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Development Studies Programme



The Children of Palestine in the Labour Market

(A qualitative participatory study)

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Foreword- UNICEF

Protection is a universal imperative, integral to the survival and development of children. Violence, abuse and neglect, exploitation and discrimination are a threat throughout the life cycle of children and an obstacle to their growth and development. Protecting children from child labour is one of the universal imperatives necessary for the survival and development of children. There are several international human rights instruments protecting children from economic exploitation. Besides the provisions stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a new convention against the “ worst forms ” of child labour was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1999.

UNICEF in its medium term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2002-2005, has focused on child’s rights aiming at further building its capacity to consistently respond to child protection issues. The ultimate impact - though not necessarily within the span of this MTSP - will be a decrease in the incidence of violence against children, the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, the provision of family and community-based care for all children without primary caregivers, and increased protection for children affected by armed conflict.

Child protection means addressing and preventing violence, abuse and neglect, exploitation and discrimination affecting children. Violence and abuse issues include physical, sexual and psychological violence against children within the family, in schools, in communities and in state and non-state institutions; gender-related violence and female genital mutilation; children affected by armed conflict; and children in conflict with the law. In the area of exploitation of children, UNICEF will concentrate its efforts on the worst forms of child labour, which go beyond economic exploitation to forced labour, trafficking, recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, hazardous work and illicit activities like drug trafficking.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, UNICEF acknowledges the high commitment of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions that led to the development of a Palestinian Labour Law that was promulgated in 2000. This law adheres to the letter and spirit of the CRC. The Palestinian Labour Law sets the age for admission to employment to 15 years, and stipulates a number of restrictions on work for children 15-18 years old. However, since the outbreak of violence in September 2000, it has become increasingly difficult for the PA to oversee the implementation of the Palestinian Labour Law, which has had a direct effect on various forms of supervision, particularly as it relates to the employment of children

UNICEF would also like to acknowledge and compliment the efforts of Dr. Nader Said, Director of the Development Studies Programme at Birzeit University and his team for their leading and exemplary role in completing this study. UNICEF hopes that this study and its recommendations will be used as a constructive tool for policy makers, professionals and researchers for advocacy as well as planning, implementing and monitoring programmes for the protection of Palestinian children especially in the area of child labour.



David S. Bassiouni
Special Representative
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
occupied Palestinian territory - oPt

Foreword- DSP

Getting to know them by name, to know their feelings, sad stories, dreams, aspirations, and points of strength, have made our work with the children of Palestine who are forced to join the labor market all worthwhile. Their experiences, insights, and analysis have made this study possible. In many ways, the interaction between the research team and the children of Palestine in the labor market was not only helpful to the children, but to us as team members. In some cases, we felt empowered by the will and determination of some of these children. While forced into adulthood, they were at peace with many of the issues that they needed to face. This is not to be confused with the fact that many of these children must endure cruelty at different levels: home, work, and school. The situation of the children in the labor market is telling; it indicates the choices that we (the adults) make in relation to our violent political situation, the type of economic system and policies that we adopt and the kind of social policies that are not friendly to children. This study is not only about the suffering of these children, it is also about violent paths that we push children to go through; it is about greed and lack of responsibility.

If anyone should be thanked, it is these children who let us peak into their own lives and provided us with their insights on life, work, relations, family, and education. It's they who made this study possible. Their help is appreciated only if we deal with their insights and recommendations with respect, only if we are honest in making their point of view heard, and if we work hard to provide them with safe and secure livelihood. The children deserve our best and we must work towards achieving their well deserved human rights.

We would also like to thank UNICEF for its commitment to the welfare of Palestinian children. Their efforts in the various fields of child protection are notable. My deepest thanks to the research team and the field researchers who have worked hard to bring this study to a successful conclusion.

We, at DSP, hope that his study will contribute positively to the eradication of forced child labor (all child labor is forced by definition). We truly hope that the various local and international institutions, governmental and non-governmental, will work together to bring a better life for the children of Palestine and children around the world.



Dr. Nader Said
Director
Development Studies Programme
Birzeit University



The Present Study

First: Introduction

The Development Studies Programme at Birzeit University prepared the study “The Children of Palestine in the Labour Market” in cooperation with UNICEF and the Secretariat of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child. It should be noted here that this study constitutes part of a regional project for the Middle East and North Africa to examine child labour through a qualitative methodology by means of participatory rapid research. In general, the studies aim to provide the qualitative information necessary for decision-makers and other involved parties, enabling them to design strategies that would help in curbing the phenomenon and, more importantly, carry out the interventions needed to alleviate the suffering of the children who are involved in the worst forms of labour.

The current study underlined many vital issues that had not been examined before, in particular the factors and causes giving rise to child labour. It also highlighted the concept of child labour itself, considered by some of the families and the children as a “positive form of solidarity”, rather than a violation of the rights of the child. This is an analytical contribution that requires in-depth discussion and determination of the particular circumstances that would render such labour a violation of their rights. The study also identified the nature and characteristics of children in the labour market, what language they use to describe their work, the level of disillusionment and suspicion with which they view their own future, and how this is reflected in the fatalism that marks some of their actions (even though these children bear big responsibilities within their families) and in their ability to take important decisions pertaining to their lives and the lives of their families.

In addition, this study relies on the point of views of working children, especially those involved in what is described as the worst forms of labour. It is their perspectives that matter: their personal accounts of their livelihood, work conditions family relations, legal frameworks, institutional settings, and proposed recommendations.

Second: Objectives

The main objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth qualitative examination of child employment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WBGS), by gathering information and analysis from the stakeholders themselves through giving them the full opportunity to express their viewpoints and to assess this phenomenon. The study compliments the available quantitative data on the subject. The research team that prepared the study examined the lives of children, their families, their friends and their workplace, collecting information on their views, feelings, concerns and aspirations as to the issues related to child labour, its underlying causes and the policies aimed to remedy the problem. In more specific terms, the present study investigated the following issues:

1. Living conditions of working children: The social, economic, psychological and political circumstances that accompany child labour, particularly at the level of the household and the immediate social environment, and the general Palestinian context. The case studies provided the material needed to examine the multifarious dimensions of child labour. Some of these were present in the statements made by children, their families and their employers, while others were observed through participation, as the researchers themselves gathered information during visits to the families and workplaces.
2. Nature of the relationship among the variables: To identify the relationship among the different variables impacting child labour, quantitatively and qualitatively. These include the circumstances the family is living under, the educational level of the parents and their work, the size of the household and how widespread is the phenomenon in the household itself, and how the children regard themselves and the rights they believe to be important for them as children.

3. The relationship between work and school: A brief examination was conducted of the relation between how children (and their families) view education, and prospects for future employment.

4. Children in the labour market: An introduction to conditions at the workplace, the nature of work children perform, risk factors, working hours, wages, and relations with employers; exploitation of children and its impact on the physical and mental health of children.

5. Dreams, aspirations and proposed solutions: Children discuss their ambitions, dreams and expectations for the future; they also discuss the nature of the interventions required to put in place strategies to address the problem of child employment.

Before presenting the results and analyzing them, we shall present some necessary information about the Palestinian context in relations to child employment, and discuss the methodology employed to arrive at these results.



Background

First: Concepts and Laws Related to Child Employment

Studies about Child Labour are Based on Two Approaches:

- The first approach focuses on child work, that includes all voluntary work and paid and unpaid work, whether for the family or outside the family. Such forms of work may have some positive impact on the child.
- The second approach focuses on the concept of child labour, and it highlights the exploitative relationships involving children in the labour market, and/or hazardous work performed by them that may adversely affect their physical, social, psychological, ethical, emotional and health development; it may also adversely affect their cognitive capacities and limit their abilities to access other services.¹

Observers can also arrive at deductions as to the exploitation of children in the labour market through a number of indicators:

1. Non-stop labour at an early age.
2. Long hours of labour.
3. Labour at low wages.
4. Labour under hazardous conditions.
5. Strenuous labour that may cause unjustified physical and social stress.
6. Work regulations that undermine the dignity of the child, and are based on slave-like arrangements and sexual exploitation.²

Age of the Working Child

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), States should enact legislation to eliminate child labour, and raise the minimum age allowing children to work to 15 years; it should not be permissible to set a minimum age for admission to work that is lower than the age for finishing compulsory education. The age should also be compatible with the mental and physical growth of the child. The minimum age may be reduced to (13-15 years) in the case of light work that is not harmful to the health, growth and education of the child. However, even with this international standard in place, states have taken differing positions as to establishing the age limit for the employment of children, while other states have specified the minimum age according to the work sector.³

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 (Article 32)

1. 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.

¹ UNICEF, 1997.

² Ibid.

³ Boulifa, 2000.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:

- Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
- Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
- Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

The Convention Concerning the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour

To deal in a more serious manner with child labour, the Convention Concerning the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour was declared in 1999. This Convention applies to all children under the age of 18. The Convention stipulates the need to take all necessary and appropriate measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which comprise:

- All forms of slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour;
- Forced or compulsory recruitment of children for service in armed conflicts;
- The use or procuring of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- The use or procuring of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;
- Work which is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children.

The acceding member states to this Convention were obligated to implement programmes of action for the elimination of worst forms of child labour, and to design and implement appropriate mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Convention, in consultation with employers and workers organizations. The Convention also required that member states provide assistance for removal of children from worst forms of labour and providing for their rehabilitation. It also required that member states secure for these children basic education and vocational training, and to take the conditions of female children into consideration. The supplementary documents to the Convention identified hazardous work for child labourers as follows:

- Types of work which expose children to physical, emotional or sexual exploitation.
- Work underground, under water or in confined and poorly ventilated spaces.
- Work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the handling of heavy loads.
- Work in an unhealthy environment which may expose children to hazardous substances, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations.
- Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work which involves keeping the child at the work place.⁴

⁴ For further information, see:
www.islamonline.net/arabic/economics/2001/08/article11.shtml-72k.

The Arab Convention on Child Labour

In the Arab region, the Arab Labour Organization signed Convention No. 18 on Juveniles in 1996. The Convention:

- Prohibits labour for children under 13, and links admission to work to the age for finishing compulsory education. This applies to all economic sectors, with the possible exception of agricultural work that is not hazardous and not harmful to the health of the child.
- Sets the age of 14 for admission to light household industries; 15 for admission to industries; and 18 for admission to more hazardous industries.
- Prohibits night work and over-time work on week-ends and holidays.
- Fair wages (not lower than the minimum wage applied in the country).
- The right to a 24-hour paid rest period every week, and three weeks of paid rest a year.
- The employer should provide social security, health and humanitarian care, occupational safety, and a registry of juveniles employed.
- Labour inspection bodies should enforce legislation relevant to the employment of children; and national legislation should provide for sanctions against violators.⁵

The Palestinian Labour Law

The Palestinian Labour Law, effective since mid-2000, prohibits the employment of children before they reach the age of 15. It devotes a separate chapter to child labour (Chapter on Juvenile Labour), in which the Law considers children between 15-18 years of age to be working juveniles, and accordingly the Law stipulates that it is prohibited to employ them in industries hazardous to their safety or health, in night work, or on official holidays. The Law also prohibits employing them for over-time hours, or on the basis of units of production, or putting them to work in remote sites, far from habitated areas. The Law also stipulates the need for reducing daily working hours for juveniles no by less than one hour a day, and that daily working hours be separated by one or more breaks, with a total rest period of no less than one hour; it also requires that juveniles should not work continuously for more than four hours. The Law makes an exception for those juveniles who are in the employment of first-degree relatives.

The Palestinian Ministry of Labour has issued a preliminary version of the accompanying regulations and decisions to the Law, and has defined 32 work sectors or industries that are hazardous to safety or health, and in which juveniles may not be employed. Most of these sectors are listed in the Convention Concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

⁵ For further information, see *ibid.*

The Accompanying Regulations for Interpretation of the Palestinian Labour Law (Palestinian Ministry of Labour)

Juvenile workers between 15-18 years of age should not be employed in the following jobs:⁶

- Working underground in mining and quarrying, and all work related to the extraction of ores, stones and the like.
- Working in furnaces for melting, refining or producing mineral ores and glass.
- Manufacturing of fireworks and related activities; the cement industry; the asphalt industry.
- Manufacturing and handling of pesticides; work that exposes the workers to ionized radiation; the tobacco industry; working in slaughter houses.

the production of alcoholic drinks; oxy-acetylene and electric-arc welding; the rubber and tyre industry; extraction of petroleum and natural gas; oil refineries and petrochemical plants; filling or distribution of gas cylinders; gas stations; working in fertilizer production; the manufacturing and repairs of electrical batteries; working in tanneries; running, screening, repairing or cleaning engines while in operation; spray-painting; installation and maintenance of asbestos; work involving the handling or manufacturing of lead, tin, or other organic compounds containing over 10% of lead; working in night clubs, or places that sell or offer alcoholic drinks; working in public baths or swimming pools; working in public toilets; working in dry docks, ports, quays and storage depots; working in ice-making and cooling factories; silver-coating mirrors with mercury; bleaching, dyeing and printing of textiles; working in medical and chemical laboratories; carrying out heavy work that requires exhausting physical effort, such as carrying loads or dragging weights of more than 10-15 kgs; and working in any of the industries that handle any of the work-related cancerogenic materials list (annexed to the Labour Law).

Second: An Overview of the Palestinian Context ⁷

The Palestinian Intifada that erupted at the end of September 2000 has entered its third year, as Israel continues to maintain its stranglehold on the Palestinian people and their resources. More than 2110 Palestinians have been killed by bullets fired by Israeli soldiers and settlers, about 400 of them (19%) are children under the age of 18. During the same period over 41,000 Palestinians were injured (17% of them children). Unprecedented restrictions have been imposed on the movement of Palestinians between different areas, and the land has been truncated into 300 isolated ghettos, enforced by 120 Israeli military checkpoints, in addition to the destruction of many main roads and side roads inside the cities, and the closure of many others with barricades.

The Israeli occupation forces displaced over 75,000 Palestinians by enforcing the complete demolition of 720 houses, and the partial demolition of 11,560 houses. Education was similarly affected as Israel closed down 850 schools completely (over differing periods of time), 8 schools

⁶ Palestinian Ministry of Labour, Preliminary (Pending Approval) Copy of Regulations and Decisions Accompanying the Law, 2002.

⁷ Source of data on casualties is the Institute for Health, Development, Information Policies (unless otherwise indicated).

were transformed into military barracks, 185 schools were hit by shelling, and 11 schools were destroyed. These measures have led to the loss of 1135 school days as a result of such direct attacks launched against educational institutions. In addition, the Israeli invasion of all Palestinian cities and towns, and the curfews imposed during the months of March and April, have resulted in the loss of 54,730 school hours per day for a period of 25 school days. The siege has partially obstructed schooling for 60% of all Palestinian households, and completely for another 11%.⁸ It has also obstructed 23% of all Palestinian households from reaching medical care facilities when they needed such access.⁹

On the economic level, losses are estimated at US \$3.2-10 billion (these figures do not include the destruction of private and public property). At the household level, 60% of all Palestinian households have fallen under the poverty line, and this average goes up to 70% for the Gaza Strip. With the start of 2002, poverty rates reached 85% for Palestinian households in the Gaza Strip. In the same context, 56% of Palestinian households lost more than one-half their household income, while 20% of Palestinian households lost their income completely. Moreover, facilities belonging to the security services and to some of the other Palestinian civil institutions were destroyed. The Palestinian airport (the building of which cost US\$ 19 million) was destroyed, and the groundwork for a Palestinian seaport under construction in Gaza was also destroyed.

As for the Palestinian labour force, the Palestinian population residing in the WBGS is estimated at 3.444 million, and the labour force is estimated at 680,000 (women make up 10.4% of the labour force). Palestinian workers are distributed over the following economic sectors: 12% in agriculture, 14% in industry, 14.6% in construction works, and 59.4% in services. Unemployment rates have gone up to more than 50% of the labour force. The closure has mainly impacted those who worked in the Israeli labour market, where over 200,000 workers were employed prior to the Intifada, whereas only 15,000 workers are employed there at present.¹⁰

Palestinian society is living in a situation of general instability. This is accompanied by the waning role of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) institutions that oversee the provision of services to children and of other child welfare institutions. This situation has had a direct effect on various forms of supervision, particularly as relates to the employment of children. The Palestinian Law prohibits the employment of children under 15 years of age, and prohibits the employment of children between (15-17) years of age in certain kinds of work, and these children are in need of special care during their employment. However, supervision has dwindled along with the all-pervasive state of instability affecting Palestinians life in the WBGS. In addition, and as a result of prevailing political conditions, international organizations involved in the field of childhood were obliged to reconsider their priorities to the advantage of the relief work required of them.

Third: Palestinian Children in the Labour Market:

There are limited studies on the state of labour among Palestinian children. Before 1998 there was a lack of adequate information on child labour, the social and economic characteristics of Palestinian children and households and the relation between child labour and the economic situation. However, a few studies were conducted and should be noted:

In 1995 UNICEF conducted a survey on child labour among 300 children in the Gaza Strip of the (8-15) age group. The study indicated that 95% of the working children were over the age of 10, and most of the children spent 5-10 hours at work a day.

⁸ DSP Survey, February 3, 2001.

⁹ World Bank, 2002.

¹⁰ UNESCO, 2002.

Another survey was conducted in 1996 by the International Movement for the Defense of Children - Palestine Branch. It covered 544 girls and boys living in the West Bank in the labour market. The sample covered children of the age group (8-18), and indicated that one-quarter of children in the labour market were under 14 years of age, 87% of the children had dropped out of school at early stages, not having passed the ninth grade. It also indicated that most of the children were employed in non-family enterprises 74.3%, while 25.7% were employed in family-owned enterprises. The great majority of children were full-time workers, working an average of 9.6 hours a day. Over one-half of the children worked in the industrial sector, 5.2% in agriculture, 17.9% in commercial activities, 20.9% in services and 3.4% in other sectors.

Another study (covering a sample of 348 boys and girls in the labour market) was prepared in 1998, in cooperation between UNICEF and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) (Secretariat of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child). Girl children made up 9.2% of the sample. The main conclusion points to the presence of girls in the labour market, even though they made up a small percentage of the sample.

Rishmawi 1996, prepared a National Report on Child Labour in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This report was based on the reports prepared by Palestinian ministries and other institutions of relevance to child labour, in addition to the survey conducted by the International Movement for the Defense of Children. It mainly focused on the size of the phenomenon and its proliferation, as well as the characteristics of child labourers and the reasons for their presence in the labour market. It highlighted government policies and programmes seeking to eliminate child labour. This report was originally prepared for the International Labour Organization (ILO) within the programme for the elimination of child labour.

In the International Conference on Labour, convened upon the initiative of the Palestinian Ministry of Labour in 1998, a paper was presented on child labour in the WBGS. This paper was a comparative study of the survey conducted by MOPIC (Secretariat of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child) and the International Movement for the Defense of Children. It examined child employment in the context of Palestinian legislation and international conventions and laws on child labour. Suha Hindiyeh prepared the paper for UNICEF.

Another study focused on legislation related to children in Palestine, particularly laws on child labour effective in Palestine in the years 1900-1995. It was prepared by Mervat Rishmawi for the Institute of Law at Birzeit University.

Another study on child labour and legislation was prepared by Faten Boulifeh, and published in 2000. It examined the concept of child employment in the context of international law, Palestinian legislation regulating child labour and the conditions of children in the labour market. The study was conducted for the Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

Surveys of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) prepares an annual statistical report on children in Palestine entitled "Children of Palestine: Issues and Statistics". The report covers educational, demographic, health, cultural and recreational conditions, in addition to issues of poverty, children with special needs, children in the labour market, and children and the Intifada. The PCBS has also set up a specialized unit on children statistics.

The PCBS started to publish its statistics on child labour in 1998, based on the survey it conducted in 1995 on the labour force. The survey covered children in the (12-16) age group, estimated to be about 274,616 children. Of these, 18,125 child were in the labour market, constituting 6.6% of the

age group. The ratio for girls stood at 1.3% and boys at 11.5%. Only 3% of these children were enrolled in schools. The survey indicated that these working children were distributed according to the following economic activities: 45.1% in services, 28.1% in agriculture and 26.8% in mining, quarries and manufacturing industries.

The annual statistical report on children published in 1999, presented a survey of children (5-17) age group in the labour market. The report estimated the number of children at the end of 1998 to be about 1,025,900, and 4.2% (43,090 children) of them were in the labour market. Of these 35,700 children were employed, while about 7,250 children were searching for work and prepared to work. In comparison with the 1995 survey of the (12-16) age group, the percentage of participation for children had gone up by about 0.8% for the same age group to reach 7.4%. The survey indicated that the majority of working children in the Palestinian territories were over 10 years of age, and their percentage of the 5-9 age group was low. One out of every two working children was not enrolled in school, and two out of every three children had joined the labour market out of material need. As for the workplace, the survey indicated that one-half of these children worked for their families, and a high percentage of these 67.1% were working for their families in agriculture. One third of the waged employed children in the West Bank governorates worked in Israel and in the Israeli settlements. The survey also indicated that 6.5% of the working children had suffered on-the-job injuries, noting that 30% of the working children considered the work they performed as hazardous, and 57.2% of working children worked for more than 6 hours a day.

As for the third report (published in 2000), it was based on the results of the survey of the labour force conducted in 1999, which covered children in the (10-17) age group. The study estimated the number of these children to be 577,305, and of these 5.9% were in the labour force (about 34,061 child). The results indicated that 73.6% of these working children were not enrolled in schools, and 73.2% of them worked for more than 6 hours a day, 37% were family-employed, 30.9% worked in the services sector, 18.7% in construction, 26.4% in mining, quarries and manufacturing industries, and 24.0% in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing.

The fourth report (published in 2001) was based on the results of the survey of the labour force conducted in 2000. It estimated the number of children in the (10-17) age group to be 605,409. The participation of children in the labour force declined in 2000 to 5.5% (33,298 child), and 38.4% of the children in the labour force were not enrolled in schools. The study indicated that working children in the Palestinian territories were working for a wage, 24.0% of them worked in the commercial sector and in restaurants, 20.0% in mining, quarries and manufacturing industries, 30.4% in agriculture, and 18.0% in construction. The percentage of children who worked for more than 6 hours a day was 73.2%.

The fifth report was based on the results of the survey of the labour force conducted in 2001. It showed a decline in the number of working children in the (10-17) age group to 22,525 children in 2001, accounting for 3.5% of all children in this age group, as compared to the year before. The results also indicated that 82.0% of working children were not enrolled in schools. The number of children searching for work and prepared to join the labour market increased from 17.7% in 2000 to 34.3% in 2001, while the percentage of children working in Israel and in the settlements declined from 13.7% in 2000 to 9.5% in 2001. The percentage of girls working for their families without wages went up from 74.4% in 2000 to 80.6% in 2001.

Fourth: Conclusions

From the above studies and surveys, we can conclude the following:

- Lack of adequate data on children in the labour market of the (5-17) age group for the years 2001-2002; the available indicators only cover the (10-17) age group.
- Different studies and reports cover different age groups, and provide divergent indicators; this in turn creates difficulties in conducting comparisons over the years.
- There is a dearth in information about children of the (5-9) age group in the labour market; this creates difficulties in disclosing the conditions of very young children in the labour market and the other forms of exploitation they are subjected to.
- Decline in the participation of children in the labour market in the years 2001-2002, accompanied by a rise in unemployment rates among them. This is related to the prevailing political conditions in the Palestinian territories. As numerous economic establishments closed down, there was a general rise in unemployment and poverty rates, and a rise in the number of children searching for work.
- The data published in the different studies indicate that the most of the working children are not enrolled in schools. This implies that those working children who are still enrolled are the ones most likely to drop out from school and join the labour market. At the same time, Israel further tightened restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, and work opportunities decreased (particularly in the formal sector), finding work became more difficult for children enrolled in schools.
- A decline in the percentage of girls in the formal (waged) labour market, and an increase in the percentage of girls working for their families or in the invisible market. This leads to difficulties in disclosing the true picture as to the work of girls. It comes as no surprise that the rates of employment for girls in the informal market have risen at the present time, particularly in household work (in domestic chores), as families increasingly seek this form of service and supply has increased on the part of girls and women in particular. This fact has been confirmed by a number of women's organizations active in the field ¹¹.
- There continues to be a major lack in qualitative studies on child labour, the real problems they face, and the exploitation they are subjected to. There is a confirmed need for qualitative studies to examine the overall conditions affecting children in the labour market and in the different economic sectors in a more revealing manner, away from mere figures that are descriptive and incapable of reflecting the details, and the objective and subjective conditions children face in the labour market.

¹¹ Another survey shows an increase in the rates of child labour. For more details, see: IUED, *Report V: Palestinian Public Perceptions on their living conditions - the role of international and local aid during second Intifada, (December, 2002)*. The Difference is mostly related to different definitions of child labour, labour force, employed, and unemployed. It is also related to the difference in the reference period of each surveys.



Research Methodology

This study has followed a qualitative participatory methodology, depending to a large extent on information, analysis and concepts offered by the children themselves. The attitudes of their families, employers and teachers, in addition to staff in specialized childhood institutions, were also taken into account.

First Stage: Preparatory Stage and Research Methodology Development

- A research team was set up in the WBGS, including consultants on child issues, gender and qualitative research.
- Numerous discussions were conducted between the research team and delegates from UNICEF and the Secretariat of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child (they provided much of the relevant literature, participated in the final formulation of the questionnaire and in training, assisted in the organization of a workshop with teachers and regularly presented their observations).
- A consultative workshop was convened with specialized childhood institutions, where issues relevant to child labour were discussed. The workshop focused on appropriate analytical and methodological mechanisms for the work at hand.
- A preparatory workshop was convened, bringing together a group of children from the labour market in Ramallah. The discussions took up the main themes and proposed methodology of the study, including the labour market, education, and work conditions, children's expectations for the future, and rights and responsibilities. The observations made by the children were incorporated into the research process and in developing the methodology, and played an important role in developing the different themes.
- In preparing for the study and developing the research methodology, three pilot case studies were conducted on children in the labour market from the regions of Jenin, Hebron and Gaza. The ideas and observations raised by the children, parents and field researchers who worked on the case studies were incorporated and helped in developing the methodology of research.
- Intensive training sessions were held for the research team in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Second Stage: Research Methods and Tools

In order to develop research methods and tools, the following four research tools were used:

1. Interviews: The team conducted 83 interviews with children from different geographic regions covering the WBGS. The interviews focused on the following issues: General circumstances surrounding the family, the attitude of the family on child labour, working conditions, the relation between education and school, work-related attitudes, legal aspects, child employment, friends and the social environment, problems and challenges in the labour market.
2. Case studies: Having collected the data from the interviews, cases of worst forms of child labour were selected. There were 24 such case studies. The basic aim was to further examine conditions relating to the family and the community, peer groups and friends, and the atmosphere at work, and to examine the conditions and attitudes of those surrounding the child.
3. Focus groups with children: Four focus group workshops were held with children working in different economic sectors. The main objective of these focus groups was to discuss important issues raised by the case studies and interviews, and which required further discussion and analysis. The workshops were attended by 35 girls and boys.
4. Focus group with teachers: The objective was to discuss the influence of the school and of teachers on children, and their inclination to the labour market or towards the school, whether directly or indirectly, and how teachers or schools deal with the phenomenon of child labour. The workshop was attended by 13 teachers.
5. Focus groups and interviews with employers: Three focus group workshops were held with employers and interviews were conducted with other employers. The main objective was to identify the approaches among employers as to the employment of children, and the nature of the relationship between employers and children. The different workshops were attended by 27 employers. Six intensive interviews were also conducted with employers.

Third Stage: Analytical Workshops for Field Researchers

The field research and its outcomes were discussed over two stages: First, after more than one-half of the field work was completed, in order to follow up, assess, draw lessons and work mechanisms. Second, after the field work was completed, and a workshop was held to analyze the work with field researchers in the West Bank. A similar workshop was held with field researchers in the Gaza Strip. These workshops served the following ends:

1. To allow the researchers themselves to evaluate the field research, the problems they faced and the implications as to qualitative research and child labour.
2. To benefit from the observations and analyses presented by the researchers on child labour, as they were the most closely involved with the cases, their surrounding conditions, and the difficulties and challenges confronting child labour.
3. To classify and analyze the data, and prepare the preliminary report collectively by all the members of the research team. This step was of utmost importance in consolidating the study, as the research mechanism brought the team in close contact with daily realities and conditions in the field, and the general environment and context under which children go to work. It also helped clarify the social and economic conditions of the families of working children. It is worth noting that the nature of qualitative participatory research allowed the children and their families the opportunity to express themselves and discuss their issues. It also played a role in awareness-raising and in endorsing positive concepts among children and their families about the rights of children.

Participants in the Research (the Sample).

First: Choice of Locations for Research

Four geographic regions were selected, representing the main areas in each of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (north, center and south). This selection also took into account the prevalent economic sectors in each region in order to probe the impact of different sectors and locations on the form and content of child labour. Another factor behind the selection was limitations in time, and in human and material resources. As a result, the following regions were selected:

- The governorate of Jenin: located in the northern part of the West Bank, a border zone where much of the population depended on work in the Israeli market; an area dependent on agriculture to a certain extent. The Jenin governorate is considered to be among the poorest regions in the West Bank, particularly its villages and camps.
- The governorate of Ramallah: located in the central part of the West Bank, it is considered a centre for services and commercial activities and hosts the headquarters of most governmental and non-governmental institutions. It is considered one of the regions with lower incidence of poverty.
- The governorate of Hebron: located in the southern part of the West Bank, the city of Hebron is considered an industrial region, and it also depends on commerce. As for the villages in the governorate, they have a diversity of social and economic modes, nomadic life, agriculture and some extraction industries (such as stone-cutters).
- The Gaza Strip: Different parts of the strip were covered, such as Rafah, which is a border zone and one of the poorest areas in Palestine; Khan Yunis with its numerous refugee camps and few villages; and the city of Gaza which is the centre of the Strip, the commerce and services hub, and the largest Palestinian population centre.

Second: Selecting the Children who Participated in the Research

For the purposes of this qualitative research, the non-probability sample method was selected, namely, selecting the sample in a manner that would secure representation of all geographic regions and population centre diversity (town, village, camp), and to provide qualitative representation of the phenomenon. In selecting the sample, the following basic indicators were also taken into account:

- Place of residence (northern West Bank, central West Bank, southern West Bank and the Gaza Strip), (town, village, camp), and (remote regions, and suburbs of the different centres of regions).
- Gender representation.
- Fair distribution of sample over different age groups (5-17).
- Distribution of sample over different economic sectors and areas to identify the conditions in each sector.
- Take into account the impact of ongoing measures by the Israeli occupation forces, and their impact on child labour.

Third: Reaching the Children Participants

- The exploratory stage, where a deliberate effort was made to identify working children and hold discussions with them about their work to come up with a preliminary idea about child labour in the field.
- Field research: Workplaces where children might be working were visited, further research by visiting factories, workshops, stores and other areas with street children. Researchers traversed streets where stall-salespersons and young hawkers sell their wares. They also visited industrial and border zones, and looked into the possibility of child labourers working there, and the possibility of conducting interviews with them.
- Consultations with some local institutions operating in research locations; and consultations with national institutions active in the area of childhood.
- Researchers would ask the children they interviewed for information on other child labourers in the same workplace or in other workplaces.
- In some areas, researchers would directly address sources from the same location (municipalities, schools) to obtain the necessary information from them.

Problems, Difficulties and Solutions:

The problems mostly arose from the political conditions prevailing in the Palestinian territories during recent years, as the siege imposed on all parts of the WBGS created numerous challenges. The research team was faced with the following challenges:

Child-related Difficulties:

1. Difficulties in finding all potential participants: There were major difficulties in finding the younger children and girls. This is due to the fact that most of these children work in the invisible informal sector, in addition to the fact that their actual percentage in the labour market is small compared to other age groups.

2. Refusal to take part in the research: About 20 of the children who were asked for interviews refused to take part in the research. Most of the refusals came as a result of the parents refusing to have their children involved, convinced that what the child might say could create problems for the family, and in their attempt to conceal certain information, considered to be of a largely personal nature, about internal relations within the family. In some cases, the refusal was due to fear of the employer, and the fact that the participation of the child in the research might get the child into trouble.

3. Some of the children denied the fact that they worked, even though the researchers had already made certain that they did work. Later on, some of these fears were identified: the children thought they might get in trouble with the law as a result of their involvement in the research and might be stopped from work; other children thought the researchers were trying to take them back to school, or stop them from working while studying.

4. The concerns of the parents: The concerns and fears of the parents were basically out of their desire to know all that went on between the researchers and their children. For this reason, the objectives and methodology of the research were explained to them, with stress on the concern of the research team to respect the privacy of the family, on the purely scientific goals of the research, and on the fact that it would not result in any harm or direct benefit to the family. Some of the parents were concerned that the research and the great attention devoted to the children and to their opinions might be an “eye-opener” and empower the children, which could lead to forms of “rebellion”. Others were concerned that the interaction between the researchers and the children could stir unrealistic ambitions among the children, and that after the research was over, and the attention disappeared, the children would be disillusioned. The researchers were keen to explain the objectives of the study, without raising the level of expectations, particularly as some of the parents thought at the start that it may give rise to new work opportunities, or a return to schooling, or an opportunity to get to know institutions concerned with child welfare, which may in turn improve the conditions of the whole family.

5. Non-cooperation of employers, manifested in not allowing researchers to meet the children in their factories. Some of them went as far as to turn out some researchers from their workplace.

6. Inability of the children to stick to appointments and arrive at fixed locations for the interviews, and the difficulties involved in arranging for the meetings. These challenges are an expression of the hard living and working conditions of these children, and how far they are in control of their time, as some of them do not work for fixed hours, and may have their working hours prolonged indefinitely. The children also bear major burdens in trying to meet the demands of work, school and their parents.

Problems Related to the Interview Process:

1. Reservations on the part of some of the families as to disclosure of information on certain issues they feel to be of a highly private nature, particularly in the case studies, and due to the sensitivities involved in some of the cases (such as beggar-children, working girls, honour killings). However, the fact that the researchers stressed on their respect for confidentiality of the information, and due to the familiar name of Birzeit University (Development Studies Programme) among the families, mutual confidence was established.

2. The research team visited some of the families for the interviews more than once, due to lack of time on the part of the family or the working child.

3. Some younger children got bored during the interviews, and researchers would break up the interview and return at a later time to resume.

4. Difficulties in transmitting concepts and issues to children during the interview, and in explaining the main objective of the study to the children and their parents, particularly among less fortunate families (poor uneducated families), which required the research team to explain the objectives of the research more than once and over more than one visit.

5. The influence of the employer on the children and on the researcher (particularly as some of the researchers were obliged to conduct their interviews during work). The main objective of this was to open the way for further interviews with the child and his/her family and visit them later at their homes.

6. Overly-concerned parents would try to intervene during the interview, but the researcher would circumvent this by conducting a separate discussion with the parents of the child so that they would give him/her the chance to have a separate interview with the child.

7. To address some of the questions with sarcasm, as questions that have obvious answers to them ("But you already know the answer to that!", or "What are these questions!", or "What business is it of yours?"), or with apathy, in addition to disillusionment from the futility of the research project. Most of these children were in need of greater attention from the researchers, and there was a need to attach greater personal importance to the fact that they are being interviewed, which mitigated some of the negative attitudes among the children.

Difficulties Obstructing Movement of the Researchers:

1. The research team faced difficulties in their movements as a result of the curfews and closures, particularly in the cities of Hebron and Jenin. This resulted in prolongation of the time allocated to field work, and in resorting in part to the selection of participants from nearby areas, such as conducting more interviews in the Bethlehem governorate to compensate for the number of questionnaires required of the governorate of Hebron. The team was also forced to work under curfew in more than one instance in order to maintain the pace of field work.

2. The team also faced psychological difficulties as a result of daily problems impeding their ability to move and subjecting them to dangers as they tried to continue working under curfew, and to cross barricades in their attempt to reach the allocated areas. The difficult conditions the children were living under created additional psychological problems. The DSP provided moral and psychological support to the researcher team members, through collective and individual counseling sessions.

Location of Interviews:

The choice of location for interviews was based on the wish of the children and their parents, under conditions that would be more comfortable for the children. Most of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the children. Some interviews were held at the workplace, or at the homes of friends or relatives of the children; in the home of the researcher, in cases where the child lived nearby; or in the street (with young hawkers); or in a public place (such as a coffee shop) upon the request of the child. All case studies were conducted at the homes of the children. Additional interviews were carried out elsewhere as needed.



Social and Familial Background

The following part analyzes data and information gathered during the field research. For that purpose, the language of the children, their parents and the stakeholders is used as much as possible (referred to in italic). Despite the fact that the research is basically qualitative, there is an important number of background indicators that reveal important insights on working children. The following results are based on the (research sample).

First: Basic Indicators

1. The Majority are Boys

About 91% of the children participants were boys while 9% only were girls (76 boys and 7 girls). According to PCBS¹², girls make up 13% of the working children in the age group (5-17 years) compared to 87% boys in the same age group. In general, 1.6% of the girls and 10.5% of the boys work in the above-mentioned age group.

2. The Majority Live in Cities

About 43% of the children participants were residents of cities, 41% of villages and 16% were from the refugee camps. These percentages are compatible with the actual population distribution, the matter that emphasizes that the child labour phenomenon is equivalently prevalent in all the Palestinian areas.

3. The Majority of Working Children are of Age Group 15-17 Years

The working children are distributed over the age groups (as shown in table 1). The table shows that the majority (94%) is between (10 and 17 years) of age, thereof 40% are (10-14 years) and 54% are (15-17 years). Although 6% of these children are 5-9 years, that should not reduce the gravity of the problem among this age group.

4. 46% of the Children Work in the Services Sector

Working children are approximately equally distributed over agriculture and hunting, manufacturing industry and construction sectors (about 17% for each sector). The biggest group of them is concentrated in the services sector. The research also showed that 4% of these children work in illegal fields of works.

5. The Majority are Drop-outs

The research showed that 30% of the working children are still enrolled in schools, whereas 70% dropped-out.

The findings also showed that most of the younger children (80%) are still enrolled to school. This percentage decreases to reach 58% among children of age group (10-14 years) and steeply decreases to reach 9% among children of age group (15-17 years). It is noted that the majority of drop out children concentrates in the age group (15-17 years).

¹² PCBS 1998

Table 1: The Social Background of the Children Participants

Female		Male		
9%		91%		
City	Village	Camp		
43%	41%	16%		
Enrolled in school		Not enrolled in school		
30%		70%		
Age distribution of the sample				
5-9 years	10-14 years	17-15 years		
6%	40%	54%		
Distribution of Enrolled Working Children by Age Group				
Age group (5-9)	Age group (10-14)	Age group (15-17)		
80%	58%	9%		
Distribution of Drop out Children by Age Group				
Age group (5-9)	Age group (10-14)	Age group (15-17)		
20%	42%	91%		
Work sector				
Agriculture and hunting	Manufacturing industries	Construction and quarries	Services	Illegal works
18%	17%	16%	46%	4%

Second: Household Conditions

The findings of the research showed that many of the working children live under familial circumstances that do not differ significantly from the national rates relating to lower-middle, and lower classes. At the same time, it is noticed that these families have special characteristics. The findings also showed that there are differences between households of working children in general and households whose children work within the “worst forms of child labour”.

■ 83% of the children live within a family having a father and mother and 17% of the children live in families without fathers (due to death, illness, divorce, desertion, family conflicts, or death of both parents). 12% of these cases are fully dependent on mothers.

Table 2: Familial Status of Parents

Father and mother live together	83%
Mother is the head of the household	12%
Others (household lives with relatives, both parents are dead, children live alone)	5%

■ As regards children who work within the “worst forms for child labour” and whose cases have been thoroughly studied, the common factor among them is the absence, or the negative role, of the father. 16 cases (of 24 cases that have been intensively studied) suffer from complete or semi complete absence of the father. these 16 cases are distributed as follows:

- The father suffers from physical or psychological disability (3)
- The father is dead (2)
- The father has a chronic disease but occasionally works (5)
- The father does not work due to old age (1)
- The father deserted the family (1)
- The father has three wives and intends to marry again (1)

A number of these families are characterized by the negative role of the father in a manner that gave rise to several problems within the household. The following case reveals one of the behavioral patterns of some fathers who encourage child labour.

A father lives for himself

S. is a child of 13. He is skinny and has worn clothes. His pronunciation is not clear. Shaker works in stones factory in a work that needs strength and large body building. S.'s father wears clean and tidy clothes; he got married three times and thinks of another marriage. The father keeps blaming S. for dropping out of school, but S. says: “I work to earn the living of my brothers and sisters; my eldest brother saves money to get married and my father does not always spend money on us.”

Average Size of the Household

The average size of working children households is higher than the national average. PCBS¹³ data showed that the average size of the Palestinian household in the West Bank and Gaza Strip reached 6.7 persons in 1998 while the average number of the working children household amounted to 8.2 persons. That may be partially explained by the fact that fertility rates in Hebron, Gaza and Jenin are higher than the national rates; but this does not completely explain the difference. Former studies¹⁴ showed that there is direct relation between household size and poverty rates.

Table 3: Number of Persons of a Household

Less than 6 persons	6-10 persons	10 persons +
5%	81%	14%

One of the parents expressed the importance of having the largest number of children as a means for dealing with the economic crisis of the household as he believes that children would solve the problem.

- A man must have many children in order to work and take care of their parents.

¹³ PCBS 1998.

¹⁴ Poverty Report 1998

The Educational Level of the Household

■ The average educational levels of the working children parents were less than the national levels as none of the fathers has obtained any university education. The educational level of 56% of the fathers is less than 6 years of schooling, 36% between (7-10 years) and 7% reached (11-12 years) of schooling. The educational level of the mothers was not different as 59% of them had less than 6 years of schooling and 25% had (7-10 years).

Table 4: Parents' Educational Level

Years of schooling	Father	Mother
6 years or under	56%	59%
7-10 years	36%	25%
11-12 years	7%	15%
More than 12 years	1%	1%

■ The school dropout phenomenon increased within households that have working children. It is noted that a number of the children or all the children of 70% of those households dropped out.

■ Moreover, early marriage (especially among girls who are under 16 years) was wide spread in 21% of the cases. It was noted that in some households, most or all the girls get married in at early age.

■ The child employment phenomenon is not restricted to the eldest brother, but on the contrary, only 10% of the children participants in the research are the eldest brothers while the rank of the remainder (90%) affirms that working children are not necessarily the eldest brothers as shown in table 5:

Table 5: Rank of the Working Child among Brothers and Sisters

First 10%	Second 28%	Third 17%
Fourth 18%	Fifth 5%	Sixth 4%
Seventh 11%	Eighth 4%	Ninth 3%

Parents' Work

Data showed that more than one-half the households had not depended on the father due to the father's unemployment, death, desertion or divorce. Among 74 cases in which the father is still alive, 32 (45%) are un-employed, while the rest are seasonal as part-time workers. A small percentage of them are currently working full time. These fathers work in the following occupations:

Porter	Worker at a factory	Farmer	Construction worker
Taxi driver	Cars blacksmith	Fisherman	Worker in a grocery store
Guard	House painter	Street cleaner	Accountant assistant
Carpenter	Vegetables salesman		

Moreover, in very limited cases, the father worked as self-employed (for example a taxi driver, a shop owner, etc). In several cases, the father worked in unspecific and in a variety of works according to demand or the season, among them hawkers and collectors of aluminum residues from solid wastes.

It was also noticed that about 40% of the fathers had previously worked in the Israeli market. The importance of this finding lies in the fact that it partially explains the reasonable housing conditions in which some of the working children households live. It also explains the adjustment mechanisms of these households that got used to a relatively above average standards of living especially that the daily income of many of these fathers was approximately USD 50.

Regarding mothers' work, the research showed that the majority of mothers (85%) were housekeepers, whereas the rest of the mothers (15%) were paid-workers inside or outside the home to earn the living of their families. The majority of the households in which women were paid workers had been characterized by the absence of the father as a breadwinner. These women worked in the following field:

Saleswoman	Textile worker	Grocery worker	Farmer
Animal husbandry	Cleaning worker	Worker	Beggar

It was also noticed that a number of these women work in small enterprises owned by the family such as animal husbandry or in a shop, while others irregularly work at home (sub-contracting); one of the mothers make hats for Israeli companies through a middleman and at low wages.

Among other factors that limit women paid work, in addition to the high rates of unemployment in the WBGS, the above mentioned fact that the reproductive rates of those women are above the average. It was also noticed that many households have children with disability. Moreover, many of the fathers are unemployed or have chronic diseases and a number of these women have physical or psychological diseases as well. Furthermore, most of these women are remarkably marginalized in terms of education, skills and capabilities to access resources.

Household Income

The monthly income of 71% of the households amounts to less than 1650 sheqels (less than USD 340, an average of USD 1.3 per capita a day), of which, 23% have a monthly income of less than USD 144 (less than 60 cents per capita a day) and 16% have monthly income that ranges between USD 144 -205. On the other hand, the monthly income of 30% of the households reached more than USD 340, thereof, the monthly income of 10% reached to more than USD 510. This distribution is not substantially different from the general rates of income. On the contrary, it is noticed that the income of some households is higher than the average national rates. This affirms the importance of the children income within the household especially that half of these households have more than one working child. But as will be seen later, in addition to the economic impoverishment from which most of these households suffer, they also suffer from human poverty and poverty of capabilities. Thus, the existence of structural, social and familial factors make these households more exposed to poverty than others and make the children of these households more vulnerable to enter the labour market.

Table 6: Household Average monthly Income (in sheqel)

Less than 700	701-1000	1001-1650	1651-2000	2001-2500	Above 2500
23%	16%	32%	13%	7%	10%

The children evaluated the economic situation of their households as bad. 63% of the children declared that the economic situation of their households is bad (worse than the situation of their surroundings) while 27% of the children said that the situation of their households is similar to others, and 10% said that their situation is better than others.

Sources of Household Income

The research showed that 13% of the households fully depend on the work of the working child, while 20% of the households depend on a number of their children including the child participating in the study. This indicates that one third of the households under study fully depend on child work. Another 17% of the households depend on child work and on assistance from governmental and non-governmental organizations and from benevolence. This also indicates that half the households do not depend, in any way, on the father or mother's, work and the other 50% of the households variably depend on the children and parents work and the assistance received from governmental and non-governmental organizations. These information indicate that in most cases the households depend on household work and child work is crucial in providing the basic needs of the household and in improving its economic conditions.

This important role of children explains the supportive positions of the majority of parents to the work of their children. According to 70% of the children, parents support their work whereas in 30% of the households, parents do not support their children work. It was also noticed that refusal of parents had not been steady. The opposition of some parents could be described as "soft opposition". Other parents and children preferred to state their opposition to be in consistency with what they believed had been a (preferable) answer for the research team. But this does not eliminate the fact that some parents feel that they are forced to approve their children work. Other factors considered important by the parents in justifying their approval to their child work range from considering it as an unavoidable solution to save the household from an economic crisis, while others consider it as a preferable option to any other option including enrollment of child in school.

Following is an example as illustrated by a father of one of the working children:

- *Had my son not been working and earning approximately 550 sheqels a month, our life would have been very difficult.*

Another mother says about her daughter's work:

- *How would we live if the girl did not work, her father was a taxi driver and left his work because of his excessive nervousness.*

Housing Conditions

The housing conditions of the working children households ranged from "ghetto-like" arrangements to middle-class standards. The quantitative data showed that out of 76 households, 7 households live in one room, 21 households in two rooms, 25 households live in three rooms and 23 households in four rooms or more. About 23% of the households live in rented houses or with other households.

For the majority, their housing conditions clarify the ramification of poverty and its features. While some households had been able to build a house before the father became unemployed, some of these houses were not completed due to the economic shocks that these households were subjected

to. Moreover, some of these houses suffer from dampness or are located in polluted or crowded areas. A number of the medium-size houses also lack furniture and domestic appliances except for old ones. Furthermore, the higher family average size leads to further crowdedness as the average number of persons per room is estimated at about 3.4, whereas the national rate is two persons per room according to 2000¹⁵ data. The researchers, through their field visits and observations, evaluated housing conditions as follows: 38% of the houses below national average, 38% average and 24% above average.

In a house made of zinc

T. (14 years) lives with his mother and four brothers in a house made up of zinc and of an area that does not exceed 4 square meters. A benevolent allowed them to live there until they can manage their life. The kitchen is inside the room and contains one tap. The room is not furnished except for an old cupboard without door, some chairs and an old table. T., his mother and two of his brothers work in begging to fulfil the needs of the household.

Mistreatment and Children inside the Household

Children have mentioned several examples of mistreatment and abuse inside the household. Despite that the majority of the children have not reported such mistreatment, the children who suffered from it clearly expressed their fears:

- *When I do not go to work, my parents hit me,*
- *I am scared of my father because he hits me,*
- *My brothers hit me,*
- *The father hits all the family members,*
- *My elder brother hits me,*
- *They made me drop out of school in order to serve my brother.*

Domestic violence and need for counseling programmes and follow-up

Father: After five years imprisonment, I was released from Al-Naqab prison psychologically ill with nervousness and agitation. I hit my children and wife and drove them out of home. Yesterday I hit my wife and children and drove away my wife before the sunset prayer. I sat in the street for hours and then returned home.

The mother: Before a period of time he (the father) wanted to throw the girl from over the house "May God relieve us". The girl's leg is cut from the knee as a result of a car accident and the boy was injured a year and half ago in his left hand (he has a cut in the vein) and the chest.

Parents of one of the working girls (12 years)

Domestic violence is severest in certain cases when torturing of children by their fathers reaches its utmost to an extent that the children and their mother wish the father were dead. Despite the complex nature of such cases, the obvious sources of violence stem from the father's addiction to drugs or his psychological illness.

Our father was violent

The wife: My husband was very harsh with his children. He used to make them stand at the wall and hit them. My husband is not a conscious man ... he does not take care of his home nor his children. He only knows alcoholic drinks, cocaine and women.

The son: I run away when I see my father because he will kidnap me and sell me as he sold my sister when we were in Israel; but mom and I brought her back. He used to force us to stand on one leg and rise the second leg and stay for hours like that. If any of us dropped his leg down, he would hit mom and us with the whip.

The wife: Once my husband put cocaine on the watermelon in order that our daughter would eat from it and he tries to abuse her sexually, but I prevented that from happening.
The daughter: I am not sad on my father's death.

As will be shown later, some of the children work with members of their family and are often subjected to abuse and exploitation. This is not to imply that all children are mistreated. In fact, most of them lived in the security of their families. Having said that, it was noticeable the significant difference in the nature of cases researched in the West Bank in comparison with those in the Gaza Strip. It was noticed that poverty and broken family problems and the accompanying violence, exploitation and immoral practices such as addiction to drugs are more acute and deeper in Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. It was also striking that chronic diseases are also more spread within the households of Gaza Strip.

The abuse practices against children by the household are accompanied by the abuse practiced by the Israeli occupation against children, by employers and at schools.

Oppression of Parents and Occupation

A. (12 years) works in fishing with his father and uncle (the boss). His father was a "a big master" on the sea but his detention obliged him to sell his boat and he is a wage- worker now. A. says: "I hate to work at night because it would be very cold and I cannot move my fingers". A. add: "My relation with my uncle is good and if I drown he saves me, and if I make a mistake, he hits me and today he threw me in the sea because I did not carry out his orders." "Everyday, my father, uncle and cousins hit me for any mistake or fault I make. Our work is not secured because the Israelis come at night, pursue us, destroy our tools and make our work very dangerous" he added.

Photo Credit: Development Studies Programme - Birzeit university

Children in the Labour Market

First: Factors behind Child Labour

When children were asked about the factors that made them work, their responses were not restricted to the economic factor despite its great significance. Most of the children referred to the importance of the bad economic conditions of the household as a main factor that makes them enter the labour market and the intervention of this factor with other social, psychological and institutional factors.

Among the factors that the children referred to are the following:

1. Meeting household basic needs especially for children who are completely or partially the breadwinners of the households (children supporting households).

- *I work because I help my brothers and sisters and if I quit work, my family will starve,*
- *I work in order to spend on my household, buy flour and pay the electricity bills,*
- *I dropped out of school because I do not have anything to spend on myself and instead of begging from others, it is better for me to work,*
- *I spend on my household that does not have a breadwinner except me because my father is unemployed.*

2. Contribution in improving the household living conditions: This factor is particularly important among children who work side by side with their other brothers and one parent. It is also important for households in which the parents are convinced with the necessity of children work as a means to increase the household income.

- *I work to help my family in its expenditures,*
- *We all cooperate to improve the situation of our home.*

3. Feelings of responsibility for helping the father in his work and to replace him particularly in cases of unemployment or illness. It is noted that there is a number of ill fathers who partially or fully work but need their sons' assistance.

- *My father is ill, I work to help him in loading bricks,*
- *My family has no supporter other than me and my father is unemployed,*
- *I help my father.*

4. Feeling the need for pleasing one of the relatives especially the father: For a number of children, it is important to work hard in order to obtain the acceptance and love of the father. This phenomenon was noted in association with other aspects of child mistreatment by the father and low self-esteem by the child.

- *I most like to obtain my father's approval,*
- *Because my uncle wants me to work,*
- *I like to sell as much as I can in order to please my uncle,*
- *The most important thing is my grand fathers's satisfaction.*

5. Gaining "value" within the family: A number of children expressed their feeling of the need to confirm their value in the family. In their opinion, this takes place through work and earning money for the family. This feeling is accompanied by the child's feeling of being different from others and the need to prove oneself to obtain love and contentment from others. Among of these children was a disabled child, a child who is perceived by family members as a "failure", and ill child.

6. Learning a craft: Many of the children and their families believe that work at this stage of the child's life is the best option. At this stage, the child can learn a craft that helps him/her in ensuring a better future and standards of living.

7. Hatred to school and considering it as unfruitful: This factor was mentioned by many drop out children and some of the children who still go to school but intend to drop out.

- *I do not like school,*
- *I do not like studying,*
- *It is better for me to learn a craft (This will be touched on in more detail in part six).*

8. Provision of personal needs: A number of children work to obtain pocket money and spend on their personal needs. Such children usually tend to be independent to a certain degree.

- *I work to buy my personal needs,*
- *I work to spend on myself and buy cigarettes.*

9. Inheritance of a business owned by the household: In few cases (especially in cities), children work with the head of the household to prepare them to run that business and inherit it in the future. That business may be very small such as a shop or it may be as large as in the case of a child whose household owns a stone cutter.

10. Planning to improve future living conditions: Many children work to save an amount of money that enables them to establish their own business and to improve their households' future situation.

- *I am learning a craft through which I will spend on my family in the future,*
- *I depend on myself from today and learn a craft.*

11. Fatalism: The feeling that work is unavoidable for is widespread. Children, in such cases, use phrases that express absolute acceptance of this reality and inability of moving out of it. This feeling is accompanied by describing work in romantic terms and linking it with the importance of ideal values such as struggle and self-dependence.

- *There is no alternative to work,*
- *We have to be content with our fate,*
- *We have to struggle in life,*
- *Self-dependence is the best thing.*

12. Influence of peers and desire to socialize: A number of children entered labour market with encouragement of friends who themselves work. It was also noticed that a number of children find their workplace a resort to spend time and for "hanging out" with friends.

- *I dropped out of school because my friends convinced me to drop out school and work with them.*

13. Preparing girls for marriage: Some parents made their girls drop out of school with the aim of preparing them to marriage believing that mastery of some works (such as agriculture, dressmaking, etc) is a qualification required for marriage.

- *They want me to work in order to learn how to become a housekeeper and help my husband if he is a fisherman or farmer,*
- *My parents say that girls have to stay at home and learn housekeeping in order to help their husbands.*

Making the Work Decision

The decision-making regarding the entry of children in the labour market is very complicated and relates to many factors. However, there is primarily a crucial decision-maker in most cases. In some cases, children were forced to work and in other cases, children entered the labour market despite the opposition of the family. In many cases, children enter the labour market gradually without being “noticed” by family members or school teachers. A “code of silence” smoothes the entry of children into the labour market.

A number of children indicated that the work decision was personal:

- *I preferred to work because I am not good at school,*
- *My parents oppose my work and they wanted me to become a teacher but I dropped out of school and worked to help my family.*

The cases in which the child received encouragement or was coerced to work are numerous:

- *My family encouraged me to work and drop out of school in order to help my father because our financial conditions have been bad for more than two years. I found work in construction,*
- *Only my father approves of my work, he wants me to work, but my mother opposes that,*
- *My father chose for me learning in an aluminum workshop and my family supports that choice,*
- *My family needs money in any way because my little sister is ill and she needs a surgical operation for her cut off leg,*
- *My family forced me and said a craft is better than a certificate,*
- *I do not like work but my father makes me to work.*

Second: Fields of Work & Income

Generally, children work in a variety of works that reflect the nature of employers who tend to hire children. Among the most important works that children perform are the following:

Agricultural workers (9)	Worker in a car shop (9)	Construction worker (7)
Worker in a grocery (6)	Worker in a stone-cutter or bricks factory (5)	Cleaning worker
Hawker (4)	Embroidery or dressmaker (4)	Small vendors (4)
Fisher (4)	Blacksmith (3)	Beggar (2)
Porter (2)	Worker in shoes factory (2)	Animal husbandry (2)
Office boy (2)	Worker in a Plastic factory	Collecting solid wastes
Tractor driver	Worker in detergents factory	Gas distributor
Collector of bullets	Worker in aluminum workshop (4)	Worker in a restaurant
Carpenter	Vegetables hawker	Worker in a poultry shop
Worker in spices factory	Helping cars pass through checkpoints	Refrigerators blacksmith
Miscellaneous works (4)		

Despite that all these works expose children to physical and emotional risks, some are more hazardous on the health of children. The following cases represent “typical” situations where children are exposed to danger:

- A child (boy, 14 years) works in agriculture in an Israeli settlement across the borders in Jenin district. He is exposed to danger resulting from crossing the checkpoints or from direct attacks by settlers,
- A child (boy, 17 years) sneaks through barbed wires of Gaza settlements to collect empty bullets and sell to workshops. Two of his friends have been killed there; he was shot at,
- A child (boy, 15 years) accompanies taxi drivers that travel across the border areas between Rafah and the Israeli checkpoint because according to the Israeli instructions, taxi drivers are prohibited from approaching checkpoints without the existence of a child or woman inside the car,
- A child (boy, 16 years) works in construction Israel. He is constantly subjected to beating by the Israeli forces because he does not have a work permit,
- A child (girl, 12 years) works as a beggar; she is always exposed to various types of harassment including sexual harassment; she stays outside home for days and her family finds itself obliged to search for her and bring her home,
- A child (boy, 14 years) works in fishing with his father and uncle who throw him in the sea as a kind of punishment for violating their orders,
- A child (girl, 13 years) works in cleaning houses (house chores). She is married and has a baby and a husband who imprisons her and only allows her to go to work and watches her by following her wherever she goes,
- A child (boy, 17 years) works in a factory for detergent substances where he is exposed to the poisonous chemical gases,
- A child (boy, 15 years) works in aluminum factory; he lives in a continuous fear of cutting his hand by the sharp scissors,
- A child (boy, 14 years) works in a stone-cutter enterprise, carries heavy loads and always has fears that heavy tools and substances may fall on him,
- A child (boy, 6 years) works in begging and is subjected to beating and chasing.

Based on all these types of jobs that children are engaged in, the following may be concluded:

1. Children are distributed over all work sectors; 50% of them work in the services sector and the other 50% are distributed over construction, industry and agriculture.
2. Girls work in sectors that are traditionally linked with women such as embroidery, tailoring, house chores, begging and agriculture.
3. The type of work that children perform partially depends on whether the work is independent or with an employer outside the household. It is noted that children who are self-employed tend to work in services while a part of the children who work with the household, intermittently work in agriculture and fishing whereas children who work in industry or construction tend to work outside the household.
4. Moreover, children who are enrolled in schools are not employed in works that require full day such as work in garages, workshops or construction whereas a part of them work in services such as hawkers or in agriculture.
5. Children often work within sectors that require a lot of efforts and those that expose them to hazards. The basic sources of risks and work conditions will be clarified hereinafter.
6. Exposure of children to hazards dose not only result from the type of work they perform, but it is an outcome of work conditions, family dynamics and community circumstances (will be clarified later on in this study). Moreover, the nature of the employer has a role in exposure to hazards.

History of Child labour

The study findings showed that the majority of children started to work during the Intifada and that most of them have been working for a period between half a year and two years. The study also showed that working children (15-17 years) have been working for a period of more than two years and less than four years during which most of them shifted from one work to another.

Workplace

Children worked in many places ranging from their place of residence to neighboring places, border areas and inside Israel. This difference in workplaces is due to the place of residence of the working children. Children who live in the border areas mainly worked inside Israel and in the areas located near the military checkpoints such as Qalandia checkpoint near Ramallah, Beit Anoun checkpoint near Hebron and Zabouba checkpoint near Jenin in addition to the checkpoints that separate the districts of Gaza Strip. Furthermore, some children work in cities neighbouring to their villages such as Ramallah, Hebron, Gaza and Jenin.

Nature of the Employer

Most of the children (69% / 55 children) are employed in non-family enterprises while 34% (19 children) are employed in family enterprises and about 7% (6 children) were self-employed. Moreover, the circumstances of the working children differ in the three different areas. While children who are self-employed work in selling and portering, many of those who are family-employed work in agriculture, fishing and within small family enterprises such as small shops and animal husbandry as well as begging. On the other hand, the rest of children work in industry, construction and services. It was noted that hazards to which children were exposed are not restrictive to non-family employers but the severest hazard and exploitation sometimes come from the household itself.

Although the self-employed children are also exposed to danger and exploitation, they are in general characterized by a high degree of independence that enable them to escape types of severe danger. Some children obtain better treatment from non-family employers as shown in the following case:

Like my father!

S. (14) says: I found a garage where I can learn a craft; the garage owner takes care of me, teaches me the craft in an excellent manner and gives me 300-400 shekels a month for transportation and pocket money. After six months, I will become a worker in his garage with a monthly salary. The garage owner treats me as if he were my father.

This does not undermine the significance of dangers that other children who work with non-family employers are subjected to. Furthermore, sources of danger are not restrictive to children who are employed in the informal sector, in fact these sources include children employed in the formal sector as well.

Third: Sources of Hazards for Children

Children stated the sources of hazards that surround them in their workplaces, within their households (discussed in a previous part) and at schools

Income Generated from Child Work

The monthly income of most children ranges between USD 65-170, and a minority of children has monthly income over or below this range. Children with higher income usually work in begging or in free works (porterage on checkpoints, owner of a stall or employer of other children). In general, the monthly income of children working as hawkers, children working on their own or children working by “piecemeal” fluctuates. Other of those working children suffer from the low income due to the fact that they work through middlemen who take the biggest share of the income. This situation is most prevalent among children working in agriculture particularly in Israel, and young children especially those working as hawkers for some employers. Children who have the least income are family workers or workers in different industrial workshops.

Despite the fact that material income was the basic return for child work, some children take their wage as in-kind alternatives (vegetables, fruit, tools, stationery, food stuffs).

Decision Making about Children Income

Most of the children declared that their work is important for the household and that they work for the benefit of their households. In 76% of the cases, the child worker gives his/her income to the head of the household who spends as see fit. In few cases, the child contributes in the decisions related to the disbursement of the income. This phenomenon more clearly spreads out among households headed by women. It was striking that 15% of the children make decisions about their own income. Many of these children are characterized by a high degree of independence, aspiration and enthusiasm for life. A number of these children independently work. In contrast a very small number (only two cases) are deprived by their households of any pocket money.

The children expressed these different modes in the following way:

- *My father settles the account with the employer,*
- *I give all the money to my father and he gives me 0.5 sheqel everyday,*
- *I give my income to my mother and sometimes to my brother to spend on himself at the university because he needs money. Anyhow, everything is all right,*
- *My father is in charge of spending on the house,*
- *I earn 900 sheqels, of which 200 sheqels go to transportation and I give the rest to my parents to spend,*
- *I give my income to my eldest sister who spends on the household and saves a part of the money that comes from my salary and the charities that we receive from people or Al-Zakat Committee,*
- *I buy things for myself and give the rest of the money I earn to my mother,*
- *I save a part of my income and give my parents the other part to spend on the house,*
- *I help my parents in their daily expenditures and help my father in buying the house needs.*

Sources of Hazards in the Workplaces

Through the workshops and the intensive interviews conducted, children mentioned the following works as the most hazardous:

- **Exposure to death or injury:** Children working at the crossing borders, military checkpoints, in Israel or in the Israeli settlements referred to their exposure to death, injury or disability by the live bullets of the Israeli army and settlers.
- **Exposure to sharp and hazardous instruments:** Such as exposure to the cutting tools of aluminum or iron in the workshops or factories, tools of kneading in the bakeries or in the plastic factories, using the machine of packing spices or wood cutting machines. Added to this, some other simple machines that may cause damage like those used in agriculture or by cars mechanics.
- **Exposure to contaminated substances:** Working children are exposed to contaminated substances resulting from aluminum and plastic filings, dust of stone cutters and chemical substances of detergent factories. In addition to that, children working in the agricultural sector are exposed to pesticides and poisonous insects and rodents.
- **Lifting up heavy loads:** Such as in portorage at the checkpoints or working in gas distribution stores and car repair workshops.
- **Exposure to falling down of heavy loads:** Children employed in stone cutters and car repair workshops are most exposed to such dangers.
- **Exposure to sexual abuse attempts, drugs addiction and to collaboration with the Israeli intelligence agencies.**
- **Illness and chronic diseases** due to exposure to severe cold, contaminated substances or heavy loads.
- **Exposure to traffic accidents** especially among children working as peddlers, seasonal sidewalk vendors and drivers without licenses.
- **Exposure to battering** by the employers or other workers.

Moreover, many children have been exposed to work injuries such as cutting of some fingers, backache or arthritis, chest diseases, cold, trembling, etc. Following are some specific examples of the children's experiences:

Aspects of hazards that working children are subjected to (in children words)

- *I injured my hand by the machine while I was mashing chickpeas.*
- *While I was working, my leg broke and the doctor said that I need a surgical operation; when I save money, I will do it.*
- *I fell down from the tree while I was picking oranges and broke my leg.*
- *While I was sewing a blouse, I injured my hand and needed two stitches; the employer has not given me a leave nor increased my salary.*
- *My work is very hazardous and I am frightened of the aluminum cutter but the employer does not take this into consideration.*
- *I was exposed to many risks such as battering, humiliation and shooting by the Israeli settlers.*
- *There is no health insurance; this boy lost his four fingers by the bakery machine.*
- *The machine itself drew two fingers from my hand and the master told me that there is no insurance.*
- *The meat grinder ground the hand of our friend to here "to the wrist"*
- *The gas jar fell on me and my toe does not move, and up till now I have not gone to the doctor; I always have fears that the gas jar may explode in me.*
- *Long work hours in agriculture caused to me back pain and slipped disk.*
- *There is danger in going to work due to the occupation, closure and the soldiers who prohibit us from reaching the field.*

Maltreatment and Exploitation in the Workplace

Exploitation of children in the Palestinian labour market was manifested in many aspects. It was shown that one-half of the working children are below 15 years of age, and work for long hours that exceed 6 hours a day and reaches 14 hours for some children. Children are also exploited through low daily wages (USD 2.0- 6.5). Working children are also subjected to battering and humiliation and (sometimes) they are obliged to carry out illegal work. The children expressed the aspects of maltreatment and exploitation by the statements listed below in the following box:

Exploitation of children in the labour market (in children's words)

- *I feel myself exploited in work because it is humiliation; I am still young and I should not work.*
- *I am exploited because they employ me long hours and give me little money.*
- *Some children are beaten in their workplaces.*
- *I work at my father's and do not take money, my father spends on me.*
- *I work as a tailor, the employer exploits me and makes me do other works such as the cleaning of the factory and making coffee and tea.*
- *I sleep two hours on the sea, I am not satisfied with my situation in the work because it is tiring; I can not move my fingers from cold and if I get ill, I sleep one week in bed.*
- *I get up at three at dawn and do my homework and study my lessons before I go to school. After I have my lunch, I meet my friends and we together go to the Almatekh (shooting field), I sneak in for about half an hour (for collecting bullets). Entering the shooting field is dangerous and I may be subjected to shooting by the Jews or they may arrest me; but thanks God, I haven't been shot although they once shot at my friends and me but we escaped.*
- *I go to the barricade and work in helping the cars to pass the checkpoint by accompanying the driver who pays me one-half of a sheqel to 2 sheqels; I do this job till ten at night then I go home and sleep.*
- *I work more than six hours a day and earn 10 sheqels and this is not enough for me.*
- *Work circumstances are bad and difficult.*
- *The person in charge treats us in a bad manner.*
- *We always stay for a late time at work.*
- *The wage is little.*
- *The work is hard and hazardous.*
- *Sometimes he hits me.*
- *Shouting and scolding in case of failure.*
- *The employer scorns, hits and scolds me and insults my parents.*
- *The employer scolds me and sometimes deducts from my salary*
- *He hits and scorns me if he is nervous.*
- *When I make a mistake, the employer hits me.*
- *When I make a mistake my uncle yells at me and sometimes hits me.*
- *The employer is moody and treats the workers with nervousness and fires them for any reason.*
- *The employer cheated me and did not pay my right.*
- *He makes me smuggle goods across the borders.*

Moreover, some children find excuses and justifications for the maltreatment they receive and sometimes blame themselves:

- *The employer treats me well to a certain extent and if I make a mistake, he scolds me and sometimes deducts money from my salary,*
- *The treatment of the employer is good and he treats me in an excellent way; but when he becomes upset he hits and insults me.*

As mentioned above, the maltreatment during work hours is not limited to non-family members but it is more manifested among children working with family members such as the grandfather, father or uncle.

- *If I come late to work, my father hits me and sometimes helps me,*
- *My uncle hits me if I make mistakes,*
- *My grandfather deprives us of pocket money if we do not work hard.*

At the same time, some children look at their employers with admiration and respect and find in them the father of whom they are deprived:

- *My boss is like my father; he treats me in a very good manner,*
- *My boss is the best; he teaches me everything,*
- *He treats me as his son; he takes care of my food and asks me about my health.*

Work Hours and Breaks

The majority of the children work more than six hours a day and a part of them work for more than ten hours a day. Some of them work during weekly holiday. Some children declared that they go to work early in the morning (at four in the morning) and a number of them at night such as children working in fishing. Some other children are obliged to stay overnight in their workplaces such as those children who work in Israel or in some factories. In few cases this happens due to the unconcern of the parents as for the place where their children sleep. In addition, some children are part-time workers particularly children who are still enrolled in school and who usually work on school holidays or after school. In general, children take breaks during work hours to have their meals or drinks.

Table 7: Number of Daily Work Hours

Less than 6 hours	6-10 hours	More than 10 hours
28%	65%	7%

From the employers' perspective on child labour, they stressed on the economic factors that "push" children to work, on one hand, and factors that attract the employers to employ them on the other. It was obvious that the economic changes represented in the deterioration of the economic structure have led to a certain degree of stagnation and unemployment of the households' heads. Consequently, that led to increasing the demand on the cheap labour represented in child employment that is ready to work in inferior works.

The following statements illustrate the views of employees, discussed through three workshops convened with employers in Gaza, Jenin and Hebron:

- *Children's families are in dire need for money,*
- *The Intifada and the economic situation increased the employment of children especially that the number of drop out children have increased,*
- *These children will never be doctors or a teachers if they continue schooling? Anyhow, this work is better for them (learning a craft is better than schooling),*
- *The majority of the children, as a result of the political circumstances, had dropped out of schools and worked to help their parents in earning the daily expenditures, these children have borne distress early in their life.*
- *In old times, if you wanted to employ somebody for 100 sheqels, you would not find anybody because in Israel an employee earns two hundred but now there is no money, a worker at my workshop takes only 25 sheqels,*
- *Under these bad circumstances, employment in Israel is not available, children are obliged to work. If a child comes and asks for work, what will he work? You let him work and give him 10 sheqels out of sympathy with his bad situation only,*
- *Low wage of child; if you give the child a small amount of money, he gets satisfied but the elders do not,*
- *Health insurance is not available for children or others in our workshops, and it is easy to get them to work on daily basis,*
- *The education policy adopted by the UNRWA and the Ministry of Education makes children drop out,*
- *Working children come from broken families.*

The Impact on Children's Physical and Emotional Well-being

Several children deal with the issue of their work in a realistic manner and analyze their situation within the context of the economic and familial necessities and that gives them a certain extent of psychological and physical stability in their life. Nevertheless, the child employment phenomenon gives rise to physical and psychological complications for other children.

Among the physical effects mentioned by the children are the following:

- *I feel non-stop pain in my back,*
- *My eyes get tired from embroidery,*
- *People hit me,*
- *I have difficulty breathing,*
- *I tremble and I have pain in my fingers,*
- *I became nervous.*

Many children also have feelings of fear and insecurity and they expressed that state by the following:

- *I am afraid of working on the high walls,*
- *I am afraid of big stones, machines and cutters,*
- *I am afraid of the Jews and of getting smashed by a car,*
- *I am afraid of street children because they ask me to go with them to the house,*
- *I am afraid because work with animals is dangerous,*
- *Because I may be fired from work at any time,*
- *Because electricity hits me while my hands are wet,*
- *One bears many insults.*

The children also have feelings of depression and frustration and when they were asked about their feelings when they get up in the morning, many of them expressed their feelings in the following way:

- *In the morning, I have feeling of pessimism,*
- *I feel sad because a child like me works,*
- *I am sometimes pessimist and frustrated and sometimes I am happy,*
- *I feel desperate,*
- *I sometimes wish to die,*
- *I am bored and pissed off because I have to get up early,*
- *I have physical fatigue and exhaustion,*
- *I am bored,*
- *I became complicated,*
- *Annoyance, fatigue, sleepiness.*

As for the social effects, the following sources of worry were mentioned:

- *Work is not good for my reputation,*
- *People who say that work is shame make me hate my work,*
- *I hate people's attitude towards work of girls,*
- *Children want me go with them home.*

During the various workshops, a number of children described the characteristics of working children in a manner that expresses the social problems that accompany child labour:

- *Youth who have problems with their parents,*
- *Youth who have fights with their friends,*
- *Youth who sleep outside home,*
- *Youth who steal because their parents do not give them pocket money,*
- *Somebody beaten in work,*
- *Youth whose fingers are cut off by machines, cutters and meat,*
- *Children who cheat at school.*



Relationship with School

Attitudes towards School

As mentioned above, 30% of working children are enrolled in schools while 70% of them dropped out. Among the school dropouts, one-fifth expressed an interest to return to school if given a chance; more than 80% show no interest in that. The following table shows the reasons mentioned by children for their expressed attitudes. As the table shows, children have many more reasons for not being interested in school.

Reasons for interest in school

Because I love school
Because I like to resume my study
To become better at reading and writing
I like to study at the university
Because I hate work

Reasons for not wanting to return

Treatment at school
I hate teachers because they mistreat me
Because teachers beat me
I do not like school
Other students laugh at me because I am not smart
I hate examinations

Feelings of inadequacy
I cannot read nor write
I lost my chance because I had dropped out of it three years ago
Because my academic level dose not allow me to return

Need to support family
I am the only breadwinner
I have to support my family
I want to help my father
I want to pay the rent of our home

Alternative opportunity
I have no money to cover the costs of schooling
Spending on the household is more important than school
Learning a craft is better than school for the future

Parents' Attitudes

The drop out phenomenon is linked with the attitudes of parents towards schooling. 70% of the children declared that their parents are concerned about their education while 30% declared that their parents are not. The findings also showed the existence of several patterns in dealing with children's education. Some parents make sure that their children go to school, as is the case of about 30% of the working children who are still at school. Other parents do their best to keep their children enrolled in school but they cannot. Fathers expressed their attitudes about this issue by saying:

- *We want him to keep at school but he does not,*
- *I made all efforts and I regret why he did not continue his study at school.*

Some parents do not care whether their child goes to school or not as shown by the following statements:

- *I cannot tell them what to do; if they succeed that would be good for them and if they do not they are free,*
- *I am not ready to pay 60 sheqels for training courses.*

On the other hand, some parents force their children to leave school due to their belief of the uselessness of education and that the job opportunities for a child having a skill is better than graduating from the university. Moreover, some parents believe that children have a duty towards their parents and consequently they have to leave school and work for them:

- *Why not leave school and work, let him help us.*

Girls suffer from additional discrimination due to parents' attitudes towards the education of girls:

- *In our area, girls don't go to school after the sixth grade. Girls have to leave school and stay at home.*

The obstacles that confront disabled children are doubled because it is difficult to find appropriate schools for them, in addition to the distance of such schools from home and the difficulties of transportation.

- *The boy was studying in a school for the disabled and he dropped out in the sixth grade and no body followed up. He no longer wants to go to school and he does not like it. The school is far from our village. The second school was uncomfortable and students are maltreated.*

The work load causes a deterioration in the performance of children and makes them think of dropping out of school and fully engage in work as expressed in the following case:

I try to study

Z. (12 years): Now I do not study because I do not have time, if I have money, I will employ another person instead of me in order to study. I do not do my homework at home I do it at school. First, in the morning I help in the distribution of milk and go early to school where I study and do my homework. None of my brothers and sisters has completed more than the ninth grade.

Mistreatment at School

Children spoke about several mistreatment events at school especially those related to battering, making fun of and encouragement to leaving school. Children expressed these events in the following phrases:

- *Teachers hit students,*
- *Teachers hit me approximately once a month,*
- *I was suspended from school due to a problem I had with the teacher,*
- *There is battering and insulting at school.*

Mistreatment is accompanied by some teachers' carelessness towards children work and their dropping out. 65% of the children who are still enrolled in schools said that their teachers know that they work while 35% said that their teachers do not know about their work. When children were asked about their teachers' attitudes towards their work, 25% of them said that teachers do not encourage them to work, 25% said that their teachers encourage them to work and 50% declared that their teachers are unconcerned whether they work or not. The working children expressed that by the following:

- *The teacher tells us that we are not good for school; work is better for us,*
- *Teachers have no opinion about my work; my relationship with my (female) teachers is good and I do not have any problems,*
- *Teachers are unconcerned about any one,*
- *Teachers do not say anything to me because they do not know that I work,*
- *Female teachers do not know that I work and they encourage me to study.*

Children find many justifications for dropping out of school including:

- *We left school because we hate it and not because we are needy,*
- *Education is for those who have money,*
- *Schooling is for nothing,*
- *I am not good at school,*
- *Education is for the rich and not for us.*

A child (14 years old) narrated this anecdote for the first time in front of his family that was investigating the reason for his drop out of school:

- *At the beginning of the academic year I was sitting in the front row but the teacher moved me to the back row and said: "I don't like you". The teacher had a son in the same school, so I hit him and the teacher hit me; I fought with the teacher, broke his car and left school without telling anybody and no body asked me why.*

On the other hand, a working girl child expressed her teachers' sympathy with her:

- *Because the teachers know our situation and that our house was demolished, they do not embarrass me because I work; they encourage me to study.*

All these factors, accompanied by the unstable political situation lead to increasing of hatred towards school making children link between their decision to school drop out, invasions and their participation in the Intifada activities (including throwing stones on the Israeli tanks).

Yes for Invasion, no for school !

A. (14 years) lives in one of the camps. He says: We go from school to work, later, if we have desire for studying, we do if not we don't. I like invasions and I like to see tanks in order not to go to school. For me, I prefer to leave school because teachers tell us "you are illiterate people not fit for school"; if this situation continues, nothing will encourage me to stay at school.

Teacher's attitudes

Regarding teachers' attitudes towards child labour, it was noticed through a workshop conducted for the study purposes, the existence of a communication gap between students and teachers and absence of institutional mechanisms for identifying students having potential for dropping out and entering the labour market. There was also lack of follow-up mechanisms even for the identified working children. It was also noticed that teachers give all types of justifications for battering and scolding students. Lack of counseling and follow-up programmes in schools reinforces the problem. Teachers described these situations as follows:

- *Child labour is usually discovered by chance or as a result of considerable deterioration in children's school progress.*
- *Teachers sympathize with working children.*
- *It is not wrong for children to work; work is better than begging or stealing; work develops positive qualities in children in addition to bad qualities. Therefore it is necessary to take care of these children.*
- *Child labour gradually and negatively impacts the children educational achievement, leads to repetition and finally to dropping out.*
- *There is a complementary role between the household and the school in the educational process and in reducing the burdens of the children.*
- *The household has a fundamental role but some households are careless towards their children.*
- *There is a gap between students and teachers due to the lack of openness and frankness between both sides.*
- *It is difficult to rehabilitate some children because they are completely illiterate (do not read and write); it is better for them to learn a craft.*
- *It is difficult to take care of all students because the number of students in a class exceeds 40 and a teacher has 28-30 teaching periods a week. Caring needs great efforts and teachers do not have enough time for tackling all the students' problems in addition to their own problems; they care within their limited capabilities.*
- *Punishment is necessary in time; battering is one type of punishment but it should be carefully worked out; but battering is openly practiced in schools.*
- *Teachers confirmed the importance of counselors in schools because their presence solves many of the problems. But, unfortunately, counselors partially exist in schools or they are engaged in teaching classes and this distracts them from following up students' problems.*
- *Some teachers hold the responsibility of children drop out because they do not give their available time for students (they only use 10-20% of their work hours).*



Conceptual & Language Dimensions for Child Labour

Values and Concepts

Concepts that working children believe in and language they use are affected by the reality of being part of work at an early age, the reality of labour market, and the child peer group. It should also be stressed that not all children have these conceptual elements and that the existence of one element does not deny the existence of another element that seems contradictory with the first one. These concepts and phrases are manifested in the following points:

1. *Shouldering Responsibility*

Many of the children have the feelings of shouldering the responsibility and solving the problems of their families and they work driven by these feelings. Shouldering the responsibility is accompanied by adherence to duties as most of the children blame themselves for joining the labour market. They express their deep adherence of the importance of their duties towards their families especially towards the symbols of authority in the household (father, grandfather, uncle). Moreover, some of them express their feelings towards supporting the family to an extent that they believe that their work forms the most important link in saving the family from the state of poverty it is suffering from. Consequently, some children feel that their responsibility stems from their feeling of their importance in solving the problem. Within the framework of this feeling, children divert from practicing activities that are normally carried out by children:

- *I do not have time for recreation and playing,*
- *I go from home to work and from work to home,*
- *I sometimes see my friends in the yard; they do not work and ask me to go out with them but*
- *I refuse because I have work and committed and I cannot leave my work.*

2. *Tendency to Independence*

A number of children tend to show a degree of independence through their work by working independently away from any employer. The number of children who are self-employed and who employ other children is not large, and such children usually focus on economic independence and freedom of decision-making. Meanwhile, some other children tend to focus on their personal independence during work hours but they are linked with an employer who drives them to the street and control their source of livelihood. Some of the children expressed their tendency to independence from their households through the following phrases: I hate when they ask me where have you been, why are you late and with whom have you been.

The King of the street

A. (11 years) and despite his young age and small size, he is smart and self-dependent to a degree that his father is not any longer worried about him. Everyday he buys things and sells them in the market. He has a group of friends, some are older and others are younger than him but he has control over all of them and thus, they call him (the king of the street). He is well-known good for his relations with the big merchants in the market who love and respect him. He buys the goods and distributes them over the children who sell them, and at the end of the day they come back to deliver the yield and take their wage. He rewards himself by buying fried chicken and shawerma sandwiches at the end of the day. Despite that (the king) says "I feel oppressed but I have to work in order to build my future".

3. Exaggerated Self-image

It seems that the income earned by some children and their belief in their ability to change and reform matters and their actual capacity to rebel against school and home have led an exaggerated self-image. Some of these children believe that they are (men) and have decisions and that they have the ability to change anything they want. A number of these children believe that they are the decision-makers at home and that they have significant influence on the neighborhood they live in. They express this feeling of “empowerment” negatively as they are convinced that they can violate the law and escape punishment, and sometimes positively when they start preparing a programme for organizing their neighborhood issues and matters in addition to organizing voluntary activities for carrying out those programmes. This tendency is enhanced by having money and ability to spend it in the way they want, as expressed by one of the children’s mothers:

- *He plays with money, he can do whatever he likes.*

Some parents reinforce and exaggerated self-image:

- *Our son is a man, why not work,*
- *He is treatment, we depend on him,*
- *Smart, nobody is smarter than him.*

4. Tendency to Violence

Some children tend to justify violence and accept using it in order to solve their problems. This belief is reinforced through a complex interpretation of the status of society at large. Many of these children believe that they live under harsh conditions, and that violence is an acceptable means by member of society.

- *We are living in a country where the strong swallows the weak,*
- *We are living under the jungle’s law,*
- *If one is not a leader, he will be lost in this country.*

5. Self to Justification

Some children justify the situation they live in saying that parents are right even if they mistreat them and teachers know what is best for them even if they scold them, and the employer punishes them only when they make mistakes. Despite that, the majority of the children (87%) negatively perceive the child labour phenomenon, 4% consider it a positive phenomenon and 9% consider it as both negative and positive.

Children express this tendency for justification by using the same terminology used by adults:

- *Work is better,*
- *Work is not shame,*
- *This is life,*
- *This is the family’s enterprise and I have to maintain it, this is my fate and fortune, what can I do?*

Children use their own language in justifying for themselves and for the society what they perform, children-beggars for example say:

- *We earn our living, we do not beg.*

Another girl child who works in her grandfather’s farm on daily basis does not label what she does as “work”, and says:

- *I help, I do not work.*

6. Low Self-esteem and Feelings of Abandonment

A number of children feel ashamed of their familial situation that made some of them withdraw from other children and commit themselves only to work and home. Such children justify what they consider inferior by accepting this reality or through self-blaming:

- *This life is not ours,*
- *We are forbidden to live,*
- *I am foolish.*

This is accompanied by a feeling of abandonment from family and community:

- *Nobody cares,*
- *They are not interested in us.*

As for other children, this feeling creates a degree of defense mechanism, as working children gather and form a “gang” that gives them moral and psychological support and makes them feel that they have value.

7. Pessimism and Fatalism

These feelings are widespread and reflect a general state in society. But feeling this intensive depression and expressing it with this strength raises serious concern. The following statements reflect the severity of the problem:

- *We live a desperate life,*
- *Surely, we will die as martyrs,*
- *I feel I am going to die when I am twenty years old,*
- *We live in a cemetery,*
- *I wish martyrdom,*
- *I wish martyrdom or invasion comes,*
- *Damn this life,*
- *Our life is worthless,*
- *I lost everything,*
- *Death is better than this life,*
- *One is disgusted with this life and became desperate.*

These statements confirm that political and social violence, which children are subjected to, absence of national freedom and the difficult economic circumstances negatively impact the psychological aspect of children and make them depressed. Some of them do not try to improve the quality of their life and consider salvation beyond their capacity. These feelings lead to actions considered by society as immoral:

- *I vent my anger through smoking,*
- *We spend the night long playing cards,*
- *I tour girl schools everyday.*

8. Use of “Adult” Language

A number of children express themselves by phrases and words considered by the society as exclusively adults' language. These phrases and words are linked with the size of responsibilities borne by the children and the adults' environments in which they live. Moreover, some of them became daring in using the language used by the adults especially that is related to sexuality.

9. Ignorance of Rights and Laws

Children were asked if they are aware of “child rights“, 8% answered that they are not, 42% answered that they know a little, while 50% said that they do not know anything about those rights. In addition, less than 3% know about the laws and legislation related to child labour in Palestine, 15% know a little and 83% do not know anything about these laws. It was clear that ignorance of laws, legislation and rights is not limited to children but also includes the employers, parents and schools teachers. One of the working children expressed his feeling of bitterness resulting from the loss of child rights:

- *In fact, we have no rights,*
- *This is not a country of rights, the strong swallows the weak.*

A female working child expressed her understanding of the issue by saying:

- *I do not know anything about my rights as a child, I think our rights are lost, but what can I do this is my fate.*



Children Aspirations and Recommendations

This part of the study presents the aspirations of children and what they consider as appropriate interventions for addressing child employment, which is an issue that touches them more than any other and has social and economic consequences on the community, in general.

First: Aspirations and Dreams

Despite the children's attempts to play adult roles, values, concepts and expressions, they are drawn back to their childhood and its innocence the moment we honestly and deeply talk to them. These children have dreams and aspirations and some of them admit that these dreams are great and cannot be realized but what is a child without dreams and aspirations.

Upon asking the children what they want to be when they grow up, their answers expressed what every child aspires to desire in success and self-realization. The following shows what they aspire to be when they grow up:

Doctor	Community leader	Teacher
Construction contractor	Farm owner	Mayor
Official	Perfumery saleswoman (owner)	Electrician
Workshop owner	Agricultural engineer	Nurse
Pilot	Accountant	Businessman

Some other children have specific and clear aspirations, they know exactly what they want to be when they grow up:

- *Mathematics teacher,*
- *Science teacher,*
- *Pediatrician,*
- *Self-employed blacksmith,*
- *Women perfumery owner.*

Many of these aspirations are related to the works these children perform:

- *I want to open aluminum factory,*
- *I want to buy a donkey and a cart and sell stones for the factories,*
- *I want to have a boat for fishing,*
- *Own a carpentry workshop and have workers,*
- *Open a workshop for repairing cars.*

And sometimes the aspirations link between the reality in which the children live and their estimation of what they may realize:

- *I want to be a maid, save money, build a house and then get married and become a housekeeper,*
- *Cleaning contractor,*
- *Sheep merchant,*
- *Successful craftsman.*

Other children aspirations express their concern for independence and formation of a family

- *I want to have my own business and to get married,*
- *To marry and become a mayor,*
- *I want to be a factory owner and employ workers,*
- *Big business manager having a lot of money,*
- *Have my own shop and work alone,*
- *Build a house and then marry.*

The dreams of some children do not surpass the reality they live in, small dreams but too big to be realized in their childhood:

- *The most important thing in my life is to own a bicycle,*
- *I wish I had an Atari game.*

Children are children, what does any child in this world want more than “to play”:

- *I want to play with my friends,*
- *I have the right to play,*
- *I sometimes escape from work to play,*
- *I don't want to do anything, I only want to take care of my study and play with my friends.*

A number of children believe that their dreams are “impossible”:

- *I wish to be a teacher or a doctor but I cannot because I work and I have not completed my school and I will stay forever in the field of car repair.*

Second: Children Proposed Interventions

Although the children could not express in-depth understanding of human rights and child rights and do not have clear knowledge about laws and legislation, but in identifying the required interventions, they showed that they are the most capable to identify their problems and propose solutions. This fact affirms that any intervention for tackling the issue of child labour will not succeed if the responsible party has not thoroughly examined the complex nature of children's lives and through their viewpoints and participation. It was revealed through the children proposals that it is impossible to solve the problem of child labour or reduce its incidence and intensity (its effect on the well-being of children themselves), unless all aspects and factors causing it are (directly and indirectly) examined. This includes the State's policies and programmes, workplaces, role of the governmental and civil society organizations, educational system and familial factors.

The following recommendations were proposed by children:

State Policies and Programmes

- *Provision of jobs for parents*
- *It is the duty of the State to provide security, education and child welfare*
- *Meet children's needs in order not to be obliged to work.*
- *Fair wages for the workers due to the fact that costs of living are higher than wages*
- *Provide health insurance.*
- *Establish institutions that care for needy children.*
- *Provide financial assistance for households headed by unemployed persons.*
- *Help the needy, spend on houses and distribute coupons.*
- *The Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA do not provide worthy assistance.*
- *The Ministry of Social Affairs does not follow-up on our issues and we do not know anything about it.*
- *What Ministry of Labour? We do not know anything about it.*

Educational Policies:

- *Helping some students to return back to school.*
- *Vocational Training: teaching a specific craft, establish institutions that provide for children vocational training.*
- *Teaching crafts such as electrician or mechanics.*
- *Provision of improvement courses in some fields of study.*
- *Make sure that other students do not drop out.*
- *Give pocket money to the brothers in order to encourage them to stay in school.*
- *Establish a boarding school.*
- *Teach Internet and computer.*
- *Hire better English teachers for children.*

Role of Institutions

- *Providing clubs for spending free time.*
- *Establishing sports clubs.*
- *Organizing voluntary work to clean up and beautify neighborhood.*
- *I like to know about my rights.*
- *Nobody follows-up on our problems, where are the institutions?*

Workplace

- *Monitoring the employers.*
- *Following-up work casualties by the institutions.*
- *Setting up laws as regards child labour and applying them.*

Household

- *I want somebody to talk to my father and counsel him.*
- *My mother cannot do by herself; she needs assistance.*
- *My brothers and sisters are many and they need a lot of money.*
- *My father and mother never agree.*
- *My father is always ill why nobody treats him.*

Third: General Recommendations

The recommendations of the research team are compatible with the children recommendations. In this study, the recommendations would be presented in a general manner in order to give the organizations operating in this field the opportunity to set up detailed and integrated interventions, taking into account the study information and data, and children's recommendations:

1. Palestinian institutions lack full control on the structural factors related to the labour market and economic performance. The majority of these factors are external and imposed by the Israeli occupation and practices that aim to destroy the Palestinian economy. Once the siege and occupation are over, a major obstacle will be removed in trying to address the child labour issue and other child rights violations. The suffering of the Palestinian children is primarily due to the

fact that the Palestinian people generally lack freedom and independence. Consequently, local and international organizations operating in the field of human and child rights have to make efforts in an attempt to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian children caused by the Israeli occupation.

2. Since there is a correlation between the degree of the household's destitution (or feeling of destitution) and the child employment, the provision of work for the household adults will be an important factor in tackling this problem.

3. Since there will not be rapid remedy for the phenomena of poverty and unemployment, that will place considerable responsibility on the formal and informal social support organizations.

4. Seeking to apply the labour laws, forms a crucial factor as regards to dealing with the problem of child employment, and improving the situation of the working children and prohibiting them from working in hazardous works.

5. The school also has a crucial role, as an institution directly working with children or as an institution whose role may be efficiently developed (in coordination with the relevant institutions). School may become a focal point in following up the cases of children who are in danger of dropping out of school. Moreover, the application of policies that prohibit battering and insulting of children became more significant than in any other time before under the violent culture spreading as a result of the exposure of children and their households to the occupation violence and the continuous hardships. At the same time, the role social counselors and their real and systematic awareness of the phenomenon is of great importance. This requires the clarification of the counselors roles and responsibilities. It also requires awareness raising among them on the principles of human and child rights. In addition, the existence of a fund for ensuring the material needs of children in danger of entering the labour market is a necessary issue. Some children suggested linking the assistance provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the UNRWA for the households with children in school age with the remaining of their children at school in addition to offering additional material incentives for them. Dropping out of school has a correlation with the nature of academic curricula adopted in the majority of schools. This fact calls for stressing the importance of vocational training and amending the dictation approach adopted by many teachers. In addition, some children face additional learning challenges regarding study, the matter that affirms the importance of resuming their educational achievement and helping them to improve in subjects they find difficult.

6. The family circumstances of children play an important role in the life of children. As clarified above, a number of the households that have working children live under difficult economic situation. Furthermore, such households suffer from additional problems represented in challenges related to the role and existence of the father as an effective member of the household, and the reproductive burdening role of the mother who takes care of a large number of children, the ill father, the disabled children and the elderly. This mother is also obliged to work in order to provide for some of the basics through her work inside or outside the household. Therefore, any programme for intervention in children will not work out if it only focuses on children themselves, without focusing on the household as an integral unit. The suffering of many children are resulting from the suffering of the household. Much of the direct suffering relates to broken families and domestic violence. Consequently, it is very important to focus on the role of the father particularly in case of his existence in the household. In addition to the provision of a work for him, the social and psychological counseling programmes within the household and in particular for the fathers have become vital. Moreover, taking into account the heavy burden resulting from the reproductive role of the mother is of vital importance. The large size of the household places additional burdens on the mother who, in many cases, is obliged to push her children for work. Therefore, appropriate training for mothers (and fathers) forms an appropriate security network if accompanied with a comprehensive intervention programme taking into consideration the nature of challenges confronted by these households.

7. Of no less importance, is awareness and understanding of legislation and rights and developing the institutional role of relevant institutions (governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in the fields of human or child rights or trade unions). This may be achieved by working on awareness programmes, strengthening the monitoring mechanisms at present and following up the circumstances within which children are employed. However, these institutions have to take into consideration the energy and experiences that children have and transform them to positive elements for the sake of the children themselves and the community. Moreover, many of the children need health care especially the ill ones and follow-up in cases of disability.

Fourth: Observations and Conclusions

Based on all the information and analyses obtained from children, their families, employers, teachers, and researchers⁴, the following conclusions may be reached:

1. The youngest and weakest members in the community carry out the most strenuous work and are subjected to tremendous hazards in order to keep their families at the subsistence level. The majority of these children are employed in physically, psychologically and socially hazardous works and of least returns.

2. Child employment is a complex, multifarious phenomenon. It is directly linked with the economic crisis represented in the unprecedented poverty and unemployment rates brought about by the Israeli aggressive practices against the Palestinian society and the deliberate siege and destruction for its economic structure and the livelihood of its individuals. Furthermore, the deteriorating security situation and the violence to which children (directly and indirectly) are subjected to puts children in a psychological state characterized with frustration loss of hope in the future, encouraging them to enter the labour market. These factors have not only led to increasing demand on child employment, but also forced children to accept the most hazardous jobs.

3. The incidence of child labour phenomenon depends on the state of the labour market with its supply and demand dynamics. The supply of child labour increases when households live in a state of economic destitution, or absence of the father role due to unemployment or illness making the households drive their children to labour market or in a way decrease their concern in school. On the other hand, employers become more attracted to child labour as cheap labour without any legal rights. They are not obliged to provide for them health or life insurance. In addition, children work longer hours and under difficult circumstances. Children also accept works that are not accepted by fathers for being considered inferior and inappropriate for adults.

4. Having mentioned that, it must be noted that child employment did not appear only with the economic crisis that emerged during Al-Aqsa Intifada, but it has deep roots in the society through the years of occupation and it has social, familial and institutional dimensions. Child employment proliferates among the poor households (that suffer from absolute or relative poverty) and sometimes extends to children of the middle class. That is because a number of the poor households employ their children to keep their families at the subsistence level and to satisfy their basic needs while other children work to improve the household living conditions and maintain its middle class situation.

5. Moreover, child labour is sometimes correlated with certain family characteristics. The households that have working children are characterized not only with economic poverty but also with human poverty as education rates are low and reproductive rates are high among them in addition to the proliferation of the early marriages and school drop out. Moreover, some of the households with working children (as poor households) suffer from a state of social isolation. Of course, these characteristics are also correlated with economic deprivation.

6. Although a number of the working children lived in broken families (particularly in Gaza Strip), the majority of the households researched lived in harmony and cooperation (particularly in the West Bank) and the children of these households work out of responsibility and their feeling of their important role in the family.

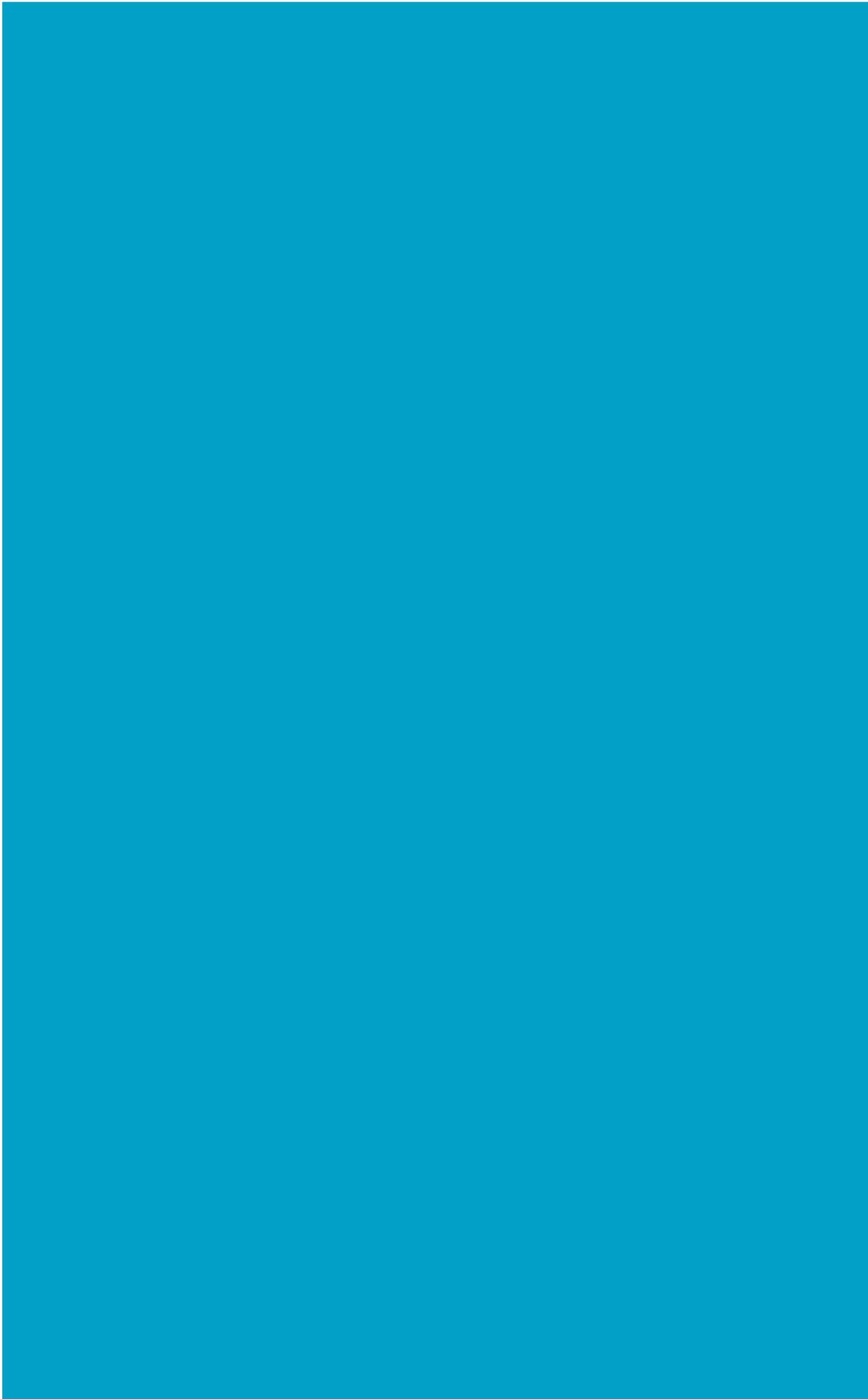
7. Child labour is to a certain extent accompanied by a weak or negative role of the father. In some cases the father is completely absent due to death, desertion or polygamy. In other cases, the father suffers from illness or chronic disability and in some other households, the presence of the father is a destructive element especially if he is addicted to drugs or alcohol or if he advocates child labour as a value.

8. In some cases, child labour is widespread within the some family. In other cases, one child is selected to enter the labour market. The (most qualified) child for selection might be the one deemed by the family as the physically weak, or not fit for schooling, or the one who gets in trouble the most. In contrast, the selected child might be the one who is considered as "street smart", and responsible.

9. Despite the risks that circumvent child employment and exposure to maltreatment, which is a main feature in their life, some of the children find some positive features for their work and others find justifications for their engagement in work at early age. For many children, helping the household or learning a craft is sufficiently important. For others, it is more than work they spend their free time in what they deem as something useful (instead of hanging out), find friends and the opportunity to be accepted from others. Other children find material and moral support in their working children friends as they spend their free time together and feel comfortable with them because of their similar social background and living conditions.

10. The school has a vital role in the involvement of children in the labour market. Many of the working children stated the school as a factor that drove them to drop out of school and enter the labour market. School here is not limited to teachers and staff but also the school role and curricula and the extent to which the educational trends and the special programmes are compatible with the children needs and the related costs of enrollment. That is also related to the estimation of parents as regards the alternative opportunity because many of the parents and teachers believe that it is better for the child to drop out of school and enter the labour market as a better investment for his future than schooling. Despite that, it is important to recall that a number of the working children are still enrolled in school and try to balance school and work. But such children need special attention before they submit to the pressures and drop out. Moreover, not all school dropping out children were of weak performance, on the contrary, many of them were smart but their involvement in the labour market gave rise to their drop out. Certainly, this does not cancel the expelling role played by teachers through battering the students and scolding them verbally and psychologically. This also does not cancel the responsibility of the Ministry of Education due to its weak policies and programmes related to children who have potential to dropping out or those who already have dropped out.

11. The Ministry of Social Affairs has had a role in providing limited material assistance for households with working children (as poor families listed within the framework of social assistance). But none of the children or of the households mentioned any role for the Ministry of Social Affairs, keeping in mind that these households suffer from problems that require much more than cash assistance. Although the study have not addressed that side, it is important to discuss the Ministry's programmes related to children and more specifically to working children, as it may have a crucial role in this field. It also should be understood that the majority of children (particularly in Gaza Strip) referred to the role of the UNRWA in providing material assistance to households in hardships.



12. Moreover, the majority of the children are unaware of their rights and the Palestinian laws related to child employment. Asking them about the role of the Ministry of Labour in their life and in dealing with their problems, the children emphasized that they do not have any ideas about the Ministry's role and that it has never had any role in their life.

13. It was obvious that the poverty of the working children extends to poverty of access to resources and institutions and characterized by marginalization. The children expressed the absence of any role for the local and international organizations working in the field of human rights, child rights and workers' rights in their life. They also expressed their unawareness of the existence of such organizations.

14. In attempting to address the issue of child labour, design programmes and interventions, it should be stressed that despite the existence of common factors that drive children to work and attract employers to employ them, there is a significant variance among these children and their households' circumstances (as above-mentioned). Every case is unique, and should be addressed without preconceived notions or inaccurate generalizations. Also, dealing with this phenomenon should not be based on myths and unsubstantiated statements but should depend on in-depth research for each case.

It is certain that these general recommendations may be only applied if relevant institutions could work on elaborating on them within an integrated and balanced programme based on the findings of this study and other scientific studies. Moreover, these institutions must be highly responsible and base their work on serious coordination and distribution of roles in an integrated manner. These institutions must also seek to benefit from the experiences of children and their families.

For these institutions to be able to assist working children, they must abandon "sloganeering", admit inefficiency in reaching the most needy children, and avoid hiding behind "external" constraints. Palestinian working children are demanding real and immediate action.

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Appendix

Workshops Conducted for the Research

Consultation Workshop with Child - Related Institutions

District	Date	Number of Children
Ramallah	December, 2002	11

Focus Groups with Working Children

District	Date	Number of Children
Ramallah	October, 2002	7
Gaza Strip	December, 2002	15
Hebron	January, 2003	7
Jenin	January, 2003	6

Focus Groups with Employers

District	Date	Number of Attendants
Ramallah	January, 2003	6
Gaza Strip	December, 2002	14
Hebron	January, 2003	6
Jenin	January, 2003	7

Analytical Workshops with the Field Researchers

District	Date	Number of Attendants
Ramallah	November, 2002	7
Gaza Strip	November, 2002	5

Focus Group with Teachers

District	Date	Number of Attendants
Ramallah	January, 2003	13