the ILO Caribbean Office in close association with the “International Program on the Elimination of child labor (IPEC)”. A draft report was submitted in October 2002 in Port of Spain (Trinidad) to the Sub Regional Tripartite Meeting on “Eliminating the Worst Forms of child labor”.

At this meeting there were similar reports by several other researchers who had experienced some of the same problems we had in getting to the children

Most of the field work that is reported was done

Vier stappenplan ILO

- reaktie verschillende landen op conferentie (Antigua adviseur zeker geen kinderarbeid en later publiek) Barbados ter vergadering eerst erg defensief maar draaide later bij.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Suriname has a population of about 445.000 inhabitants and is one of the smaller nations in South America.¹ Compared with the Caribbean, however, it is one of the larger nations. The population is very plural with major ethnic groups being Creoles (or Afro-Surinamese), East Indians, Javanese (or Indonesians) and Maroons (or Bush Negroes). There are a number of smaller ethnic groups as well such as Amerindians and Chinese. Ethnic background, religion and culture play a crucial role in the life patterns and thinking of the population. This also goes for the issue of child labor.

Suriname has a small open economy, which still depends heavily on its main export products Bauxite and Aluminium. Other export products are gold, oil, rice, shrimps, and bananas. Due to high inflation and unstable exchange rates the country has suffered from a declining macro-economic and monetary situation. The government has lost many revenues due to informal economic activities in sectors such as gold mining, timber, fisheries and trade. The vast natural resources, triggered the World Bank at one point to consider Suriname one of the 17 potentially richest countries in the world. This has remained an illusion, however, for most of the population. In 1993 about 63% of the urban population was living below the poverty line and in 2000 this was still 53%.²

About half of the families of the working children, who were interviewed during this survey, dipped under the poverty line, while most of the rest hovered just above this line.³ Economic context and factors definitely are at work when it comes to child labor.

Suriname has a rather young population with a mean age of 23.8 years in 1995.⁴ children up to the age of 14 years made up 32.9% of the population in that year. The share of children in the overall population will not have changed much in 2002. There are no exact statistics on the number of working children, but only estimates. One estimate is from an unpublished survey report by the Ministry of Labor and Environment (1998), which reports that about 2% of all children between ages 4 and 14 can be considered economically active.⁵ In many reports about child labor the family demographics and its social context play a role as causes of child labor and in Suriname this is no different.

Besides the volume of working children little is known about the exact nature of child labor in Suriname. Some research into the conditions under which children work, and the sectors they work in, has been done, but these have been of a limited nature. This report that is based on a nationwide probe of child labor will address the main issues with respect to this phenomenon in Suriname.

¹ Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Centraal Bureau voor Burgerzaken. Demografische data Suriname 1998-1999, Paramaribo December 2000.

² UNDP: Sustainable combat against poverty in Suriname (Paramaribo, March 2001).

³ We asked the parents if their income would be above or below Sf 300.000 (about US\$ 140) a month and used this as a poverty line. Dr. J. Menke, one of the experts on poverty measures in Suriname, used Sf 320.000 for July 2002 for a family of four per month. From this they could buy the minimum food items. He also mentioned that in May 2000 the poverty line stood at Sf 160.000, which gives an indication of the inflation that has been going on (interview on Radio ABC August 21, 2002).

⁴ General Bureau of Statistics: Suriname Demographic data up to 1997 (Paramaribo, May 1999).

⁵ Ministerie van ATM, Onderdirectoraat arbeidsmarkt: Draft report of the survey on child labour in Suriname (unpublished, 1998).

1.2 Education in Suriname

Compulsory education for children in Suriname was introduced in 1876. Parents and guardians were “obliged to their children and pupils in the ages between 7 and 12 to - wherever there was an opportunity to do so- provide for common primary education by persons who were qualified” (article 18 of the original law).⁶ The sentence “wherever there was an opportunity” clearly had to do with the fact that schools and education were not present at every location.

In 1960 the Primary Education Law replaced the law of 1876. It used virtually the same wording, thus children between 7 and 12 years have to get an education, but technically do not have to attend school.⁷ The law stressed the education and not the physical location.

The Constitution of Suriname of 1987 acknowledged that “The State recognizes and guarantees the right of all citizens to be educated and gives them an equal chance” (39 sub 1). Despite the fact that no age limits are mentioned this article also makes mention of the “... plight of the State to ... ensure compulsory and free common primary education.” (39 sub 2a). Since primary education normally consists of six elementary grades this is seen to correspond to ages 6 through 12 years. In practice, however, most primary schools will write off only children that have reached the age of 15 years. When we asked older children why they were not attending school anymore many of them told us that they have been written off “due to age” (*wegens leeftijd*). This normally meant that they were not attending primary school anymore because they were considered too old.

Virtually all reports on children in Suriname refer to the 1877 or 1960 law which puts the compulsory education age between 7 and 12 years. Nevertheless the provision in the Constitution can be interpreted as such that any child that has not completed primary education (i.e. regardless of age) should be in school, since primary education is compulsory. The practice to write off children from primary school only when they have reached age 15 underlines this interpretation as a valid one and shifts the compulsory school age effectively towards 15 years rather than 12 years.

In our research we will refer often to the educational level of working children and it is therefore useful to state some of the characteristics of basic education in Suriname.

Children can start preschool, which is usually offered in primary school facilities, at age four. It is estimated that nearly 90% of all young children attend preschool. After this they automatically continue with primary school (GLO) which consists of six grades (grade 1 through 6). The educational system at this level and also in general is characterized by group teaching in the classroom with a heavy accent on reproduction of the subject matter. “Junior secondary education ranges from two to four years, depending on which option the student pursues. General Junior Secondary Education (MULO), a four year program, is reserved for those with the highest sixth grade examination performance. Those with a lower score may continue to a four year General Vocational School (LBGO) or Technical School (LTO). Those with yet lower scores may enter four year programs by going to a Vocational Home

⁶ The law with provisionary regulations for primary education was published in the Government Gazette (G.B.) of 1877 nr. 10.

⁷ J.H. Adhin: *Honderd jaar Suriname* (Paramaribo 1973, gedenkboek i.v.m. een eeuw immigratie).

Economics School (LNO) or Elementary Vocational School (EBO) or Special Education School (VBO). These programs do not generally lead to further educational options.” (Chapman & Levens 1997: 4). Students who have completed MULO can continue with senior secondary and tertiary education, while some of the others may continue with more vocational schooling.⁸

The Internal War, a conflict between the National Army and guerrilla groups in the interior, which struck Suriname briefly (1986/1987 but officially terminated in 1992), had severe consequences for the quality of education in the interior. During the war many schools were destroyed or damaged, while teachers fled and many schools closed down for years. Many families fled the interior either to the capital, to smaller towns or to French Guyana. Ten years after the Peace Treaty was signed the consequences are still felt in the educational underdevelopment of many teenagers and young adults who were not able to attend school. Furthermore the educational system in the interior has not been completely rebuilt and also suffers from many years of economic decline of the country.⁹

A second negative development in the educational system is the high percentage of repeaters and dropouts. The National Education Plan which was recently presented reports that 4 out of 10 children who start with primary school are completing high school (2002:23). The following table illustrates the high percentage of repeaters and dropouts by district. It signifies the percentage of those pupils that entered first grade in 1995 but who did not complete 6th grade in 2001, including those who dropped out.

Table 4.1 Repeating and drop-out by district

<i>District</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils that entered first grade but did not complete 6 th grade including those that dropped out</i>
Paramaribo	30%
Wanica	16%
Para	34%
Commewijne	31%
Saramacca	36%
Coronie	49%
Nickerie	43%
Marowijne	62%
Brokopondo	60%
Sipaliwini	71%
Total	35%

Source: MINOV, examenbureau

⁸ For a full discussion of Suriname’s educational system see the quoted report by Chapman & Levens (1997).

⁹ In December 1996 the Suriname Mission Aviation Fellowship (SZV) published a report of its finding about the situation in the villages on the Upper-Suriname River. It was estimated at that time that only 35% of the children in this region were able to attend primary school. The educational situation was considered ‘miserable’. Since then schools have been rebuilt and attendance has improved, but based on our own recent observations the situation still is far from normal.

2. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to make an assessment of the nature and extent of the worst forms of child labor in Suriname. This was realized by looking into different occupational sectors and geographic locations.

Suriname is divided into 10 administrative districts, including the capital Paramaribo. In addition the districts are clustered into Greater Paramaribo (Paramaribo and Wanica), the coastal area (Nickerie, Coronie, Saramacca, Commewijne, Para) and the hinterland (Sipaliwini, Brokopondo, Marowijne). In the research proposal the intend was stated to visit about 6 districts, but in the end nine of the districts were surveyed and only the smallest, Coronie with less than 3000 inhabitants, was left out since there were no indications of any worst forms of child labor there.

The research strategy was focused on a Rapid Assessment approach i.e. to acquire within a short time span relevant information about the state of affairs with respect to the worst forms of child labor in order to be able to develop policy priorities.

This Rapid Assessment method is focused on:

- * An overview of situations where (the worst forms of) child labor is detected (locations, occupational categories)*
- * Description of the labor and working conditions from the perspective of the child*
- * Description of actors that are part of the 'solution' of the phenomenon of child labor.*

The accent in the research and in this report will be on a qualitative assessment. This was done for practical reasons. Relatively little is known about the daily world the working children are living in, while such children often are difficult to reach. It is also necessary to study the phenomenon of child labor within its context i.e. to give a detailed description of factual behavior and background of child laborers. The representatives of this research is limited, since no use was made of statistical sampling, which would allow generalizations for a population from which the sample was taken. Instead the research focused on the discovery and description of locations and concentrations of working children. Thus in the end the report presents a more qualitative picture of the context, nature and conditions within which children are working.

In addition to the general strategy of the research the main research question can be stated as follows:

What is the nature and extent of worst forms of child labor in different districts and sectors in Suriname?

In order to answer the main research question interviews with respondents have been conducted which focused on the following issues:

- * *The situation of child labor in Amerindian and Maroon communities with respect to mining, domestic work and prostitution.*
- * *Gender differences with respect to child labor.*
- * *The nature of child labor with respect to commercial sex, domestic work, drugs trade, agriculture, informal trade, gold mining and small industries.*
- * *The push and pull factors of child labor in the different occupational sectors.*
- * *Conditions and hazards under which children have to work.*
- * *Socioeconomic and cultural background of working children.*
- * *Historical and cultural contexts that are relevant in the sectors children are working in.*
- * *The impact and consequences of labor on the children.*
- * *Perceptions and experiences of children who are working.*
- * *Overview of policy measures and programs intended to deal with child labor.*

The research methods consisted mostly of structured interviews with key persons, children and parents. The interviews with key persons were meant to assist in finding occupational sectors and locations of working children. In addition it was hoped that key persons would have knowledge about relevant reports and documentation. Other methods that were used were literature review, informal interviews, and non-participatory observation. In the research proposal the intention was stated to use focus group meetings with a number of people such as labor inspectors and educational inspectors. During preliminary interviews in preparation for the focus group meetings it became evident that child labor was not a policy issue for these inspectors and that they had very limited knowledge about the phenomenon. These focus group meetings were therefore canceled. In a number of instances, however, smaller focus group meetings were held when for instance the District Commissioner would round up his staff to speak with the researchers, or in schools when the headmaster would gather several teachers around him to discuss the issue, or in a village in a meeting with the captain and some of his assistants (elders).

We had planned about 200 interviews in the research proposal i.e. 100 with key persons and 100 with working children. Later we added the parents. In the end we had a database with the information processed of 320 interviews i.e. 169 children, 52 parents and 99 key persons. In reality we spoke with more key persons i.e. about 142 were identified (not counting those who sat in on small meetings), but most of the additional interviews were of a more unstructured and/or group nature and thus not recorded on questionnaires.

During the meetings with many key persons it turned out that they could not distinguish between working children and worst forms of child labor. Thus when we were directed towards child laborers it often turned out that these were children that often went to school and did some light work at the side. Thus they were not the real child laborers we were looking for. We also found out that it did not appear as if there were major concentrations of exploited children in any location. This meant that those that were being exploited would be rather hard to find and that we needed a finer comb to locate them.

We therefore adjusted our research at that point by working more closely with the schools, especially those in poor neighborhoods (at least in Paramaribo and Wanica). This may seem odd since you would expect children involved in the worst forms of child labor not be in school. The reason we turned to the schools for assistance in identifying child laborers was:

1. To identify the children at school (notably grade 4, 5 and 6) that were working and

interviewing them, thereby hoping to learn from them more about the work scene and about other working children.

2. To identify children that were registered at school, but very infrequently showed up,

thereby assuming and verifying if these were potential child laborers.

3. To identify children that had been registered but dropped-out, thereby also assuming that these could be potential child laborers.

4. We assumed that teachers would know their pupils and that they and other children could assist us in tracing the exact locations of child laborers (addresses).

Thus from this point on we employed both key persons and schools to find child laborers. Because it was hard to find worst forms of child labor we also extended our search beyond the districts identified in the project proposal and added more interviews with children. This extended our field work with about two months, although part of this extension had to do with bad weather and inaccessible roads in several districts. The field work was done during the months April, May, June and July of 2002.

3. OVERVIEW OF CHILD LABOR IN SURINAME

Child labor is certainly not a new phenomenon in Suriname. During the days of slavery many children were working along their parents on the plantations. Education was off limits to these kids, while separation between mothers and children clearly occurred, since in 1782 a special law was made to forbid such practice.¹⁰ The children of slaves that had despised the colonial system and regrouped into proud tribal Maroon groups also had to work along their parents in order to ensure survival. And probably the children of the Indigenous population that remained free had to do the same.

After Emancipation in 1863 child labor was one of the reasons that children stayed away from school. Gobardhan concludes that because many freed slaves struggled to make a living “The (children’s) labor was very much needed and it was common in those times that children would work, although there were also attempts to make laws against it.” When the contract laborers began to pour in from (then British) India it was regulated that boys from the age of 10 years had to work. Between age 10 and 16 these boys would get the same pay as women i.e. the minimum wage of 40 cents a day. The Annual Colonial Report of 1916 mentioned that many Javanese and East Indian children were absent from school. This was to a large extent due to agricultural activities, from which it can be inferred that these children were working (Gobardhan 2001:132, 133).

For many years in Suriname’s Colonial past child labor was the rule rather than the exception. This changed with the introduction of mass education by the Moravian and Catholic Missions, followed by the Public Schools and much later by other denominational schools. The opening up of society itself through a more vibrant Civil Society was also at the heart of this change.¹¹ It was a gradual change, however, and it is difficult to point at a date when child labor became the exception rather than the rule.

During the Second World War Suriname had done relatively well and had smelled autonomy, since the Netherlands were surviving in war and had little means to monitor its colony properly. In 1946 the first political party was established and several others followed soon afterwards. In 1948 important steps were taken to decrease the power of the Governor and to open up the political system for party politics and mass democracy; the first general elections were held in 1949.¹² With respect to education the year 1948 was also a turning point, because the education system was reorganized, which allowed more children to participate. This was followed in 1960 with a special law on elementary education, which made it free to all citizens (Gobardhan 2001: 452, 486). Given these developments it is safe to say that between 1948 and 1960 most children were beginning to attend school and the appreciation of children in society became more manifest.

The growing post-war economy added to an environment that was not in favor of child labor. It was only in the early 1980s that the economy began to contract and inequalities began to

¹⁰ J. Th. de Smidt: *West Indisch Plakaatboek: plakaten, ordonnantien en andere wetten, uitgevaardigd in Suriname 1667-1816* (Amsterdam, S. Emmering, 1973).

¹¹ See chapter 7 and 8 on Civil Society and the Body Politics in M. Schalkwijk: *Colonial State Formation in Caribbean Plantation Societies, Structural analysis and changing elite networks in Suriname, 1650-1920* (Doctoral Thesis, Cornell University, 1994).

¹² *Encyclopie van Suriname* (1977): Politieke ontwikkeling.

show more prominently. The economy became fairly stagnant since 1983, while high inflation eroded most salaries, savings and pensions.¹³ Thus the economic environment had changed for worse and child labor seemed to be on the rise again.

3.1 Definition of the problem

There are a variety of definitions being used to describe child labor. The earlier mentioned survey of the Ministry of Labor in Suriname used the following definition¹⁴:

“Child labor entails all activities (work or pursuits) done by a child not older than 14 years, where a monetary reward may or may not be given to provide in its own support or that of its family, and where the development of its abilities is restricted and thus diminishes the spiritual and physical (health) development of the child.”

Van den Berghe (1990) used a completely different description of the phenomenon and came up with the following statement:

“Child labor consists of all activities that are done outside the household (as spatial entity), which may or may not involve a monetary compensation, and which are performed by persons who have not yet reached the age of 17 years.”

Both definitions differ in respect to:

- the actual location where the child is working;
- the age limit; and
- the impact of labor on the development of the child.

We clearly need more consensus about the definition of child labor in order to develop insights about who child laborers are and what the age limits are. The definition matters because it sets the direction for policy programs by central governments and international agencies to curb or eradicate child labor.

In our research we worked with the definition that has been used by the International Labor Organization:

Child labor is work that becomes a necessity for the child, that deprives a child at educational and social levels, harms the child's safety and health and/or is likely to offend a child's morality and dignity

In the Conventions 138 and 146 the ILO employs a minimum age of 15 years for working children. The conventions disallow certain type of economic activities of children who are younger than 15 years. The survey by the Ministry of Labor in Suriname also employed an

¹³ P. van Dijck (ed): Suriname the Economy, prospects for sustainable development (Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, 2001), page 34-38.

¹⁴ This survey was done among 2500 households in Suriname with exception to the district Sipaliwini and the rural areas in Para, Saramacca, Marowijne and Brokopondo. In the end 1660 households were reached.

age limit of 15 years. In this survey we used this age limit as a guideline as well, although we have interviewed young people up to 17 years old in order to get a broader picture.

3.2 working children and child labor

There is an important difference between children's work (*kinderwerk*) and child labor (*kinderarbeid*). Children's work is generally accepted and has a positive impact on the development of the child. This kind of work takes place within normal family settings, contributes to the learning experience and improves social integration. It is often associated with a rewards system of the child. Such work consists of daily chores, simple (household) jobs and passing on of family values and crafts.

In contrast to children's work there is child labor, which often is associated with exploitation, and has a detrimental effect on the child's social development, while it limits the child's educational opportunities. Young age, long working hours, little compensation, and hazardous working conditions are examples that point towards child labor.

The difference between these two phenomena can not be underlined enough and has led to much confusion about the real child labor issues. We have encountered this also in our research and must conclude that for many people the differences are unclear. All work is often seen as child labor and many key persons have send the team on a track that turned out to involve only child work and not child labor. The same problem is eminent in most of the literature on child labor in Suriname. It is therefore good to make a sustained effort to clarify this difference for the Surinamese readers in this report and moreover to give some guidance on where to draw the line between these two phenomena for future research.

3.3 Literature on child labor in Suriname

At least eight documents were found that deal in some way with child labor in Suriname. The authors used several perspectives to address child labor and came up with different solutions. Basically they saw the phenomenon as a troublesome issue and made use of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, public administration, psychology and law. Several authors started out with important research questions, but came up very short with answers.

Defares' thesis (1981) started with cultural anthropology, but in the end was very macro-economic in scope. Wijntuin's paper (1996) treats child labor from a public administration angle by looking at the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Ferrier's research proposal (1997) starts from a psychological framework and promotes a holistic integrated approach of youth care by means of counseling and peer group activities. There are two legal documents: The Interagency Committee on child labor (1985) and Dennen's research report (1990). They point at the discrepancy between national law and international treaties with respect to the legal school age and the minimum age for youngsters to enter the job market. Currently these two ages do not match. Finally Orié's thesis (2002), the survey by the Ministry of Labor (1998) and van den Berghe's research report (1990) use a sociological perspective and are mainly interested in the description of the phenomenon and its causes.

There are several reports on Surinamese children in general that sometimes also deal with working children, but these will be referred to in other sections. One report, however, by Nancy Tai Apin (2002) is of major interest, since it deals exclusively with child labor in

respect to ILO Convention 138 (Minimum Age Convention). Since this topic is discussed in the next chapter, however, we will report the main findings at the end of the next chapter.

Before we discuss each of the documents briefly it is of relevance to point out four findings:

- 1. None of them give a clear indication of the presence of worst forms of child Labor in Suriname.*
- 2. The documents are too diverse to agree on a single definition of child labor.*
- 3. The age limits for child labor also differ and vary between age 4 as lower limit to age 17 as upper limit.*
- 4. There are more young boys than young girls working in Suriname.*

3.3.1 A pilot study (1981)

Shirley Defares studied cultural anthropology in the Netherlands and did her practical research in Suriname in March through June 1981. This resulted in her thesis about child labor in Suriname. Her interest in child labor was raised when the United Nations declared 1979 the ‘Year of the child’. Her main research question was to develop insights in the nature, extent and types of child labor in Suriname, plus the factors that caused it. This was too ambitious and in the end she mainly did a review of general literature on the topic. The practical part consisted of interviews with 20 working children in downtown Paramaribo in the ages between 8 and 16 years, she had more extended interviews with 5 of these. According to her the children did not get a fair chance to finish school, which was due to their economic environment (poverty, low income, unemployment) and cultural environment (home and school situation). Her solution: eliminate the causes of poverty and inequality in society, which is easier said than done.

Defares was not able to arrive at any good estimates of working children in Paramaribo at that time. Nevertheless she mentioned an activity by the Police and the Department of child Protection of Ministry of Justice. In 1977 the police held a raid in the vicinity of the Central Market during school hours and rounded up all the children of school age that were there. The raid was meant to establish the number of children that did not attend school and the number of working children, “During this raid slightly more than 100 children were rounded up and questioned” (1981:59). We will probably never know why all those children were there (although this was near the bus terminals) and how many children were actually working, because Defares mentions that even the head of the Department of child Protection did not see a report. In 1979 another raid was done, but again no report was filed.

3.3.2 An Interagency view on child labor (1985)

In 1985 the Minister of Labor installed an Interagency Committee on child labor (*Interdepartementale Commissie Kinderarbeid*, ICK) to do a short inventory of two months and to write a report about the phenomenon of child labor. The ICK focused on legal and policy concepts about child labor. The ICK stated that Suriname’s Labor Law, which dated back to 1963, was in conflict with the 138th ILO Convention. The law put the minimum age to perform any form of labor at 15 years. According to the ILO Convention the age limit had to be connected with the legally established school age. In Suriname the compulsory school age still is 12 years. In 1983 the Labor Law was modified and the minimum labor age was

put at 14 years, although for specific branches -such as fisheries- the minimum age was set at 15 years. The ICK recommended that the school age should be increased to 15 years.

The ICK defined child labor as “all activities (*werkzaamheden*) that are performed by children under age 15 in whatever form and under whatever name, for which they may or may not receive pay, and which is performed during school hours outside the family with the goal to support oneself” (1985:8).

The ICK also identified a number of organizations and individuals that were involved directly or indirectly with the phenomenon of child labor. Both the ICK (1985:4) and Ferrier (1997:1) assumed a causal relationship between problems associated with child labor and the socioeconomic problems in Suriname.

3.3.3 A legal perspective on child labor (1990)

Law student Kenneth Dennen (1990) of the University of Suriname wrote a final thesis on the legal aspects of child labor, but also interviewed 60 working children in four low-income neighborhoods. Dennen’s main research question was “what caused the presence of child labor in Paramaribo”.

Using the 1983 report of Director General of the ILO, the thesis differentiates between five forms of child labor i.e.:

1. Labor within the household (e.g. cooking, washing, looking after siblings), which is not seen by the law as child labor.
2. Unpaid non-household labor (e.g. teaching a child hunting by a parent) as part of the socialization process.
3. Labor based on bondage (e.g. children that are ‘bought’ by intermediaries and where the child has to repay a debt to such an intermediary).
4. Paid labor.
5. Marginal labor, mostly activities that are of a short or irregular nature. This is often the case in the informal sector.

Dennen dwells on the age limits and discusses several ILO treaties, while pointing out the provisions in national laws as well. One of the recommendations in the thesis is to increase the compulsory school age from 12 to 15 years (1990:61), which was in conformity with the earlier recommendation by the Interagency Committee on child labor.

In mid 1989 Dennen interviewed 38 boys and 22 girls in the ages from 7 to 15 years. There were more boys than girls, because the girls had to stay home often to look after younger siblings (1990: 40, 41). The children that were interviewed were mainly active in sales of newspapers and petty trade (*kramerijen*), while most were either Creoles (48%) or Maroons (32%). The neighborhoods that were surveyed were Latour, Balona, Ephraimzegen, and Flora. The reason why he chose these neighborhoods is of interest (1990:42):

“In these areas the children have much freedom, because for most of the day they are without parental supervision; the father is often absent in the family, while the mother is working.”

3.3.4 Causes of child labor (1990)

Another thesis by L. van den Berghe, a Dutch student from the University of Amsterdam (1990) focused on the causes of child labor in Paramaribo. According to this author “child labor consists of all activities that are done outside the household (as spatial entity), which may or may not involve a monetary compensation, and which are performed by persons who have not yet reached the age of 17 years.” (1990:10).

In order to get at the causes of child labor he focused primarily at marginal activities outside the household for which a child would get paid. His data came from 81 interviews with working children (75 boys and 6 girls) in the ages between 8 and 16 years. He also conducted interviews with 131 pupils of the 5th and 6th grade of the primary school. Furthermore he asked pupils in 3rd grade of the primary school to write an essay and asked the teacher to provide information on each pupil (gender, age, language, with whom the pupil lived).

In general he identified poverty as the most important factor in explaining the occurrence of child labor. Other factors at the macro level were:

- limited supply of labor at the job market, which triggered children to offer their labor;
- friction unemployment, which caused children to work in order to supplement the family income.

At the micro level the factors identified were:

- poverty in the household;
- composition of the household, where matrifocal households had a greater chance to produce child labor;
- urbanization, where children have to work during the period of transition when parents are seeking employment;
- attitude of parents towards education;
- cultural factors e.g. in some cultures children have to work as part of their upbringing.

Based on his research findings he furthermore drew the following conclusions¹⁵:

There is a relative bigger chance for child labor to be present when a child does not live with the parent(s). The size of the family also affects the chance for child labor. The correlation is particularly strong for families consisting of 9 or more people and especially among Bush Negroes and Creoles. A fourth contributing factor towards child labor is poverty. A fifth factor has to do with the education level of the father of the child. The more education the father has the less chance for a child to be involved in child labor. Despite the fact that many women are working, there is only a weak correlation between the mothers education and child labor. According to van den Berghe this can be explained by the fact that most fathers are the main breadwinners even when the mother is also working. children from a matrifocal household are more often involved with child labor than children from a household where both parents are present. In such households the children have to do more household work as well in order to allow the mother to earn a wage elsewhere.

¹⁵ Van den Berghe used Kramer's V to test for association.

In van den Berghe's research it is clear that gender and ethnicity are also important factors with respect to child labor. Most of the working children were males and two third of the working children he interviewed were Bush Negroes (Maroons).

3.3.5 A methodical paper (1996)

Patricia Wijntuin did research as a student from a Dutch University into the situation of street children in the period December 1995 through April 1996. She had no real name for her final report, but called it "A methodical paper". Her main research question was "What is the role of the Surinamese Government and Non-Governmental Organizations in solving the problem of street children and have they been successful in doing so". She had intended to do 50 interviews with street children, but after discussions with field workers she concluded that there were no street children as such at that time in Suriname. She therefore changed her research question into a description of three categories of children i.e.

1. Children who basically live on and from the streets (but do not sleep there).
She found ten children in the busiest streets of Paramaribo, ranging from 12 to 17 years
2. Children who do not attend school anymore and wander around the streets.
This part of the research she did in district Wanica and found 20 youngsters in the ages 10 to 15 years in five poor neighborhoods, mainly Maroon children.
3. Children who work at the Central Market
Here she reported that children between 10 and 15 years were economically active from 6 o'clock in the morning to 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and mainly sold plastic bags.

Wijntuin remarked that her research may not have been completely reliable, because the children did not always spoke the truth. Probably they were ashamed of their circumstances or thought that the researcher was working with the police or a government agency (1996:4). In the second part of her report Wijntuin mentions institutions and key persons that were actively taking care of street children. This information was used by us when we made our list of institutions and key persons.

3.3.6 A research proposal on street children (1997)

Lilian Ferrier is a psychologist and director of the Foundation for Human Development (*Bureau Kinderontwikkeling*). In 1997 she wrote "a research proposal to collect data on the nature and number of street children as well as initiating policy proposals to counsel this target group". According to her the economic crisis and the war in the interior could be seen as major causes of the phenomenon of street children. She also pointed out that the Emmaus children's home was established to take care of former street children. She estimated that there were about 60 children between ages 10 and 18 that lived or had lived on the streets. These children could be found on the streets, in the Youth Correctional Center (part of the prisoners complex at Santo Boma), in police cells, in Koela (a Youth Care Center for difficult boys), the Emmaus Home, and the Foundation for the child (a home for sexually abused children). The research had the intention to describe the experience of children and to come to an unambiguous definition of street children. This research proposal most probably was not implemented since we did not find the report on the matter.

3.3.7 A general survey on child labor (1999)

In June and July 1998 a major survey on child labor was commissioned by the Labor Market Department of the Ministry of Labor. The objective was “to develop insights into the size and nature of the socioeconomic problems of children who perform labor that can be defined as child labor”. In this respect it is useful to note that the following definition of child labor was used:

“Child labor entails all activities (work or pursuits) done by a child not older than 14 years, where a monetary reward may or may not be given to provide in its own support or that of its family, and where the development of its abilities is restricted and thus diminishes the spiritual and physical (health) development of the child.”

The Ministry took the age of 8 years as its lower age limit (1999:50). The survey was done in all of Suriname with exception to the district Sipaliwini and the rural areas in Para, Saramacca, Marowijne and Brokopondo. A sample of 2500 households was taken, but in the end 1660 interviews were done (1999:39), of which 50.4% confirmed to the target population i.e. there were children present between age 4 to 15 (here the age limit of 8 years seemed to have been abandoned). The survey used the household as its initial interview unit, but added a child module for a secondary interview.

Of the children that were interviewed 3.6% of the boys answered to have worked at some point and 2.9% of the girls. When the same question was asked about current jobs 2.1% of the boys replied positively and 1.8% of the girls (1999:47). The report concludes that 2% of the children between ages 4 and 14 were economically active in Suriname.

Most of the jobs that were done by the children involved assisting at the family agricultural plot, helping carrying vegetables and bags, and looking after younger siblings. The report also mentioned that in the districts Saramacca, Marowijne and Para relatively more children were working to help relieve the economic pressure on the family.

As the main reason for children to work the researchers saw the need to contribute to the family income (1999:52). At that point households with a net income of Sf 50.000 (about US\$ 90) or less were most at risk to have working children. More children were working from larger families (1999:63), and in single parent families (1999:25).

We will come back to the findings of this report when we report our research results in chapter 5.

3.3.8 A Bachelor thesis on child labor (2002)

Asha Orié graduated in 2002 at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Suriname on a thesis titled “child labor, a survey into the care taking and counseling of children”. Her main research question dealt with the possible models that exist to care and counsel the victims of child labor. She notes that all research reports on child labor used the upper age limit of 15 years, while she used a lower age limit of 7 years. She also did a survey in two poor neighborhoods in Paramaribo (notably Flora and Latour) to find working children. In each neighborhood she interviewed 25 children. She reports the data in a descriptive manner and in fact her whole thesis is of a descriptive nature. Orié also compares child labor with the Treaty on the child, which was ratified by Suriname in 1993, and concludes that the reality of children is not in agreement with their rights (2002: 16-24).

When the research team spoke with her about the children she had interviewed it turned out that she had not focused exclusively on child laborers, but on all children that reported to be somehow economically active.¹⁶ Thus she had a mix of what we will refer to as ‘working children’ and not only ‘child laborers’ which consists of a smaller group of these working children.

¹⁶ NIKOS invited Mrs. Orié to join the research team, which she did, but to a limited extent due to her full-time job.

4. LEGAL ASPECTS OF CHILD LABOR

4.1 Convention on the Rights of children

In the fight against worst forms of child labor conventions play an important role. In 1989 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of children. Many countries have ratified this Convention and Suriname did so in 1993. Article 32 of the Convention deals with child labor:

“The Right of the child to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

Following ratification the Surinamese Government appointed a “National Commission on the Rights of the child” (NCRK) in January 1995. The NCRK has the job to report regularly about the state of the implementation of the Convention. Most of its activities and reports are financed by the local UNICEF office. In 1997 the NCRK issued its first report “Putting Surinamese children first” which identified national implementation strategies for different aspects of the Convention.

4.2 Conventions of the ILO

The ILO is a main force behind the attempts to eradicate child labor. In 1999 the Convention 182 on the Eradication of the Worst Forms of child labor was adopted. By July 2002 some 129 countries had ratified the Convention. Suriname has not yet ratified this Convention, although the Government has stated that there are no obstacles to do so.¹⁷ Article 3 of the Convention describes the following worst forms of child labor:

- (a) All forms of slavery practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- (b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornographic performances.
- (c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.
- (d) work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the safety or morals of children.

The ILO Minimum Age Convention 138 which was adopted in 1973 is also of importance with respect to child labor. This Convention so far has been ratified by 117 countries, but not yet by Suriname (the request has been submitted to the National Assembly). It deals with the issue of the minimum age at which labor should be performed by people. The most relevant articles are 2, 3, 4 and 7.

¹⁷ Statement by the Surinamese delegation towards the ILO Caribbean Tripartite Meeting on the worst forms of child labor, which was held December 6 and 7 1999 in Kingston Jamaica (ILO 1999: 38).

Article 2:

- (1) Each Member ... shall specify ... a minimum age for admission to employment or work within its territory no one under that age shall be admitted to employment or work in any occupation.
- (3) The minimum age specified ... shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years.

Article 3

- (1) The minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons shall not be less than 18 years.

Article 4:

- (1) In so far as necessary, the competent authority ... may exclude ... limited categories of employment or work....

Article 7:

- (1) National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work which is
 - (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and
 - (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school ...
- (4) ... a Member ... (whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed)... may ... substitute the ages 12 and 14 for the ages 13 and 15 in paragraph 1 ...

In a recommendation (Nr. 146) to Convention 138 the ILO added the advise that it would be better to use 16 years as minimum age for people to start laboring.

Thus the ILO position can be summarized as follows:

Children below 15 years should not work, and if possible they should rather start at a minimum age of 16 years. For light work a minimum age of 13 years can be allowed, but for hazardous work the minimum age should be under any circumstances 18 years. If need be in developing countries the ages for light work can be adjusted downward to 12 years and for normal work to 14 years.

4.3 National law

The legal notion of child labor in Suriname starts with the Labor Law from 1963, which was amended in 1980 and 1983. This law makes a distinction between a child and a young person.

*Children are persons who have not yet reached the age of 14 years.
Young people are persons who are 14 years or older, but have not yet reached the age of 18 years.*

The Sea Fishery Decree of 1980 stated that with respect to labor on board of fishery vessels children are persons who have not yet reached the age of 15 years. Labor on board of such vessels is not permitted by persons under 15 years. This modification was added to the Labor

Law which meant that the term child was now defined in general to be maximum 14 years and for the Fishery sector at maximum 15 years.

The Labor Law has three articles that deal in particular with child labor i.e. article 17, 18 and 19 and another three articles (20, 20a and 21) that have specific regulations for young people.

Article 17

- (1) It is forbidden for children to work, irrespective whether this involves a salary or compensation.
- (2) It is also forbidden for children to employ activities outside an enterprise, except
 - a. in the family where the child is being raised, in schools, workshops, day care centers, correctional facilities and similar facilities, provided that such activities are of an educational nature and not primarily meant to earn money;
 - b. in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry geared towards the family where the child is raised, as long as the activities do not take place in factories or workshops or with machines powered by more than 2 horsepower.

Article 18

children who have passed the Compulsory Education Age may engage in certain activities as should be described in a special government decision, provided that these activities:

- a. are meant to be performed by children or are necessary for learning a trade;
- b. are not physically or mentally too demanding;
- c. are not of a hazardous nature.

Article 19

In very special cases, that have to be in the interest of the child involved, and at the request of the head of the family in which the child is being raised, the Head of the Department of Labor Inspection can grant an exception to article 17. To this exception special conditions could be added.

Article 20

- (1) It is forbidden to employ young people, irrespective whether this involves a salary or compensation, in night shifts or in labor that is deemed hazardous for reasons of life, health, or morality.
- (2) A special government decision will describe which labor will be deemed hazardous.
- (3) With respect to the term 'night' this will be deemed to be the period between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Article 20a states that no employee can be forced or threatened to work, except in cases of war or national emergencies.

Article 21 mentions that in certain cases, under certain circumstances, in a limited number of enterprises -as the government will describe- exceptions can be made to allow young people to do night shifts. Enterprises need to file special requests for such cases.

The situation with respect to child labor in Suriname can be summarized as follows:

In Suriname persons younger than 18 years should not do hazardous work or work night shifts. children below 15 years should not work on Fishery boats. Children below 14 years should not work at all, except in a family agricultural setting, in special institutions, and for educational purposes (vocational training).

4.4 Discrepancies between national and international law

Recently Nancy Tai Apin was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs to report about “child labor, an investigation into probable obstacles to the ratification of ILO Convention 138 in the framework of article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of children” (March 2002).¹⁸ According to this report the biggest obstacle has to do with the minimum age for labor in Suriname (14 years), which does not correspond with that of the ILO (15 years). In an interview she had with the Minister of Labor he indicated, however, that Suriname will not change its law at this point, since it does not obstruct ratification of Convention 138. The Minister clearly pointed towards article 7.4 of the Convention, which allows developing states to use the age limit of 14 years. According to Tai Apin, this is an exceptional clause for which Suriname would need to apply, and she recommends that the intention should be to apply the minimum age limit of 15 years or even 16 years.

Tai Apin also points toward the discrepancy with the Compulsory Education Age, which she derives to be 12 years, and proposes to change this at least to 14 years to be in conformity with the Labor Law, but rather to 15 years to conform to the ILO norm. In addition she also recommends to decrease the minimum age for Compulsory Education from 6 to 4 years.

Furthermore Tai Apin proposes to forbid any overtime work for children, increase the number of free days from 18 days to 4 weeks per year, and improve regulations (notably minimum compensations) with respect to illness and accidents. She also recommends to give more priority to controls over child labor by Labor Inspectors, who should be trained in the stipulations of the Convention.

In February 2002 the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing came out with a well organized “Action Plan with respect to children”. With respect to child labor the Action Plan recommends to do research how to make the Labor Law more congruent with the international laws. Although this is a very limited solution to child labor many of the other proposed actions will benefit children in difficult socioeconomic circumstances, who are more inclined to work, as well. The Action Plan put goals and formulated activities for the following topics:

1. Making children a policy priority.
2. Optimize legal protection of children.
3. Improve health of children.
4. Promote Early childhood Development.
5. Improve Education for children.
6. Eliminate all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation of children.
7. Increase prevention against HIV/Aids.

¹⁸ This investigation was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, notably the Office for the “Rights of children”.

8. Improve participation of children at different levels.

The Action Plan used another document “Situation analysis of children in Suriname” (2001), also commissioned by the Ministry, as its basis. The section on child labor dwells on the Labor Law and comments that the sanctions on violations of this law by employers are very low (Sf 1000 not even 50 dollar cents). It also has a short discussion of Suriname’s position with respect to the ILO Conventions 138 and 182. Furthermore it mentioned the survey on child labor which was commissioned by the Ministry of Labor in 1998. The section ends with the following statement:

“In the street one can often observe children who are begging, attend to cars, sell newspapers or fruit. In the interior many children find their way to the gold mines or become involved with prostitution and drugs trade. Although there are no children working in the formal labor market, they are on the increase in the informal sectors. Data about this are lacking however.” (page 53).

It is the lack of data that is hampering much of the debate and policy about child labor, while lack of data also leads to speculations about the presence and size of this phenomenon. It is to the results of our field work that we turn in the next chapters and come back to the policy implications in the last chapter.

5. MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This and the next chapter mainly reports about the research findings of the interviews with working children. Before talking to the children, however, we spoke with key persons. Their views are integrated into these chapters as well. After we spoke with the children we tried to contact some of their parents, but only of those children that had no objections and were willing to give us the address of their parent(s). The tale of the parents is told in chapter seven. The field work took 54 days, which was twice the amount we had anticipated. In addition there were also a number of telephone interviews with key persons that were difficult to reach, or whose opinion we needed to prepare a field visit to a certain district. The following table gives an overview of the children, parents and key persons that have been reached.

Table 5.1 Summary of interviews by district and respondents

Categories	Districts									
	Parbo	Wan	Com	Para	Mar	Bro	Sipa	Nick	Sara	Tot
working children	42	14	13	15	19	18	12	15	21	169
Parents & Guardians	8	7	3	8	5	2	3	8	8	52
Sub total	50	21	16	23	24	20	15	23	29	221
Key persons by district										
Principals & teachers	10	2	1	4	3	4	5	3	2	34
Village leaders	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Civil Servants	8	4	3	8	4	4	2	7	1	41
Education authorities	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	6
Health workers	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	6
Police officials	5	1	1	0	2	2	0	4	1	16
NGO's	16	0	0	0	1	0	4	2	0	23
Missionary	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
Youth workers	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Private workers	3	1	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	9
Sub total	47	8	7	12	14	14	17	18	5	142
Total	97	29	23	35	38	34	32	41	34	363

Notes:

1. Not for all persons that researchers spoke to a questionnaire was filled out. For example, in Para a focus group meeting was held with local government officials. The District Commissioner, the District Secretary and the Superintendents of five ressorts were present at that meeting.
2. Discussions were held with teachers, captains, basja's and village people in the interior. The information gathered has been recorded, but not by means of separate questionnaires.
3. Thus the amount of respondents does not equal to the number of questionnaire.

In order to check the reliability we asked the interviewers to make their own assessment at the end of each interview with respect to the reliability of the information and the expertise (reliability) of the informant. We did not ask this information for the children, because we assumed that we had to develop a minimal trust first before interviewing a child and that an interview would be terminated -or at least not processed- when the interviewer got the impression that the child was unreliable. The same was true for the key persons actually,

since a very doubtful interview would not be used or processed. Thus it was only with the parents that we encountered some situations where the interviewer would have doubts about the reliability of the information and/or the person. The reliability level was not always as high as we would prefer, but most often reasonable enough (qualification ‘positive’) to be used. Since we had relatively few parents we processed the doubtful interviews also, because normally parts of the interviews could still be used. Finally it should be pointed out that virtually all people we approached during this survey were willing to cooperate, even if sometimes it took some pressure to get their cooperation. Surprisingly most children had no problems to cooperate, while several parents were uncooperative at least in the beginning of an interview, since they were not sure why someone would come and ask them questions about their child. Most key persons were also quite willing to assist.

Table 5.2 Expertise of persons and reliability of information

	Expertise of the person			Reliability of the information		
	High	Positive	Doubtful	High	Positive	Doubtful
Parents	44%	46%	10%	56%	35%	9%
Key persons	62%	38%	0%	67%	33%	0%

In the following chapter we will report the main results by geographical area i.e. by district rather than by sector. This seemed the best way to process the information in a coherent matter. Most districts have their own ethnic and occupational mix and therefore this form of reporting also takes more into consideration than just a location. It also makes it easier for future researchers to duplicate the research or verify the results.

Finally it should be pointed out that the researchers were mainly focusing on children below the age of 15 years. For heavier and dangerous type of work young people under 18 years were also brought into focus. When we use the term children this would normally mean boys and girls up to 14 years, while the term young people (young males or young females) will be used more specifically to describe the group from 15 to 17 years.

5.2 Sector

Although we assumed at the beginning of our research that there would be a number of sectors where child labor would be very prominent, this turned to be much less so. We found no major geographic clusters of child labor, nor occupational clusters, but rather a variety of jobs where children are employed. Most jobs are low-level jobs that require little education or skill, and even in sectors where more skills are required (e.g. auto mechanic, construction, rice mill, furniture production), the children will mainly assist more skilled workers.

Table 5.3 working children by Sector

Sector	Frequency	Percent
Production (agriculture, mining, fishery, timber)	61	36.5
Trade (vending a variety of products in various places)	33	19.8
Service / domestic work	40	24.0
Other / several jobs	33	19.8
Total	167	100.0

There is a clear correlation between sector and district, which means that in some districts children are found more active in certain sectors than in other districts (table 5.4). Those districts that were above the average distribution can be noticed. Thus it is clear that in Wanica, Brokopondo, Sipaliwini, Saramacca and Nickerie children were working relatively more in production jobs.¹⁹ Thus each district has its own blend of working children by sector.

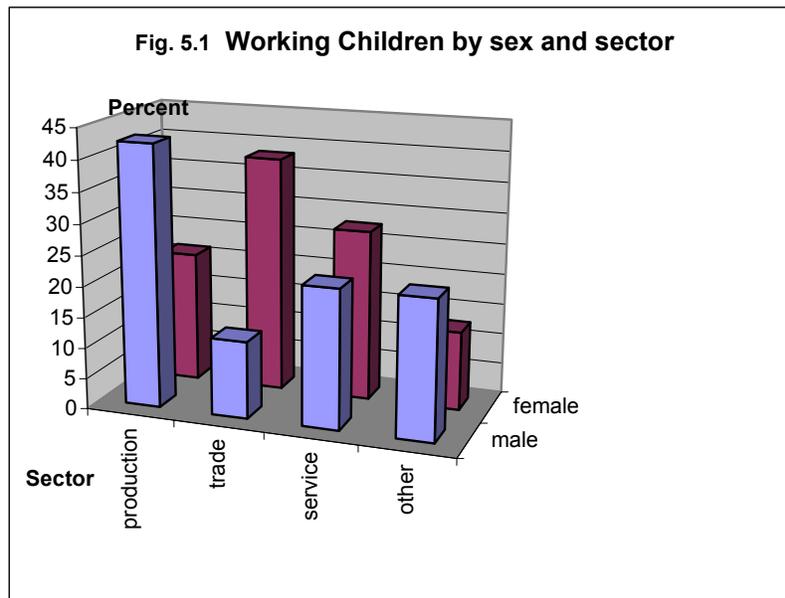
Table 5.4 working children by Sector and District²⁰

District	production	trade	service	other	Total
Paramaribo	17%	21%	26%	36%	100%
Wanica	50%		36%	14%	100%
Commewijne	31%	8%	31%	30%	100%
Marowijne	17%	28%	39%	16%	100%
Para	33%	60%	7%		100%
Brokopondo	61%	28%	11%		100%
Sipaliwini	50%		25%	25%	100%
Saramacca	52%	5%	33%	10%	100.0%
Nickerie	50%	21%		29%	100%
Total	36.5%	19.8%	24.0%	19.8%	100%

Although both girls and boys are found among working children there is a clear gender difference, when we look at the different sectors (figure 5.1). The distribution of boys is more biased towards the production sector, while the distribution of girls is biased towards trade.

¹⁹ The selection of children was not done random, therefore some cells are empty, but nevertheless with 167 children in the overall survey it gives some rough comparative indications.

²⁰ The probability of the reported χ^2 (Chi Square) was 0,000 for this table, which means that the distribution is significant. With significant we mean significance of the distribution of two variables in a table which is tested by means of looking at the Chi Square distribution and notably the probability that the distribution which is found is due to non structural factors (i.e. due to chance rather than pattern). If this probability is very low – normally below 0.025 for a two tailed test- than we may assume that the distribution is significant i.e. it is due to structure rather than chance factors. In fact even higher probabilities can be allowed for this exercise, since we are dealing with social events where many other factors may also play a role and cause some less fine tuned measurement. If we reduce the districts to three regions (i.e. City, District, and Interior region than the probability for the reported χ^2 was 0,031).



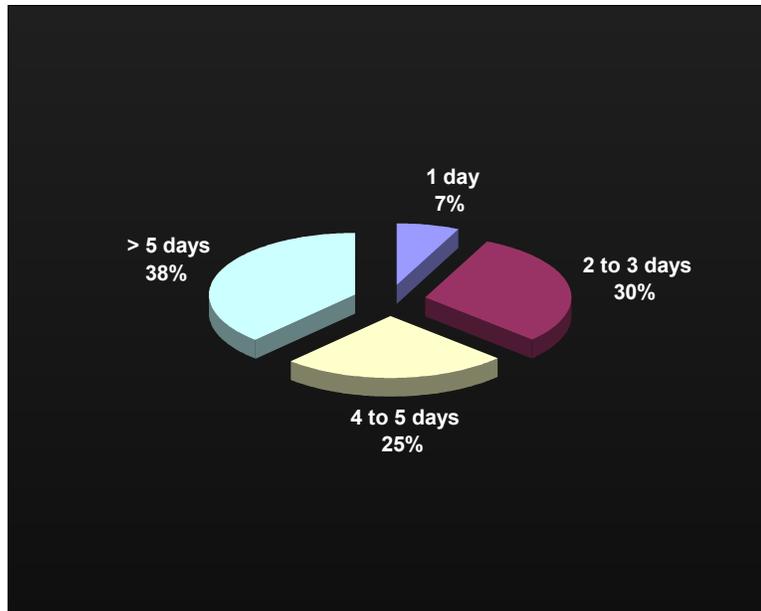
We will see later that the worst forms of child labor are found in the production sector and mostly in the districts Brokopondo, Marowijne and Nickerie; also mostly among boys. Before we come to those conclusions we first will analyze the data in general, and by looking into regional differences, gender differences and also ethnic differences.

5.3 working hours and days

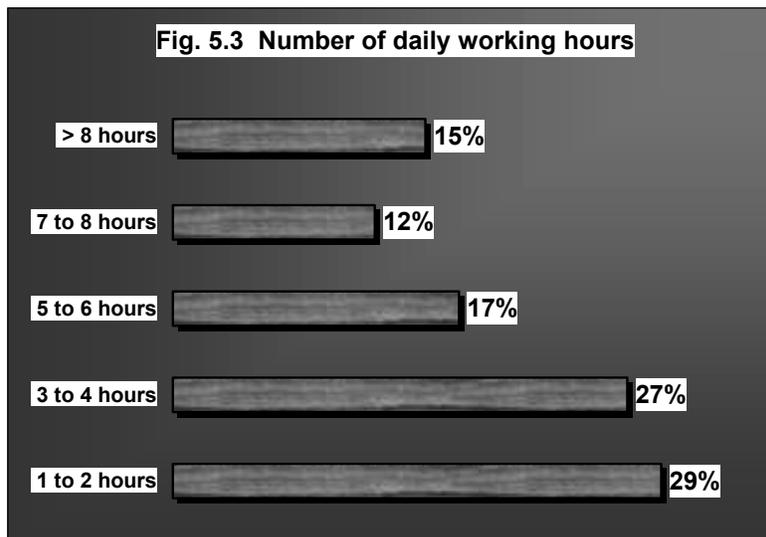
It is not easy to establish the number of hours and days that a child works, since these vary e.g. a day may consist of 1 hour of work or 8 hours. Thus the number of days do not give a clear indication of the work load. We will come back to this in paragraph 8.1. For the time being we just report the overall results in figure 5.2 and 5.3. As can be seen 37% of the children work 1 to 3 days, while the remaining 63% work 4 days or more. If we look for child labor those children working 4 or more days seem to be the group where we need to take a closer look. In the survey of the Ministry of Labor it turned out that 14% of the children were working 4 or more days a week (1999:54).²¹ This again points out that the children interviewed during the Rapid Assessment survey were working longer than those in the general survey.

Figure 5.2 Numbers of days the children work

²¹ In the survey by the Ministry 42.2% of the children were categorized as 'other' and 12.3% as unknown, which makes up a substantial portion of the population.



The number of working hours per day varied as well (figure 5.3), but 44% of the children reported that they worked more 5 or more hours a day, while 29% worked only 1 to 2 hours. Actually this last group seems more to be doing light work rather than child labor (see discussion in 8.1). The survey of the Ministry of Labor reported that only 3.6% of the children worked 5 or more hours a day (1999:55), while 16% worked 1 to 2 hours.²² Again this illustrates that –as expected- the children who were picked up by the Rapid Assessment exercise were working longer hours.



5.4 Reasons for working, employer and earnings

²² The Ministry report stated, however, that for the majority of children (31.4% ‘other’ and 44.6% ‘unknown’) the number of working hours could not be given.

The children were asked why they were working and a variety of reasons were given. We reduced the number of reasons to basically two categories i.e. self-centered reasons (to look after myself, buy clothes, save money for some specific goal, need some money, bored, like to work, etc.) and family oriented reasons (help mother, father, parents, grandma, aunt, siblings, etc.). Then there were also children that cited reasons from both clusters, which we can add as a third (overlapping) category. As can be seen from table 5.5 both main categories were about equally important, while the third category was smaller.

Table 5.5 Reasons for working

	Frequency	Percent
own centered reasons	66	40.0%
- look after myself		- 15.7%
- to save money		- 5.4%
- other		- 18.9%
own and family	27	16.4%
family oriented reasons	72	43.6%
- help mother		- 18.1%
- help father		- 2.4%
- help parents		- 16.3%
- help other family		- 6.8%
Total	165	100%

The survey by the Ministry of Labor reported that the largest category of working children did so to assist their mother (43.8%) or father (9.4%), while only 11.3% of the children worked for themselves. Furthermore 3.2% worked to assist a non-family member, 1.2% were classified as ‘other’, while a large category (31.1%) were ‘unknown’ (1999:52). Despite this large category of probably missing cases the trend is clear. The trend with respect to parents, especially the distribution between assisting parents (i.e. mainly mother’s and less father’s) is also reflected in our survey. The main difference, however, is that in our survey a larger group of children was working for themselves rather than their family. This can be explained by the fact that many real child laborers had to fend for themselves rather than for their family, while many of those children that did some less intensive work often did so to assist the family income.

This difference can be further illustrated by looking at the ‘employer’ of the children. Those children that work longer hours and days tend to work much more for a real ‘employer’, while the children that work shorter tend to work more for parents (table 5.6).

When we look at the earnings that were reported by the children during the interviews it seems that there was a large group (51%) with reasonable earnings i.e more than U\$ 2.50 a day (figure 5.4).²³ That means reasonable within the current Surinamese context, where many adults would be happy to make that amount. The group of children that earned less than one dollar a day made up 22% of those interviewed. This included the group of 9% which did not

Table 5.6 working hours and type of employer

²³ The children reported their earnings in Surinamese Guilders which at the period of the interviews stood at about Sf 2,150 for one American dollar. We worked with categories of Sf 1.000 each, which for convenience sake we report here as about U\$ 0.50 while the actual amount was U\$ 0.465.

	work load expressed by working hours per week ²⁴			
	Light work	Semi-light work	child labor	All children
Employer	28%	44%	63%	44%
Father	2%	5%	4%	4%
Mother	23%	18%	9%	17%
Parents	11%			4%
Uncle/aunt	11%	9%	6%	9%
Grandparent(s)	9%	8%	9%	8%
Neighbor	7%	3%		4%
Self-employed	7%	8%	9%	8%
Other family	2%	5%		2%
Total	100% (N = 56)	100% (N = 65)	100% (N = 46)	100% (N=167)

get any pay for their work. It should be pointed out, however, that since the working hours per day varied substantially per child the answer to the question “How much do you earn per day?” could mean that in fact some children earned more if one would calculate the earnings by the hour. On the other hand the earnings seemed quite high and it could be possible that some children reported their turnovers rather than their actual ‘salary’. An inspection of this possibility did not reveal such a bias, however.²⁵

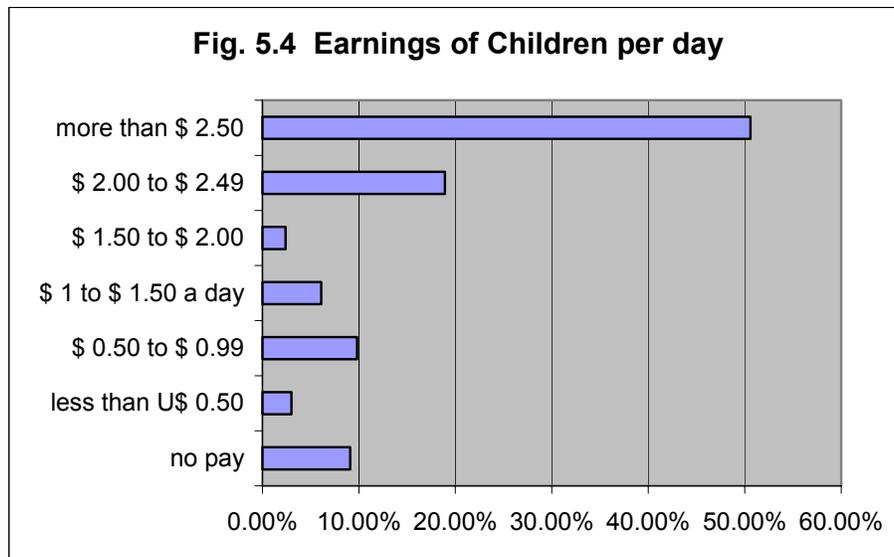
It turned out also that those who worked the longest hours –i.e. the group labeled child labor in table 5.6- also earned most, since 74% of the children in this group earned more than US\$ 2.50 a day, while only 6% earned less than a dollar a day. Those who worked least hours also earned less (38% of this group earned less than one dollar and 34% more than \$ 2.50).

We get a different angle on this, however, if we look what happened to the income of these children. Of the working children 38% gave all their earnings to their family, while 44% gave part of their earnings, which leaves 18% who kept all of their income to themselves.²⁶

²⁴ We combined information about working hours and days together. Basically the first group worked 2 hours or less a day, while the last group worked at least 20 hours a week, and the middle group was in between. See paragraph 8.1 for a further elaboration of the categories used. The probability of the χ^2 distribution was 0.021

²⁵ The verification was done by comparing the earnings per day with the sector and it should be expected that especially in the ‘trade’ sector earnings would turn out to be much higher (since here the total sales could be confused with earnings) than in other sectors. It turned out, however, that earnings in the trade sector were actually much lower e.g. 43% of the vendors earned less than one dollar against 15% in the service/domestic sector.

²⁶ We have included those who did not get any pay in the first place to the group who handed all their income over and left out 10 cases with missing values.



Despite the fact that many children gave part or all of their income away still 62% of all the children reported that they were able to save regularly (27%) or sometimes (35%). The comprehension of saving often for many was that some money was kept to take care of oneself when such was needed. Another large group saved to buy clothes or specific items.

5.5 working conditions

Since we tried to get to the worst forms of child labor we asked a number of questions with respect to the working environment and conditions. This included questions about supervision, tiredness, work pressure, monotonous work, lifting heavy items, hazardous materials, working with machines, and perception of dangerous circumstances.

Many children (51%) work jobs where there is no supervision of an adult. Nevertheless this varies by sector (table 5.7). In the primary sector supervision is much higher (67%) than in all the other sectors.

When we look at the other factors that may determine potential worst forms of child labor we see the pattern as given in Table 5.8. There are seven variables listed. For most of these variables the question was asked with three answers e.g. “How often do you come home tired?” (answer could be: always, sometimes, never). In some instances the information was recoded into several categories e.g. we asked if the child worked with a machine at work and which machine. This was then recoded into potential dangerous machines (e.g. chain saw), not very dangerous machines (lawn mower, outboard), or no machines. The total of potential harmful cases is reported and indicates how important this category was overall e.g. only 9

Table 5.7 Supervision at work by sector²⁷

Sector	Is there an adult that supervises your work?		Total
	yes	no	
production (agr., mining, fishery, timber)	66.7%	33.3%	100.0% (N = 60)
trade (vending)	39.4%	60.6%	100.0% (N = 33)
service/domestic work	35.0%	65.0%	100.0% (N = 40)
other/several jobs	42.4%	57.6%	100.0% (N = 33)
Total	48.8%	51.2%	100.0% (N = 166)

children reportedly worked with a dangerous machine, which was only 5% compared to 16 other children that worked with non dangerous machines and 141 who were not working with machines at all.

Table 5.8 Assessment of potential harm at work by sector

	Production	Trade	Service	Other jobs	Total (potential harmful cases)	Light cases (some-times)	No potential harm registered
Always tired from work	48%	13%	13%	26%	100% (N = 23)	N = 85	N = 58
Always busy at work	49%	13%	23%	15%	100% (N = 47)	N = 86	N = 31
Always lift heavy weights at job	75%	0%	8%	17%	100% (N = 12)	N = 70	N = 84
Always bored at work	37%	21%	21%	21%	100% (N = 19)	N = 34	N = 113
works with (potential) hazardous material	65%	0%	18%	18%	100% (N = 17)	N = 71	N = 79
works with (potential) dangerous machine	56%	0%	11%	33%	100% (N = 9)	N = 16	N = 141
Finds job itself often dangerous	48%	8%	36%	8%	100% (N = 25)	N = 10	N = 129
Average percentages	54%	8%	18%	20%	100%		

Note: average percentages calculated by adding percentages of all categories and dividing by seven (no weights)

²⁷ The probability of the χ^2 distribution was 0.006, which means that there was a clear structure underlying this distribution.

From the table it becomes clear that the production sector outscores all the other sectors in terms of potential harm at work. Thus it should be expected that the worst forms of child labor will occur mostly in this sector. On the other hand the indications point towards the trade sector as the least harmful, with the service and 'other' sector in between. The 'other' sector often contains children who may have several jobs e.g. one in the production area and another in the trade or service sector; thus it will partly pick up some harmful indications from the production sector.

5.6 Family background and education

The social background of the children is often important, because it may determine which type of children are more apt to become child laborers. With respect to the family situation questions were asked about with whom the child was living, how many brothers and sisters were staying with him/her, and how many people were living in the same house. Furthermore how many siblings younger than 15 years were also working. The occupation of both parents was asked and the religious background of the family. Gender, age and ethnicity have been reported earlier in this chapter. The interviewers themselves had to assess at the end of the interview the social class of the child's family from all the information obtained. Of one third of the children the parents were also interviewed and thus we will be able to derive additional information about their social background from those interviews (see chapter 7).

According to the assessment of the interviewers 81% of the children come from a lower class family, while 19% were seen to have a middle class background. Although this was a crude assessment it still gives a clear indication that most children came from poorer and less educated families and neighborhoods.

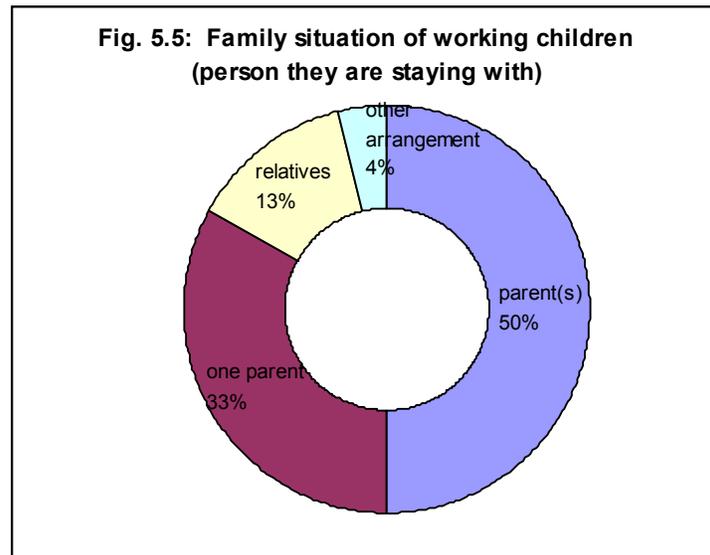
The social class was evident also from the type of jobs the parent(s) held. Of the mothers 44% were homemakers, while for another 12% their job could not be established since they lived elsewhere or so. Of the remaining women 26% were coded as janitors (cleaning jobs) or vendors; 6% worked as employees, saleswomen in shops, guards or lower civil servants. Another 3% worked in the fishery sector, 5% as small business women and 5% held 'other' jobs.

The occupation could not be established for 35% of the fathers (unemployed, dead, abroad, don't know, etc.). A large group (18%) worked in the production sector as lumberjack, gold digger, farmer or fisherman, while another sizeable group (12%) were active as security guards, employees or construction workers. 5% was coded as vendor, gardener, janitor or handyman and 4% as driver (bus or cab). Some 10% held jobs that required more education such as teacher, health worker, civil servant, military or police. 8% was listed as (mostly small) businessman, while the remaining 8% held 'other' jobs.

Half of the children were living with both parents, another third with one parent, 13% with relatives (often grandparents or aunts) and a few lived on their own, with friends or with the employer (figure 5.5.).²⁸ The size of the household the children were part of varied from 2 to

²⁸ Eight cases where the child stayed with mother and stepfather were categorized as staying with both parents. With respect to one-parent arrangements it should be noted that in 51 cases the child stayed with the mother and in 4 cases with the father. We included two cases where a child lived with foster parents as staying with 'others'.

16 persons. Nevertheless 41% of the households had 5 or less persons, while the rest was larger, with 18% even consisting of 10 or more persons.



It was reported by 6% of the children who worked that none of their brothers or sisters under 15 years was working, while we did not have this information for 14% of the children. This still left 80% of the children who had at least one brother or sister under 15 years who was also a working child. This is a very high percentage and indicates a clear pattern i.e. if one child works in the family the chance of finding another working child in the same family is very high. In other words certain families will have a much higher chance of having working children than other families (see paragraph 8.4 for a further analysis).

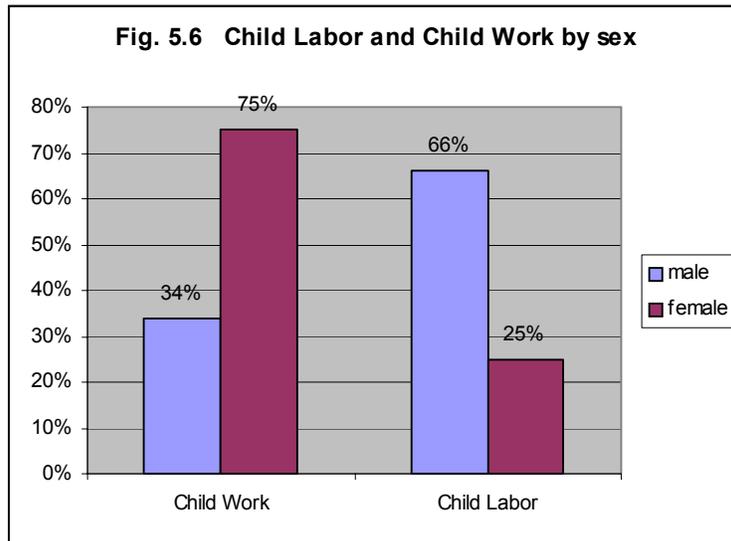
From all the working children that were interviewed it turned out that 76% attended school everyday, 6% went irregular, while 18% had left school. Only very few (4%) of all these children had gone beyond elementary school. Thus we deal with a population that in general had a very low level of education, which was partly caused by their age (43% were still at the age of elementary school which is normally seen as 12 years), but also by a high frequency of repeating classes (85% of those that answered this question had repeated a class) and high drop-out rates. Only 7% of those that had left school went beyond elementary school and of the others only 16% had completed elementary school.²⁹ Thus we may conclude that about 80% of the working children that were not attending school were drop-outs.

5.7 Gender, Age and Ethnicity

We interviewed 167 children in various locations. The distribution in the end of 120 boys (72%) and 47 girls (28%) indicates that overall there will also be more working boys than girls. This is consistent with earlier findings. Orié who did a survey of 50 working children in two poor neighborhoods found 66% males and 34% females (2002:26).

²⁹ Actually 6 out of 30 children who had left school reported to have been in 6th grade of elementary school (we did not ask if they had completed the school, but up to what grade they had attended school), including 2 who had been to secondary school (and thus obviously completed elementary school). We assume that all of the remaining 4 children had completed elementary school, which leads to the calculation of 16% (but which could thus even be lower). Of 3 children this information was missing, which we left out of the calculation.

The general survey by the Ministry of Labor reported that “the degree of participation (of those who at some point were engaged in economic activity) of boys is on average slightly higher than that of girls i.e. 3.6% against 2.9%” (1999:45). This means that of those children that were working 55% consisted of boys and 45% of girls.³⁰ Since the Rapid Assessment survey was aimed at child labor rather than just economic activities the discrepancy with the overall picture is a first indication that more boys than girls are involved in child labor. This becomes clearer in figure 5.6.³¹



There was no significant difference between the ages at which boys and girls first began to work, nor with respect to their current age.

There is a gender difference in earnings, which means that boys get better paid for work than girls. When one analyzes the data further, however, this difference disappears when we keep working hours constant.³² Thus the difference is due to the fact that boys overall work longer than girls and therefore also earn more. On average boys work more days per week than girls. When we look at working hours than it turns out that 20% of the boys work just one or two hours a day, while this is 51% for the girls. For those who work 7 or more hours a day the percentages are 35% for the boys and 6% for the girls. This difference in working hours is very significant.

When we look at the potential harmful aspects of the jobs the working children perform (table 5.9) than we see overall more boys involved in potential worst forms of child labor.

Table 5.9 Potential harmful aspects of work by sex

³⁰ On page 47 the survey reports that of those children interviewed with respect to current economic activities 2.1% of the boys were actively engaged in work and 1.8% of the girls i.e. 54% against 46%.

³¹ The probability of this χ^2 distribution was 0.000, and remained very significant for all tables (= specifications) of working hours and working days we did.

³² The probability of the χ^2 distribution for earnings per day and sex was 0.003. It was non significant, however, for ‘Light work’ (p=0.055), ‘Semi Light work’ (p=0.664) and ‘child labor’ (p=0.838).

	Boys	Girls	Total cases	Probability of χ^2 distribution being result of chance factors	Significance of gender difference
Always tired from work	15%	11%	N = 23	p = 0,753	not significant
Sometimes tired	50%	53%	N = 85		
Never tired	<u>35%</u>	<u>36%</u>	N = 58		
	100% (N=119)	100% (N=47)	N = 166		
Always busy at work	33%	19%	N = 47	p = 0,212	not significant
Sometimes busy	50%	58%	N = 86		
Never busy	<u>17%</u>	<u>23%</u>	N = 31		
	100% (N=117)	100% (N=47)	N = 164		
Always lift heavy items	10%	0%	N = 12	p = 0,000	significant
Sometimes lift items	50%	23%	N = 70		
Never lift items	<u>40%</u>	<u>77%</u>	N = 84		
	100% (N=119)	100% (N=47)	N = 166		
Always bored at work	6%	26%	N = 19	p = 0,001	significant
Sometimes bored	24%	13%	N = 34		
Never bored	<u>70%</u>	<u>62%</u>	N = 113		
	100% (N=119)	100% (N=47)	N = 166		
Hazardous material at job	13%	2%	N = 17	p = 0,005	significant
Less harmful material at job	5%	2%	N = 7		
Dust, sand, saw dust, cement	43%	28%	N = 64		
None	<u>39%</u>	<u>68%</u>	N = 79		
	100% (N=120)	100% (N=47)	N = 167		
Dangerous machine at job	8%	0%	N = 9	p = 0,003	significant
Non dangerous machine	13%	0%	N = 16		
No machine at all	<u>79%</u>	<u>100%</u>	N = 141		
	100% (N=119)	100% (N=47)	N = 166		
Finds job itself dangerous	17%	11%	N = 25	p = 0,442	not significant
Sometimes dangerous	7%	4%	N = 10		
Not dangerous	76%	85%	N = 129		
	100% (N=117)	100% (N=47)	N = 164		
Worst forms of work ³³	76%	4%	N = 31	P = 0,003	significant
Not worst form	<u>24%</u>	<u>96%</u>	N = 136		
	100% (N=120)	100% (N=47)	N = 167		

There is also a significant gender difference for school attendance, with 98% of the working girls still attending school every day, while this was only 68% for the working boys.³⁴

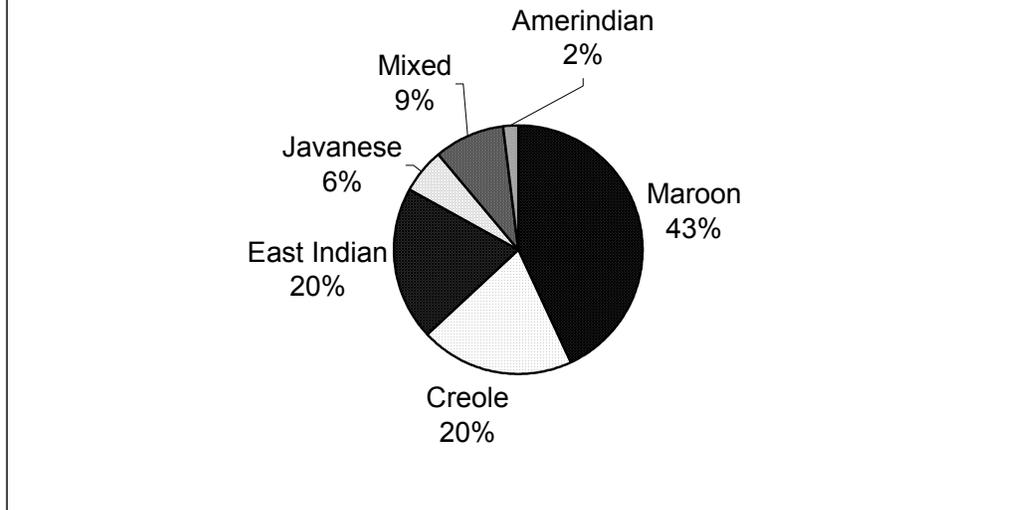
Finally it was found that girls tend to work more for their parents (40% against 18% for the boys), while boys work more for a non-family member (56% against 28% for the girls).³⁵

³³ This is a summary of all indicators (see 8.3 for full explanation).

³⁴ We found that 8% of the boys went infrequent to school and 24% had left school. The probability of this χ^2 distribution was 0.000.

³⁵ The probability of this χ^2 distribution was 0.005.

Fig. 5.6 Working Children by Ethnic background



Ethnicity in a plural society like Suriname is a variable that picks up a variety of cultural, religious, social, historical and environmental characteristics, and therefore remains of importance. When we look at the ethnic background of the children it becomes immediately very evident that Maroons (Bush Negroes) make up the largest group of working children (figure 5.6). Since Maroons in the total population consist of about 15% it means that Maroon children are clearly over-represented among working children. This already points toward a clear ethnic bias among working children, but also towards a regional distribution since many Maroon children are still living in tribal settings in the Interior.³⁶

The working children were asked what their age was and it turned that 7% were younger than 10 years, while the others were 10 years or older. Furthermore they were also asked at what age they had started working. The responses indicated that 26% had been younger than 10 years when they started working.

The survey by the Ministry of Labor reported that 25.9% of the economically active children were younger than 10 years (1999:50). This was very much in line with the age the children we interviewed reported for their first job. The fact that in the Rapid Assessment only 7% of the children were younger than 10 years already indicates that child labor in Suriname is found primarily among children of 10 years and older.

³⁶ The survey of the Ministry of Labor noted that the economic activities of children are “strongly dependent of the ethno-cultural group” (1999:67), but is not very clear about this distribution. There is only an indication of religion, which nevertheless makes it very clear that Maroon children also dominate in the survey (35.9% tribal religion against 15.6% Muslims, 7.8% Hindus, 5.4% Christians, 12.9% other). Although this distribution is somewhat strange and does not add up to 100% it points out that the group of working Maroon children was at least twice larger than the next group and this despite the fact that Sipaliwini (a typical tribal region) was left out of the survey.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS BY DISTRICTS

6.1 Regional characteristics

In this chapter we give a more specific overview of the results for each district, since each district has its own characteristics and forms of child labor.

The field work was primarily organized by district, and the results are also reported by district (in the next chapter). An overview of the significant overall results is given here, however. Before reporting those we should point out that there are 10 administrative districts in Suriname, which are often clustered into:

- a. the main urban area (Paramaribo or commonly known as the **City**),
- b. the –mainly coastal- **Districts** (Wanica, Commewijne, Para, Saramacca, Coronie, and Nickerie),
- c. and finally the **Interior** or Hinterland region with a more tribal population consisting primarily of Amerindian and Maroon peoples (Marowijne, Brokopondo, and Sipaliwini).

Regional differences were statistically significant for the following variables:

- who does the child work for
- how much do you earn
- do you give pay to family
- do you save some of your income
- carry heavy things at work
- work with hazardous material
- busy at work
- bored at work
- number of brothers and sisters
- social class

Much of this significance has to do with the fact that location (district) has a high correlation with ethnic and social background, culture and religion, but also with certain types of work and sectors.

6.2 Paramaribo

The capital Paramaribo is the most densely populated area in the country with an estimated 234.000 inhabitants.³⁷ The field work started in the capital, since as Suriname's governing center it also contains offices of government agencies, private companies and NGO's that are operating nationwide. The researchers interviewed 47 key persons from several branches. Many of these (71%) worked more than four years in their job en where doing fieldwork as part of their job. Given these characteristics most interviews were considered to be very reliable. The interviews were done in order to get a picture about the occupational sectors

³⁷ According to the Central Bureau of Civil Affairs (1998-1999). From this publication we will also use the figures for the other districts. The last census dates back to 1980.

where children were working. The information was also used to get a qualitative picture of the living and working conditions of the children.

6.2.1 Opinions about child labor

Virtually all of the key persons in Paramaribo were of the opinion that it was bad for the country when children became economically active at a young age. One key person summed up that by neglecting their schooling these children had less opportunities in life and could easily fall victim to exploitation by employers. The key persons listed a number of solutions to prevent child labor and we have grouped these into socioeconomic, social-educational and legal measures.

Socioeconomic measures

- improving the socioeconomic situation of the parents by creating more employment.

Educational and Social measures

- providing information to parents and children
- taking action to track working children and get them into the school system
- improving education (instructional tools, infrastructure, teachers)
- better monitoring of existing laws
- creating a triangular relationship between Ministry of Education, school and homes
- more recreational facilities and opportunities for children
- caring and counseling system for working children

Legal measures

- improving the existing Labor laws and regulation

6.2.2 Economic activities

According to the key persons children were active in selling newspapers, selling fruit, cleaning homes, assistants in construction activities, and commercial sex. Most were not able to give reliable estimates, however, about the number of children that were employed in each sector. The field team looked into these sectors, but also used information obtained from the literature and through the schools.

Central Market

In several documents the Central Market is mentioned as one of the foremost locations where children are active. The field team visited the market four times at different hours and also interviewed the manager of the market. Before the visit to the market one key person - who was not working there himself- had pointed out that many children were hauling goods in the very early morning hours to the market stands. This could not be verified by the field team on several occasions. The team did not see any young children performing such jobs at those times. Only two to five children were found who sold goods after school. These children were interviewed. The market manager pointed out, however, that during the holidays the number of children that do some petty trade increases substantially.

Sale of fruits (genip, star-nut)²⁰

²⁰ Wim Veer mentions the scientific names of *awara* or star-nut (*astrocaryum segregatum*) and *knippa* or genip (*melicocca bijuga*) in his beautiful edition on Surinamese fruits (*Vruchten in Suriname, Paramaribo, 2001*).

During the months of August and September there is an increasing peddling on the street corners of fruits such as genip and star-nut. This can be labeled seasonal work where one may find clusters of three to six children. Sometimes the children work as a family unit with an older member present, while at some corners they peddle together with other children. One cluster of peddlers was interviewed together.

Along one of the busiest street in Paramaribo three women and five children are selling genips. We spoke with one of the woman. She has five children ranging between one and twelve years. When asked why her children are not in school she answers that her son of 12 does not want to go to school anymore, while the others sometimes go late to school because of the work. Her house burned down and she was covered with burns on her feet; she is not able to work anymore, because she can not stand for long periods. Her husband left after the event and now she lives in one room with all of her children. She also has to prepare meals in the same room. She gets an allowance from the government of Sf 50.000 a month (about US\$ 20) and child benefits of Sf 300 per child per year (US\$ 0.12). She is glad that her children are helping out with the peddling of genips. She herself sits on a case nearby to watch over the safety of the children. When the genip time is over she tries to find other ways to earn some money.

Newspapers

This is another traditional job that has been associated with child labor in several reports. It turns out, however, that most of these children sell newspapers before and after school, while virtually all attend school. They sell the newspapers on the street and quite a few are accompanied or in the nearby presence of a parent. It is estimated that about 40 children are involved with the sales of newspapers. Some of these children were interviewed. One newspaper has shifted its distribution after midnight and told the team that previously (when the distribution was around 9 or 10 p.m.) they could see children among the clients who came to collect the newspapers, but currently there are none. Thus the parents or others collect the newspapers, while children help them to sell in the morning before going to school. The other daily newspaper distributes its papers in the afternoon and some children accompany their parents at the distribution point.³⁸

Construction

A number of children were found to be active in the construction sector mostly as assistants (*handlangers*). Most of the young boys we interviewed would work after school and during the weekend. The research team suspects, however, that there are many more working full time, but could not verify this during observations in a number of construction firms and sites. There are no large concentrations of children or young people at any given site, since usually construction is done in teams, where most probably only the youngest member would be under age.

Timber and Furniture Industry

Several key persons directed the team towards the furniture industry. In several enterprises that were visited young males were found who were doing jobs such as carrying shelves.

³⁸ By the end of the field work another daily newspaper was established, which was not taken into consideration.

Overall it seemed, however, that there was not a large concentration of young people involved in this sector, while the jobs they performed were not of an hazardous nature and did not involve very demanding physical work.

Commercial sex

One of the worst forms of child labor is prostitution or commercial sex. Actually this should not be labeled child labor at all, since it is a type of exploitation of children that is and needs to be banned altogether. The field team did not trace any brothels that employed children or young women, nor did they find any concentration on the streets.³⁹ The Maxi Linder Foundation which works with commercial sex workers, has reported on several occasions, however, that children are involved in commercial sex, and moreover become victims of sexual exploitation. It seems that this involves a limited number (certainly not more than 50 and most probably far less) of young women and young males, who behave inconspicuous and do their job mostly at night. Some cases get a high profile since papers and readers have shown interest in such stories.⁴⁰ There are young girls of school age, who have been reported to sell their body occasionally to earn some extra money for their own expenses. The Director of Maxi Linder reported at the meeting when the draft report of our assessment was presented, that she found that at least 29 commercial sex workers and mothers are exploiting their daughters. She added that it took her about two to three years to find these cases, however. This may well explain that there are no clusters of such cases and that those cases are hard to find, and clearly too hard for a rapid assessment approach.

Jason is a young Maroon boy of 14 years who sells his body to older men. He told a reporter: "I have five younger sisters. They go to school and that costs money. My father is a guard, but we can not live from his salary. My parents were of the opinion that I had to find work. They know what I do, but we never discuss it at home. It is a couple of years that I have left school. If possible I would like to have an ordinary job, but those jobs do not pay well. That is why I am working on the street. I don't like it, but it is important that my sisters can go to school and have food every day." (Leids Dagblad)

Drugs

Involvement of children in the drugs trade is another worse form of child labor. Interviews with the narcotics brigade of the police force did not reveal indications that children were involved in this trade in Suriname. We did not find evidence of their involvement during any of our field work either. The fact that children are talkative seems to be a factor why they are not involved in this trade. Nevertheless there may be individual cases of children involved in the drugs trade.

Schools

³⁹ The field team went to one major location that is known for prostitution and went at several hours in the evening and night. They also asked the guards of businesses in the neighborhood whether they had seen any young children operating in that neighborhood.

⁴⁰ Leids Dagblad, 18 juni 2002, "Steeds meer Surinaamse tieners in de prostitutie" ("More and more teenagers enter prostitution" was the title of an article in a local Dutch newspaper).

Interviews with working children at schools revealed that these mostly worked to earn something extra. The kind of activities they were involved in included: weeding, cleaning, assistant to a mechanic or in construction work.

6.2.3 working conditions

In Paramaribo 42 children were interviewed in ages varying from 8 to 15 years. With respect to ethnic background Creoles (41%) and Maroons (41%) stood out, while there also were those of a mixed background (12%) and East Indian background (7%). Although this was not a representative sample it is nevertheless clear that -given the ethnic distribution of Paramaribo- Maroon children are over represented. This group consists overall of recent urban dwellers and most of them live in poor neighborhoods, have little or less education than other groups, and suffer from high unemployment.

For three quarters of the children their current job was also their first job. Most children (60%) started to work between their 10th and 13th year. Two thirds of them (69%) work 4 to 5 days a week. Most children still go to school and work after school (50%) or during the weekend (19%); There were others, however, that had to work during school time (14%), while the rest of the children gave a combination of work periods.

One third of the children told us that would normally work about 1 to 2 hours a day, while another 26% worked 3 to 4 hours. The other 41% worked 5 or more hours, which should be considered long hours.⁴¹ About 22% of the children worked before or during school hours, nearly half the children (49%) were busy after school, while 20% worked in the evening. The others (10%) worked the whole day or had two sets of hours.

Slightly more than half (55%) of the children said that they were working for a boss, while one quarter (24%) worked for their parent(s) and 12% for another family member. Only few (5%) worked for themselves or for a neighbor (5%).

The most cited reason for working (68%) was to contribute to the family income, often to assist a single mother.⁴² All other reasons (32%) were of a more personal nature e.g. take care of oneself, buy clothes, wanted to earn something extra, was bored, or enjoyed working.

About half (52%) of the children said that they earned more than Sf 5000 (US\$ 2.32) a day, while 21% earned nothing to less than a dollar, and the others were in between.⁴³ In addition to their pay nearly one in three children mentioned that they would get a meal from their employer. Training and medical insurance were not mentioned as part of the extra benefits. Of the 36 children that answered this question 44% told us that they gave all their earnings to their family, while 36% kept part and 19% kept all to themselves. Of those 20 children who kept all or part of their earnings 35% did not save any, while 45% saved sometimes and 20% even on a regular basis.

⁴¹ This 41% was divided into 16.7% who worked 5 to 6 hours, 14.3% who worked 7 to 8 hours and 9.5% who worked more than 8 hours a day.

⁴² Several combinations were given e.g. help parent and could not learn in school; in such cases we have included this combination in contribution to the family income.

⁴³ It was not clear afterwards if this was their net earnings or their turnover, since several children who sold newspapers estimated their 'earnings' by way of multiplying the number of papers they sold by the price of the paper. Only 3 children did not earn anything.

The majority (55%) of the children was not supervised during their job, while the others were supervised by an adult. The following illustration gives an idea of the kind of work some of these children did.

*- I turn mortar. The whole day I am busy carrying stones, cement and sand.
- In the morning I wake up and go to school. After school I eat and do some chores or play. After that I go and collect newspapers and they drop me off at a street to sell the newspapers. After I am finished they pick me up, I take a shower, eat and fall asleep.
- I go to the golf club. When people come to play I accompany them and search for the balls. I also push their golf cart.*

The majority (84%) of the children did not think their job was hazardous. Those who did say that it was dangerous (10%) or sometimes dangerous (7%) were working mainly in the construction sector, weeding, selling newspapers at night, or peddling.

With respect to hazardous materials it turned out that very few children ever got into contact with chemicals (paint and chloride were mentioned each by 2%), but quite a few (38%) mentioned dust and sand (including sawdust) at their job. The rest did not complain.

To get a further indication of potential hard forms of labor we also asked if they had to lift heavy things. About 44% said they (mostly sometimes) had to lift heavy bags, newspapers, stones, etc., while 56% replied that they never had to lift heavy things.

About 9% of the children said that they were always tired when they got home after their job, while 55% sometimes were tired, and 36% were never tired.

When asked if they were busy at their job 20% agreed, while 32% stated that it was sometimes busy, and 49% find their job not so demanding. When asked furthermore if they were ever bored at their job 69% said not, while 29% said they were bored sometimes.

In their free time children were mostly playing soccer, watching television, or fooling around with friends. When asked about their future 26% had not thought about it at all, while others frequently mentioned occupations such as a doctor, teacher, policeman, military, or mechanic.

6.2.4 The school and home environment

Most of the children (81%) that were interviewed still attended school daily i.e. primary school. Those that did not go to school anymore or infrequently mentioned causes such as lack of motivation, not being able to grasp the teaching materials, language problems, or they were written off.

Surprisingly many children lived with both parents (29%) or their mother (45%), while the others lived with other relatives and only a few with non-relatives. Thus the family still is the most important factor for housing of working children. Despite this fact, however, many working children came from large families and (52%) said that they had four or more siblings. Most of the children (64%) had a Christian religious background, while 14% adhered to a tribal religion.

Virtual all children told us that they had siblings below the age of 15 who were also working. Those children we spoke with were often one of the eldest (either the oldest, second or third child) in the family.

The children were also asked about the occupations of their parents. The mother was often a cleaning woman, market woman, or stayed home. Father would often work in the mining sector, cab- or bus driver, guard, or lower civil servant, while 19% of the children did not know their father's occupation and 12% said that the father lived in another country.

6.2.5 Different types of child labor

In contrast to most districts where one type of occupation would dominate the 'job market' for children, the capital Paramaribo shows a variety of 'opportunities'. children could be employed as fruit peddlers, sell newspapers, work in construction, at the market, or could be victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Concentrations were never large in any of these sectors, but newspapers and sales of fruits seemed to employ most children. Many children work to support their family, but only a very few would be the only source of income in the family. Pooling different incomes, however is an important strategy to help poor families survive. This also means that there is some pressure from the family upon the child to work (pull factor).

The construction sector seems to be another sector where employers make use of child labor. Boys from age 11 were employed in this sector as assistants, but here it seems that especially young people (age 14 through 17) will work in this sector than younger children. Most of the work involves carrying stones, sand, mixing mortar, while the youngster has to deal with dust and sand. Since there are many small enterprises in this sector -e.g. a skilled laborer with his own team- it also seems that through family or neighborhood networks children are recruited i.e. a parent would find a job for his son with a cousin or acquaintance. Family pressure thus may serve as a pull factor here.

Mainly young women will be involved with commercial sexual exploitation, although some boys are also involved, but few of them seem to be professional sex workers.

6.3 WANICA

6.3.1 General Information

Wanica, is the second largest district in terms of population and has about 77.000 inhabitants. This district used to produce most of the agricultural products for the city, but it has become more urban, because many people only live there but work in the city. There is a large service sector, most of which caters to local residents, and some small industry.

Many of the key persons in Paramaribo would also speak for the urban parts of Wanica, but five local key persons were also interviewed, while a number of schools were visited. They mentioned children who mainly cleaned yards, while one of the key persons drew our attention to the furniture industry, where quite some children would be working. Various sawmills, shops and wholesale businesses were visited by the field team, but they found no

children when they visited and thus could not endorse the statement by that key person. Later some individual cases were discovered.

Two schools were visited; one at Houttuin and one at Leidingen. What the team found was that many children assist in agricultural activities, in the household or vending agricultural products (such as milk). Most children work after school.

The key persons in Wanica did not think child labor to be a healthy development since children have the right to be educated. People should become more aware of the fact that schools offer education and development; the educational system should be adjusted and more stringent measures should be taken by the government to prevent children from partaking in the labor market at an early age.

6.3.2. The work environment

The researchers interviewed 14 children in Wanica, 10 boys and 4 girls. The age varied between 11 and 14 years. More than half (57%) were East Indians and 21% Maroons.

About 43% has been working five years on average. For 43% this was their first job and for 29% their second. Many of the children (57%) started working from their 9th, 10th, 11th year and they work four or five times a week after school or during the weekends. Most of them (36%) worked more than 8 hours a day, whereas others (29%) worked a maximum of 2 hours per day, while the working hours of the others where in between.

The children that were interviewed mostly helped in agriculture (29%), others were assistants in construction or in a furniture industry (29%), some as maids (14%). More than half of these children (57%) had an employer; others worked for neighbors (21%) or family (14%).

Some children help their mothers or parents with the costs of living (28%), for self-maintenance (21%), or to save money for a specific purpose (14%). Half of the children (50%) earned more than Sf 5000 a day whereas others did not get any pay (14%), Sf 1000 to Sf 2000 a day (14%), or between Sf 2000 and Sf 4000 (21%%). Of those who got paid two third gave a share of their earnings to their parents, while 17% handed all their earnings over, and another 17% kept it all to themselves.

There is a lack of medical services, and no adequate schooling on the job. More than half of the children were supervised by an adult, while the rest was not.

A fragment of an interview regarding a normal workday.

- I go to the market in the morning. The employer arrives with a car loaded with vegetables and I have to make sure all the vegetables are sold by the end of the day.

- After school I take the goats, and tie them so they can graze. Then I rake the yard after which I tie the cows and goats at another spot. At the end of the day I wash the dishes.

Hardly 43% admitted to come home tired some of the time. Asked if they had to lift and carry heavy loads 36%

answered sometimes. About 14% said it was always busy at their job, while 7% got bored at work.

Sand and dust were mostly (41%) mentioned by the children as potential hazardous material they came in contact with, while 7% came in contact with pesticides, 8% with cement and 7% with paint.

When the children were asked about their future 36% had no idea yet. The others answers varied: some want to become nurses, others police officers, others stewardesses, construction workers, doctors, agricultural specialist, and computer experts. In their spare time the children mainly do their homework and study, play soccer or go for walks with friends.

6.3.3 School and home

The answer to the question, “Do you go to school every day” was affirmed by 57% of the children. The other answers were evenly split between those that went occasionally and those that did not attend school at all. The main factors for these children between the ages 9 and 12 that dropped out of school were language problems and conflicts with teachers.

Those children still attending school are mostly in elementary school. 75% of them have failed classes at least once as a result of a lack of motivation or the inability to comprehend what they were being taught.

Many of these children live with both parents (64%), mother and stepfather (14%), mother alone (14%) or grandparents (14%). Half of the children have just 1 or 2 siblings, 33% have 3 to 4 brothers or sisters, and 17% share a home with 5 or more siblings. The majority of the children (79%) says that younger brothers or sisters are also working.

The occupation of the parents was also discussed. The mother is mainly a housewife (43%), a maid (14%) or vendor at the market (14%). Of 43% the father was dead, without a job or they did not know what he did. The other fathers worked as public servant, gold digger, construction worker, weeding, military/police, handyman, or bus driver.

Half of the children came from a Hindu background, 22% were Christian and 14% adhered to a tribal religion.

6.4 SARAMACCA

6.4.1 General overview

Saramacca has a population of about 14,000. Until recently Saramacca was the cradle for the banana sector, but because of internal problems Surland, a state owned company, along with its many jobs, is in danger. Another important company in this district is Staatsolie (State Oil). This company, which is owned by the government, exploits crude oil. These companies do not provide labor to children and very young people, however. Agriculture is the dominant sector in this district, with livestock, rice and vegetables as the most common products. Located at the western border of Saramacca is the fishing village of Boskamp. Most of the population lives spread out along parts of the main road and often on their own agricultural plots of land.

The researchers have paid four visits to Saramacca. The first was for orientation purposes. The headmaster and teachers were asked to make an inventory of the children that were working and to check also which children were often absent. Four key persons were interviewed in Saramacca. According to these key persons a number of children were working in construction and agriculture. According to the key persons the children are hired because they are sources of cheap labor. Besides these key persons the following also acted as informants: teachers, an education inspector, local government officials, public servants of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (LVV) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (SOZAVO). The interviews indicated that the children attended school, but help out at their parents land after school.

6.4.2 working conditions

In Saramacca eight schools were approached. Researchers interviewed the working children on three of these schools. On the other schools their appeared to be few or no working children. In these three schools about fifty working children were found. The field team also found some young people working in a small fishery village Boskamp and looked for others elsewhere but hardly found any, since there are just a few concentrations of populations and given the distances few opportunities for children to work beyond their own family plots. The team interviewed 21 children, 14 boys and 7 girls ranging in age from 11 to 14 years. Ethnically one third (33%) was East Indian and almost a fourth (24%) Javanese.

The jobs of these children varied a lot. Common activities are: catching and processing fish, cleaning houses and working in agriculture, on a plot or in the garden. For most children one of the above is the current job that they have and have had for the past one to three years.

More than half (52%) of the children say they work two to three days a week. Usually after school, in the weekends and during vacations. Most of them (57%) work between one and four hours a day. work usually is provided by an employer (48%) or a relative (33%).

The children were asked why they worked. 29% said to help their parents and 24% said to take care of themselves. Other reasons included saving money to buy candy, clothes, a watch or a bicycle. One teacher gave the following reasons why these children worked.

Because bridges were built and renovated there now is a better connection with the city. The children visit Paramaribo more often and want to have the stuff that their peers in the city have like Nike shoes. For an average parent a pair of sport shoes can easily cost half a month's salary. So the kids then go work for it. Friends and advertising pressure them into being "cool", which stimulates child labor.

Almost half (48%) of the children said they earned between Sf 4000 and Sf 5000 per day and a little less then a quarter (24%) said they earned more then Sf 5000 per day. Part of the earned money is given to parents and the rest is saved.

Half said an adult guided them during work. The supervising adult is either the employer, a parent of the child or a relative. The other half said they work alone. The following account illustrates a typical workday of two children.

- I throw out the nets and have to wait for about six hours, then the nets are pulled in and the fish we catch is delivered to the customers.
- In the morning I feed the chickens and tie up the cows. After school I help my dad with farming, harvesting and planting.

Medical provisions and training are absent. 40% of the children say they have to lift and carry heavy loads and one third say they come in contact with sand and dust, yet most (81%) do not think their jobs are dangerous. In agriculture machines may be a risk for working children, but few machines are being employed, while these are mostly handled by adults. Chemicals may provide another risk, but here no real assessment could be made since agricultural plots are spread out. Again the indications are that adults rather than children are involved in spraying

vegetables with chemicals. The Fishery sector seemed to harbor another potential danger, especially operating at sea with small vessels. The adults the team spoke to stressed, however, that children were not allowed to go to sea, while they normally did not do any preparation of fish either. Nevertheless the team found three boys over 15 years to be involved in fishing and preparation. children who had told the team at school that they helped with fishing after school, were not found at the village to do so. They probably assisted with some minor work and sales.

6.4.3 The school and home situation

A relative high percentage of the children (81%) say they attend school daily. Most of the children attend elementary school in Calcutta and Groningen. The children we interviewed were living in Boskamp, Calcutta and Groningen. About 38% of the children live with both parents, while 29% were living only with their mother. Furthermore 24% of the children were living with relatives (aunt/uncle/grandmother/grandfather) for quite some time.

Almost 20% said they had no other family members, while about a quarter (28%) had 1 or 2 siblings. One third of the children said they had 3 or 4 siblings, and almost 10% lived with 5 or more siblings. Interesting is that the children claim that siblings younger than 15 also work. 76.2% of the children say that they have one or more younger siblings that work. The children themselves claim to be the first or second child of their parents.

Christians (38%), Hindus (29%) and Muslims (24%) make up 91% of the religious background of the families of the children.

The father's occupation seems to be versatile. Out of an inventory it appears that the fathers commonly work as farmer, fisherman or public servant. About 20% do not know what their father's occupation was. The mothers often work as cleaning woman (33%), market or street vendor (19%) or housewife (10%).

6.4.4 The agricultural sector

A major source of employment in Saramacca is the agricultural sector. children are used for various tasks like harvesting oranges and black-eyed peas and preparing vegetables. These tasks are carried out as a family and the children help out after school. The influence of parents on the children forms a pull-factor of child labor in this sector. Helping out with tasks after school is a part of the family's life pattern and not directly an option for the children. Because of work after school there is less time for the children to make their homework, however, which may have detrimental effects on their school performance. When the children get older and do poor in school, the parents seem to push the priority from school to work (during school times), based on the reasoning that their children will not make it through the school system.

6.5 NICKERIE

6.5.1 General Overview

Nickerie is known as the rice district. The cultivation of rice forms the most important means of subsistence, but there are other means of income as well such as trade and services, banana export (currently suffering), fisheries, livestock and others. The district consists of 34.500 inhabitants.

The field team spend two days in Nickerie. Prior to their visit 12 schools were contacted by phone, of which 9 indicated that there were hardly any working children present. The 3 other schools were visited and several children were interviewed. Most children work after school time. The investigators also spoke with 15 key persons. According to these key persons there were concentrations of children working as assistants in the rice and agricultural sector, as gardener, fishermen, newspaper vendors, babysitters, cleaners, hucksters and assistants in building activities. The key persons estimated the number of working children between 100 and 300. They were worried about this development. Information, supervision, rules and sanctions against those who stimulate child labor, were mentioned to resist this trend in child labor. With regard to the prevention of the worst forms of child labor, interviews were held with the police of Paradise and Waldeck, and with a social official.

Drugs

The police of Paradise explained that much drug traffic was done. The team afterwards spoke with two young males of 14 and 17 years from this area, who were arrested on drug charges. According to these boys chiefly adults were active in this sector, while no children were involved. The two youngsters said they were drug users, but no traders. The police of Waldeck explained that in the drug trafficking circuit youngsters were not used, because they are usually indiscreet and can disclose possible activities of the drug dealers.

Commercial sexual exploitation

Four of the 15 key persons said that sexual exploitation of children was present in Nickerie. Only one person, however, could point out a location where the children could be found. According to this person about 6 young girls would be involved. During an unannounced visit to that location, however, no children were encountered. Nevertheless the key person

seemed very reliable, because she herself had spoken to these children as representative of the Justice Department.

6.5.2 working circumstances

The field team interviewed 15 children in the ages of 10 to 15 years. Almost all the children (87%) were East Indians and the others were of a mixed background. The majority of the children (73%) were Hindu.

In general the children worked most of the week i.e. 43 % of the children said they worked 5 days or more and an equal percentage worked 4 to 5 days. One third worked 1 tot 2 hours a day, while 27% worked 8 or more hours, and the rest was in between. Two third of the children did their work after school and during vacations. Nearly half (47%) of the children we interviewed worked in agriculture, notably the cultivation and processing of rice, while one third were involved in peddling, mostly of agricultural products. A fragment from one interview

We spoke with a boy at his work in a rice mill. He was not a bright student at school and at age 13 was still in the second grade of elementary school. His father does not live at home anymore, but once had set fire to the house when he was drunk. Within a month the police released him. The mother is jobless. Therefore the boy has to work to support his mother and two sisters. At the rice mill he has to sweep, but it is very dusty there. This is so because of the padi. According to his mother, the boy coughs a lot, but he has no other choice than to work for a starvation wage.

The majority of the children worked for an employer (73%). The most important reasons why the children worked was to contribute financially to the income of their parents (33%), or to provide in their own need (20%). Other children worked because of negative school results, to save for a special purpose, just to earn something extra or out of boredom (47%).

Most children (80%) earned more than Sf 5000 a day. Nearly a half (40 %) gave part of their income to the family, an equal percentage kept it for themselves, while 20% gave all their earnings to their family. More than half (53%) of the children save a part of their earnings. Approximately half are supervised by an adult during work, while the other half gets no supervision. The children told us what happens during their workday.

*- At 5 o'clock in the afternoon I drive with my bike along the houses and shout "Pepper, Pepper" till everything is sold.
- I work in the rice fields. My work consists of weeding and digging gutters. I also assist in the harvest time. With the combine we gather in the harvest.*

A high percentage of children get home tired everyday (27%), and others sometimes (40%). Daily heavy lifting was experienced by 20%, while another 20% said they sometimes had to lift heavy things. Asked if their work is very demanding 27% agreed, while 7% sometimes felt pressure. Only 7% were bored at work, and 20% sometimes. Only 7% came in contact with pesticides during their job, but 53% complained about sand and dust.

When asked about their future 27% of the children had no idea yet. The rest of the children would like to become a teacher, police officer, soldier, electrician, mechanic, engineer, lawyer, manager of a bank, or businessman.

6.5.3 The school and the home situation of the working children

Two third of the children go to the primary school every day, while one third dropped out of school. The field team visited 3 schools, all were public schools. They were located at Paradise, Groot-Henar and Bacovendam.

Paradise

In this school, the team found 12 working children, most of them sold agricultural products in the afternoon. A few children helped in the stores or were busy with fishery on a small scale.

Groot Henar

The working children in these schools were all boys. They assisted with building activities, or worked in the rice fields and do things such as cleaning and oiling the tractors.

Bacovendam

At this school there were only 5 working children. They had no permanent job, but they now and then weed for someone. A boy of six years had to take care of his younger sisters of four and of one and a half years when his mother is at work.

We spoke with a boy of six year in the presence of his teacher. He made a scared impression and did not have the nerve to say something. The school management has adopted the boy. At school he is given a sandwich and every now and then he gets some clothes. He told us that he often stayed home to take care of his sisters of 4 and 1 ½ years old, when his mother has to work somewhere. His parents have no permanent job. According to the teachers the parents are very poor.

Approximately 60% of the pupils repeat a class, mostly because of difficulties with learning or because of lack of motivation.

Most children live with both parents (80%) or stay with their single mother (20%). The families seem relatively small . Only 20% of the children had more than 5 siblings, while 40% had 3 or 4 brothers and sisters, and an equal percentage lived with one or two siblings in the same house. Nearly three quarters of the children said that at least one of their brothers or sisters under 15 years also work.

A boy of 14 years goes to school, but his grades are poor. He already repeated a class three times. After school time, he works in the rice sector. His father is a farmer and his mother is housewife. In the rice fields he drives along with his employer on the tractor to plough the rice fields. If the tractor gets stuck in the mud, he has to help fasten the chains, so that the tractor can be torn loose. After the ploughing, he washes the tractor and takes all the mud from it. After this the tractor is completely oiled. Sometimes he also helps to change the tires of the truck tires. He earns Sf 10,000 a day. With his money he has bought a bike. In his spare time he repairs bicycles, plays soccer and goes out with his friends.

The fathers had jobs such farmers, laborers in construction and private companies, guard, fisherman. Most women (80%) did not have a job outside their home, but would normally also maintain a garden. The few mothers with outside jobs worked as cleaning lady, laborer or had their own small enterprise.

6.5.4 Rice sector

The rice sector remains an important occupational sector in Nickerie. children and young people are employed by this sector. Most of the sector is mechanized, but children are used to maintain equipment (e.g. cleaning tractors). Furthermore the children go in the fields after the harvest to gather the leftovers of the rice-crop. In Nickerie four rice mills were visited, where only two boys were found. The field team interviewed six children who were traced through the schools and the mills. This method resulted in a small number of children. One manager of a rice mill said that there was no production at the moment because it was not the harvest time. During the harvest period they work in shifts. Thus the chance to find children and young people in these mills, and in the sector, will be higher.

6.6 COMMEWIJNE

6.6.1 General overview

In the past Commewijne was a cradle for plantations, which produced coffee, sugar and cacao. The plantations are nowadays as good as gone; the land has been divided up and is now used by the residents, who use it for small-scale agriculture. The district has a population of about 22.000. Although Commewijne is adjacent to Paramaribo, it was relatively isolated because of the Suriname river, which had to be crossed by ferry. Still quite a few of its residents commuted to work in the capital city. Since the opening of a bridge in 2000 Commewijne has been virtually connected to Paramaribo and is reorienting itself more towards the capital. In addition to small scale agriculture the fishing sector is a main source of employment. In the near future the expansion of Paramaribo will continue eastwards into Commewijne and its population will most probably grow substantially due to increasing numbers of commuters.

The research team paid six visits to Commewijne, one of which was to a fishery village. Thirteen children and two key persons were interviewed. Other informants included the school inspector of the district, local government officials, the police, teachers and an employee of a local agricultural organization. According to them there is limited economic activity in Commewijne, because many residents work in Paramaribo. They pointed towards the construction and furniture industry, which would employ quite a few child laborers, but the field team did not find prove of those suggestions. No child laborers were found in construction and a few children older than 15 were found in the furniture industry.

The key persons also warned about the negative aspects of child labor, specifically that young child laborers have less chances of developing themselves. Informing the parents about child

labor, measures to improve the social-economic situation, and after school programs were mentioned as suggestions to curb child labor.

6.6.2 The working conditions

In Commewijne twelve schools were contacted. Researchers interviewed boys and girls, on four of those schools. The other schools reported few or no working children. Most of the working children in this district were between 12 and 14 years old.

Overall 13 children were interviewed in this district, 10 boys and 3 girls. The children were 31% Maroon and 31% East Indian, with smaller percentages of Mixed background (23%), Creoles (8%) and Javanese (8%). This was surprising, since most residents of Commewijne are Javanese, which may indicate that Javanese children seem less likely to be working.

The children said they have been working for a few years, mostly since they were 10 or 11 years old. About 70% said they work more than 5 days a week, after school and in weekends. Some work 3 to 4 hours a day, but almost a quarter usually work 8 or more hours a day. The three girls, ages 10 to 14, are all employed as maids for other people. Sweeping and mopping the floor, cleaning windows, washing dishes and clothes, hanging the clothes to dry and folding the clothes are the tasks they carry out.

The boy's duties vary from catching fish, processing shrimp, assisting a mechanic, and producing charcoal. In most cases either an employer or a relative employs them.

The children say they work to support their parents (or relatives). Some say they work to support themselves; they save up their earned money to buy such things as candy, a bicycle or a watch.

The daily earnings was reported by 46% to be between Sf 4000 and Sf 5000, while the rest receiving more than Sf 5000. Nearly one third (31%) gave all their earnings to their parents/relatives, while 61% gave only part and 8% kept it all to themselves.

Medical provisions, education and training during work are nonexistent. More than half (54%) of the children say an adult does not guide them during work.

With respect to the way the children perceive their work the following can be reported. One quarter found their job dangerous, while 15% came in contact with (potentially) hazardous materials and 8% with (potentially) dangerous machines. Only 8% reported that they were always tired when they came home from work and 46% were sometimes tired. In 23% of the cases the children reported the job to be busy, while only 8% sometimes got bored at work. Furthermore 31% said they sometimes had to carry heavy items during work hours. Overall, however, most children seemed to have a relatively safe and not too demanding job.

6.6.3 The school and the working child

Besides work a high percentage (69%) also goes to school. About 23% say they do not attend school, while another 8% say they sometimes go to school.

The reason some children leave elementary school early is usually motivation (they did not learn their lessons) or social (their father left the family).

Most children do follow primary education (GLO) at schools in Mariënborg and Nieuw-Amsterdam. Also interesting to note is that almost 70% of the children said they have failed a grade, usually first, second or third. But failing two consecutive grades is no exception.

6.6.4 The home situation

Most (54%) of the interviewed children live with both parents. The others live with relatives or foster parents, often for the past ten years or more.

When asked about their siblings it turned out that half the children had 3 or more siblings and the other half just 1 or 2 or even none. Still 62% of the children lived in households of 6 or more people.

According to age the interviewed children were either the first or second in their family. They also noted that siblings younger than 15 are involved in the work process. The father usually works as a gardener or (small) businessman, but also as farmer, fisherman, busdriver and civil servant. Some children (15%) do not know what their father does for a living. About half of the mothers were housewives (46%), while others worked as cleaning ladies (23%), in fish processing (15%) or employees in a private company (8%). One child did not know what the mother was doing.

6.6.5 The fishery sector

No evidence has been found for child labor in the fishing sector. Some pupils did say that they commuted daily from the fishing village of Pomona to the public school in Nieuw-Amsterdam by boat. So the field team went to Pomona during school hours to see if there were any children that did not go to school and instead stayed to work. No children were found; they had all gone to school. One mother said that the children could not help the parents after school, because of the way the shrimp industry works. In the early morning the fish and shrimp are caught and laid to dry in the sun. This takes two to four days and after that the fish/shrimp are put in big bags. Suppliers from Paramaribo then pick up the bags and further process the shrimp/fish and sell them in smaller bags to customers. This process leaves little room for the children of Pomona to help out.

This analysis shows that the use of child labor in the fishing sector is minimal. The school is the most important push factor, because most parents give it a high priority and would rather have their kids attend school than process shrimp during school hours.

6.7 PARA

6.7.1 General Information

Para is situated to the south of Paramaribo and has about 15.500 inhabitants. The primary economic activity of this district is mining of bauxite which is done by Suralco and BHP Billiton. Those residents that live in the regions of Para not too far from Paramaribo are

commuting to the city. The presence of the International airport also generates some local economic activity e.g. porters and vendors (sales of beverages and cassave bread plus dosi i.e. cassave bread filled with ginger or pineapple). Furthermore Suriname's major local tourist resorts –which also generate work for locals- are situated in Para e.g. Cola Creek, Republiek, Bersaba, Carolina, Berlijn. In this district there is also a concentration of Amerindian villages, many of which still depend on subsistence agriculture supplemented by some market products (e.g. pineapple). Along the road to the airport there are many Creoles and Maroons who live from selling agricultural products to passers-by and a number of Maroon artists who sell wood carving.

Field researchers went to the district four times and spoke to several key persons. Contact persons were the district commissioner and the secretary of the district, the regional overseers (*bestuursopzichters*) and principals of the schools. The administrative executives were from the resorts/areas North and South Para, Bigi Poika and Carolina. According to the district commissioner child labor does not exist in Para. The overall impression from the interviews with these key persons was that only a limited number of children are involved in vending of dosi and cassava bread. These were often linked to international flights at the airport, which are limited and thus were not full-time labor.

6.7.2 The work environment

Ten schools were approached in an initial phase of which the researchers visited four. The other schools were not visited as there were hardly any working children reported in these schools. At the four schools about 100 working children were counted. The researchers spoke to a group of 11 children, who assisted in the production of Pemba-doti (white clay), used by inhabitants of the interior for various rituals. Pemba is extracted from rocks in the bauxite mines. This group consisted of both boys and girls who then sell Pemba in the marketplace on Saturdays. Another group of children sold dosi en cassava bread near the airport after having assisted in the production of these goods.

In total 11 boys and 4 girls between the ages 9 and 14 were interviewed. Most children were Creoles (47%) and Maroons (33%). child laborers in Para either sell food products (dosi, cassave), or Pemba in the marketplace, or they assist in a construction business or help the family on agricultural plots. Most of these children (71%) worked in their first job and often at irregular hours.

Many children (60%) work for their parents or a relative, while 27% have an employer and 13% work on their own. Also 60 % of the children reported that an adult was supervising their work, while the remainder lacked supervision.

The children work mostly (54%) to support their parent(s) in the costs of living, while 20% said they had to support themselves. The earnings varied. One tenth (13%) of the children did not receive any pay for their work, while 20% earned Sf 1000 to Sf 2000 a day. Another 27% received between Sf 2000 and Sf 5000, while the remaining 40% earned more than Sf 5000 a day. The fact that 40% of the children handed over their entire income to their parents and another 40% gave part of their earnings to them, underlines that the children supported the family. These working children lack medical care, adequate education and training on their job.

Though most of the children (87%) do not experience their jobs as dangerous, they do complain about exhaustion (20% were always tired after work and 40% sometimes), the demands of the job (53%), lifting heavy equipment (13% always and 27% sometimes) and boredom (7% were always bored at work and 27% sometimes). Only 7% work with (potentially) dangerous machine, while another 7% mentioned to work with (potentially) hazardous materials.

In their spare time the children mainly play soccer or *slagbal* (kind of soft ball), swim or do their homework. When asked what they would like to be in the future, some answers were teacher, policeman, firefighter, pilot and stewardess.

6.7.3 School and the working child

All the interviewed children attend school daily. Many of the respondents are in the upper classes of the elementary school at Zanderij, Bersaba and Onverwacht. Many of the children have failed some grades several times. The reasons cited are lack of motivation and the inability to comprehend the lessons.

A fragment from an interview with a principal illustrates these points:

I have been working in this school for 9 years now. During classes these children write labels to stick them on the packets with dosi. Their grades are low. After school parents pick up these children, especially when there is activity at the airport. Many times these children spend the whole day at the airport from 15.00-20.00 p.m. These children take along their notebooks and do their work on the spot. During the lessons they fall asleep since the preparation for the dosi continues up to late in the night. The children help with the grating of the coconuts and labeling the packets. This is family business and the children are not paid. The parents buy them shoes and clothes and they earn an allowance. For the greater part this situation occurs in single parent homes where the mother has many children from different fathers. This is the reason why the children have become child laborers.

Many of the children (40%) lived with a single mothers and a third (33%) with both parents. Some stayed with their father (7%), mother and stepfather (7%) or other relatives (13%). The children in Para come from large families, because 40% have more than 5 brothers or sisters. 27% have 3 or 4 brothers or sisters and 27% have 1 or 2 siblings. A very high percentage (87%) confirm that other brothers and sisters younger than 15 years of age were also working. Many of these children are Christians (60%) and 20% said to have no religious background (but most probably were affiliated with a tribal religion).

About 40% of the mothers were housewives, while the rest were working as maids, small business women, vendors, employee, or in fisheries. The occupations of the fathers varied more and included a farmer, gold digger, watchman, construction worker, employee, teacher and policeman. It is noteworthy to mention that 20% of the children said that their fathers were dead or in foreign countries, while another 20% did not know their father's occupation.

6.7.4 Mining

The primary economic activity in Para is bauxite mining. There are no indications, however, of child labor in this sector. The fact that we do not encounter child labor in mining is due to

a high degree of professionalism at Suralco and BHP Billiton, which requires substantial training, while these companies also follow the local Labor Laws.

6.8 MAROWIJNE

6.8.1 General profile

In the district of Marowijne there are about 13.500 inhabitants. The district is bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean and in the east by neighboring French Guyana. The Marowijne river is a boundary-river between both countries. Important economic activities in Marowijne are the mining of bauxite, forestry and subsistence agriculture. Several villages and centers in the district were destroyed during the Internal War (1986-1992) between the National Army and the Jungle Commando.

The researchers visited the district of Marowijne on three successive days. The most important towns Moengo and Albina were visited. In Marowijne the field team spoke with seven key persons. These persons were the commander of police, an inspector of the Ministry of Education, a pastor of the Moravian Church, the head of the department of Social Affairs at Albina, a medical doctor of the Regional Health Organization (RGD), the district secretary of Moengo and a member of Parliament. From the conversations (interviews) with the key persons it appears that many children are involved in activities in the informal or *hossel*⁴⁴ sector. Due to the illegal trade between Albina and St Laurent-du Maroni (French-Guiana) many children quit school and choose to work to earn some money. The estimates by the key persons with regard to the number of working children are in the range of 10 to 300 children, mostly from the Maroon communities. Most key persons did not endorse child labor, since it has negative consequences for the full development of the children. One key person saw child labor as a characteristic of the poor development of the country. Only one key person found the participation of young children in the labor process not a bad thing, but pointed out that it should not interfere with school attendance. Instructions, measures to improve the economic situation in the country and more control by the local police force were mentioned to counteract the labor of young children. The interviews directed the research team towards the border region and notably the waterfront in Albina.

There are 4 schools in Albina and the researchers visited two schools. In these schools they found 75 working children. In one school there were even 63 children. Moengo has 6 schools, of which 3 schools are visited. In the 3 schools of Moengo 82 working children were found. In the other schools there were no working children present or the population of the group was too small.

6.8.2 The waterfront in Albina

During the field work we found 7 boys in the age group of 9 to 14 years at the riverside during school hours. They did not go to school anymore and carried mostly cargo with wheelbarrows as the following fragment illustrates:

⁴⁴ *Hosselen* is a Suriname word for informal jobs which have mostly an incidental character. With the income of several hustling jobs one can survive.

In Albina we met 7 boys between 9 and 14 years of age. To be specific: 2 boys of 14 years, 2 of 12 years and one of 9, 10 and 13 years. These boys do not attend school. They work from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. With their wheelbarrows they transport cargo and luggage for persons who travel to Saint Laurent or those who travel to the interior to villages along the Marowijne river. The boys earn daily between Sf 25,000 and Sf 30,000. For one ride they charge Sf 2,000.-. The cargo varied from gas cylinders, sacks with fruits, produce, rice and barrels of petrol.

From the stories of the boys it appeared that the parents also work as peddlers. They did not tell why they quit school. A grandmother of one of the boys told the field team that the boy stayed with her, but misbehaved. He did not want to go to school and was not polite towards her. His mother lived in the interior. The grandmother did everything to put him in school again, but he also misbehaved in school. Now she has decided to send him back to his mother. He did not support his grandmother financially, so she does not know how he spend his money.

During school hours the field team also visited all shops and supermarkets in Albina, but found no working children during those hours. It was remarkable, however, that many children came to the waterfront after school. It seemed as if most school children went home to pick up their vending items and baskets and went to the waterfront, which suddenly changed into a hustling crowd of young people.

6.8.3 working environment

The field team conducted interviews with 19 children, of which 10 boys and 9 girls in the age group of 7 to 14 years. The children were from Maroon (67%) and Creole (33%) background. The children work in general after school, some one to six hours per day. The majority of the children (61%) work more than five days per week.

The activities of the children consist mostly of vending agricultural products, sweets and petrol. Petrol is smuggled into French Guyana, where prices are higher. From the survey at the schools 78 children were counted who sold products after school hours and in the weekend, notably 50 girls and 28 boys. Most children were working for their mother or both parents, while some worked for themselves.

Besides the trading of products on the streets, the girls are also active as babysitters or do cleaning jobs. Fourteen children -11 girls and 3 boys- worked as babysitters. Most of the time they took care of their little brothers and sisters when the mother is absent. One mother left home around 01:00 a.m. for St. Laurent. In some cases the children did not attend school because they had to babysit.

The boys transport cargo in wheelbarrows and load the cargo in boats or work in the garden. These are the most important activities of children who are hustling. For most of the children (70%) it is their first job, which they worked at for 1 tot 5 years.

The number of children with other activities is substantially less, notably:

Type of Labor	Number
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Gardening	12 boys
Loading of cargo	10 boys
Production of Podosiri	3 girls and 1 boy
Shop assistant	1 girl and 4 boys
Fisherman	2 boys
Laborer at an agriculture plot	4 boys and 2 girls
Laborer in a furnishing firm	2 boys

More than one-third of the interviewed children (39%) worked for an employer, while 28% worked for their mother, and another 22% for a family member. The remaining children were self-employed.

Many children work to help their mother (44%), parents (17%), another relative (11%), to take care of one self (17%) or just to earn some money (11%).

Boy of 12 year, does not attend school anymore. He lives with his uncle in Albina . His mother does not want to take care of him anymore. His father died and his mother has another husband, with whom she has other children. The boy attended school when he lived in Paramaribo. His uncle sent him to look for a job. He wishes to go back to school.

Half of the youngsters earned more than Sf 5,000 per day, 17 % received less than Sf 1,000 while 11% reported that they did not earn any money. The rest got irregular payments or got amounts between Sf 1,000 and Sf 5,000. Half of the children gave all their income to their family and 22% gave part of it. The rest either did not get any pay or kept it to themselves (17%). Those with some money spend it mainly to buy things for themselves. Most children (78%) work without supervision of an adult.

The children do not receive medical services or any specialized training on their jobs. In this district the children are more exposed to risks at work, since 41% of the children qualified their job as dangerous. On the other hand no child was working with (potentially) dangerous machines, while 11% was exposed to (potentially) hazardous materials. Many children experienced feelings of tiredness (6% always and 61% sometimes), were bored (33% always and another 33% sometimes), had to lift heavy weight (6% always and 61% sometimes), or complained that their working environment was noisy (63%).

On the question about the activities during leisure hours, the answers differed. children used their time to play, do homework, to sleep and to watch television. The researchers also asked about their ideas of future professions. The professions that were mentioned were teacher (33%), medical doctor/nurse (28%), police/military (17%), journalist, boss at Suralco mining, or custom agent. Some of these professions were typical for the region.

6.8.4 The school and the working child

A large percentage (83%) of the working children reported that they attend school daily, while some children (11%) do not go on a daily basis. The majority of the children repeated classes. Reasons mentioned why they repeated were: the lack of motivation, the difficulty to

combine work and school, or the distance between home and school. The main religious background of the children is Christian (89%) and tribal religion (11%).

Most children said that their younger brothers and sisters of less than 15 years were working also. The children were also questioned about the profession of their mother and father. With regards to mothers, they work as housewives, (street and market) vendors, small entrepreneurs or janitor. Also, some of the children mentioned that the mother work in French-Guyana. Some 44% of the children did not know the occupation of their father (he lived elsewhere or was dead) against only 17% for the mothers. The other fathers were gold diggers, drivers, worked in construction, were gardener, employee, or small entrepreneur.

Oglaya, 9 year, is often absent from school. She is a babysitter. The head master said that the mother often reports that she is sick, while Oglaya in reality is baby-sitting her little brother. The mother works as a janitor. Oglaya is a pupil of the first grade.

6.8.5 The home situation of the working child

Most children lived with both parents or foster parents (55%), with one parent (28%), while the rest (17%) stayed with other relatives. The houses where they stayed were crowded with 83% having 7 or more persons living in the same place. Most children were part of large families which is illustrated by the fact that 61% mentioned that they have 5 or more brothers and sisters. Only 6% reported that they were the only child.

6.8.6 Peddlers

In the district of Marowijne, the researchers met children who work as *hosselaars* (peddlers). They met the children at the waterfront of Albina and at schools. The children worked without the supervision of adults. They rented wheelbarrows or sometimes these were owned by their parents. Most children mentioned that their parents were also peddlers. Interviews indicated that several children from one family were involved in the same peddling activities, for example transportation of cargo with wheelbarrows.

The employment of the children in peddling activities resulted in poor school performance. These children repeated a class more often or arrive late at school. Also the children assisted their parents in the agriculture plots and functioned as baby sitters for the younger children. Some helped with the selling of products when the family went across French-Guiana. We conclude that the pull-factors for child labor in peddling activities are working in a team as a family and the role of children as baby-sitters.

The researchers also had a meeting with the local police to discuss the role of this institution with regards to child labor. The policeman in office stated that they condone child labor, because they do not have the means to counteract the problem. He mentioned also that activities in the past to enroll children in school resulted in resistance from the community. The policeman wished that the Police Force will open a youth department in Albina to counteract the present situation of child labor. The police office at Albina has only two policemen on duty, while they received on a weekly basis some support from Paramaribo.

Sometimes they also receive support from the police office in Moengo. But in the present situation they are understaffed, which has been reported to the office in Paramaribo.

6.9 BROKOPONDO

6.9.1. General overview

Brokopondo is a thinly populated district with 8,000 inhabitants. It is ethnically a rather homogenous district since the vast majority of the population consists of Maroons or Bush Negroes.

The field team visited Brokopondo three days in July 2002. Prior to the visit some key persons had been contacted by phone. Ten key persons were interviewed. They mentioned a concentration of working children in the gold sector, but noticed at the same time a decline in the number of children in this sector. Furthermore children would be operative on family agricultural plots, in fisheries, freight and timber.

The opinions of key persons with respect to the employment of children varied. Some disapproved of this development and stated that the children could not develop themselves in this way. Others neither condemned nor approved of child labor, since the Maroon and Amerindian communities are arranged in this fashion, while there are no other possibilities for employment. Finally some key persons considered child labor a good alternative when the children did not go to school anymore.

In the district the field research workers visited 6 schools on Klaaskreek, Brokopondo, Nieuw Koffiekamp, Brownsweg and Lebi Doti. Observation and interviews pointed towards a high drop-out percentage on the schools. The premature drop-outs did not have many possibilities in the district. At the school at Lebi Doti many boys who left the school prematurely went to work in the gold sector.

The bauxite sector is basically limited to the hydro-electric dam and its operations, while the mines are located in other districts. This sector will not make use of child labor, although it may employ some young people as assistants to more experienced workers. There are timber activities in the district, but in this industry one will not find children either, because of the heavy equipment involved, but one may find young males to assist. The field team did not find any during the field trips, because the wood-cutting is often isolated in hard to reach places, while there certainly are no concentrations of young people to be found according to key persons. There is a small gravel sector, but it experiences difficult times. Previously one could see family type gravel enterprises where a woman with several children would select gravel by using an old iron bed frame and throw scoop of sand and stones against it. The sand and very small pebbles would pass through the frame, while the gravel would stay behind and be collected into buckets and put on a heap. Truck drivers would then buy and transport the gravel. We were told that in the dry season one may still see some of this family business, but overall less gravel is collected in this way. We saw a few larger companies that were active. The team did not observe any children in these companies, but saw older males and several foreigners (Guyanese divers). The gravel was collected from the river with pontoons and large hoses. Those that distribute the gravel piles were robust males around 20 years old. The gold sector was flourishing in this district and we will discuss this separately. Agricultural

products are of limited meaning in terms of marketing, but still important for many families as a survival mechanism. One mostly finds the agricultural activities on a small-scale and primarily for own consumption.

Brokopondo, and especially Brownsweg, is often mentioned as a place where marihuana is traded from. Interviews with the District authorities and several key persons did not point toward any major drugs scene. There is no police force in Brownsweg, however, and it was mentioned that there had been a number of incidents where mopeds that had been stolen in Paramaribo had turned up in Brownsweg. In the past there had been some highly publicized raids on marihuana fields, but in the past years not much was heard of such raids. The police force was understaffed and did not have enough transport facilities to patrol the whole district on a more regular basis. Most informants denied, however, that any children would be involved in the drugs trade, since Brownsweg was seen more as a transshipment point for the marihuana and thus had not much local trade. The field team could not get any positive feedback about the drugs scene in Brownsweg and was not able to verify the stories about drugs.

6.9.2 working conditions

The field workers interviewed 18 respondents, 11 boys and 7 girls, mainly between 8 and 15 years. All children were Maroons. The children worked two to three days per week (33%) while an equal number worked more than five days a week. Many worked after school (44%) and in the weekend (28%).

One third of the children worked three to four hours a day, almost a quarter (22%) worked one to two hours and another quarter of the children more than eight hours.

The activities of the children that were interviewed in this district consist mainly of gold extraction (39%), work on the family agriculture plots (17%), sale of ice lolly (17%) and peddling (11%). Most of the children are active in the gold sector.

In the village Lebi Doti the research team spoke with three boys, two were 19 and one was 17 years old. The boys said that they had been active in the gold sector ever since they were about 14 years old. The experience of these young man were taken into account since it helps us to describe the situation younger boys were now in.

One third of the children were employed by their mother and 11% by their father, while 17% worked for an employer. Most children (39%) worked to help their family earn some income for the daily needs, for personal reasons (17%), or for themselves (11%).⁴⁵ Personal reasons means mostly children who work because of boredom or because they like to work.

The majority of the children (61%) earned more than Sf 5000 a day. Almost a quarter (22%) earned between 1000 and 2000 Surinam guilders on a working day. More than a quarter of the children (28%) gave their money entirely to their family, while others (22%) gave only a part, and some kept all of their earnings for themselves (17%).

⁴⁵ Of these 22% put their money in the household of a single mother and 17% in a household run by both parents.

Most children who earned money themselves saved to provide in their own needs or for a certain goal. Half of the children were accompanied by an adult during their work, while the other half does not receive a supervision.

A high percentage of 79% of the children come in contact with substances as mercury (22%), dust (17%), a selection of mercury and dust (17%), a selection of dust and sand (17%) and gas (6%). children complained about lifting heavy things (83%), tiredness (67%), being busy at work (67%) and boredom at the job (33%). In spite of the many dangers almost three quarters of the children did not find their work dangerous.

When asked what the children do in their free time it turned out that many played soccer, slept and learned lessons. The children also reflected on their future profession. Most of the children (40%) aspired to a job as teacher, while the remaining children wanted to become nurse, driver or police agent. A small part of the children (17%) had no clear idea.

6.9.3 The school and working children

There is only one secondary school (MULO) in all of Brokopondo although this district has probably about 200 kilometers of roads along which villages can be found. All these children have to attend either the secondary school in the district capital, also named Brokopondo, or have to leave Brokopondo and stay with relatives in Paramaribo to attend school there. The District Commissioner was very concerned about the school performance, since only 12 children in 2002 had made the final exams of the MULO. The year before only 8 children had participated in the exam of whom 4 graduated. This was a very poor result for the whole district.

Thus given the limited educational opportunities, primary school is the limit of the education for most children who remain in Brokopondo. Of those interviewed the majority (78%) attended primary school daily. A small percentage (5%) visited the school four days in a week. The remaining 17% of the children did not attend school anymore since they were written off from the school. A remarkably high percentage (94%) of the children said that they repeated a class one or more times because of lack of motivation, difficult lessons or sickness.

The research workers visited six primary schools in Brokopondo, Klaaskreek, Lebi-doti, Nieuw Koffiekamp and Brownsweg (two schools) and did a few interviews with children in each school.

Brokopondo

In Brokopondo the team spoke with several schoolteachers. The school principal said that most of children in the school did not work for people. Some go to family agricultural plots with their parents. He also said that the drop-outs can not find work in the most cases. Girls that get pregnant stay at home to look after the baby, while boys who leave the school often move to the city. In some cases these young males become involved in criminal activities, since they lack the education that is needed to get most jobs and thus find themselves marginalized. In Brokopondo, however, job opportunities are very limited and thus Paramaribo still looks more promising to most.

Klaaskreek

The school principal of the school told the research workers that there were no working children in the school. She said that there is no employment in the village. Most of the women in Klaaskreek do not even have a family agricultural plot any more. The bus connection with Paramaribo is improved -takes just more than an hour- so that the people do their shopping in the city. Furthermore she said that women of Klaaskreek buy agricultural products of women from other villages. In the village there are no males that go to the gold fields. Most men, who formerly worked in this sector have now found work at the ministry of public works e.g. working at the local roads. Because of lacking employment and the drift to the city there is no commitment of young children to employment in Klaaskreek.

Lebi Doti

There are three villages on islands about an hour travel into the artificial lake Blommenstein. Together they have about 1000 inhabitants and Lebi-doti is the largest village. The school in Lebi Doti has 280 pupils, but the headmaster complained that at the beginning of the school year there were only three teachers. It is clear that with so few teachers the children would get an education below normal standards. In the end, however, the pupils of 6th grade will still have to do the same exams as all other children in Suriname. For children from Lebi Doti it is even harder to get to the secondary school in Brokopondo, because they first would have to take a boat and then travel by bus. So only those that can live with relatives off the lake or in Paramaribo can continue their education, if they ever pass the final exams. It is therefore not surprising that the headmaster told us that there were about 100 pupils in first grade, but only a few in 6th grade. The drop-out percentage was very high, while incentives to stay in school were very low. In order to get a better picture of how many children dropped-out and what happened to them afterwards, we asked him to check how many children that had been in 4th, 5th and 6th grade three years ago had dropped out and what they were doing. After a week he came into town and dropped off a list with 26 names of children that had dropped out. The ages of these children -after dropping out of school in any of the past three years- were now on average 17 years old, which indicates that there are many older children and most probably repeaters in the higher grades of primary school. Unfortunately we were not given the size of the classes the children dropped-out from so we could not calculate the percentage, but a rough estimate may be around 35%. In any case it turned out that all of the 14 girls that dropped out were now registered as housewives i.e. none of them had an outside job, but probably followed the traditional road in subsistence level agriculture. Four of them, however, were listed as being without a husband (probably single mothers). Of the 12 boys five had no jobs, while three were involved in water transport, two were active in the gold sector, one was a lumberjack and another one helped in the bakery.

Brownsveg

Brownsveg has the largest density of people in Brokopondo with about 3000 people. Actually it consists of about 7 villages that were relocated after a dam was built in the Suriname river in 1964, which would flood the original villages. There are two schools in Brownsveg.

On the Catholic school no working children were found by the field workers, who spoke to children in four class rooms, which seemed strange. According to the school principal the gold sector had been less lucrative and was in decline in this area. Some pupils, however, knew children who still went to the gold fields. According to them the girls worked as kitchen help, while the boys helped with gold extraction. They could not exactly indicate where we could find these working children. At the Moravian school there were several children that were working and some also knew other children that did not attend school but

worked. In one 3rd grade alone 14 out of about 25 children were working. One boy worked in the gold fields, but the rest were peddling vegetables, oranges, cookies, ice lolly, bananas and craft. In another 3rd grade two children were working, one boy was carrying gas cylinders for a shopkeeper, while a girl was peddling vegetables.

Yvonne, a Maroon girl of 13 years is still in 3rd grade. She began peddling shrimps when she was 10 years old. Now she sells vegetables from her mother's plot on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. She does so by going house by house and it takes about two hours, but she gets home tired of carrying the heavy bag around. She also assists her mother with planting. She gives all her money to her mother, but gets every now and then Sf 1000 to Sf 2000 to spend. She would like to sell pop-sicles instead, because she could sit and sell. Eventually she would like to become a teacher. Her mother does traditional agriculture, while her stepfather is working in the gold fields.

Nieuw Koffiekamp

The village of Nieuw Koffiekamp also known as Kilometer 106 is located near the camp of Golden Star, a Canadian company which holds a large gold concession in the area. During a survey in 1994 this town had about 500 residents and was booming because of the gold rush. There were about 400 gold diggers active in the vicinity of the town, but this later grew to about 1000. The local people at that point were digging mainly by hand and only a few were working with machines. Since then the gold rush has subsided, while the gold company has protected its concession with guards and road levers. The company has not yet invested in a mine, however, but announced plans to do it within a year. Still there was some gold digging by locals, but we were told that many young males had once again left the village. In 1994 there were 119 children in the school and more than half -even in kindergarten there were some- were working in the gold fields after school.⁴⁶ This time the school counted 115 pupils. In the school only 5 children were found who went to the fields to seek for gold, although the 6th graders were not at school during the inquiry.

6.9.4 The home situation and working children

The children were asked a number of questions with respect to their home situation. More than half of the children (61%) lived with both parents (including 6% mother and stepfather), while 28% lived only with their mother. The remaining children (11%) stayed with their employer or with friends.

The children came from large families. Nearly half (46%) had 5 or more siblings, while a quarter (24%) lived together with 3 to 4 siblings in home, and the rest (30%) mentioned that just 1 or 2 siblings were also home. The children that were interviewed were mostly the second or third child of their family. In most families (87%) the children came from there were brothers or sisters younger than 15 years that also worked.

The religious background of the children was mainly Christian (83%), while the others followed the rites of their tribe.

⁴⁶ M. Schalkwijk & W. Sumter: Socioeconomic aspects of the Environmental Baseline Study and Impact Assessment in the Gros-Rosebel Gold Concession (Environmental Research Group, University of Suriname, 1994).

The father's occupation was mainly cited to be gold digger, policeman/soldier, employee of a private company, or health worker. In 29% of the cases the father had already died, lived in another country or the child did not know his occupation. Half of the mother's were housewives, but some also worked as cleaning woman or vendor.

6.9.5 The gold sector

Despite its overall decline the gold sector still seems the most important occupational sector in the district Brokopondo. There is a small concentration of children and moreover of young persons economically active in this sector. In Nieuw Koffiekamp children processed the precious metal by swinging the traditional batee. The sand flies away because of the twisting swings while the gold remains and is bound by mercury in the cone of the batee. In a late phase the concentration is heated by which the mercury evaporates and the gold remains.

The field team went to visit one gold area which was about two hours by boat from the Afobakka dam, called Tjilip Pasi. We were escorted by a local guide. Upon our unannounced arrival we saw two main camps near the shore, but both were occupied by Brazilians. We did not see any children or young people, mostly men over 20 years. There were three women probably in their thirties in the camp, but these looked and acted more like cooks than prostitutes. Upon our request the Brazilians -who did not speak much Sranan Tongo, but the Maroon guide could manage in Portuguese- they pointed out where a Surinamese team would be working. After one and a half hours walk we found it. The team consisted of eight men,

Darinho is 8 years old and the second year in 1st grade. On Sundays between 12:30 and 19:30 he does some gold digging. he goes with two friends of 9 and 11 years. They go by themselves with their batee (gold pan) and find about 1 gram of gold during such a day (about Sf 23.000 or US\$ 10). Each one works for himself and keeps the gold. They could go with the batee or without. If they go without than they dig up rocks and look is they contain samples of gold. Those that they suspect to have gold they take to their home and crush them and put mercury to bind the gold. When they burn the mercury they keep the gold dust in a paper and later sell it. It is heavy work because of the digging and carrying, but they do not get tired easily and do not consider it really dangerous. Darinho likes the job and it helps the family and himself to earn extra income. His father works in the gold fields, while his mother is a cleaning woman. He lives with them and five siblings. He wants to become a teacher when he grows up.

half
camp

of the camp, another Maroon. They worked for a boss in town. Once they had prospected and decided on a spot, they would clear the largest trees with a Stihl chainsaw. Strong water pumps (old car engines) were used to clear the rest and to get to the ore, which was sucked up as mud and directed through hoses to a sluice (long tom) that had a mat with mercury to bind the gold particles. Once a week they would clear the mat and check the gold by burning it. This was a dangerous job since the mercury vapor could do damage to one's system if inhaled. Other dangerous aspects of the job where the felling of the trees and the work in the mud (which could slide if one did not separate the different streams carefully). The young cook was not involved in any of these parts of the job, but would go hunting when he was not preparing meals. He mentioned that he got malaria three times already. Asked about women and prostitution the men pointed out that there were other places about 3 to 4 hours walk away where they had bars and brothels. The women would be either Brazilian or Dominican and hardly any Surinamese. They also had not seen very young girls as prostitutes. Sometimes some Brazilian ladies would even visit their camp. This story was confirmed by

our guide. The young cook told us that they would stay in a camp for one to two months until they relocated to the next spot and at that time they would go home for a break.

There is a relationship between the school situation in the district and the participation of children in employment. The bad school situation in Brokopondo is a result of a lack of classes, sanitary, furniture, educational tools, and competent teachers.⁴⁷ Together with the pressure on the children to assist in generating income for the daily needs of the family, this can be considered a pull-factor to let the children work in gold extraction. However, there is not enough hard data to support a thesis that there are any large concentrations of children working in the gold fields. The manual labor is hard, but most gold mines that now operate are exploited by machinery. In the beginning of the 1990s there were many young males active in the manual gold digger teams. With the shift towards more machinery the young males are less present, since there are less people employed in the branch, while Brazilians have taken over substantial parts of the gold activities.

The gold areas in the district Brokopondo have been given mostly as a concession to outsiders, who then sublet them in parts to Brazilians. The Brazilians often have their own teams that do the work and are efficient at it. The village is losing control over its territory, while local people have a hard time to dig for gold themselves otherwise they have to lease a concession. This, however, also means that less locals and subsequently less children and young people are involved in gold mining.

children and young people in this sector have no medical insurance and do not get specific training, while they can be exposed to mercury vapor. We were surprised how little people involved knew about the dangers of mercury when we spoke with them, both the young and old.

6.10 SIPALIWINI

6.10.1 General overview

The district Sipaliwini makes up about 80% of Suriname's land area, but is sparsely populated with about 50.000 inhabitants. Most inhabitants (79%) are Maroons, while a smaller part (11%) consists of Amerindians.⁴⁸ Most people in this district still live in tribal groups and villages. The highest population concentrations are along the upper Suriname river and the Tapanahony river. The Amerindian villages are spread out and there are hardly any major population concentrations, except for one or two larger villages near the Brazilian border. These villages -such as Kwamelasemutu- do not have employment for children beyond the traditional agricultural type.

⁴⁷ See also National Education Plan 2002, page 21 (Ministry of Education).

⁴⁸ The official statistics estimate the population for Sipaliwini around 25,000, but this is probably too low. We therefore used the statistics of the *Medische Zending* (Primary Health Care Suriname) used in their annual report 2000/2001. They listed 48,771 persons as registered patients in the interior, which includes 9.083 patients in the Brokopondo area. For a discussion on demographics and population estimates for the interior see M. Schalkwijk (1996:7-9).

The research team decided to visit two locations in Sipaliwini and choose one location in the upper Saramacca river, where there was still a gold rush and a populated area on the upper Suriname river, with many children but few schools. Both were locations in Maroon areas. The field team went by airplane to the locations and spend three days in the villages. This meant that we did not visit any Amerindian location. During interviews with several knowledgeable Amerindian key persons they were not aware of any forms of child labor apart from traditional agricultural work. Stories about sexual exploitation and maids seemed to be based upon incidents rather than any structural patterns. Notably one case in which a Cabinet minister of the former Government had taken a 14 year old Amerindian concubine from a village and brought her to Paramaribo –with consent of the girls’ mother- made headlines. When this became known Surinamese society was stunned and condemned such behavior. The case was taken to court and the minister was sentenced by the judge.

In total 17 key persons were interviewed, which included representatives of the Ministry for Regional Affairs, Ministry of Education, Primary Health Care Suriname (*Medische Zending*), the Organization of Indigenous Village Leaders (VIDS), a influential Indigenous Women Organization, a gold company, several NGO’s, and local village councils (Captains and Basjas), health workers and teachers. According to these informants children worked in fisheries, gold mining, freight and transport, and on family plots (*kostgrond*).

A number of key persons did not oppose that children were engaged in work, since they pointed out that according to cultural traditions the children had to help their parents. Other key persons, however, did not agree since child labor interfered with schoolwork and more and more children were in danger to become illiterate as a consequence. Measures to decrease child labor were: information to the parents, improvement of the socioeconomic situation, and improvement of education by sending more qualified teachers to the district.

It should be pointed out that there is no secondary school of any kind in the more than 100 villages of Sipaliwini. Some villages have become small towns with a couple of thousand residents. The region depends mainly on its own internal authority rather than any central government authority. Life in most parts is very traditional and incomes are well below the national average, but there are exceptions.

6.10.2 Education in the Djumu region

The upper-Suriname region is the most populated river with about 50 villages. The Maroon people here are of the Saramaka tribe. The team spend two days in the Djumu region which has a concentration of 7 villages: Godo, Solang, Bendekondre, Asidonhopo (residence of the tribal chief), Akisiamaw, Dangogo I and Dangogo II. The regional population is estimated to be around 3000 and the number of children of school age around 1000.

Djumu itself is not a village, but a medical post that once also had a hospital. There aren’t any hospitals left in the interior, only basic clinics. The clinics are run by health assistants, while three trained doctors from the Primary Health Care Center in Paramaribo have to cover all of Sipaliwini. The doctor visits about once a month, while very ill patients are flown by Mission Aviation Fellowship to a hospital in Paramaribo.

In Djumu there is one Moravian school with 165 registered children, including an annex in Asidonhopo with 26 children. The annex at Asidonhopo consists of three classrooms for kindergarten and first grade, but there was only one teacher. The school at Djumu had no teachers for third and fifth grade. This meant that these children remained home all year long, which once more underlines the problems with education in the interior. The headmaster explained that the place was seen as isolated (no newspapers, no television, no radio, etc.),

salaries were too low (especially for transport), while medical facilities were deemed below average by many teachers, who therefore rather remain in the capital. He had reported that some teachers did not come and requested others, but none had arrived, so he was forced to close the 3rd and 5th grade classes. The attitude of parents had changed towards education and many did not bother to send their children to school.

We heard that many parents did not want to send their children to school, however, because they found it too far away. Many key persons and parents told us that and we decided to verify this ourselves, by visiting Dangogo I and Dangogo II, which were the furthest villages away from school. We spoke with the captains and some elders of these villages and they had the same complaints. There was a school boat, but the boats man was not being paid and did not use his boat. The distance between Dangogo and Djumu by boat is approximately 10 to 15 minutes. According to the captains there were about 150 children in their villages, while we estimated from school records at Djumu and guessing for Asidohopo that not more than 30 of these children attended school. Thus 80% of these children stayed home or worked which is an incredible high percentage even for the interior.

Parents were afraid to send their children to school, especially the young ones, because the distance by foot was too long and they were afraid of snakes and other dangers. We decided to walk the distance ourselves to see what the path looked like and how long it took. It took us as adults approximately 45 minutes to get to Asidohopo and another 45 minutes to walk to the school in Djumu and thus it would take the children probably somewhat longer, while they also had to return the same distance. The path crossed six creeks and it could be seen that in the rainy season these would overflow so that the children would get wet, since there were no real bridges to go across. We thought that the parents were right not to send their young children along this path.

The people of Dangogo had asked the school to establish an annex in their village and the captain showed us a spot along the river they had already cleared for this purpose four years ago. The School Board in town first had reacted positive, but for years they had not heard anything. The spot was kept clean by one villager.

6.10.3 child labor on the upper Suriname river

With so few educational opportunities the children of this region have to do other things. At the school in Djumu we spoke with 11 working children (5 girls and 6 boys) in the age between 10 and 14 years. These children were all working on the agricultural plots with their parents. The plots are often at some distance from the village and the whole day you see small boats with women and children either going to these plots or returning with cassaves and other products. Many women would sleep in camps at their plots with their children. The husbands normally do not go to these plots and only are involved when they have to clear a new plot for their wife. Many males are not even in the villages, but seek work in other places or even in French Guyana. We visited one plot where we found two women and three little girls. The smallest girl of 7 years was busy preparing the meal for the others, who were harvesting rice with little knives. The other girls were 9 and 10 years. None of the girls ever went to school, but the mothers gave no particular reason why they did not send the children to school. One of the women only told us that the little girl had to learn to cook and she gave her instructions every now and then. The girls that were harvesting would work about three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon.

In the village Dangogo II the field team walked around during school hours and spoke with six boys, varying between 10 and 14 years and who were officially in grades 2, 3 and 5. The

boys said that they were free, because there was no teacher for the 3rd and 5th grade (which was true), while the other boy had no excuse. When we spoke to them many other children were peeking out of their homes. One of the boys gave us a description of his average day.

I wake up between 7:00 and 8:00 o'clock and go swim in the river. Afterwards I have breakfast and go to play, generally with a katapult to shoot birds. If my parents have cooked I eat and afterwards I play soccer. Than I take a bath and go to sleep.

The boys also told us that from time to time they did some activities for others. For instance they could be asked to carry shelves or sand to build homes, assist when a new agricultural plot needed to be cleared, and catching fish mainly for personal use. For the small jobs they would get paid between Sf 5000 and Sf 7000 a day (between two and three dollars a day).

When we spoke with the captains of Dangogo they mentioned that many children did not go to school, but also did not go to work on the family plot. The boys should learn to make boats or to carve wood, but they did not seem to be interested. Many children went with their mother to the family plot, but rather played than work.

According to some key persons marihuana was being planted and smoked in the vicinity. These activities took place on a small scale and for local consumption. Most elderly people did not notice it even. We could not establish if children were involved.

6.10.4 Gold rush in Njun Jacob Kondre

Njun Jacobkondre is situated on the upper Saramacca river and is a community of the small Matawai tribe. Njun Jacob kondre consists of a core of four villages: Njun Jacob kondre, Baling, Mi Sa Libi and Bilawatra. The population probably is around 300 inhabitants. The research team had heard of the thriving gold business in the area and rumors of all kinds of child labor, including sexual exploitation.

Upon arrival by airplane two young boys with a wheelbarrow came to the plane to check if we needed to transport any luggage to the river. For such a job they asked Sf 5,000 (about US\$ 2) for a trip of probably less than 10 minutes. So you knew you were in a town with different prices.

The team spoke with the captain of the village, who described daily live and told us that many young boys would work rather than attend school. The authority of the captain was clearly less than in other Maroon villages, since two young boys whom he called just walked by. This also seemed to be the case with another traditional institute the school. Several children in school uniforms just walked around in the village even when the school had started.

The Moravian primary school had (another) difficult year. Kindergarten had started in February, while the 1st and 2nd grade had started their first lessons on 11 March 2002. This was because the teachers had arrived very late, because there was no money for their air transport. Many children go to school at a late age and are written off at the maximum age of 14 years, which means that they may not have completed school. There were only 55 students

registered, while the dropout rate was high. During a conversation with students in third grade it showed that a quarter of these were living with a granny or aunt, because the mother was living in Paramaribo. Despite the expensive air transport it turned out that the villagers traveled a lot to town. Some even had homes in both places and shuttled between them.

The team visited a camp in the gold fields, about 30 minutes by boat from Njun Jacob Kondre. Upon arrival they had to walk for about one and a half hour to reach the camp. This was a large camp which held about 300 people, most of whom had gone to the mines. Half the population was Brazilian and half was Maroon, but they lived peaceful together according to most persons interviewed. Adjacent to the camp there were two deep mines where Brazilian drivers operated heavy machinery (two large excavators). Other mines were further away.

There were distinct Brazilian camps and Surinamese camps, but the bars and shops were all operated by Surinamese.

No children were seen in the mines although some young people wandered around. According to some key persons the work on the gold fields was too heavy for children and therefore you would not find them there. We interviewed a boy of 14 years, who was working as assistant to a shopkeeper. Another boy of 14 years was working as a cook for some gold diggers. One boy of 16 years was helping out with freight and water transport. One boy had worked as ATV driver (All Terrain Vehicle), which was owned by his mother, since he was 17 years. We were interested in some of the young girls we saw, but these turned out to be cousins of shopkeepers, who also assisted in the shop. Several young people from the village came to visit relatives as well. As far as we could determine facts about commercial sex workers these were not so young and more foreigners. Thus we could not support the rumors that young girls were involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Actually this would not be easy for local girls, since the village was rather nearby and small i.e. everyone would know who was involved. At the same time, however, the distance was too far to overcome for really young girls from Paramaribo. None of the people we spoke to could verify such claims either. Overall young people in this vicinity earned a lot, although prices were also sky high.

6.10.5 Main findings Upper-Suriname river and Upper-Saramacca river region

Overall 12 children were interviewed, nine boys and three girls. The ages varied between 10 and 15 years. All were tribal Maroons. Three quarters of the children were working one to four years. Most were only in their first job. Half of the children were either 9, 10 or 11 years old when they started working, while the others started at a later age.

Two thirds of the children were working 4 or more days a week, and the rest worked less. Many (42%) worked more than 8 hours a day, whereas (33%) would work one or two hours a day, and the others fell in between these two categories.

The largest activity (42%) performed by the children was to work on the family plot, while other types of activities included peddling (17%), gold mining (8%) and gardening (8%). Most of the children (83%) were employed by their parents or a relative, while only (8%) worked for an employer and another 8% was self-employed.

The most important reason (51%) to work was to help the parent(s) or to maintain oneself (42%), while several other reasons were hardly mentioned (8%). There was a clear gap between those who did not get any pay from their work (42%) and those that earned more

than Sf 5000 a day (also 42%). The rest earned between Sf 2000 and Sf 5000 a day. The majority of the children (67%) worked under supervision of their parents.

About 17% of the children found their job to be quite dangerous, while another 17% found it sometimes dangerous, while the rest thought it was not dangerous. children complained of being tired when they came home from their job (17% was always tired and 58% sometimes), but one quarter was never tired. Only 8% often had to lift heavy things at the job, while 50% had to lift things sometimes, while the other 42% did not complain. According to a quarter of the children they were always busy at their job, while another quarter were sometimes busy and the rest was not so busy. Actually 17% said they were sometimes bored at the job. Half the children were confronted with different substances during their work, notably sand (42%), but also mercury and gas (8%).

In their free time many children enjoyed playing, especially soccer, while some others went hunting or fishing. The children also reflected on their future and although 42% did not know what they would like to do later, a quarter mentioned teacher, while mechanic, policeman, military and carpenter were also mentioned.

It is clear that the school has a limited meaning in Sipaliwini, since only half of the children attend it daily. The reasons not to go included lack of finances, distance to school, and being too old. About three quarters of the children had at least repeated a class once. They cited lack of motivation, illness and not being able to comprehend the teaching materials.

Most children (42%) lived with their mother or even with both parents (33%), while the rest (17%) stayed with their grandparents. About 58% of the children had five or more siblings. Virtually all the children mentioned that one of their brothers or sisters younger than 15 years were also working. The mother of most children (75%) was housewife, which normally meant that she worked on the family plot. When present, the fathers worked in agriculture, timber, health workers, were self-employed, or in transport. Three quarters of the children were Christian, while the other quarter adhered to a tribal religion.

6.10.6 Subsistence level agriculture as a way of life

Most people in Sipaliwini still live a tribal and traditional way of life in which subsistence level agriculture is a main mean of survival. Education does not land many jobs in the village society, since there are just a few bureaucratic jobs and even less companies to reward education. The gold sector does not require much education and neither do many self-employed jobs such as water transport. Thus it is of utmost importance for children to learn to survive, which they normally do when they learn to plant cassave, bananas and rice at the family plot. Or for the boys when they learn how to handle a boat and freight, clear a piece of forest, and know where to make some cash. Thus work is a matter of survival rather than a point of real concern. It seems that the school system is not functioning properly, but seems merely an institute to keep boys and girls off the land and waters. There are not many that even complete primary school and there does not seem to be much of a future even for those that do. Nevertheless it will not stay like this and many young people aspire to leave their village, but are very ill equipped to enter a modern city environment. This remains a dilemma for the educational system, since it does not seem to perform for any of these environments.

7. BACKGROUND AND ATTITUDES OF PARENTS

7.1. Main characteristics of the Parent(s) and Guardian(s)

In the period April through July 2002, some 52 parents and guardians of working children were interviewed. The respondents were traced by the address given by the children. This was done only after the children gave permission to interview their parents/guardians.⁴⁹ With permission as a criteria came some selection bias, since children who had bad relationships with their parents would not be expected to give permission.

Parents in all the districts that were visited were interviewed i.e. Paramaribo, Wanica, Saramacca, Commewijne, Marowijne, Para, Brokopondo, Sipaliwini and Nickerie.

Of the parents that were interviewed 21% were men and 79% women. The largest segment of respondents consisted of Maroons (39%), which was also the largest ethnic group which was found among the children (table 7.1). Among the other ethnic groups there was some discrepancy between the relative size of the children and parents, which was due to the fact that we did not select parents by ethnicity, while we also did relatively more interviews with parents in the districts than in the city and interior. The coastal districts have larger populations of East Indians and Indonesians, while Creoles make up a larger segment of the urban population.

Table 7.1 Ethnicity of Parents/Guardians and working children

Ethnicity	Parents/ Guardians	children
Maroon	38.5	42.8
East Indian	26.9	20.5
Creole	13.5	20.5
Indonesian	7.7	3.4
Mixed	7.7	9.0
Amerindian	5.8	1.8
Total	100% (N = 52)	100% (N = 166)

The majority (60%) of the parents of working children that were interviewed had a job. The five jobs that were most frequently mentioned: cleaner/janitor, vendor, civil servant, bus-driver, taxi-driver. Nearly 60% mentioned that they work daily in a full-time job, while the remaining 40% were unemployed. Lack of employment and child care facilities, plus the obligation towards the other partner to stay home, were mentioned as the most important reasons for not working outside the home. This does not mean, however, that

⁴⁹ We will use the term parents instead of parents/guardians to make the text more readable.

unemployment stood at 40%, since in cases where there was a partner he/she could have been employed. Unemployment of the household could nevertheless be assessed to be at least 18%, which is still higher than the overall average for Suriname which stands at about 11%.⁵⁰

From the research data we conclude that the parents or guardians often have informal jobs which require low or no formal education.

Family size, housing, education level of the parent and income are the indicators of the socio-economic environment of the working child.

The question “How many people live in this house?” indicated that 67% of the households consisted of 5 to 9 persons. A household size of 10-16 people was confirmed by 14% of the respondents, while 19% lived in small households of 3 to 4 persons.

More than half of the parents (54%) live in their own home. One-fourth (25%) of the respondents stayed in a house of relatives, or in a house owned by a company (6%). A minority (13%) are tenants. According to the assessment of the research team 19% of the houses were in a good condition, 54% were in a reasonable state, and 23% in bad shape.⁵¹ If we compare these statistics with those of a major household survey which was done for Paramaribo in 1992, then we have less ownership among the parents (was 64%), more parents in houses that belonged to relatives (12%), less tenants (22%) and more other arrangements (3%).⁵² The data for Paramaribo were for all social classes and covered only the city. Nevertheless it gives some idea, notably the fact that a sizeable number of parents lived in a house of a relative indicates that networking seemed important in this area, and probably led to cheaper arrangements for low budget families.

When we look at the educational level of the parents we see that 63% do not have formal education or only primary education, while 31% had maximum secondary school and only 6% went to a tertiary institution.

Half of the respondents earned less than the poverty income of Sf 300,000 (about US\$ 140) per month and half earned (often not much) more than that.⁵³ In two thirds of the households there was just one adult earning an income and in the other third two or more adults. 13% of the respondents worked extra side jobs. 19% received direct financial support from the government, which would be given only to very poor families.

⁵⁰ The assessment was made by looking at single parent households where the parent was not working with 18% of all parents/guardians falling in this category. In cases of two-parent households, however, it could be that the other partner was also unemployed, but this was not asked. So the unemployment rate could be higher than 18%.

⁵¹ Of 4% the condition was not assessed.

⁵² Data taken from Schalkwijk & de Bruijne 1992: 44.

⁵³ The question about income was asked to the respondent only and thus in cases where two persons were working the combined income was higher (but not registered).

Of the families 81% said they had some form of medical insurance, while 19% had no insurance at all. Of those with medical insurance it turned out that many (68%) had a medical card from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is also an indication that these were fairly poor families. Overall 37 of the 52 respondents (= 71%) either had a medical card for poor people or no insurance at all.

Table 7.2 Education level of Parents/Guardians

Education level of the parents	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	9	17%
Primary education	24	46%
Secondary Technical vocational school	2	4%
Secondary school	14	27%
College	1	2%
Tertiary technical training college	1	2%
Teachers Training College	1	2%
Total	52	100%

If we look at the classification by socio-economic class than 61% of the parents/guardians were classified as lower social class, 35% as middle class and 4% as higher class. This was the classification by the field researchers and compared to the medical information it seemed probably still optimistic. The researchers who interviewed the children made the assessment that 81% came from lower class families and 19% from a middle class background. If one takes the average of all these assessments than an estimate of 70% lower class families seems a fair statement to describe the background of most working children.

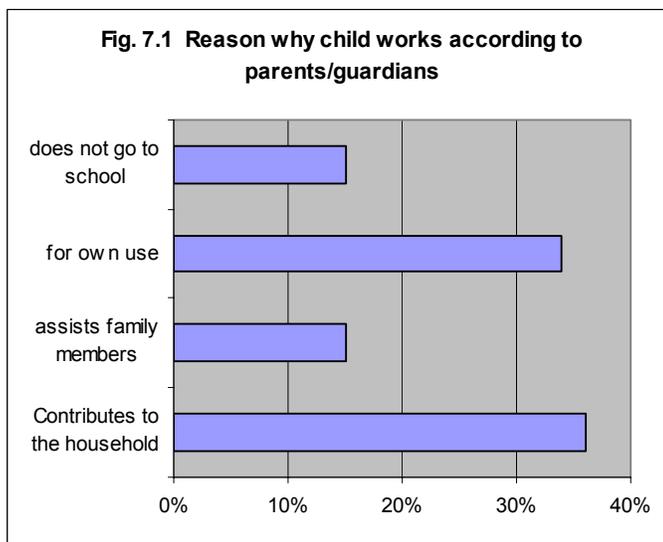
We can conclude this section by stating that there was a need for extra income in many of the households and that the contribution by working children was either urgently needed or in any case welcome.

7.2. Opinions of Parents

Most parent know that their child is working, because only 15% reported that they were not aware that their child was working at the time of the interview. About three-fourth (77%) of the respondents found it a good thing that their child was working, while the others (22%) thought that a minor should not work and would prefer that the child would finish school. The most important reasons the parents gave for a child to work is illustrated in figure 7.1. According to the parents their children worked to support the family income, assist family members, to earn money for their own use, or because they just had to earn some money since they were not going to school anymore.

Most parents (69%) mentioned that their children were attending school, while the remaining 31% confirmed that their children were not going to school anymore. The reasons that were given for those that did not go to school were: the child can not learn

(5x), child does not want to go to school (4x), child has been sent off from school (2x), not possible to enter school (2x), and child has to help family out financially (1x).



The parents were asked what future they saw for their child. About 42% of the parents were of the opinion that the future of their child would be more secure if the child would stay in school and perform well. Some 23% saw a good future through a good job, while 8% stressed that the child would have to learn a specific vocation to make it. Another 8% was optimistic in a fairly general but unspecified way, why the same percentage was less optimistic, and 11% had no opinion or no answer.

We asked the parents whether they knew any other working children in their neighborhood of which 27% answered positively, 63% negatively and 10% gave no answer or did not know.

7.3 Matching children and parents

Finally we tried to match the information provided by the child with that of the parent/guardian in order to get some feedback about their knowledge about each other and the reliability of the information.

Table 7.3 Matching information of Parents and children

	work parent	work child	Ethnicity	Social Class	Family size*
Perfect match	73%	42%	90%	73%	40%
Partial match	8%	27%	n.a.	n.a.	21%
No match	15%	23%	6%	21%	35%
Unknown	4%	7%	4%	6%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* for the family size one person difference was considered a partial match

The information in table 7.3 reveals first of all that with social surveys one has to be cautious, because if you ask two persons the same thing the answers can differ substantially, even with respect to the simplest facts. The best match was between the ethnicity of the child and the parent/guardian, but this information was not asked but jotted down at the end of the interview by the researcher. The 10% discrepancy can be explained by the fact that in 4% of the cases the data was not known for one of the respondents (not taken down by the researchers), while in 6% the child and the parent/guardian had different ethnic backgrounds. The difference could be because of foster parents, mixed marriages, or a possible mistake by the researcher or with coding.

Social class was also assessed in both instances by the researcher, but based on the information provided by the respondents. Here the researchers made different assessments in 21% of the cases, which could be retraced most probably to the different kind of information given by the child about his/her background and that of the parent/guardian given about the same background. Visiting a home and asking the parent specific questions about their education and income has resulted in different assessments than the more scanty information provided by the child.

A more marked difference was the information given about the family size. One would assume that this would match very close, because both parent/guardian and child –who lived in the same house- would be able to do this very simple calculation. There was also no need to assume any intentional misinformation. The discrepancies therefore seemed to be the result of estimates rather than precise calculation.

Interesting are the matching differences between the work of the parent and the job of the child. Here we see that the child is better informed about the work of his/her parent (73% full matches) than the other way around (only 42% full matches). On the other hand this is to be expected since the parent will probably be much longer in his/her job, while the child often has held the job much shorter. It may, however, also indicate a lack of interest by many parents.

8. MAIN ISSUES

So far we have presented the results of the children by district, but we also need a more comprehensive view before we can come to conclusions and recommendations. There are a number of issues that can now be addressed and which are of relevance for policy purposes.

8.1 child labor and child work

In Suriname there has been a confusion about whether all work that children are doing should also be seen as child labor (see paragraph 3.2). In this survey we were not able to differentiate between these two from the outset either. Therefore we have interviewed all kinds of working children that we encountered, but we hoped that through our methods we would eventually get more children who could be qualified as child laborers. This was also the main reason why we interviewed more children (169) than we had intended (100). In order to differentiate between different forms of work we asked the children how many days in a week they worked and how many hours in a day. It is clear that there is a difference between a child that works one day a week for 1 hour and another that labors for 8 hours a day and 5 days a week. The first case would be considered a form of very light work and child work (even if the job was difficult), while the other could be considered child labor (even if the job was less difficult). Thus for a first attempt to differentiate between child work and child labor we used a combination of these two variables (working hours and working days). The extremes are normally easy to decide on, but the problem is where to draw the line between the two categories? It should be clear that there probably will be a gray zone between the two types of working children, but nevertheless we tried to establish a borderline. This we did by means of reasoning, analyzing the data and experimenting with different borders.

Light work

The best that we could come up with at this point was that in any given family a child would normally have to do some chores. These chores would take up about 1 to maximum 2 hours e.g. sweeping the house or raking yard, baby sitting, washing dishes, etc. Thus all children that would only work 1 to 2 hours a day would be considered to do child work, even if they had to do it everyday. Whenever a child would work more than 2 hours a day this would therefore go in the direction of labor rather than chores. This would not be true, however if this happened only occasionally i.e. on Saturday or Sunday a child could be expected to work longer e.g. weeding the yard, repairing some tool, cleaning the house, buying goods at the store, etc. Or the child would go with his father and/or mother to some family plot outside the house and work longer hours and maybe even stay overnight. Thus we drew a line for light work if a child was also working longer hours, but only one day a week. These children would work a maximum of 14 hours a week, but half of them would work only 6 hours or less in a week. This resulted in a group of children that made up 33.5% of all interviews.

child labor

The children who worked 4 days or more in a week and who were also working at least 5 hours a day were considered to be engaged in child labor. This would mean that the children in this group worked at least 20 hours a week. For our purpose these were considered to be those that could be engaged in worst forms of child labor. This group made up 27.5% of all interviews.

Gray zone between light work and child labor

Then there was a middle group who worked 3 to 4 hours a day for at least two days a week, or who worked only 2 or 3 days but 5 or more hours during those days. Most of these children would work between 10 and 30 hours, which we labeled ‘Semi-light work’. This group made up 38.9% of all interviews.

Table 8.1 working children by district and type of labor

District	Light work	Semi-Light work	child labor	Total
Paramaribo	38.1%	35.7%	26.2%	100% (N = 42)
Wanica	35.7%	28.6%	35.7%	100% (N = 14)
Commewijne	30.8%	38.5%	30.8%	100% (N = 13)
Marowijne	22.2%	61.1%	16.7%	100% (N = 18)
Para	33.3%	53.3%	13.3%	100% (N = 15)
Brokopondo	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	100% (N = 18)
Sipaliwini	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%	100% (N = 12)
Saramacca	33.3%	38.1%	28.6%	100% (N = 21)
Nickerie	35.7%	21.4%	42.9%	100% (N = 14)
Total	33.5% (N = 56)	38.9% (N = 65)	27.5% (N = 46)	100% (N = 167)

If members of the “Semi-light work” group had to be added to either the light work or child labor category we would add those making on average over 15 hours a week to the child laborers (i.e. those working 3 to 4 hours a day but more than 4 days a week, and those who worked only 2 or 3 days but at least 7 hours a day), while the others would than be joined with the Light work group. This last group could than be labeled the child work group. If we thus had only two groups those involved in child labor would make up 54% of all the working children, while those involved in child work would consist of 46% of the children that were interviewed.

Thus all said and done we could now distinguish between child work and child labor by drawing a line between those children that worked less than 15 hours or 15 hours or more a week.⁵⁴

8.2 Estimated number of child laborers

⁵⁴ Unfortunately we could not check our results against those of the household survey which was done by the Ministry of Labor in 1998, since that report did not give the actual numbers (only percentages). Moreover the data with respect to number of working days were distorted because 42.2% of the respondents answered ‘other’, while 12.3% did not answer at all (unknown). For working hours per day the category ‘other’ made up 31,4% and the unknown category 44.6% (Survey 1998 page 54 and 55). Nevertheless we will still attempt to use some of the information.

There are no real estimates of the actual number of child laborers in Suriname or even in Paramaribo. We will make an attempt to estimate this as follows.

- a. There are about 25,000 children in Paramaribo between 10 and 14 years, which is about 10.7% of the population in the capital. We use this age category because we have at least this data, while most working children are in this age group.⁵⁵
- b. According to the 1998 survey by the Ministry of Labor 1.8% of the children in Paramaribo were economically active. Using only the age group 10 to 14 years we can estimate that 4% of this age group would be working children (high estimate). If we now take 4% of 25,000 we arrive at about 1,000 working children in Paramaribo
- c. According to the 1998 survey, however, only 15% of all the children were working 5 or more hours, which we could use as a proxy for child labor, and thus can estimate that only about 150 of the 1,000 children would be involved in child labor.⁵⁶
- d. The next step is to use our own survey to arrive at another estimate for the number of child laborers in Paramaribo. According to our data 27.5% of the children we interviewed were involved in child labor (which we expanded to 54% by dividing up the gray zone as well i.e. using a wider definition). If we use these percentages we arrive at a number of 275 child laborers (or even 540) for Paramaribo.
- e. Since we were aiming our interviews primarily at children that were suspected to be child laborers, while the 1998 survey had a much wider range of children, the actual number of child laborers probably will be somewhere in between i.e. around 200 (or 250 if we use the wider definition).
- f. Since the population of Paramaribo is roughly half that of Suriname we can now put the number of child laborers in all of Suriname around 400 children (or 500 if we use the wider definition).
- g. Not all these child laborers will be involved in worst forms of child labor and thus that number will be lower and probably much lower. In the next paragraph we find an estimate of 18.5% of the children to be involved in worst forms of child Labor, which means that we may estimate the total number of this type of child Laborers in Suriname to be roughly around 270 (or 335 if we use the wider

⁵⁵ The survey of 1998 found 74% of the working to be in this age group, while we found 77%.

⁵⁶ The survey actually states that 16% of the children worked 1 to 2 hours a day, 4.4% worked 3 to 4 hours, another 1.3% worked 5 to 6 hours, 0% worked 7 to 8 hours, and 2.3% worked 8 hours or longer. In addition there were 31.4% categorized as 'other', while 44.6% were unknown (probably not asked by the interviewer). So we know that 20.4% of the children worked at least less than 5 hours and 3.6% worked 5 hours or longer than we know the working hours of at least 24% of the children. If we now assume that this pattern would be the same for the category 'unknown' and 'other' (which probably would be a category with irregular working hours) than we can multiply those that worked 5 hours or longer (i.e. 3.6%) by a factor of 4.17 to get an estimate for the whole sample, which gives us the estimate of 15%. We are a little bit on shaky ground with these assumptions since these categories are so large, but for lack of other estimates we use it.

definition); thus we may say about 300.⁵⁷

8.3 Worst forms of child labor

The Rapid Assessment was primarily meant to find worst forms of child labor and it is time to give an indication of the occurrence of such forms in Suriname. We can now look at different indicators to differentiate between 'ordinary' child labor and the 'worst forms'. Indicators that we have used in the questionnaire to track potential worst forms of child labor were:

- 1) amount of work (hours and days)
- 2) level of tiredness (fatigue)
- 3) lifting of heavy materials
- 4) exposure to hazardous material
- 5) perceived danger/risk of the job
- 6) working with machinery
- 7) pressure of the job
- 8) level of boredom (possible monotonous job)

We will discuss each of these indicators by itself and then add them together into a composite indicator to measure worst forms of child labor.

ad 1) Amount of work

We have already dwelt on the number of working hours to delineate the concept of child labor. With respect to working hours we start with the narrower definition of child labor i.e. those 27.5% of all working children that were classified as such. It should be clear, however, that children who make the longest working hours will be more likely to be part of a worst form of child labor. According to our survey 16% of the children who were interviewed worked for more than 35 hours a week. These children were all 12 years or older and actually 85% of these were 14 years and older. This then means that younger children would be at a lower risk to be involved with more intensive child labor. This group is overwhelmingly male (96%), while two thirds of the children that work less than 35 hours were female.

The largest ethnic group of children in this category were Maroons (44%), followed by East Indians (30%), Javanese (11%) and Creoles plus Mixed (both 7%).⁵⁸

The type of jobs that were done did not distinguish themselves from those that other children spent less time in e.g. gold digging, fisheries/shrimp, rice production/processing, hustling (vending), construction, boat transport. Two third (67%) of the youngsters in this category, however, worked for an employer, while this was the case with only 39% of the other working children.

The vast majority of children (89%) that worked long hours were among the best paid (over Sf 5,000 per day i.e. more than US\$ 2 a day), while in the other group of children only 42% earned that kind of money.⁵⁹ A quarter (24%) of these children gave all their earnings to their family, while another 60% gave part of their income. For the other group this was

⁵⁷ We have to divide 18.5% over 27.5% (the percentage of estimated child laborers in our survey) which is 0.673 and multiply it with either 400 or 500.

⁵⁸ This distribution may be biased, since Paramaribo where Creoles make up nearly half of the population was somewhat underrepresented and the districts were overrepresented. Nevertheless the presence of so many Maroon children can not be denied.

⁵⁹ This was our highest category in the questionnaire, but in fact many children earned more than Sf 10.000 a day.

respectively. 28% and 39%. Nevertheless many youngsters said that they saved part of their income regularly (33%) or every now and then (48%), which was higher than for the group that worked less hours (respectively 26% and 33%).

Half of those that made long hours said that their job was (sometimes) dangerous, while only 16% of the other group made a similar statement.

Those that worked over 35 hours were mostly working full time, because 89% did not attend school anymore, while this was only 4% for the other working children. Moreover 38% of them did not even get halfway through elementary school.

ad 2) Level of tiredness

If we look at the level of tiredness 24% of the child labor group said they were always tired, while only 4% of the child work group were always tired.

ad 3) Lifting heavy stuff

When asked if they had to carry or lift heavy things 12% of the child labor group said this was always part of their job, while only 1% of the child work stated that they always had to lift heavy things.

ad 4) Exposure to hazardous material

In 15% of the jobs that were done by the child labor group there was exposure to potential hazardous materials, while this was only 4% for the child work group. This would include materials such as mercury, oil, butane gas, and paint. In addition 48% of the children in the child labor group complained about less hazardous materials such as dust and sand against 35% in the child work group.

ad 5) Perceived danger of job

Of the child labor group 22% perceived their job as dangerous or risky, while only 7% of the child work group did so. From both groups 6% found their jobs sometimes dangerous/risky, while the rest did not consider their work dangerous or risky.

ad 6) Dangerous machinery

Just a few children were operating machinery that could be deemed dangerous such as heavy equipment during construction, agriculture or gold digging i.e. 6% of the child labor group and 4% of the child work group. There were others that dealt with light machinery such as lawn mowers or outboard motors (14% of child labor group and 9% of child work group). The difference between the two groups was not significant however.

ad 7) work pressure

The child labor group experienced more pressure at their job (always 28%) than the child work group (15%), while 21% of the child labor group found it sometimes demanding (against 18% of the child work group).

ad 8) Monotonous work

The level of boredom at the job did not seem a good indicator of child labor, since the pattern was not significantly different between the child work and child labor group.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ We checked the Chi Square of the distribution in cross tables. In all previous cases these were significant at a standard range of 0.025 for a two sided test, which meant that the probability that the observed distributions were only due to a chance factor was very small. Thus a more meaningful correlation between the two variables could be assumed.

From these criteria we should leave out number 6 and 8, but use the others to arrive at a more limited group of child laborers, which can then be designed as those that would be prone to be involved in worst forms of child labor. Thus we may define such a group as those that would have experienced extreme positions on three out of the six indicators.⁶¹ By this method we selected a group of 31 children (19% of all our interviews) that were suffering from several extremes in their job. This group can now be described more fully.

This group is overwhelmingly male (94%), and except for one case of a 7 year old boy all of the children were 12 years or older. Ethnically Maroons dominated this group (52%). The religious affiliation of the children was largely Christian (42%), Tribal rituals (26%), Hindu or Muslim (each 13%), or none (6%).

This group did not work primarily to support their parents, but rather to support themselves. The group seemed to earn a decent wage (94% earned more than Sf 5,000 or US\$ 2 per day, while none earned less than Sf 3,000 a day. Their spending and saving pattern was not significantly different from other working children.

For most of these children it was either their first job (62%) or their second job (31%). Of this category 58% had left school, while the rest still were in school. Their school career was clearly below average, since 88% had repeated at least one class.

More than a third (36%) lived with both parents, while 39% lived with one parent. Of the remaining children 16% stayed with relatives, while the other 9% lived with non-relatives. The households the children stayed in were for 36% small (2 to 4 persons in total), 45% medium (5 to 7 persons) and for 19% large (8 or more people). There was no indication that these children were the eldest or so in their family. Most of them had brothers and sisters under age 15 that also worked, but this did not differ significantly from the other group of working children.

They came mainly (87%) from a lower class background. In 52% of the cases the father was living far away from home (in the interior or in another country), had passed away or was very sick or the child did not know what his/her father was doing. Those that knew the occupation of their father mentioned that he was a farmer, lumber jack, fisherman, gold digger, boatsman, construction worker, janitor, porter, policeman/military, small entrepreneur. Of the mothers 58% were listed as housewife (who often maintained a plot), others were cleaning ladies, market vendors, laborers in a company, one was a small entrepreneur, and another one a cook.

The type of work these children did were: gold mining (6), hustlers/vendors (6), construction work (6), transport/porter (8), agriculture/fisheries (6). Several children were juggling different jobs e.g. some were also selling newspapers, weeding.

We could further fine tune this method of arriving at the 'worst forms' of child labor, but we will probably need more discussion about its underpinnings. Nevertheless this is another kind of approach to get to the 'worst forms' than through the field approach where one looks for concentrations of children involved in a very serious situation of child labor. In a country like Suriname where such concentrations have not been found, however, one will probably need another systematic approach to find 'worst forms' of child labor.

8.4 Causes of child labor

⁶¹ We counted two positions that were in between as one e.g. sometimes dangerous and sometimes tired.

One of the main interests in doing research on child labor is to find the underlying causes that could then be addressed through specific policies. It should not be expected, however, that a Rapid Assessment method will be sufficiently sophisticated in its design and depth to make any sort of thorough causal analysis of child labor. Such causal testing requires other more sophisticated research designs and tests. Nevertheless the Rapid Assessment approach aims to explore the issue at hand to such an extent that at least superficial causes (i.e. what children themselves and their parents state to be causes), but most probably also underlying causes will be revealed.

8.4.1 International recognized causes of child labor

In the literature and documentation about child labor there are some generally recognized causes for this phenomenon. According to the ILO “Poverty is the greatest single force which creates the flow of children into the workplace. It forces many children to work full time for their own and their families’ survival”. (ILO 1996: 34)⁶²

In the same document the ILO also mentions lack of educational opportunities and the fact that “most ‘free’ public education is in fact very expensive to a poor family” (cost of school supplies, uniforms, transportation), especially if they have more than one child in school. “Many children live in communities that do not have adequate school facilities, so they work”. Even if they are in school many children drop-out because of the low quality of the education (which discourages them) or the lack of chances for improved upward mobility after graduation (ILO 1996: 35, 36).

Furthermore the ILO stated that “Large family size has been statistically shown to be associated not only with the higher likelihood that children will work, but also lower school attendance and completion.” (ILO 1996: 38).

A fourth major factor has to do with the demand for child work. This demand may originate within the family e.g. in family farms, shops, and other endeavours “...that depend on family labour for their economic viability.” The other source of demand is by the market. “It is generally considered that children are most likely to be employed when their labour is less expensive or less troublesome than that of adults, when other labor is scarce, and when they are considered irreplaceable by reason of their size or perceived dexterity.” (ILO 1996: 39 through 45).

In an IPEC documentation folder on child labor in Nepal, poverty was identified as the main causal factor, but in addition the following contributing factors were listed:

- * lack of access to education for children
- * employer-worker relationships in rural areas
- * rural-urban migration
- * family problems such as violence
- * inadequate enforcement of labor and criminal laws
- * social customs, values and attitudes that attribute a very low status to children
- * lack of education of parents

Thus the main factors identified are: poverty, lack of or poor education, family size, and demand, but other factors may also contribute to the phenomenon.

8.4.2 Causes given in Surinamese Reports

⁶² “child Labour: What’s to be done?” Document for discussion at the Informal Tripartite Meeting at the Ministerial Level, International Labour Office, Geneva , 1996.

In the literature and research on Suriname (see 3.3) a number of causes are also mentioned by the authors. Some authors have come up with causes that they assumed to be there i.e. not based on hard research facts and analysis, but more on other literature and intuition. The following causes were listed:

- Defares (1981): Economic environment (poverty, low income, unemployment) and cultural environment (home situation, school situation).
- Both the ICK (1985) and Ferrier (1997) saw the socioeconomic problems as a major cause, while Ferrier also added the Internal War as a main cause.
- Dennen (1990), who did a survey, assumed primarily that the absence of a father in the family would lead to more child labor.
- Orié (2002), who interviewed 50 working children did not identify any causes.

Two sources reported more empirical based causal relationships i.e.:

- Van den Berghe (1990) identified poverty (both at the macro and micro level) as the most important factor, but also scarcity of labor, friction unemployment, composition of the household (notably matrifocal households), urbanization, attitude of parents towards education, and cultural factors (acquiring skills).
- The Ministry of Labor survey (1999) brought 3 causes to the attention i.e. low income, large families and single parent families.

If we compare these findings with those of the ILO we notice that poverty, family size, and demand for labor came out of the research in Suriname, while lack of educational opportunities was not mentioned. Most other factors were not new, since a couple were also found in Nepal. In addition, however, some other family characteristics were mentioned: single parent families and especially single mothers. Friction unemployment was also a new factor, as was the Internal War.

8.4.3 Reasons stated by children, Parents and Key-Persons

If we look at the reasons the children gave during interviews of why they were working, than we must conclude that these often were of a superficial nature e.g. “to help my mother”, “because I can not learn in school”, “I need money”, “I want to buy some clothes”, etc. We condensed them to three categories: “own centered reasons” (40%), “family oriented reasons” (44%), and a combination of both (16%), but this was not very edifying in terms of getting to the real causes of the problem (see 5.4). The limited setting of an interview was not enough to get to the underlying causes.

The interviews with the parents were somewhat more instructive, but also not enough to get to the underlying causes (see 7.2). The parents/guardians gave the following reasons why their child was working: “contributes to the household” (36%), “assists family members” (15%), “for own use” (34%), “does not go to school” (15%).

The key persons were asked why they thought the children were hired to work and they came up with the following answers: “They are cheap laborers” (37%), “the parents stimulate it” (12%), “the children themselves want to work” (11%), “Other reasons” (21%, which were often a combination of the three earlier reasons given), or they did not know or did not answer (18%). They shedded some new light on the probable causes, but still did not go to the underlying causes.

What we see in terms of causal reasoning in the three different groups mentioned, is at least that their perspectives varied depending on their position. The parents did not tell us that sometimes they send the children to work (as many key persons assumed), but on the other hand the key-persons missed the fact that many children simply have to look after themselves.

If we compare the reasons given by the children, parents and key-persons, there still are enough indications to link them with the four main causes reported by the ILO we see the following pattern:

- Poverty was not mentioned directly, but could be inferred from several statements by both parents and children e.g. to help parents, to contribute to the household, etc.
- The parents and children did not mention demand for the child's labor (although there were a few that actually did), while the key-persons focused in on this aspect.
- Lack of education, motivation or poor performance at school was mentioned by some of the children and by 15% of the parents ("child does not go to school").
- Family size was not mentioned at all by either group, although family pressure (by parents) was one of the causes given by the key-persons.

This section shows that direct questions in an interview are not enough to get at the causes of child labor and that it will be useful to add more causal inferences from the acquired data itself to enrich the analysis on the situation in Suriname.

8.5 Causes inferred from survey variables

We will confront the data first with the four major causes –poverty, lack of education, family size, and demand for child labor- and see if these are also confirmed by the data and then look at possible other causes. We will also include a special analysis of the group of working children that we have found to be involved with “worst forms” of child labor in Suriname.

8.5.1 Poverty

Indicators of poverty were primarily included in the survey of the parents and in paragraph 7.1 the results were reported. We will focus here on unemployment, income and health insurance.

We estimated that unemployment among the parents/guardians was at least 18%, which was higher than the 11% average for Suriname. Unemployment normally corresponds highly with poverty.

The information gathered on income is too scant to draw major conclusions, although we can say that about half of the parents seemed to be living below the poverty line, which was about the same as the average in Suriname.⁶³ We could not analyze the other half further, but expected most of them to be just over the poverty line.

⁶³ Our research experience is that questions on income are often not answered properly and tend to create unnecessary tensions during interviews. We therefore put in only one direct question on income towards the end of the interview i.e. “do you earn more or less than Sf 300.000” (the poverty line at the time), which was broad enough to be answered without problems by the respondents.

One indirect indication of low income is the fact that we found a clear overrepresentation of Maroons among the working children and parents. According to a household survey by the Statistical Office in 1999/2000 the ethnic distribution of incomes was clearly unfavorable for Maroons i.e. they stood at 57% of the average income of all Surinamese in that survey, while all other ethnic groups stood at 89% of this average or higher (ABS 2001).⁶⁴

The best indicator of poverty we have reliable data on is the type of health insurance, since those with no health insurance or with a medical card from the Ministry of Social Affairs normally would qualify only if they were well below the poverty line.⁶⁵ The main health insurance in Suriname is from the State Health Insurance Fund (SZF), which covers virtually all civil servants and many businesses as well. There are private insurance companies where businesses can insure their employees or private citizens can take insurance. When we compare the situation of the parents/guardians of working children with those of the overall situation in Suriname (table 8.2), it becomes evident that most probably at least 74% of the parents were below the poverty line, which was much higher than the 46% in the household survey. This is when we categorize those without insurance and those with a social card as poor people.

Table 8.2 Health insurance by household

Type of medical insurance	Household Survey ABS	child labor Survey NIKOS
No insurance	12%	20%
Social card	34%	54%
SZF	43%	20%
Private insurance	10%	6%
	100% (N=1255)	100% (N=50)

Summarizing the evidence so far we can state that the information of the child labor survey confirms the fact that at least three quarters of the families of the working children were very poor.

Surprisingly, however, we should add that when we made a distinction between parents of children who were labeled to be involved with child work and those who were involved in child labor we did not get significant differences for our indicators on poverty. The same was true for the group of parents whose children were labeled to be involved with worst forms of child labor.⁶⁶ What this probably says is that most parents of working children were overall quite poor, so that there was not much room too differentiate between them. It also could be that we did not have enough detailed information to make a further differentiation possible.

8.5.2 Family size and background

⁶⁴ Actually this household survey was done in three districts, covering 79% of the population.

⁶⁵ There are frequent reports that many other people –who actually can afford to pay their own health insurance have such cards- but given the population we worked with (parents/guardians of working children) we can safely assume that most people with such cards would get them because they qualified for it according to the rules i.e. mainly by being poor.

⁶⁶ We tested the following variables on these different groups: type of medical insurance, financial support from Government, income, unemployment, and social class.

In the literature on child labor one of the main causes why children began to work is found in the family situation. The ILO stresses the size of the family, while Surinamese sources also point towards the composition of the family and notably towards single parent families with a mother as head of the household. We will focus on these two aspects of family background.

The average household size in Suriname is 4.1 according to the last household survey (ABS 2001), but it varied substantially across ethnic lines. The average size of the households where the working children stayed was 6.7, which speaks for itself. Table 8.3 gives a further breakdown of the household size by ethnic group. This only confirms the pattern for each group separately, except for the Amerindians which most probably was due to their small numbers in the child labor survey. The household survey shows a clear difference between the households from ethnic groups with a tribal background (Maroons and Amerindians) and the other ethnic groups. The Asian households (East Indian and Indonesian) are also slightly larger than those of the Creoles and Mixed population. In the child labor survey, which targeted mostly poor households, we see that the households of the poor Creoles nearly twice the average of all Creole households and even larger than that of poor Maroons. This discrepancy was less marked for the other ethnic groups.

Table 8.3 Household size by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Household Survey ABS i.e. average household	child labor Survey NIKOS i.e. poor household	Ratio of poor households to average households
Maroon	5.4	7.1	1.3
Amerindian	5.3	4.7	0.9
East Indian	4.2	5.8	1.4
Indonesian	4.1	4.9	1.2
Creoles	3.9	7.6	1.9
Mixed	3.6	6.1	1.7
Total Average	4.1	6.7	1.6

The large size of the household of the working children is also underlined by the fact that 18,0% of these households consisted of 10 or more people, while only 2,5% of the households in general were so large.⁶⁷ Interesting enough the household size of working children were even larger than those in two of the poorest neighborhoods in the urban fringe around Paramaribo.⁶⁸ In these two neighborhoods (Pontbuiten and Sophia's Lust) NIKOS had done a survey of all households. It turned out that 39% of the households consisted of 6 to 9 persons and 13% of 10 or more people (NIKOS 1998).

⁶⁷ According to the ABS survey furthermore 19.1% of the households had 6 to 9 people, while in the NIKOS survey this was 40.8%.

⁶⁸ These were two government housing projects Pontbuiten en Sophia's Lust. Many of the houses had been occupied before they were even finished by desparate families, many of whom who had fled the Internal War. Both projects had large concentrations of Maroons and Creoles.

If we look at the composition of the families than the indications are that the households were very representative of those of Pontbuiten and Sophia's Lust. In these two poor neighborhoods resp. 34% and 32% of the families were single parent families, while 33% of the working children lived with only one parent.⁶⁹

When we tried to differentiate further between the families of working children it became evident that there were no significant differences between those involved in child work and those involved in child labor, or even those involved in Worst Forms of child labor. Only one relationship proved significant i.e. children that were involved in worst forms of child labor came more often from single parent families than those that were involved in less demanding forms of child work or child labor. Thus more stable families (two parent families) shielded children from worst forms of child labor.

Given the above mentioned facts we can confirm that the working children came from large families and a substantial number also from single parent households. This confirms earlier findings.

8.5.3 Lack of education

The situation with respect to education is not very favorable for working children as the following statements will reveal.

About 80% of the working children that had left school were drop-outs for some reason. They themselves often mentioned their age and lack of motivation as reasons.

Some 85% of the working children had at least once repeated a class and thus although 76% of the working children still went daily to school, there is a very high chance that they would not go beyond elementary school. Only 4% of the working children actually were or had been in a secondary school.

In most of the three interior districts there is a lack of educational opportunities, combined with poor quality of the education that is provided. In all of Sipaliwini there are only elementary schools and not a single secondary school. In Brokopondo there is only one secondary school, but school transport is a problem. In Marowijne there are several secondary schools in Moengo and Albina, while children from other villages have to get to these schools. In Sipaliwini there are not enough schools for all the children and at least in the upper-Suriname river region probably more than one third of the children still can not go to school. School attendance is also hampered by poor arrangements for school transport and long distances to school, especially for the very young. Many –if not most- of the teachers and the schools in the interior are poorly equipped (both in qualifications as in material) to do their job. The question for the children deep in the jungle even is if children who successfully completed elementary school will get any opportunity to continue their education or use their acquired knowledge in any meaningful way in their own environment.

⁶⁹ In these neighborhoods resp. 46% and 45% of the families were two parent families, while 20% and 23% were made up differently (e.g. just one person, some friends, or more generations without a family pattern). In the child labor survey 50% of the children lived with both parents, while 17% lived in households with other arrangements.

Lack of educational opportunity and poor quality affects primarily the interior districts, where the inhabitants are mainly Maroons. Given the high rate of repeaters and drop-outs poor quality may also affect other districts.

8.5.4 Demand for child labor

It is difficult to address the issue of demand for child labor, because we did not find any major concentrations of child labor in any particular type of economic activity or sector. Thus it is not so that a particular type of activity would come to a standstill if all children suddenly stopped working tomorrow. Still there probably is a demand for child work at the local level, since Suriname's labor market is not so flexible that any employer can attract labor from anywhere. Large companies may be able to do so, but small and marginal enterprises clearly not. The need for child labor also seems largest in the production sector, which may have more problems to attract labor.

We can not say much either about the cheapness of child labor as compared to adult labor, since this was hardly mentioned by children and parents and probably only assumed by key-persons. It seems evident that marginal enterprises would rather have cheap labor to survive and to make some profit, but this is mere speculation and needs more inquiry.

There is evidence, however, to state that family enterprises –especially in the agricultural sector- require some cheap child labor in order to survive. Much of the agricultural sector involved family plots, and in the interior shifting cultivation. In the interior child work was seen as part of the tradition to grow up, but also as a necessity to learn enough agricultural skills to survive later in life. Much of Sipaliwini still knows a subsistence type of economy where one has to look after himself/herself.

8.6 Definitions

One of the issues that has to be resolved in the Surinamese situation has to do with the definition of child labor. As stated before there is a lingering confusion among many –if not most- key persons between child work and child labor, which needs clarification. In order to do so we will revisit the literature on Suriname (see chapter 3), assess the existing definitions in the light of our research findings, and work our way towards an acceptable definition.⁷⁰

The Labor Law of 1963 describes child labor as:

“...labor which is performed by persons below the age of 14 years”.

It is clear that this is a very limited definition, since it only defines an age limit, but not the type of labor performed, nor its effects. In other articles (17 through 21), however, there is a further elaboration of the type of work children may be engaged in. Below 18 years no child should do any type of hazardous work, below 15 years no child should work on a fisher boat and below 14 years children should only work in family agricultural settings, in special institutions and for educational purposes. Thus we may infer from this that working activities of children below 14 years are meant to be labeled by the law as child work rather than child labor, but that those should be restricted to an educational and family setting, and definitely should not involve any work of an hazardous nature. Since children in practice perform many

⁷⁰ All definitions in the original documents are in Dutch; the translation provided here is our own. Wijntuin (1996), Ferrier (1997), and Orie (2002) did not come up with an own definition.

other activities –while not all family related work is innocent- this definition falls short of the reality.

Defares (1981) defined child labor as:

*“- all activities that children have to perform for the survival of their household, but which at the same time limits their mental development and their prospects;
- all activities that children have to perform to provide in their daily livelihood.”*

In the view of Defares child labor is framed mainly in terms of direct and indirect income, since it is related to the child’s own survival or to that of the household he/she lives in. Inferring from this work that is not of consequence for these types of survival and does not limit their prospects and development of the child could be labeled ‘child work’ rather than child labor. Defares does not put any age limit on child labor, while it is problematic in reality to make a proper assessment whether a certain type of activity is necessary for survival of the child or the household.

The Interagency Committee on child labor (1985:8) defined child labor as:

“all activities that are performed by children under age 15 in whatever form and under whatever name, for which they may or may not receive pay, and which is performed during school hours outside the family with the goal to support oneself”

This definition probably would see child work as those activities performed outside the school hours, both within the family or outside of it, which are not primarily meant to support oneself. This again is not in line with reality, since many children who are involved in child labor still go to school, but work long hours outside school, and sometimes even within the family.

Dennen (1990: 8,9) came up with the following definition of child labor:

“Labor performed by persons under 14 years, which requires much mental and physical effort, and where the activities performed are not connected at all to education and well-being of the child.”

The problem with this definition is that labor which is not seen as physical or mentally demanding –which most work that children do may well be- will fall outside this definition, which is not in line with reality.

Van den Berghe’s (1990: 10) attempt at a definition reads as follows:

“child labor consists of all activities that are done outside the household (as spatial entity), which may or may not involve a monetary compensation, and which are performed by persons who have not yet reached the age of 17 years.”

This definition puts child labor squarely outside the household, and therefore child work can be assumed to consist of all those activities which are done within the household. Again this seems a limited distinction, since child labor may well take place within the setting of the household itself.

The Ministry of Labor survey (1999: 9) used another definition:

“child labor entails all activities (work or pursuits) done by a child not older than 14 years, where a monetary reward may or may not be given to provide in its own support or that of its family, and where the development of its abilities is restricted and thus diminishes the spiritual and physical (health) development of the child.”

This definition stresses the harmful effect of labor on the child’s development, which implies hazardous types of work and working during school hours. At the same time by doing so it

also implies that work that is not hazardous or harmful may qualify as child labor, which again is not necessarily true, especially if a child may have to work long hours.

So far the different definitions have primarily tried to describe child labor, but not child work. Nevertheless we get from them the following indications for inclusion in a description of child work:

- it will be found more in agricultural settings
- less of an economic necessity for the child and household
- work performed outside school hours
- work done primarily within households
- less demanding types of work
- less harmful and non-hazardous types of work

Some of these elements we have found to be less typical of child work than child labor e.g. child labor may be performed after school hours, within a household and may involve all kinds of work. A major element that has to be added has to do with the working hours per day and per week.

The ILO has come to recognize the fact as well that not all labor children are performing can be labeled child labor as the following recent statement illustrates (2002:9):

“The term child labor does not encompass all work performed by children under the age of 18. Millions of young people legitimately undertake work, paid, or unpaid, that is appropriate for their age and level of maturity. By so doing, they learn to take responsibility, they gain skills and add to their families’ and their own well-being and income, and they contribute to their countries’ economy. child labor does not include activities such as helping out, after school is over and schoolwork has been done, with light household or garden chores, childcare or other light work.”

The ILO does not come up with a definition what comprises child work, but nevertheless indicates some useful elements i.e.: legitimate work (not forbidden by law or custom), after school work, light types of work (household, childcare, chores), work done as part of a socialization process (gain skills, learn responsibility).

If we now add the working hours to the above mentioned elements, a working definition of child work may read as follows:

Child work comprises all economic activities performed by children under 15 years, during less than 15 hours a week, which is not forbidden by law or custom, which consists primarily of non-dangerous and non-hazardous light types of work, and does not interfere with school hours and performance.

The inclusion of economic activities differentiates child work from most ordinary chores that a child performs at home as part of his/her participation in the family or household unit.⁷¹ Our research has indicated about 15 hours of work per week as a rough demarcation line between child work and child Labor. We have found support for this in Convention 60 on the minimum wage in non-industrial employment, which stipulated in art. 3 that “no child under fourteen years of age shall (a) be employed on light work for more than two hours per day whether that day be a school day or a holiday”, and “(b) spend at school and on light work a

⁷¹ The ILO described ‘economic activity’ as a broad concept that encompasses most productive activities undertaken by children, whether for the market or not, paid or unpaid, for a few hours or full time, on a casual or regular basis, legal or illegal; it excludes chores undertaken in the child’s own household and schooling. To be counted as economically active, a child must have worked for at least one hour on any day during a seven-day reference period (ILO 2002:15).

total number of hours exceeding seven a day”.⁷² Much damage can be done to a child in a short period of work (e.g. sexual exploitation), therefore the working hours should not be seen as the main part of the definition, but as a contributing part e.g. sexual exploitation of children is forbidden by law. The other parts of the definition thus make sure that hazardous and harmful types of work are not part of child work. Even child work, however, will not always be light, since occasionally some more intense work may be required e.g. a boy who is helping a few hours in a shop may be required to help move some furniture.

Having defined child work we now turn to the definition of child labor. Here the international consensus –including the ILO- seems to be with the definition used by the United Nations in art. 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (a child is defined as a person under 18 unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier):

“States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

Earlier we used the following definition by the ILO:

“Child labor is work that becomes a necessity for the child, that deprives a child at educational and social levels, harms the child’s safety and health and/or is likely to offend a child’s morality and dignity”

Definitions of child labor point toward negative effects on the children, and this may involve one or more of the following elements (Anker & Meldas 1996):

- work by very young children
- long hours of work on a regular full-time basis
- hazardous work conditions (physically or mentally)
- no or insufficient access, attendance or progress in school
- abusive treatment by the employer
- work in slave-like arrangements (bonded labor)

We want to add to these that for Suriname work by children involving 15 or more hours a week should be considered child labor.

With these definitions in place we hope that the confusion about child labor and child work will diminish in the near future.

⁷² This Convention was shelved and absorbed by Convention 138, although the number of hours mentioned were not incorporated in Convention 138. Convention 60 actually arrived at a maximum of 14 hours of work a week if we multiply 2 hours per day by 7 days. We arrived at 15 hours by allowing a longer working day in the weekend and 1 to 2 hours during the week. Still this is a rough estimate rather than a clear cut-off point.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- aanpassen aan nieuwe tekst m.n. conclusies en aan literatuur m.n. aanbevelingen

The main research question in our investigation was to find the nature and extent of worst forms of child labor in different districts and sectors in Suriname. To give an answer to this question we sketched a picture of the international conventions and national laws aimed at regulating child labor. In addition we reviewed the major existing Surinamese literature and reports about this issue.

To provide a more pragmatic picture of the extent and nature of child labor we spoke with 142 key persons, interviewed 169 working children, and 52 parents, spread out over 9 districts in Suriname. The proposed method by the ILO of a Rapid Assessment was new and innovative and differed from previous methods. Instead of using a structured questionnaire on a sample which was pooled out of a national population the accent of the Rapid Assessment is on more in-depth interviews, observation and gathering of background information from different sources. This relative fast and goal oriented method of gathering data resulted in a fairly well-organized presentation of the current situation with respect to child labor in a country. The results of this method may lead to the initiation and implementation of policy programs, follow-up research, or comparative research between countries.

The core of the research had to do with an assessment of the worst forms of child labor as mentioned in article 3 of ILO Convention 182. We should bring in mind that according to this article the worst forms of child labor comprise of: (a) all forms of slavery and bondage, (b) the use, procurement or offering of a child for prostitution and pornography, (c) idem for illicit activities such as drugs, (d) work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

With respect to the presence of these worst forms of child labor the researchers have to conclude:

ad a) that they did not find any sustained indications for the use of children in forms of slavery or bondage. The Interagency Committee on child labor already had concluded in 1985 that this form has not been reported in Suriname.

ad b) With respect to the use of child labor in the production and sales of illicit drugs we have to conclude that even though we did not encounter any such activities, there may be some incidental cases.

ad c) There have been reports about the exploitation of children in commercial sex (estimates by the Maxi Linder Foundation speak about 50 cases), but we have not been able to verify this independently, nor have we been able to track any concentrations of such victims of sexual exploitation. From our research the occurrence of such activities by children seem to be limited. It is not unthinkable, however, that a further decline of Suriname's economy may trigger more activities by children in this sector. Since these cases were hard to get by with a rapid assessment approach it should also be helpful to design a special study for this sector to further gather data and make a more careful assessment of the problem.

ad d) The research team did not find any major concentration of child labor either that could harm the health, safety or morals of the children. As we have reported there are no major concentrations of worst forms of child labor in certain sectors in Suriname.

This does not automatically mean that there are no severe cases of child labor, but rather that these are spread out instead of being concentrated. Even these severe cases may compare positively in terms of their level of exploitation with many other countries. Thus what is probably considered a 'worst form' of child labor in Suriname may be considered a normal case in many other countries. This then means that one probably needs to either adjust the definition to the local context or has to decide that what the ILO describes as 'worst forms' of child labor hardly occurs in Suriname.

There are a number of important issues, however that need to be reported in these conclusions and that need to be addressed at the policy level, because if they are not taken up they may result in worst forms of child labor over time.

1. First of all it is clear that child labor and moreover the more severe forms of it in Suriname has a clear gender bias i.e. boys are much more likely to be involved in such forms than girls. Overall we interviewed 72% males and 28% females, while the incidence of males in the most severe forms of child labor was 94%.

2. child labor in Suriname also has an ethnic bias, because young Maroons are much more likely to become involved in it. For a multi-ethnic society such as Suriname such a bias may cause social unrest in time and it is therefore needed to develop policies to stem this trend.

3. child labor also seems closely connected to lack of educational opportunities. This factor is highly correlated with the second factor, since it became very evident during the research that districts such as Brokopondo, Sipaliwini and Marowijne with a high ratio of Maroons provided the least educational opportunities to its young citizens. This observation is fully supported by the Ministry of Education itself who reported in July 2001 that in these three districts only 60% (Brokopondo), 62% (Marowijne) and 71% (Sipaliwini) of the children did not finish elementary school within a reasonable time period. In certain areas that we visited there were probably much higher percentages that did not finish the school. Despite these limited educational opportunities the researchers have observed that many children still attend school and often only work after school is finished. Gradually, however, they part with school, especially when they have become repeaters and have experienced that the school system is not assisting them in their opportunities.

4. The Constitution of Suriname of 1987 has put an obligation on the Government to provide and ensure compulsory elementary education. This means that the Government has to see to it that every young boy and young girl has a chance and a right to complete elementary school. The Government does not exert enough control over this constitutional duty, because many children abandon elementary school without completing it. The often repeated notion that children have an obligation to attend school until age 12 seems to be overtaken by this constitutional provision, which puts no age limit, but actually introduced a minimum performance limit. The practice by many schools to write off children at age 15 is also a sign that the age limit of 12 years is redundant.

5. Suriname's plural cultural background makes it necessary to deal cautiously with the work children are doing. Parts of society see work that children do as a precondition for their survival, especially in the interior, while in other agricultural settings there sustained efforts are also expected and needed. In the past there has been little differentiation between types of work. One way to start with more differentiation is to distinguish more clearly between child labor (with its more negative connotation) and child work (with a more positive connotation). Our research has tried to draw the line at 15 hours of work a week, with the general observation that families should be able to expect about 1 or 2 hours of work from a child per day. Policy makers and legal departments should not be inclined to confuse child work with child labor.

6. The existing Labor Law of 1963 seems to be well written with respect to dangerous work for young people (age 15 through 17), but needs further operationalization.

- Rights of the child art. 32 provides some tasks that states have to undertake: minimum age, appropriate regulation of hours and conditions, penalties and sanctions. Zelfs bij niet ratificeren 138 en 182 dus verplicht om acties te ondernemen ter uitbanning child labor.

- veel in informele sector die juist niet gereguleerd is en formele wetten niet erg effectief, meer werken vanuit sociale regelgeving en schoolplicht.

- aanbeveling twee definities accepteren.

Recommendations

1. The Law on Elementary Education of 1960 needs to be amended with respect to the compulsory educational age for children and be brought in line with the Constitution of 1987. Such an amendment would also operationalize article 39 sub 2a of the Constitution towards a more pragmatic interpretation of its current wording. The age limit should be increased to 15 years, which would be more in conformity with current educational practices in Suriname and with international conventions.

2. The Labor Law of 1963 should be amended by increasing the minimum age of employment to 15 years, which would then conform also more with educational practices and international conventions.

3. The Government should be more effective in exerting control over children who are not attending school in order to improve their educational and employment opportunities.

4. At the same time, however, the Government should build and/or properly subsidize schools wherever there is an evident lack of such schools and/or facilities and/or teachers. Improvement of educational opportunities in terms of teaching materials, qualified teachers, and infrastructure, is of eminent value to prevent children from a life that is marked by poverty. It also improves the chances of the nation towards a better future with more qualified citizens.

5. The Judiciary and Social sector should develop a more coherent notion about working children and should introduce a marked distinction between child labor and child work.

6. Special programs are needed to prevent severe forms of child labor to develop. Such programs should target those ethnic and gender categories that are more prone to child labor.

- definition of child labor en child work in Suriname (binnen en buiten gezinsverband, 15 werkuren, geen gevaarlijke omgeving, niet ten koste van school)
- definitie van child labor en Worst Forms (langere uren, gevaarlijk werk, e.d.)
- involvement of NGO's and churches, labor unions, schools in programs (many schools and teachers were interested during our work)
- implementation of programs
- commerciële sex
- speciale vraag opnemen in volkstelling 2003 om omvang nationaal vast te stellen
- toch nog veel respect voor kinderen in Suriname

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11. Annexes

- Overview of field trips

Overview Field work

Period	Interview	Place
15 April - 7 May 2002	Key persons	Paramaribo/ Wanica
	Field / by telephone	Brokopondo / Nickerie
	By telephone	Saramacca / Commewijne
	Field / by telephone	Marowijne / Para

Field work

Period	Place	Interviews
April 15 - 30	Paramaribo / Wanica / Commewijne	children/ parents
May 4, 6, 8, 9 en 29	Paramaribo	children/ parents
May 9	Commewijne	children
May 15	Saramacca	Orientation visit / interviews
June 4 + 7	Paramaribo	children/ parents
June 10, 11 + 12	Wanica	children
June 14	Saramacca	children
June 19	Commewijne	children
June 20	Para	children
June 25	Para	children
June 26 , 27, 28	Marowijne	children/ parents
July 04	Commewijne	children
July 10, 12 , 18, 29	Commewijne/ Par'bo/ Wanica	children/ parents
July 11	Commewijne / Pomona	None / conversation adults (fishery)
July 17 - 19	Brokopondo	children/ parents
July 22	Commewijne	Parents
July 23	Wanica	Parents
July 23	Boven- Saramacca	Key persons
July 24 - 26	Nickerie	children / parents
July 30	Para	Parents
July 31	Saramacca	Parents
July 31 - August 01	Boven- Suriname	children / parents / key persons
August 01	Leiding	Parents