

Rural Child Labour in Peru

A comparison of child labour in
traditional and commercial agriculture



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The Foundation for International Research on Working Children (IREWOC) was established in 1992 to conduct anthropological qualitative research on child labour, to raise awareness and influence policy concerning this complex issue. IREWOC is an independent research institute with a focus on policy-relevant research on working children, street children and children who are generally excluded from mainstream childhood development.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2008 IREWOC carried out its research project *Rural Child Labour in Andean Countries*. The project gathered information on the various forms of rural child labour in the Andean countries Bolivia and Peru, and identified the worst forms among them. A compilation of the research reports was published as *Rural Child Labour in Andean Countries: problems and solutions* [Van den Berge & Baas 2009].

This current report documents the research conducted in Peru, where a comparison was made between child labour in traditional and commercial agriculture. To study child labour in traditional agriculture, fieldwork was carried out in two small indigenous communities in the department of Cusco in the Peruvian Highlands (*Altiplano*): Ccasacunca and Cusibamba. Fieldwork in the commercial agricultural sector (mainly export) was carried out in the department of Ica, specifically in and around the villages of Santa Cruz de Villacuri and La Venta. In addition, the interventions of two local NGOs working to improve the situation of rural child labourers were studied to explore the possible solutions.

The first fieldwork period in Cusco was carried out in close collaboration with the Peruvian NGO *Centro de Estudios Sociales y Publicaciones*¹ (CESIP), specifically with their local department in Cusco. Through their educational projects CESIP has good contacts with teachers and representatives of several indigenous communities in the department of Cusco, and was able to help us with access to the communities of Ccasacunca and Cusibamba. Their educational interventions were studied to determine the possible effects on the phenomena of child labour in the villages. In the agricultural export sector in the department of Ica access to the field was facilitated by the NGO *Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Ica*² (CODEH-ICA). CODEH-ICA has a special program that focuses on child labour in the region, called *Programa de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores*. One of the objectives of this program is to organise working children and adolescents into local groups. Several of these groups include working children and adolescents working in the agro-export industry. CODEH-ICA arranged contact with these specific child and adolescent labourers, who, in their turn, introduced their communities and the plantations where they worked. The different aspects of the *Programa de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores* were studied to establish its achievements regarding improving the situation for rural child labourers in commercial agriculture.

The methodology used was a combination of anthropological and sociological techniques, depending on the specific characteristics of the community and on the limitations of the project planning. Participant observation was used in the communities in Cusco. The researcher participated in as many aspects of the daily lives of the children as possible, for several weeks. In practice this meant

¹ In English: Center for Social Studies and Publications

² In English: The Human Rights Commission of Ica

herding the cattle and harvesting together with the children, being in school with them and visiting their homes. Participation was easier to employ in Ccasacunca; this qualitative methodology was more difficult to achieve in Cusibamba³. In Cusibamba, most time was spent in the schools, rather than the village, providing a lot of information about rural education and the relationship with child labour. In Ica, because of time limitations, the time-consuming qualitative methodology was replaced with the more sociological methodology of semi-formal interviews. Children and their parents were interviewed. Also, several visits were made to the homes of the working children and several plantations were visited to observe the working conditions and to talk to the plantation supervisors. To get an insight into the child labour program of CODEH-ICA several meetings of the organised local groups of working children were attended.

The main research questions were:

- What are the living and working circumstances of child labourers and their families in rural areas of the Andean region?
- Why do these children work?
- What is the impact of their work on their physical, emotional and cultural development?
- What is already being done by governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of child labour in rural areas? How can pro-active policy regarding rural child labour in the region be improved?

The report begins by describing the general living conditions in the four different communities. The second chapter presents the working activities of the children, what the main implications are, reasons for children to work and an identification of the worst forms. The third chapter outlines the different interventions implemented by NGOs to improve the situation of rural child labour in the research regions. The last chapter concludes with the main results and recommendations.

³ In general the local population seemed more reserved in Cusibamba than in Ccasacunca. In Ccasacunca I was properly introduced to the local authorities by the NGO CESIP; in Cusibamba this was unfortunately not the case and I remained a mystery to many people. Cusibamba also has a violent history caused by the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso); many inhabitants have been murdered by this terrorist group. It has resulted in a deep-rooted suspicion towards outsiders.

Chapter 2

Context

2.1 Child labour in Peru: the numbers

The available child labour statistics on Peru are quite outdated, and stem from the 2001 National Inquiry about Living Conditions and Poverty (ENAHPO) of the National Institute for Statistics [INEI & OIT 2002]. In 2008 the INEI carried out a new national study on child labour, but no official statistical data has been made available to this date. However, in an interview with the representative of the ILO/IPEC program in Peru it was revealed that the new statistical data shows that child labour has increased since 2001.

In 2001 the ENAHPO registered almost two million children, between 6 and 14 years old, who were involved in economic activities; this amounts to 29% of all children in this age group [INEI & OIT 2002]. Considering that the same inquiry registered 16% of these children working in 1996, we can conclude that child labour has increased significantly in a short period of 5 years. In fact, between 1993 and 2001, child labour in Peru tripled [ibid:25]. According to INEI estimates, the percentage of working children between 6 and 17 years old would be 32% in 2005 [ibid:25]. The economic activities of children between 6 and 11 years old has specifically increased, while working adolescents have increased relatively little [CPETI & MTPE 2005, referring to INEI & OIT 2002]. There is little gender difference in the numbers of child workers; 54% are boys and 46% are girls [CPETI & MTPE 2005].

Of all working children in the age category 6-17, the vast majority (70%, 1.4 million children) are stated to work in the countryside with a clear overrepresentation of children between 6 and 13 years old⁴. Child labour is particularly present in the sierra⁵ regions of Peru and the majority of working children and adolescents are involved with farming or herding. Although the vast majority of working children work in rural areas, almost all studies on child labour in Peru concern urban child labour. Of the few studies that have concerned rural labour, the focus has been traditional agriculture, mainly within the family context [see among others Alarcon 2001, 2006]. These reports, however, don't present any statistical data. Additionally there are no studies at all on child labour in the commercial agricultural sector in Peru. The 2001 INEI study is the sole source of numbers of rural child labourers in the research areas. This study claims that in the department of Cusco 38.6% are economically active, and that this number has increased enormously in comparison with 1993 (9.3%). Additionally, the study states that in the department of Cusco 38.6% of all children combine work and study, 4.7% only work and 53.8% only study (2.8% don't do anything) [INEI & OIT 2002:23]. In Ica 13.8% of the age group 6-17 are economically active; again a significant increase in comparison

⁴ Ibid; page 26

⁵ The *sierra* regions, or highlands, are those that lie in the Andes Mountains; they comprise high plateaus known as the Altiplano, and high peaks.

with 1993. Of all the children only a low percentage (9.8%) combine work and study; only 3.5% work and at least 83.9% only study (2.8 % neither work nor study) [INEI & OIT 2002:28].

2.2 Child labour in Peru: legislation

Peru is governed by several national and international laws, rules and conventions, which relate to child labour. Peru has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁶ and ILO Conventions 138⁷ and 182⁸. The Peruvian state initially established a minimum working age of 12, but in the modification of the Children and Adolescents Code in 2001 it was raised to 14. The Peruvian government has established various official agreements to protect children from illegal or dangerous forms of child labour. There are basically three forms of national legislation that regulate the work of minors. First of all the Political Constitution of Peru declares in article 23 that “the state protects especially children, mothers and handicapped persons that work” [CPETI & MTPE 2005:22]. Secondly there is the 1991 Penal Code, which states in article 128: [T]he person who exposes the life of a person that is placed under his or her authority, (...) such as to submit this person to excessive or inadequate work (...), will be sanctioned with one to four years in prison. In case the agent has a parental link with the victim, or the victim is younger than twelve years old, the sanction will be two to five years” [CPETI & MTPE 2005:30-31]. Third, there is the Child and Adolescent Code. This Code specifies that children who work for another person, may do so at 15 years old if the work concerns non-industrial agricultural work; at 16 years old in cases of industrial, commercial or mining work; and from 17 years old onwards in the fishing industry. For all other forms of work children must be at least 14 years old. A judge, however, has the authority to make exceptions and allow a child to work at 12 years of age, but only when the activities involved don’t harm the child’s health or development, don’t interfere with his or her school attendance and do allow his or her participation in formation or orientation programs” [‘Nuevo Código de los Niños y Adolescentes’ 2000 Art. 51]. Young workers of 12 years old are only allowed to work when it concerns “light activities”, which are unfortunately not specified in the Code.

Regarding our research then, it is important that in the context of traditional agriculture children may work from 12 years onwards, where light activities are concerned. On the large scale exporting plantation in Ica, the commercial agriculture, one must be 16 years of age, and between the ages of 14-16 one can work with a permit.

Additional to the age criteria, the Code establishes a set of norms regarding working hours and the workload. Children between 12 and 14 are allowed to work for only 4 hours a day, during the daytime, with a maximum of 24 hours a week. The work of youngsters between 15 and 16 may not

⁶ Article 32 deals specifically with child labour and states “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.”

⁷ This Convention obligates member states to “pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to progressively raise the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons”.

⁸ This Convention urges member states to “take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”.

exceed 6 hours a day and 36 hours a week. Work during the night, i.e. between 19:00 and 7:00, is only allowed if authorized by a judge and for boys and girls between 15 and 18 years old, for a maximum of 4 hours a day. Economic activities that take place under ground, that involve toxic substances, that require carrying heavy weights, that are in any way harmful to a child's health and moral being, are prohibited for all children below 18 years old. ['Nuevo Código de los Niños y Adolescentes' 2000 Art. 56-64].

2.3 The worst forms of child labour

Upon signing the Worst Forms Convention 182 Peru committed itself to an identification of the worst forms of child labour in Peru, identify where exactly these forms exist and periodically examine and revise this list (article 4 of Convention 182). However, the Peruvian government has, to date, no such official list. Nevertheless, several studies have shown the existence of various types of child labour in Peru that should be listed as a worst form of child labour. For example, the presence of sexual exploitation of children is mentioned in various regions. Also several forms of hazardous child labour are mentioned that form a clear threat to the health, safety or morals of children, such as mining and quarrying [Alarcon 2006], [Ensing 2008a] and [Van den Berge 2008]; children working on markets and garbage dumps [Cesip 2002, 2004, 2006] and [Ensing 2008b]; domestic labour [ILO 2003] and children working in the brick industry. Children working in agriculture are conspicuously missing from these studies. Regarding child labour in commercial agriculture, there is one ILO/IPEC document that mentions participation of children in this sector as one of the “most dangerous activities” [ILO/IPEC 2003]. Risks and consequences mentioned are: working with chemicals, extremely physically heavy work, working in climatologically extreme situations, and the negative effects of rural child labour on school participation. However, the document neither mentions any sources (qualitative or quantitative), nor does it make any references to comparable studies. This current research helps answer the question whether or not rural child labour in traditional and commercial agriculture in Peru should be listed as a worst form of child labour.

2.4 Child labour in Peru: the institutions

In 2003 the Peruvian government created the National Directive Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (CPETI), with the intention to coordinate, evaluate and follow up the efforts made towards the gradual eradication of child labour. Its most important task is to enhance the National Plan of Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour with detailed plans of action [CPETI & MTPE 2005]. The Ministry of Employment presides over the CPETI and has two main programs for youths. Through the Direction for the Protection of the Minor and Security at Work it authorizes work for adolescents and it implements awareness raising campaigns concerning the child labour problem. Through the program “Projovent” the ministry facilitates adolescents with limited possibilities with their entrance into the labour market. Working children and adolescents are given the opportunity by the Ministry of Education to attend school with an alternative schedule

(Programme EBA⁹). Finally, the Ministry of Public Affairs is responsible for the protection of CPETI; for example, it must implement inspections on the work floor to check if the norms are respected. According to the ILO/IPEC representative for Peru, eradicating rural child labour has been specified as one of the key priorities of this Plan. However, no concrete actions to eradicate rural child labour have as yet been implemented.

There are a number of ministries and governmental institutions that are in charge of supervising the population below 18 years old. The Direction of Children and Adolescents (DINNA) falls within the Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES), which is in charge of the programs for the wellbeing of children and youths, and which participates in the CPETI. The DINNA coordinates the *Defensorías Municipales de Niños y Adolescentes* (DEMUNA), or Children's and Adolescents' Ombudsman, a public service that defends children's rights and denounces crimes committed against children. The program "Street Educators" also falls within MIMDES, and is a program that was formerly coordinated by the National Program for family Wellbeing, INABIF¹⁰. The goal of the program is to assist working- and street children at the national level and to mediate between them and institutions that work with children and adolescents. In the same way, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MININTER) coordinates "Colibri", another program focused on working children on a national scale.

In 2005, former president of Peru, Alejandro Toledo, initiated the *Juntos* program. The *Juntos* program consists of a monetary grant for poor families if they remove their children from the working process and if they send their children to school and take them for regular medical checkups. The program is available for those families living in extreme poverty and with children under the age of 14. Several government bodies lend their support to *Juntos*, including a representative for the President, the Ministries of Health and Education, MIMDES and the Ministry of Finance.

In general, there is a clear focus on the young population of Lima by all national institutes, while youngsters in rural areas are relatively ignored. In the research communities, the only governmental program we found that was directly involved with child labour was the *Juntos* program in the community of Cusibamba.

2.5 The research setting

Ccasacunca is located in Anta province in the department of Cusco at an altitude of 3640 metres. All inhabitants (approximately 200 families) are primarily Quechua speakers. Spanish is spoken by the majority as a second language. Access to the community is difficult as public transport only reaches the community in the weekends. There is one public phone and no computers in the community, let alone an internet connection.

The land is suitable for certain specific types of agriculture and cattle breeding; potatoes, quinoa, broad beans, wheat, barley and corn is grown. The land used for agricultural and life stock farming activities is communal, and is divided among the inhabitants (*comuneros*). Most farming activities

⁹ Educación Básica Alternativa

¹⁰ Programa Integral Nacional para el Bienestar Familiar

are self-subsistent. Public works (*Minka*) are decided upon in the General Assembly of the community; they can include such activities as road improvements, building construction and cleaning public areas. Another traditional form of labour in the community is *ayni*, solidarity labour: this is work that one *comunero* does on the land (*charca*) of another *comunero* with the expectation that this labour will be compensated in due time. There are few, if any, possibilities to generate monetary income in the community itself. Cash is received through the sale of agricultural surpluses at neighbouring markets in the weekends, and through migration, especially in-between sowing and harvesting seasons.



Figure 1: The location of Ccasacunca in the district of Anta

The kindergarten and the primary school in Ccasacunca function only in the mornings. The primary school has four teachers and 134 students, of which 69 boys and 65 girls. The secondary school is in Izcuchaca, which is a 1.5 hour walk. Few parents choose to send their children to this school because of the distance. Besides the school, there is hardly any presence of state institutions; there is no police or any official administrative representative.

The second rural village, Cusibamba, is situated at around 20 kilometres from the departmental capital Cusco; it is classified as 'very poor' [Plan Peru 2007:5]. The village (180 households) is situated at approximately 3640 metres. Agriculture and life stock farming are the main means of production. Like in the village of Ccasacunca, the majority of people working in Cusibamba do so on

communal lands and mostly for self-subsistence. As in Ccasacunca the more traditional working relations of *minka* and *ayni* are practiced to produce food for the *comuneros* and to contribute to the development of the community. Just as in Ccasacunca, to make an income most *comuneros* are forced to look for paid jobs outside the community: one study estimates that 19% of the district of Ccorca migrates temporarily, especially the male heads of households with their adolescent sons. A typical job would be porter for tourists. Tourist agencies in Cusco travel to these rural areas in search of cheap labour who can carry the backpacks of tourist that go hiking to the ruins of Macchu Picchu.



Figure 2: Location of Cusibamba in the district of Ccorca

In 2007 the primary school had 117 children (49 boys and 68 girls). All of these students were enrolled as native Quechua speakers. The school has 5 classrooms; the 5th and 6th grades receive classes together. The distribution per class was:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6
Students	29	22	26	16	14	10

The school has 5 teachers, all living in the departmental capital Cusco. As transportation from Cusco to Cusibamba is highly problematic, they are often forced to stay overnight at the school during the week or leave early in order to catch a bus, which is what they usually do. The nearest secondary school (*colegio*) is in Corcca, at a distance of 1 hour. Just as in Ccasacunca this makes parents

hesitant of sending their daughters to school. Some children were sent to godfathers or other relatives living in urban centres, but in a number of cases, and this was found in Ccasacunca too, their hosts mistreated them and they were made to work.

In addition to the school there are three governmental programs active in the community: Pronats (food supplements to the school), Juntos (monetary grant for families that send their children to school) and Vaso de Leche (milk distribution). These are administered through the school.



Photo 1: Doing research in Santa Cruz de Villacuri

The province of Ica was identified as an important research area to study child labour in the commercial agricultural sector, as it is the home of the largest agro-exporting plantations of Peru. The most important products are asparagus, grapes, paprikas, mandarins, onions, avocado, artichoke and cotton. Peru is the main exporter of asparagus in the world.¹¹ Santa Cruz de Villacuri, more popularly known as ‘Barrio Chino’, is a small village along the highway from the departmental capital Ica to Pisco. It is located in the *Pampa de Villacuri*, which is an immense desert area, populated with several large plantations and small settlements inhabited mostly by the labourers of these plantations. Most houses in the village are built from cardboard and straw, some of them donated by the Red Cross after the 2007 earthquake destroyed many of the original homes in the village. There is no running water and people have to buy their water from trucks. According to the governmental census, “El Barrio Chino” has 534 inhabitants and 180 houses.¹² However, this is probably not accurate as the majority of the residents are labour migrants living temporarily in the village during the different harvesting periods of the vegetables and fruits.

Almost all inhabitants are wage labourers, selling their manual labour to the surrounding plantations. In addition to wage labour in the plantations, a few families make their money in small

¹¹ http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departamento_de_Ica

¹² <http://desa.inei.gob.pe/mapas/bid/>

trades, such as small stores, a restaurant, an internet café and a clothing store. There is a market on Sunday afternoon, where locals and sellers from nearby villages come to sell their products.

There is one kindergarten and one primary school.¹³ The school was severely damaged by the 2007 earthquake and several classes are still given in emergency makeshift rooms. The nearest secondary school is in the departmental capital Guadalupe. As there is no public transport to or from Santa Cruz de Villacuri, most of the adolescents hitchhike their way to school. Some have money to pay for the long distance busses, but these do not officially stop in Santa Cruz de Villacuri as there is no bus stop. Other children choose to walk, which takes two hours.

Just as in the two rural communities in Cusco, there is no official state representation in Santa Cruz de Villacuri. It has no mayor, no police force or even a garbage collection service. There are some NGOs, such as the Red Cross and Save the Children, who have implemented housing projects, the construction of a public water system and the construction of a children's playground.

La Venta Baja (600 families) is situated in the district of Santiago, south of Ica on the highway Panamericana Sur. Although this is still desert area (and therefore dry and hot), it does not have the sandy environment of Santa Cruz de Villacuri. It has several small parcels of land where cotton and several other products are grown. Whilst most families earn a living as wage labourer on the surrounding plantations, a sizeable group is involved in small trades such as running a store, a restaurant, etc. The houses of several of the economically better-off families are made of brick. The houses of the less fortunate are made of mud and cardboard. It has a kindergarten, a primary school and also a secondary school, with respectively 135, 352 and 394 children enrolled. In both Santa Cruz de Villacuri and La Venta many children complained about the comfort of the classrooms; with outside temperatures sometimes rising to 40 degrees in summer, the classrooms can become unbearable.

La Venta has the best healthcare of all research communities; there is a medical post with a doctor. For more serious conditions and accidents there is a health centre in the departmental capital Santiago (20 minutes by car). The nearest hospital is in Ica, which is a 45 minute drive. There have been some NGO interventions in La Venta, especially after the earthquake. Just as in Santa Cruz de Villacuri some cardboard houses were constructed and a project was initiated to build a playground for children. This playground was set up in collaboration with the Human Rights NGO Codeh Ica, which organized the children to take an active role in the construction of the playground. Codeh Ica still works in this village with a group of organized children called the Working Farmer Children and Adolescents (CANNTA¹⁴).

Taking a close look at the research communities there are several similarities. First of all, they all suffer from poor educational facilities. In the rural communities of Cusco, most classrooms are in a very bad state and basic amenities such as running water, sanitary services and sewerage systems are lacking. In the rural communities around Cusco this is a result of their remote locations. In Ica

¹³<http://escale.minedu.gob.pe/escale/inicio.do?pagina=335>

http://escale.minedu.gob.pe/escale/consulta/buscar/listar_centros.do?metodo=listar

¹⁴ CANNTA: Campesino Adolecentes, Ninos y Ninas Trabajadores

the schools were in a bad condition because of the 2007 earthquake. Secondary schools are absent in all villages except for in La Venta.

Secondly, the quality and accessibility of healthcare services is very problematic. This is reflected by the poor health conditions of the inhabitants, of the children in particular. Especially alarming is the level of undernourishment; in Cusibamba undernourishment was as bad as 100% of the children enrolled in the primary school.

There are of course also several differences. The remote distances of the rural communities of Ccasacunca and Cusibamba result in a lack of basic services such as electricity and potable water. A striking difference is how people make a living. In the rural communities Cusibamba and Ccasacunca all inhabitants are involved in agricultural activities for self-consumption. They also carry out some other communal labour, such as *minka* and *ayni*, to produce food for families in need and to contribute to the development of the community. Opportunities to earn a wage, to be able to pay for education, healthcare or other basic costs, are completely lacking. The *comuneros* are therefore forced to occasionally migrate for cash-paid jobs. On the contrary, in Santa Cruz de Villacuri and La Venta, the vast majority of inhabitants are wage labourers, often themselves migrants from other departments. They sell their manual labour to the plantations and earn a daily wage. This difference results in more extreme poverty in the rural communities, but also has a decisive influence on the different forms of rural child labour and their consequences, as will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Activities and Risks

It is known that child labour appears in many forms. As stated by Unicef [UNICEF 1997:24]:

In reality, children do a variety of work in widely divergent conditions. The work takes place along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the work is beneficial, promoting or enhancing a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation and rest. On the other end, it is palpably destructive or exploitative. There are vast areas of activity between these two poles, including work that need not impact negatively on the child's development.

While there are a number of studies that highlight the differences in urban child labour, there has been little attention for the differences in child labour that exist in rural settings. This is especially true in the context of Peru where only two studies were carried out on rural child labour. These studies specifically concern child labour in traditional agriculture [see Alarcon 2001, 2006]. There are no studies on child labour in the commercial agricultural sector in Peru. In this research project we have investigated child labour in two extremes of rural Peruvian reality: in traditional and in commercial agriculture. This chapter will show that the specific types of activities children perform in these two contexts take on many forms, and therefore also involve different risks and explanations.

3.1 Activities in traditional agriculture

3.1.1 Herding

One of the most frequent activities of children and adolescents in the rural communities of Ccasacunca and Cusibamba is herding. In this particular location it concerns cows, bulls, sheep, goats, llamas, alpacas and vicuñas.¹⁵ Herding involves several activities: guiding the cattle to the grazing grounds in the morning and back home again at the end of the day, keeping the cattle together by running after animals that wander off, separating fighting animals, watching over the safety of the cattle as they might have accidents (falling in rivers, stepping into holes), be eaten by predators or stolen. These herding activities are mainly carried out by young children and adolescent girls.

It was striking to note that practically all children under the age of 12 in the rural communities were involved in herding tasks. Sometimes they are accompanied by their mothers, but usually they

¹⁵ The *vicuña* (*Vicugna vicugna*) and the **Alpaca** (*Vicugna pacos*) are South American camelids that live in the high alpine areas of the Andes; they are related to the llama.

go on their own. I saw children as young as 5 doing this work on their own. There is little gender difference between the specific activities; both young boys and girls are equally involved. The gender difference becomes pronounced when children reach adolescent age; by around 12 you find more girls than boys performing herding activities. Boys at that age start to increase their activities on the land. Adolescent boys also tend to migrate more to work in nearby villages, whereas the girls stay close to home, performing domestic and agricultural tasks.

Young children and adolescent girls get up at 4 am to prepare breakfast. The children help to prepare the food, usually potatoes, and bring this breakfast with them as they get the cattle out and guide them to their grazing grounds, which usually takes them 2-3 hours. This task is fulfilled before school begins, from 5-8 am. After the school day (at 1 pm), children eat lunch at home, or bring food with them, and walk back to the grazing ground. Upon arrival they check the cattle and watch them until about 6-7 pm. The hours involved make it near impossible to combine herding with secondary school, especially since the secondary schools are so far from the villages, and so herding adolescents are mostly out-of-school.



Photo 2: Herding girl with a sling and a boy with and pickaxe, on their way to work

3.1.2 Agricultural tasks

Another set of activities in which children are very active are agricultural tasks on the family land. These tasks were seen relatively less during the research, as it wasn't harvesting or sowing season. However, children were occupied in several maintenance tasks. While working on the land children have a variety of tasks depending on the season: ploughing, sowing seeds, several maintenance tasks and harvesting the vegetables. During the fieldwork period I asked children to make drawings of the tools they use during these different agricultural activities.

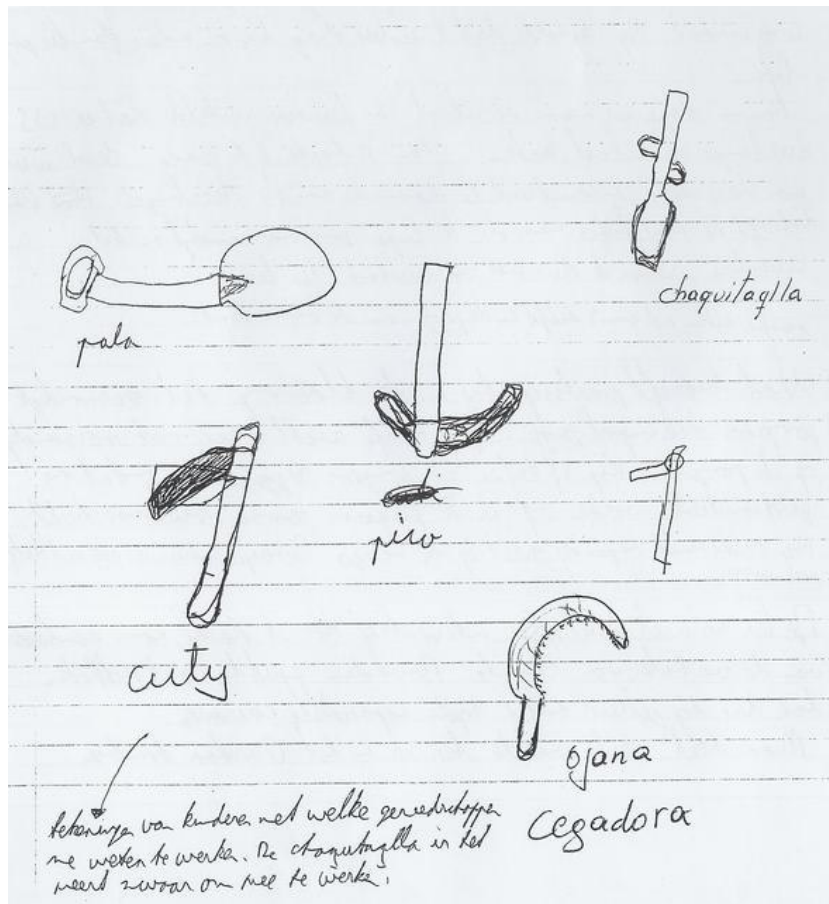


Photo 3: Tools used on the land - identified by the children

The *pala* is a shovel, used for ploughing and sowing; the *pico* and *cuty* are types of pickaxes used for ploughing, just as is the *chaquitaqlla*. The *ojana* is used to cut hay for *adobe* and to feed the guinea pigs. Children mostly agreed that using the *chaquitaqlla* is the most strenuous activity, followed by the other ploughing instruments. Children sometimes are given tools suitable to their own strength and height (photos 4 and 5).

The number of hours worked on the land varies according to the agricultural season. During high season children work all day on the land alongside their family. Their day starts at 4.00 in the morning and ends at sunset at 20.00. A large part of the agricultural peak season takes place during the school vacation (December - February), but also somewhat overlaps with school time (March - April). Teachers report that there are a lot fewer pupils in school during the harvest and sowing seasons. During the agricultural off-season, children simply perform occasional maintenance tasks, before and after school hours.

Boys as well as girls help out on the land. Whereas adolescent boys are above all involved in the physically more demanding tasks, adolescent girls are more involved in the light tasks and with preparing the food which is taken to the land. In the younger age categories this difference is less pronounced: also young boys are supposed to help in preparing food and carry out some light agricultural tasks. In the agricultural off seasons, adolescent boys carry out the maintenance tasks (such as soil preparation), while the adolescent girls go herding.



Photo 4: Adult with chaquitaqlla, girl with pico



Photo 5: Boy with ojana

3.1.3 Domestic tasks

In addition to agricultural tasks and herding, children are involved in domestic tasks. Children carry out a variety of activities; the most significant include cleaning the house, washing clothes, looking after siblings and cooking. Domestic tasks are often entwined with agricultural tasks in several ways. During the harvest children cook in the mornings before leaving for the family land. Even in the agricultural low season children have to cook their own food to bring with them whilst herding. Then, when children come home from school their parents are often still working on the land, requiring them to again prepare their own lunch (*almuerzo*). While on the land, children who are too young to actively help in agricultural tasks look after their younger siblings. When parents are out on the land, children are required to care for their siblings, clean the house and wash clothes.

The young age at which young children become responsible for domestic tasks is striking. It was not uncommon to see 5 year old children looking after their younger siblings, carrying them around, and preparing them dinner. Children from the age of 5 years old already know how to light a fire in the stove, peel potatoes and prepare them. During my fieldwork period in Ccasacunca a boy of 5 years old and his 4 year old brother cooked me a meal because their parents were on the land working. Age and gender are decisive factors for the number of hours spent on domestic chores. Especially young children and adolescent girls are involved in domestic chores.

3.1.4 Other tasks

Agriculture is the only productive sector in these rural areas, and so children in the communities of Ccasacunca and Cusibamba spend most of their time on agricultural tasks. In both communities there are two small stores, where the children from the families that own them sometimes help them out before and after school. However, here it concerns 5 children aged 6-15. Sometimes when the parents go to the neighbouring villages to sell their surplus products, their children join them to help them sell. This happens during school holidays or in the weekends.

3.2 Combining activities

The vast majority of children and adolescents in the traditional agriculture sector carry out several agricultural and domestic tasks on a daily basis. This results in a busy day of both productive and educational activities. For example, a typical day for 7-year-old Ernesto from Ccasacunca is as follows:

He is the oldest of 4 children; he has a younger brother of 5, a sister of 3, and a sister of 2 months. He lives with his mother; his father only comes in the weekends as he works in a governmental road repair program in a nearby city. Ernesto's day begins at 4.00 when he gets up and helps his mother with the cooking. He also makes sure his brother and sisters wake up and get dressed. After drinking tea and eating toasted corn, he gets the cattle out and brings them to the grazing fields with his brother at around 5.00. His mother stays behind to do domestic chores such as washing clothes; occasionally she goes to the family land to do some maintenance or to cut some hay for the guinea pigs they keep in their house. Ernesto arrives at the grazing fields at about 6 am. Then he returns home, changes his clothes and goes to school at around 8.00, taking his brother with him. School hours are from 8.30 - 13.30. When school is out he goes back home. Often his mother is still on the family land, which means Ernesto has to cook *almuerzo* for himself and his brother. After *almuerzo* he sets out and goes to check on his cattle. He arrives there at around 15.30. He watches the animals, checks on his brother and does some of his homework. He stays there until sunset and then takes the cattle back home again. At home his mother cooks while Ernesto and his brother do their homework and play a bit. Then at 20.00, exhausted from their day, they fall sleep.

All activities increase in intensity during school holidays. In class one day, the children were asked to complete the following sentence: "During my holidays I" It became clear that holidays involve a lot of work for these children. Some of the answers were:

- I took the sheep to the mountains
- I harvested wheat
- I worked on the land
- I helped my mother with the cooking
- I travelled to sell our barley
- I washed my clothes and helped my mother with the cooking

3.3 Risks children face during their tasks

Children have different complaints, especially about the herding and agricultural activities. Some of these complaints have to do with the negative physical consequences, liked sprains and getting hurt by the animals. Working on the land causes muscle aches. 14-year-old Mariela from Ccasacunca stated: “During harvest, we do the same work for several days in a row. We have to finish as otherwise the vegetables will go bad, so its work, work, work. These days you wake up with muscle aches and blisters on your hands”. A boy from Cusibamba added: “During harvest working is pretty heavy as we have to get up at 4 am and work until 6 pm, without a break.” One father admitted: “During these seasons we ask the best of our children. I don’t have any money to pay workers, so it’s the only way we can manage to get everything off the land in time. I know they are sometimes worn out, but it’s the only way to get the work done”.

Herding is a monotonous job. Most children stated they would love to stop herding as they are just fed up with doing the same thing every day. Edgar (11) complained: “I would really like to work in something different when I am an adult, herding is just so boring doing the same thing every day, just waiting and waiting, the day seems endless”. Joanna added: “It is so boring just sitting here waiting until the day passes”. But it can also be a taxing job. One of the most often heard complaint was the fear of children that their cattle would be attacked by predators, such as the Andean puma. 9-year-old Jorge explained: “Once my sheep was attacked by a puma, I have never been so afraid as I had to scare it off and I was all alone. I screamed, threw stones and luckily had a big stick. Eventually it went away, I hope this never ever happens again”. Narda (13): “Luckily it has never happened to me, but the worst that can happen is that a puma comes and attacks your animals. That is what everybody fears, being attacked by a puma, when you are not paying attention. My parents would kill me if our cow was eaten by a puma; we need it for when my sister marries”. Igidio has a similar responsibility: “My parents would be furious about losing our sheep as we were planning to use it for if my brother goes to secondary school.”

Cattle is the family capital. Losing such an asset would have a significantly negative impact on the family economy. The responsibility over such an asset was found to contribute to the psychological stress of the children. The combination of the different activities that children are supposed to carry out can in some cases form a heavy burden on the physical and emotional capacities of the children. Children combine work, education and domestic chores and are often exhausted at the end of the day.

Negative effects are observed in school performance. Several teachers mentioned that during harvest, many children cut classes. One teacher in Cusibamba related: “During harvest many of my students fail. When we leave in our car to go back to Cusco we see them working on the land. In that period sometimes more than half of my students don’t show up”. Although it is only two months that school and harvest overlap, it is clear that the absence from school has negative effects on the children’s educational development. In addition, children often come to school tired because of the domestic chores and labour activities in the mornings: “As I get up at 4.00 a.m., it’s sometimes difficult listening to the teachers. Sometimes I am just too tired”, explained Jorge (12), who herds his cattle every morning. Eva (10) confessed: “Yes, I have fallen asleep in school, but that’s because we have to get up very early to herd our sheep”.

3.4 Why do children work in traditional agriculture?

The few studies on rural child labour in the Andean region usually refer to the indigenous socialization process [see among others Domic Ruiz 1999; Galvez 2002; Alarcon 2006]. Through the various activities, knowledge of cultural norms and values are passed on to the next generation. Practical agricultural knowledge is also transferred: “This type of knowledge you don’t study in school, you acquire it by developing within a social context, accompanying one’s parents to work” [Alarcon 2006:111]. Our research encountered many such explanations. Carlos (33) from Cusibamba, talking about his 15-year-old son said: “My son sometimes complains when I ask him to help. But then again it’s also important he knows how to work the land, how to sow, harvest and weed”. A 28-year-old father from Ccasacunca similarly stated: “My father taught me how to work, now I pass it on to my son. It’s the way we work here, and without it we don’t eat. So by taking my son out working, he will be a bit better prepared for the future”.

The knowledge to be passed on is partially gendered. One father from Cusibamba, for example, stated: “Girls herd more than boys as this is something they will probably be doing when they are grown-ups. By beginning early they can gain experiences”. Another father stated: “Boys can wash clothes when they are young. However, when they are older they have to work on the land and girls wash the clothes, just like they will be doing in their grown-up lives”.

The predestined role of girls involved with domestic chores, however, was not necessarily cultural. A decisive factor for the participation of adolescent girls in domestic chores and herding is the absence of a secondary school. Many families prefer their daughters to perform domestic tasks and herding instead of walking for more than an hour through deserted mountainous areas to the secondary school. Parents are afraid that exposure may result in their daughters meeting boys, which in turn might result in undesired pregnancies. As stated by Santusa, the 34-year-old mother of two adolescent girls stated:

I prefer my girls to stay at home than to let them walk for 2 hours through the deserted mountains. You never know what happens there, they can be attacked and meet boys that force them upon them and get pregnant afterwards. No, it is far better they stay at home until we have a secondary school here.

Pablo (30), the father of an adolescent daughter, made a similar suggestion: “You know how adolescent boys are, they go after girls. Especially in the mountains when nobody sees them, they can do anything. That’s why I prefer keeping my girls at home”.

In his report on child labour in a rural Andean community, anthropologist Rodríguez Valle states that in Andean highlands a basic difference is made between the good and the bad child, which in Quechua would be *allin chicucha* and *qella chicucha*. He comments that these norms of good and bad are tightly linked to labour activities within the family and the community. He explains:

A good child works, helps in the household, listens to his parents and goes to school. For all these activities the child receives respect of the grown-ups and gets social recognition as an honest child, a good worker and a good person in general. On the other hand there exists the image of the bad child that is lazy, disobedient, forwards and bad in school [Rodríguez Valle 2008].

The exact tasks children are traditionally expected to perform depend on age and gender. In his research Rodríguez Valle was able to identify the following cultural age categories related to responsibilities regarding labour and education. At the *Chicucha or Chicacha* stage (7-12 years of age) children are assigned responsibilities within the labour structures of the family. Children under the age of 12, boys and girls alike, are responsible for herding the animals, helping out in tasks related to the household (cooking, cleaning, looking after siblings, etc) and looking after the younger cattle in the corral at home. From 12 years onwards children, especially boys, are supposed to help more in agricultural activities on the land of their parents or family members; girls at that age are supposed to take on more domestic tasks. At the *Waynacha or Sipascha* stage of childhood (12-15 years old) boys have to work on the land like any other adult, and additionally assume study responsibilities; the adolescent girls have to assume more important roles in domestic tasks and herding; studying is seen as less important.

These norms were found during this research. One father in Ccasacunca said:

Children have many responsibilities, school is important, but they also have to help us on our land. Of course you don't give a *chaquitaqlla* to a 5 year old. Until they are 5 children can only play, once they get older they can help in herding and they can help their mother in the home. When they are older, like 12/13 years old they can help ploughing with the *pico* and *chaquilltaqlla*. Everything depends on their age and capacities.

Another parent in Cusibamba stated similarly:

It is important that children go to school and play. But they also have some responsibilities at home: helping out on the land or with the cattle. My own kids, as they are young, help us by herding the cattle and doing some light tasks on our land. But as they get older they will be able to help us with some heavier tasks, such as harvesting.

The traditional norms on gender, age and working responsibilities seem to be changing. Several *comuneros* were found to be sending their sons and daughters to secondary school and additionally indicated that they wanted to send them to University. Several parents indicated that they thought it was more important that their children were studying than working in their free time. One father stated for example: "My parents thought that education was not that important for girls, but those are the thoughts of the old generation. I do want my girl to study and be someone in life, that's why I send her to school".

This new attitude towards education seems to be influenced by the level of education of the parents. Parents that send their daughters to higher education are often those parents that themselves have finished secondary school. But migration also seems to play an important role in changing the traditional beliefs concerning work and education, based on age and gender. Elvira (28), the secretary of Ccasacunca, has two little daughters. She is one of the few mothers in the community that can read and write Spanish. She stated:

I know some mothers don't care about their daughters' education as they think that they will never leave the community anyway. But even in the community, it is important! The only way we will be able to improve our community is through people who have studied, so

that they can invent plans to improve our organisation and our production. So everybody should send their children to secondary school and university.

Yet, despite the new insights, even the children from these families were found to be working much of the time. Economic poverty stimulates the existence of child labour in several ways. In the community itself there are hardly any opportunities to generate a cash income; but cash is needed. They need cash to pay for school and healthcare. Many *comuneros* migrate (temporarily) to nearby villages, which leads to an increase in the work of women and children. According to one mother: “My husband left to work in construction in Cusco. So who are left with all the work here? Me and my kids! Therefore the kids have to go with the cattle while I work the land. Who else will do it?” Jorgecito (11) explained: “I used to help only in the mornings, but since my dad left to work in the mine, me and my brother, we go every day with the cattle while my mom washes clothes and works the land”. Paradoxically, migration is mostly undertaken to offer better educational possibilities to the children. Paul, who works as a day labourer on a large plantation near Izcuchaca stated: “I want my children to have a better future than I had, so I want them to go to secondary school and later University in Cusco. But it costs money, so I have to go and work. I know my wife and children suffer, but we do so to be able to improve our situation in the future”. Mother Graciela with 3 children in Cusibamba added: “My husband has gone to Ccorca to work, so now we can save a bit so we can send Carlitos to secondary school and perhaps later to Lima where the schools are better. We now have to work twice as much, but hopefully it is worth it”.

Poverty also affects the phenomenon of rural child labour in another way. Many families live on the production of their land and since they can't pay for wage labourers, the families are dependent upon the labour force of their families, including the participation of the children. Carlos (27) said: “If I would have money I could hire a day labourer to do his work. But I haven't, so my son has to help me”. Martin (35), father of 6 children, added: “I need my kids to help me on the land. Here in Ccasacunca we grow what we eat, so when we don't harvest we don't eat either. And as I can't pay any labourers my kids have to help, so we can eat”.

3.5 Commercial agriculture

The agricultural products cultivated in the Rica department represent 65% of the total agricultural exports of Peru. Child and adolescent labour in commercial agro-exporting industry is a delicate subject. To be able to receive an exporting certificate from the Peruvian state, plantations must comply with the national Peruvian labour norms, which clearly indicate that children under 16 are not allowed to work in commercial agriculture.

On the large scale plantations it is usually the contractors, and not the actual owners, that are involved in contracting the labourers. They do so with the blessing of the owners. Most of the owners hardly ever come and involve themselves in issues regarding hiring labourers. One supervisor of a large scale exporting plantation, however, confided that the owner of his plantation is a US national. He is living abroad, but is consulted on issues regarding contracting minors:

I discuss contracting these kids with my boss, especially as in the US they think differently on letting children work. I tell him on the situation of poverty in which these kids live and

then I say to him that by contracting them he is doing them a favour. I tell him: 'Boss, you will give them some pocket money and at the same time you are earning money because you have to pay them less than adults; so actually it is a win-win situation'. And then he said, ok Jorge, just do what you think is right.

Many children and adolescents under the age of 16 were found to be working on different types of plantations. Most of them did not work directly on the export-plantations, but on large-scale plantations that sell their products to the export-plantations. Through this system of outsourcing, a part of the production process involves children and adolescents. In Santa Cruz de Villacuri, children and adolescents were mainly found working on large-scale export-plantations. In La Venta children were working on middle- and small-scale plantations. The specific activities, the risks and the motivation for the presence of child labour in both communities will be discussed separately.

3.5.1 Santa Cruz de Villacuri

According to the research findings around 50 children were working on the large-scale plantations of Santa Cruz de Villacuri; they were found harvesting asparagus, grapes, onions, paprikas, mangos and oranges. Most children were aged 14-16, but about 10 children were 12-13. Older adolescents confirmed that they had begun working at much younger ages, often at the age of 12. Children in the age category 12-15 are usually accompanied by other older family members or an older friend.

The children and adolescents claimed to be working on the plantation mainly during school holidays (December to February) and occasionally in the weekends. During these periods, the children get up at 5 am, and board the plantation buses at around 6. On some plantations a working day ends at 13.00 because it is then considered too hot to work. However, several children reported working until 19.00, with a break at lunchtime from 12.00-15.00. They are given workloads (*tarreas*) to be completed during the day. Some children skip school or give up going to school altogether since it is impossible to combine this type of work and schooling.

For some tasks such as weeding, planting and checking the irrigation tubes, the gender differences are not significant, but for most other jobs, boys are often preferred because of the physically demanding tasks. As one contractor said:

The work is really hard and therefore more suitable for boys. Girls get tired more easily and therefore won't be able to complete the working criteria for the day. If there is sufficient manpower on offer we prefer contracting men and boys. The work is often too heavy for girls. However sometimes we lack workers, then we do contract girls.

Children are involved in several activities, from planting to maintenance (thinning out, weeding and cleaning) and of course harvesting. They also are engaged in activities such as *pension*. *Pension* is the task of preparing the breakfast for the labourers, which they bring to the fields¹⁶. A dozen children and adolescents stated that they get up at 2 am to help their mothers prepare these meals. After cooking, the children usually go to sleep again for an hour or two before going to school.

¹⁶ As these lunches are often included in the rent of labour migrant, preparing these meals is usually referred to as *pension* (bed and breakfast) by the children.

The contracting of the children goes as follows. Subcontractors (*contratistas*) of the surrounding plantations hire a megaphone in a local store and make a public announcement that the plantation they are subcontracting for is looking for labourers. The shopkeeper also has a list of workers available for work, which he supplies to the subcontractors. These people will be contracted first before the official announcement is made through the megaphone. People pay the shopkeeper small amounts of money to be on this priority list, also adolescents and occasionally children. The shopkeeper explained: “Normally subcontractors don’t want young children, but sometimes they do in times of labour shortages. When they ask for all possible labour I also know some families that have severe economic difficulties and whose kids are willing to work”. Children and adolescents can also bring along false identity cards so as to fool *contratistas* and get hired by them in spite of their young age. Krista (14), living in Santa Cruz de Villacuri and working during school holidays on the surrounding plantations, said:

Most of the plantations don’t want to hire children, so we have to invent ways. I sometimes use the ID of my sister who works in the city and doesn’t need it. Others go to Ica to make false IDs. In this way we are able to work and earn some money to help our parents.



Photo 6: Cutting asparagus

3.5.2 La Venta

In La Venta, children and adolescents were also found working on large-scale export-plantations, but in smaller numbers. Of the group of 30 children that we studied, only 3 had work experience on the large-scale plantations (a 13-year-old girl and two 16-year-old girls). All the other children, however, had been working on middle- and small-scale plantations. The plantation owners and the

subcontractors live in the same village as the children. Therefore recruitment is mostly arranged through informal networks of friends and family. These smaller plantations, however, have a connection to the larger export-plantations as they sell most of their agricultural products to them.



Photo 7: Picking cotton

Children and adolescents mainly work during the school holidays and in the weekends. Several of them were working in the cotton fields (photo 7). Because these small- and medium-scale plantations do not produce for the export market directly, they don't need the export certificates of the Peruvian government and are less subject to monitoring by the labour inspectors of the Ministry of Labour. Since these plantations produce mostly for the internal market, they attract less international scrutiny.

On all plantations, regardless of the size, children complain about the extreme climatic circumstances under which they work. The plantations are located in desert areas, and so plantation work entails exposure to the burning sun and average temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius. In addition, the dry sand is a problem; it constantly causes irritation to eyes, ears and mouth. In an attempt to protect themselves from the elements, the workers wear long trousers, long-sleeved t-shirts, hats and gloves. They also cover their mouths and noses with strips of cloth (photo 8). By covering up they protect themselves from the sand and sunrays, but the heat remains unbearable, if not worse.



Photo 8: Harvesting asparagus; workers cover themselves from head to toe in an attempt to protect themselves from the elements.

Various statements by the children indicated that these weather conditions indeed have serious consequences for physical health:

- Working on the plantation is very hard; you have to work bending over with the sun on your back. You feel like you are being fried alive. (Juana (14) working on an onion plantation)
- The sun here is unbearable; your brain is cooking and your whole body is burning because of the heat. (Ernesto, 16, working on an asparagus plantation)
- I imagine hell is like this, with these temperatures. It's just so hot you can't think anymore and at the end of the day you feel sick from the heat. (Irma, 15, working on a paprika plantation)
- Working on the plantation makes your head spin; when you start working for the first time each day you have headaches, and you barely make it to lunchtime. (Walter, 12, cutting asparagus in Santa Cruz de Villacuri)
- I myself once fainted because of sunstroke and my friend as well. It's horrible as you have to vomit and are sick for several days. (Luisa, 15, working on an asparagus plantation)

Some physical complaints depend on the specific activity undertaken. For example, as cutting asparagus or picking onions entails a stooped position for much of the day, there were many complaints of backaches. A boy of 15 commented: “Working like this, bending over all the time, it really kills your back. It hurts and sometimes one just can’t sleep from the muscle ache”. Backaches are also caused by carrying heavy loads, such as wooden crates full of fruit or vegetables. Miguel (16): “Especially carrying the full crates of asparagus to get them ready for transport really kills your back”.

Activities such as picking oranges, cotton and grapes result in different physical problems. Here the most common problems are blisters and cuts, as explained by Jorge, a 15 year old working on a cotton plantation: “The plants are very hard, so picking the cotton leaves marks on your hands, especially on the first days working”. Insect bites are also a large concern. Although unlikely to leave permanent damage, bites are a real nuisance.

The plantation workers also have to endure harsh treatment from supervisors. Verbal abuse is motivated by the smallest event, such as taking a small rest. Gabriela (14) works on an asparagus plantation. She mentioned: “Working in the sun for hours sometimes just makes you want to rest in the shade a bit. However, the supervisor always made us go back and work, even when we were really worn out”. 12-year-old Jesus added: “Working on the plantation is hard as the supervisors are always checking on you. If you rest or sit in the shade for a while they will scream at you to make you work again’. Jorge, a boy of 16 working on an orange plantation: “Once I had a dispute with a supervisor. My sister of 13 was playing with my cell phone instead of working and the supervisor started calling her names. Some supervisors really have a bad temper and scream at you and don’t let you do anything but work”.

Several girls working on the plantation mentioned sexual harassment too, although most was limited to sexual remarks and jokes regarding the girls. Julia (15) commented: “Work conditions on a plantation really do depend on the supervisor. Almost all are harsh on us as they want us to complete our tasks (*tarreas*) they assign us no matter what. Several also make sexual remarks, which are very rude”. Lidia (16) working on an asparagus plantation commented: “Some of the supervisors are a real nuisance. They always pick on girls, by making filthy remarks if you know what I mean”.

Children and adolescents also mentioned they are often not paid when unable to complete the tasks assigned by the supervisor. Angel, a 15-year-old commented: “Often the supervisor does not want to pay us when we are unable to finish the assignment he gave us. This is unfair as perhaps we did not meet his standards, but we did work so he should pay us!” Angelica (14) added: “It happens several times that the supervisor doesn’t pay us, or lowers our pay because we were unable to complete our *tarrea*. I really hate that because although we did not finish our *tarrea* we did stand in the sun all day sweating for this guy, and he doesn’t even pay us”.

Children and adolescents observed differences between the supervisors on the various plantations. In general they commented that the supervisors on the large-scale plantations are worse mannered than those on the small- and medium-scaled plantations. This is likely due to differences in labour relations. Whereas in Santa Cruz de Villacuri the contractors and supervisors are largely unknown to the labourers, on the small- and medium-scaled plantations the supervisors, and sometimes the owners, are acquaintances of the labourers, and often live in the same village. Familiarity between

labourers and supervisors/owners seems to result in more flexibility of working hours and a more respectable behaviour. 14-year-old Carlos, picking cotton in La Venta, commented: “On the large plantation they treat you bad, they scold you and sometimes don’t pay you well if you don’t complete your task. However, here it’s different. We know the boss and the supervisors, they respect us”

Transportation to and from the plantations is another source of concern. Some plantations provide old school or city busses to transport the labourers, which are comfortable. However, the majority of plantations simply use flatbed trucks or semi-trailers, on which the workers are tightly packed together, without the possibility to sit, and without shelter from the elements. This method of transport is especially uncomfortable for children because of their size. Juan (14) explained: “You are so tightly packed together, one can hardly breathe in between all the grown-ups. Everyone is pushing for more space it’s really uncomfortable and scary”. Irina (15) added: “In these trucks one is transported even worse than cattle: we have even less space and all the sand comes into your eyes. It’s horrible.”

There were also some reports on the spraying of chemicals by adolescents and the spraying of chemicals while children and adolescents are working in the same area. Carlos (14), working on a cotton field near La Venta, commented: “When we are picking cotton sometimes they start spraying in the row next to us. It’s prohibited to spray in the same row that we are working, but when it’s the row next to us, they say it’s no problem.” In La Venta two adolescents were observed spraying chemicals in a cotton field. Carlos commented on this: “These are youngsters of like 16 years old. Really young children can’t carry the backpacks with the chemicals and they say it’s bad for your lungs as well. That’s why you can start doing that only at the age of 16”. Some children also mentioned respiratory problems: “It’s horrible when they start spraying as it stinks and it makes you cough sometimes”, said Carla, a 14-year-old girl working on a cotton plantation in La Venta. This exposure to chemicals obviously poses a serious threat to the health of children and adolescents (and adults) working on the plantations.

In contrast to child labour in traditional child labour, child and adolescent work on the plantations doesn’t seem to have many negative educational consequences. As mentioned, almost all the children and adolescents included in the research in the Ica area only worked on the plantations during school holidays and occasionally in the weekends, probably because of a better economic situation and stronger norms on education (the reasons for the differences will be explored in the following section).

One type of work related to commercial agriculture that was found to negatively influence the children in their education was preparing *pension*. Several children help their mothers to prepare *pension* before school. Their schedules leave them tired and unable to concentrate in school, resulting in poor performance. 10-year-old Rosemary: “One has to wake up at 4.00 to be making breakfast, as most workers want to eat at 5.00. Afterwards I go to bed again and sleep for an hour or two. Then it is horrible to get up again as I am really tired. In school I sometimes fall asleep and the teacher screams at me”.

Considering the labour conditions and the impact on children and adolescents this plantation work is clearly a Worst Form of Child Labour according to ILO norms. Consequently, the admission age for working on these plantations should be lifted from 16 to a minimum of 18 years of age.

3.8 Why do children work in commercial agriculture?

Contractors, supervisors and owners use several arguments to justify the hiring of children and adolescents. First of all, several supervisors stated they wanted to *help* the children by providing them with an income. A contractor of an asparagus plantation commented:

I know the level of poverty in the villages. People have to live on one dollar a day. The children come to me for work as they live in miserable circumstances. Their families sometimes even have difficulties in sending them to school. By giving them a job we are actually doing them a favour, as they can pay for clothes and school fees with the money they earn here.

Although this argument suggests altruism on the part of those who contract minors, the behaviour actually results in a vicious circle: the poverty of the villagers is strongly related to the low wages paid to the adults working on the plantations, resulting in their children having to pitch in.

Another argument is the fact that hiring minors saves on wages, which has a positive effect on profits. In the weekends, especially on Sundays, when adults demand higher wages, it is more profitable to hire children, who are paid less anyway. This is also generally the case in times of labour shortage or high workloads. As one supervisor in La Venta said: “During harvest we just need to get these asparagus out of the ground to send them on a ship to the United States or Holland. So we hire everybody we can, women and children alike”.

Supervisors also admitted that children are more docile: “Adults often complain about everything; about their wage, the climate, that we give them too many tasks, and so on. Minors are easier to deal with; you give them tasks and most of them just do it without whining”. The words of another supervisor from a plantation near Santa Cruz de Villacuri:

The adult workers here are known for being difficult labourers. Once I assign them tasks they may think it is too demanding and just walk out. As there are many plantations which need labourers, they can get work anywhere easily. With the kids you don’t have that problem: they are more obedient as not many plantations want to hire them.

The majority of the children and parents mentioned poverty as the main reason for children to work. Indeed much of the money earned by younger children goes to the parents and is spent directly on basic needs, such as school fees, school books and uniforms, food and clothes. The children sometimes are given some pocket money that they can spend freely. Adolescents (14-18) usually earn their own money on the plantations and often spend it on clothes and schooling.

Poverty is especially significant in cases where younger children are found working. When parents were asked for their opinions on child labour, the majority agreed that plantation work is not suitable for children below 14 years of age. It is considered to be too physically demanding. Younger children therefore only work on these plantations out of real economic necessity. The economic necessity is in many cases related to broken families (after migration, illness or death). 13-year-old Mauricio, for example, works on an asparagus plantation during holidays and sometimes on weekends. He lives with his father, mother and 3 little brothers of 3, 6 and 10. His father is a day labourer on one of the plantations. His mother had a stroke last year and can’t get out of bed anymore. His father’s wage does not cover the daily costs of the family, which means Mauricio has

to pitch in. His mother explained: "Working on the plantations is no children's work. It ruins your back, one needs to be strong. But since I was sick and can't work anymore, there is nothing more we can do. I am glad Mauricio is helping us because otherwise we would starve, but I am also sad he has to suffer". Another example is Juana (14). She lives with her mother and her 3 siblings in Santa Cruz de Villacuri. Her father left to work in Lima and never returned. Her mother works in a factory, packing asparagus. Juana and her sister work on a nearby asparagus plantation during the holidays and occasionally in the weekends. Her mother commented:

Sometimes it hurts me seeing Juana like this working under these harsh circumstances. Working on the plantation is not suitable for someone of 14 years old. We tried to get other work for her, but it was impossible. So we have to keep on going like this because we really need the money for food and clothes.

So, younger children (under 14) generally only work on plantations if severe poverty forces them to do so. However, when children reach 14-15, parents feel that their adolescent children have a responsibility to contribute to the family income and that plantation work is no longer inappropriate. Carlos, father of 16-year-old Henry who works on a paprika plantation, remarked:

Working on the plantations is no work for young children. It's bad for your back, so you need to be strong. But Henry is already 16, a strong boy and an adolescent with his own needs like expensive clothing and going out with his friends. He needs to learn how to be responsible and independent. Therefore I think now it's okay that he makes his own money.

Antonio, father of 15-year-old Jorge who picks cotton every holiday, commented in the same way:

When he was young I really did not want him to go. Working on the plantations is hard even for grownups. But now he is almost a grownup himself, and will start his own family soon. He needs to learn what it is to earn his own money, so he goes to work on the plantation and is responsible for his own costs.

Another parent commented on children working on plantations in general: "Children should go to school, they shouldn't work. Also because it is just too hard for them. But at 14/15 then they can contribute, at least during school holidays". Adolescents are clearly given the responsibility for many of their own needs and costs, and are considered to be old and strong enough to work and earn their own income. Adolescents are allowed and sometimes even stimulated by the parents to work on the plantations.

When children and adolescents themselves were asked about the reasons for working, again many mentioned poverty. Often-heard arguments were "we are a poor family and we need the money to eat" or "my parents don't make enough money, therefore I have to work" or "we don't have any money, who else will buy our food and clothes". Children often mentioned that they, and not their parents, had decided that they should look for work. 15-year-old Iris, who worked on an orange plantation stated: "I know we don't have enough money, and I didn't want my parents to suffer anymore. So I looked for work so I can buy my own clothes". Another boy stated: "I don't want my parents to suffer more than they do. It's difficult for them to pay all my costs. So I decided to go and earn the money myself". 16-year-old Maria from Santa Cruz de Villacuri, who had worked on different kinds of plantations since she was 13 years old, wanted to work on an asparagus plantation

to save money to pay for a school trip. She commented: “My parents are short of money themselves, and I can work, so I can make my own money to go on the school trip”. She asked for her father’s permission, but he did not allow her to work because school exams were coming up: “It’s good she feels responsible, but sometimes these kids think too much of money instead of their school. Now it’s more important that she studies than that she goes on the school trip”. Maria was very disappointed not to be able to work: “Now I can’t go on the trip”.

Not all children worked just to cover basic needs. Some also liked earning to be able to afford a little extra, such as nice clothes, sweets, or in the case of adolescents, to be able to go out and have a drink. For example, 14-year-old Julia lives in La Venta and has worked occasionally since she was 12. Her mother is a shopkeeper and her father works as a day labourer on different plantations. She has a brother who lives in Lima and who sends them money once in a while. Together they make enough money to pay for Julia’s schooling, clothes and other basic needs. However, during holidays Julia always goes with a friend to work on a nearby plantation. She explained: “My parents pay my school, but don’t give me anything extra. I want nice clothes and perhaps a mobile phone in the future. As they don’t want to give it to me, I work”.

Manuel (15) told a similar story. His parents both work in agriculture; his mother in a factory, packing asparagus, his father as a day labourer. He also has a sister and brother, working in Ica and Lima respectively, who occasionally help him with his study costs. Nevertheless, Manuel works during holidays because: “Every Friday there is a market here where they sell nice clothes from Ica and Lima. If I work I can buy myself some. If I don’t then I will never have nice clothes to wear, because my parents won’t give them to me”.

16-year-old Juan’s family pays for his daily needs, but Juan started working on the plantation ever since he got a girlfriend: “My parents won’t give me money to go out with my girlfriend, to drink something or to go out in Ica. So to give my girl a nice time I have to work”.

The children also stated boredom as a reason for working during the holidays. When not in school there is little to do in the villages, and work is considered to be a better option than doing nothing. “The village is deserted during the day, it’s very boring. If you go working than you’re with friends and you earn money along the way!” stated 14-year-old Raoul from La Venta. Joel (15), working on the cotton plantations near La Venta, added: “during holidays it’s no fun to be left here in the villages, as everybody leaves to work. It’s better to go working with your friends than to stay behind in a boring place”.

Children in these settings rarely leave school to work permanently, unlike their peers in the traditional rural setting. This seems to be motivated by a slightly better-off economic situation, combined with a more influential norm on education. In comparison with the families from the small rural communities in Cusco, the land labourers in Ica earn much more, thus more able to send their children to school. The income of an average family in the traditional rural community, for example, is less than 1 dollar a day, whereas a day labourer near Ica earns about 10-15 dollars a day. There also seems to be a difference in how people perceive education, and its significance. In areas with significant levels of commercial agriculture, and thus where people tend to earn more than those living in traditional rural settings, most parents consider primary and secondary education as one of the basic conditions for a better future for their children. Parents stated for example: “Nowadays you can’t work if you don’t have any educational papers”. Another parent

added: “I want my children to have a better future than me, and the only way to reach that is by going to school”. In addition to the better-off economic situation, these people have been living in a relatively modern society for quite some years. Modern values have impacted their own belief systems, and is the most obvious motivator of the value placed on education.

3.9 Rural child labour a worst form?

This chapter presented the differences between child labour in traditional and commercial agriculture. In the traditional agricultural setting, practically all children start to work from a very early age on, sometimes as young as 5. On a daily basis these children, boys and girls alike, are involved in various agricultural, herding and household tasks. As children get older they get involved in more physically demanding labour on the family land. Also gender differences become more pronounced when children get older, with girls performing more domestic tasks than boys. The work is not very taxing or dangerous, but a number of aspects directly related to the work have a negative impact on the development of the child. The combination of the different activities (agricultural/harvesting tasks, education and domestic chores) can in some cases form a heavy burden on the physical and emotional capacities of the children. Children often miss classes or attend school tired and unfocussed. It can therefore be concluded that, despite the lack of any serious physical consequences, the work in traditional agriculture, because of the negative effects on education and the burden of multiple responsibilities, can in some cases (especially for very young children) form a threat to the “health, safety or morals” and should be classified as a worst form of child labour.

In commercial agriculture, most children start working at an older age: from 10 years onwards on small- and medium-scale plantations and from 12 years on large-scale plantations. Almost all children work only during school holidays and occasionally in the weekends. Skipping classes for work is very rare. The working conditions on the plantations are extreme, especially because of the very hot and dry environment. The burning sun and extreme temperatures result in nausea, dizziness, headaches, and eventually sunstroke. Since the work on most plantations consists of bending over for extended lengths of time most complaints relate to sore backs. Carrying the heavy boxes of fruit and vegetables also results in many physical complaints such as sore backs and arms. Many complaints are related to the harsh treatment by the supervisors and on the poor conditions of the transportation from and to the plantations. On some plantations children and adolescents come into contact with chemicals such as fertilizers. Taking all these negative labour conditions and consequences into account, it becomes clear that working on the plantations in Ica harms the health and safety of minors and should therefore be listed as a worst form of child labour according to ILO norms. Consequently, the admission age for working on these plantations should be raised from 16 to a minimum of 18.

Chapter 4

Interventions

This chapter considers two particular interventions undertaken by local NGOs to improve the situation for the working children in the research areas. In Cusco the local department of the Centre for Social Studies and Publications (CESIP) implements an educational project aimed towards children involved in rural labour. The director explained: “On the one side education is an important tool in reducing the level of child labour in the area, on the other side child labour is an important obstacle to reach education for all”.

In the research area Ica, the Human Rights Commission of Ica (CODEH-Ica) runs a specific program on child labour, through which they promote the organisation of local groups of working children so that “in an organised way they can try to improve their working and living situation”, explained one of the employees.

In addition to these two specific NGO projects, governmental organisations and labour unions were questioned about their involvement with child labour. Their contributions will be elaborated on at the end of the chapter.

4.1 CESIP-Cusco and *La Ruta del Sol*

CESIP is one of the eight organisations in Peru participating in a national educational project called *La Ruta del Sol*, financed by the Dutch NGOs ICCO/KiA and Edukans. The main objective of *La Ruta del Sol* is to improve the quality of rural education in the south of Peru in order to stimulate the development of rural areas. Its specific focus is to make education more culturally relevant, since much of Peruvian education is developed for urban children. By including culturally specific norms in rural education and educating in the mother language (*Quechua*) *La Ruta del Sol* wants to increase the relevance for the indigenous inhabitant of Peru, so that school participation increases, educational results improve and “education becomes the motor for rural development”. *La Ruta del Sol* is being implemented in 4 southern departments in Peru, of which Cusco is one (the other departments are Apurímac, Ayacucho and Huancavelica). CESIP is one of the eight organisations involved in implementing the project. On a national level CESIP, with headquarters in Lima, is responsible for lobbying the Ministry of Education. On a local level CESIP-Cusco coordinates the project in the region of Cusco, where they work with 10 different schools, of which 7 in Ccorca and three in Anta, with a total of 29 teachers and 715 students.

One of the projects implemented by CESIP-Cusco, as part of *La Ruta del Sol*, is called *Rural Schools, Friends of Children and Adolescents*¹⁷. This project aims to integrate the defence and promotion of

¹⁷ In Spanish: Escuela amiga de niños, niñas y adolescentes

children's and adolescents' rights in the school curriculum of the educational centres in the region of Cusco, and additionally to prevent and address situations that violate these rights. It is also from this angle that child labour is a point of interest for CESIP-Cusco. The three specific phenomena that need to be prevented and confronted, according to CESIP-Cusco, are violence against children, sexual abuse and child labour. The director explained: "We are very interested in the theme of child labour as almost all children are working and we like to know specifically what kind of negative effects this has on the children's education". At the same time, improving education is seen as a strategy to combat child labour: "By offering good quality education we also hope to convince the parents not to send their children to work, but to send them to school instead".

During the fieldwork period several components of this project were studied, workshops were attended, and interviews were held with CESIP-Cusco representatives, teachers, community leaders and the children. Several weeks were spent in the classrooms of the schools involved in the program. The next section addresses some of the lessons learned regarding education and child labour.

4.1.1 Identifying the child labour problem

CESIP uses education to tackle rural child labour. Their first step is to work towards improved education. The assumption is that when education becomes more attractive, children will spend more time in school than working in agriculture. Secondly, CESIP tries to combat rural child labour by including child rights education in the curriculum, specifically focussing on the right to be protected against child labour. Lastly, CESIP-Cusco specifically targets the parents by offering workshops on child rights (*escuela de padres*). CESIP hopes that awareness will contribute to a decrease in child labour. But to establish whether these objectives are reached it is important to define child labour in this setting; in other words, what exactly is the problem CESIP wants to solve?

Unfortunately, concluding from numerous interviews with various CESIP employees, no uniform definition for child labour is adhered to. The director remarked that all rural activities by children should be considered child labour and should be eradicated: "in the end almost all rural activities have a negative impact on the children's education. Either they come tired to school or don't have enough time to do their homework. Rural child labour should be eradicated in all its forms". The other employees presented a less rigid definition of child labour: "not all forms of child labour in the communities are bad, some have an educational function to pass on traditional norms and values to the children. I think only those really heavy forms of child labour should be eradicated". Another employee added: "Child labour is an integral part of rural life; one can't just prohibit all forms. Additionally one has to take into account the context of rural poverty where families can't survive without the help of their children. Therefore I think it's impossible to eradicate all forms of rural child labour and we should focus on those forms which are really harmful".

Regardless of which of these positions has more validity, it might serve recommendation to work with one uniform definition of child labour. By working with different definitions it becomes unclear which problem exactly is being confronted and therefore also makes it difficult to carry out a thorough impact study.

4.1.2 Improving education to combat child labour

Because one of the strategies to combat rural child labour is to make education more attractive by improving its quality, this research set out to discover the opinions of parents and children on the quality of rural education.

On average, most parents are unaware of CESIP's efforts to improve the quality of education. This probably is the result of the fact that CESIP's project is only minimally rooted in the community; CESIP mostly works with teachers and community leaders. However, on a more general level, some parents, although still very pessimistic on rural education, did mention an improvement in the quality of education. Carmelo (29) father of two children (8 and 10) in the community of Ccasacunca stated: "Education here in the countryside is horrible in comparison with the city. However, it was even worse. Teachers now attend more than they used to, and from what my son tells me, it appears that classes have improved". A parent from Cusibamba added: "Education here is still worse than in the cities, but it's getting better at least. The new principal seems to be more involved than the previous one; I can see they demand more involvement from my children than the previous one".

Teachers and children also mentioned a slight improvement in the quality of education. Teachers explained that they apply more interactive methods, which lead to students participating more during classes. One teacher, for example, mentioned: "Most of the interactive methods CESIP teaches are new to us. Although going to these workshops is quite a burden, some of the methods really have an effect. Children seem to like it, pay more attention and remember the content afterwards". Another teacher commented: "These children are not really used to participate, but convincing them a bit, they seem to like it. Especially boys pay more attention if they are included in the classes. I would say they like school more than before". This was confirmed by some of the students. Pablo (10), for example, remarked: "Nowadays the teachers ask us stuff on what we did and what we think. They did not do that before; it's nice though". Carla (11) commented on her teacher: "I like classes now more than before. The teacher is not that strict anymore and he even asks us our opinion on stuff and brings us newspapers to read and discuss; that's great!" The interactive methods, and the participation of the children, were indeed observed during the fieldwork.

Although generally it seems that the quality of rural education in the two communities has improved, the link between this improvement and a reduction in child labour in the community is not so obvious. Not one parent mentioned that their children are now working less because of the increased quality of education. However, the teachers acknowledged an improved attitude among parents regarding school participation of their children. The principal in Ccasacunca commented:

Ever since we started working on improving the quality and putting more effort into education, children come to school more often. The previous principal was particularly poor at making education attractive; he had very high numbers of drop-outs. Now that we use other methods, and give more attention to our students, we see that more children come to school, even during harvest and sowing periods.

The improvement in quality of primary education also seems to have a positive effect on secondary school participation. "That our new methods of teaching have been successful motivating children

and parents, is also obvious looking at the numbers of children who are enrolled in secondary education. Under the previous principal the parents were not motivated to send their children to secondary school, now more than 70% goes”, commented the principal.

One can conclude that an improved quality of education through the CESIP project has led to better participation of children in school. Because the teachers observed an increase in pupil numbers during harvest and sowing periods, one can assume that there has been a reduction in working hours. The increase in secondary school enrolment also indicates a decrease in working hours for adolescents. However, their improved participation in education does not necessarily mean children and adolescents have stopped working altogether.

4.1.3 Child rights education

In addition to improving the quality of education, CESIP-Cusco tries to stimulate awareness of child rights among the parents, by offering workshops (*escuela de padres*). Most of the parents that participated in the meetings, mostly community leaders, were quite positive about the content. One parent mentioned: “They are very interesting. I didn’t know these child rights exist. Now I try to take them more into account, I think I treat my children better now”. The community leader of Ccasacunca remarked: “Our own parents didn’t teach us about these rights. It’s interesting to receive this knowledge so we can progress as a village”. In the workshops CESIP focuses on getting the parents to give priority to education. In general it indeed appears that more parents in the last few years have become more convinced of the importance of education. Additionally, the changing norm seems to have had positive effects on child labour in the communities. As stated by one of the *comuneros* from Ccasacunca:

My parents, for example, thought that education was not that important for girls; girls only need to learn about household chores. But those were the thoughts of the old generation. I do want my girl to study and be someone in life, that’s why I send her to school instead of asking her to herd our animals.

Another *comunero* in Cusibamba remarked:

My parents didn’t think it important to send me to school. When I finished primary education they wanted me on the land helping them in agricultural work. However, we the new generation, do see the importance of education, and send our children to school instead of making them help on the land.

This changing norm on education in the community was also confirmed by the teachers. One teacher in Cusibamba commented: “There used to be many more school drop-outs than there are now; especially during harvest and sowing periods. There are still many children that don’t come during harvest, but it’s definitely better than it used to be”. Another teacher stated:

Norms in this community are changing, slowly, but they are changing. In the old days parents did not come at all to school meetings to check on their children. It is still only few parents who care, but at least now some come. What is important as well is that the

number of children dropping out has decreased; apparently education is winning a bit of terrain, especially in relation to the time children are working, which is great of course.

Judging from the comments one could conclude that a positive change in ideas about education seems to be resulting in a decrease in hours that children are working. It is, however, difficult to establish to what extent this changing norm can be contributed to CESIP's child rights workshops. Firstly, the program is only minimally rooted in the community; only a dozen parents participate in the workshops. The vast majority of parents in the community are not aware of the *escuela de padres*.

Secondly, there appear to also be other factors influencing this change in norm. Migration, for example, seems to have a positive influence because those who migrate are confronted with jobs they could have had, would they have completed their schooling. One *comunero* from Ccasacunca remarked:

When one goes to work in Cusco or Izcuchaca one realises that to be able to progress in life one needs primary and secondary education; its essential to go to school. Sometimes mining companies come here to hire us. But they only give us the boring manual labour. To be able to do lighter and more interesting work they ask for educational papers. Therefore to be hired by a company one has to have educational certificates; that's why I want my children to go to school.

Progressive community leaders also have a significant influence on people's beliefs. For example, in Ccasacunca, the community president had very progressive ideas on education, which he often discussed with the community during the monthly general assemblies. He explained:

I think it is very important for our community if the level of education of our inhabitants increases. In that way we bring more knowledge in the community and the level of production may rise, which again leads to the development of our community. That is why I always try to stimulate the *comuneros* to help their children in their education and to give incentives to the committee to demand better education from the teachers.

On another occasion the same community president commented:

Here in Ccasacunca we only produce for self-consumption. What we need is an increase in production, but we have less knowledge and skills to do so in comparison with other regions in Peru. That's why it is important our children study, to be able to contribute to the development of our community.

The educational level of the parents themselves also seems to influence their opinion on education. Most of the parents who prioritise education are those who have completed primary and secondary schooling themselves. In the words of the secretary of the community Ccasacunca:

I am one of the few women in the village who has completed secondary education. That's why they asked me to be the secretary of the community I guess - because I can read and write. Therefore I know from personal experience one can get somewhere with education. That's why I want my children to go to school as well.

A *comunero* from Cusibamba remarked: “Everybody that went to school knows that it’s important to go there. I didn’t always pay attention, which I now regret because I see how much one needs an education for getting a good job. Therefore I do help my children to get the maximum out of their education”.

One can conclude that CESIP’s attempts may indeed have contributed to a changing norm favouring education at the expense of child labour. However, other factors must also be taken into account; factors such as migration, political leadership and the educational level of the parents.

4.1.4 Criticism on rural education

In spite of CESIP’s efforts there is still a lot of critique in the community about the poor quality of rural education, which limits the role of education as a possible solution for child labour. In the following sections I want to focus specifically on the different causes of this discontent as this might contribute to improving the strategy of education as a possible solution to rural child labour.

Language

One of the most frequent complaints by the *comuneros* concerns the teaching language at schools. Almost all children in rural areas are native Quechua speakers; the problem is that they are not taught Spanish early or quick enough. One of the fathers in Ccasacunca commented: “Education here is very bad. They teach our children in Quechua, even though they need Spanish to have a better future. My son is 12 and doesn’t even speak Spanish well. If I had more money I would send him to Izcuchaca; there the teachers educate in Spanish and he will learn Spanish faster”. A parent from Cusibamba complained: “I want my children to learn Spanish, as all trade is in Spanish. Hardly anybody in Cusco uses Quechua on markets anymore. But in what language do they teach here: in Quechua! In this way my children will never progress”. A Ccasacunca parent asked rhetorically: “When children leave school here, sometimes they can’t even speak Spanish. How will they manage in secondary school? What kind of primary school prepares their students so poorly they can’t even speak the language properly, but which they will need to keep on studying?”

The teachers agree that language skills are poor, but also blame parents for their lack of effort to speak Spanish at home. One teacher explained: “We can teach the children Spanish, but they are only 4 hours in school. The rest of the day they are with the parents, and their parents speak only Quechua with their children! The parents have a great responsibility in this as well”.

Migration seems to have a significant influence on the language spoken by parents at home. The villagers who migrate are mostly men, and as a result the children grow up in female-headed households. The men may learn Spanish whilst they are out of town, but the women never do, and the children are barely ever exposed to Spanish speakers. So the teachers’ complaints are valid, yet they too take responsibility: “One of the difficulties we experience is that we don’t know how to handle the language problem. That was never taught to us. It would be great to learn techniques in that respect”. A teacher from Cusibamba remarked: “We are not taught how to deal with the problem of language difficulties. In my class I eventually end up explaining things twice, in Quechua

and in Spanish. But I am just making this method up myself. I would like to have a methodology how to deal with this language problem”.

The teachers therefore recommend that CESIP include such methods in their workshops:

All these participatory methods we learn in the CESIP workshops are great, however, not really relevant in our context. We have children here who don't speak even one word of Spanish, therefore I can't even implement the new methodologies I learned, which are in Spanish, because of this language difference. First we should have some classes on how to deal with this problem, before other methodologies are treated.

Commitment

Another point of criticism the parents have towards the teachers concerns their apparent lack of commitment to rural schools and education. According to the parents the teachers often come late, leave too early or don't show up at all for their classes. One of the parents from Cusibamba commented: “Education in the cities is better, the worst teachers are sent to us in the countryside. I don't think they even want to teach here, as they arrive just before classes and flee away afterwards.”

During the fieldwork period it was indeed observed that teachers in Cusibamba often leave their classes early, sending the children home an hour early. They do so to be able to catch the last bus back to Cusco, where most of the teachers live. The teachers are unable to live at the school during the week, because most school buildings lack all basic amenities, such as water and electricity. Besides, most teachers are married and have their own children waiting at home. An ideal solution to this problem would be improved accessibility by public transport, or the employment of local teachers.

During the fieldwork in Ccasacunca, 4 classes were cancelled due to illness and a funeral. However, neither parents nor children were informed about the reasons for cancellation, and the absence of the teachers led to frustrations and misunderstandings. Better communication between the teachers and parents obviously serves recommendation.

Parents also complained about the lack of house visits paid by teachers. One parent in Cusibamba commented: “Most teachers don't spend any time here, checking up on families. They want to go back to Cusco or Izcuchaca as soon as they get out of the school”. Teachers indeed leave the village straight after school, if not before the end of the school day. This was mentioned above, and is due to the poor public transport on offer. The disadvantage, besides missing out on valuable in-school time with the children, is that the teachers fail to build a bond with the parents and community.

While there is much criticism on the part of parents towards the teachers, the teachers in their turn doubt the commitment of the parents regarding their children's education. Teachers feel that parents rarely help their children with homework. Our research confirmed this suspicion, but we also found that parents are mostly willing yet unable, due to a lack of knowledge and inability to speak Spanish.

Teachers also complain that parents rarely attend meetings and fail to prioritise their children's education. As was commented on above, this is only partly true, as many parents, especially the

younger generation, do want their children to attend and do well at school. Unfortunately, parents tend to consider their children's performance at school the teacher's responsibility. They consider their responsibility to be limited to paying the school fees, buying school utilities, making sure that their children do their homework once in a while and helping the school with communal works. One parent from Ccasacunca stated: "Yes I help my children in their education. I send them to school always and make sure they do their homework. However, it appears that the teacher doesn't help my kid: look in his book it's almost empty, I don't know what they do all the time there in school". Another father, 32, from Ccasacunca confessed: "I would like to help my son to do his homework, but it seems that the curriculum has changed. What he learns now, is not what I learned then, therefore I often don't understand it. It's the teacher that should make sure he performs well".

It can be concluded that there is a lot of misunderstanding and frustration from both sides; many prejudices are born out of a lack of communication between parents and teachers. The teachers come to the village to give classes, but don't involve themselves with the community, which results in a lack of knowledge or understanding of the parents. The parents rarely go to school meetings and put minimal effort into the education of their children - whether intentionally or through inability - thus projecting a sense of disinterest. The negative preconceptions teachers and parents have of each other could be improved by better communication.

Physical punishments

Parents often complained about the physical punishments some of their children receive at school. As one parent remarked: "My Juan sometimes comes home with red marks on his hands, back or buttocks. This makes me very angry as I don't think the teacher has the right to beat my kid". Although actual physical punishments were not observed during fieldwork, there were several incidents that gave a strong indication that physical punishments are still used by the teachers. For example, one day I participated in teacher Jenny's classroom. While the children were doing their work I asked Jenny what she had learned during the CESIP workshops. One of the things she had learned was to no longer use physical punishment. At the very moment she was telling me this, one of the children started talking even though they were supposed to work quietly; Jenny grabbed a stick that was lying in the corner, slammed it down on the child's table and screamed: "shut up and do your work!"

Children mentioned beatings they had received from teachers. "Especially teacher Juan is a bad one, he explodes really fast and beats us with a stick", commented Gloria (9) from Ccasacunca. "If we don't behave ourselves then we get a good beating" added 11-year-old Manuel from Cusibamba. When confronted with their behaviour, the teachers referred to the use of physical punishment in the households: "These children often only listen to physical punishments as they are used to it in their homes". However, the teachers claimed that the use of physical punishments had diminished as a result of the CESIP workshops. One teacher explained: "I like the workshops of CESIP and in a certain way it has changed the way I teach. I used to walk around with a stick all the time, as I was also educated that way. But now I don't use it anymore and I try to get the attention by positive stimulus". Frequency and severity of physical punishments may have decreased, yet they still occur, and so it would serve recommendation for CESIP to continue with their workshops on this theme.

4.1.5 Economic constraints

Improving the situation for working children in rural areas will take more than better and more relevant education. There are also several economic constraints related to child labour, which cannot be solved by education. As previously mentioned, many adult males have to migrate to earn enough for their family's basic needs. The temporary migration of one of the parents increases the workload for those who stay behind: usually the mother and children. The problem of labour migration and its effect on the levels of child labour goes beyond the influence of education and calls for poverty alleviation interventions in the community.

Many families also need the manual labour of their children because they are unable to pay wage labourers to work the land. This demand for child labour also calls for strategies that tackle poverty, perhaps in combination with agricultural modernisation.

Most males who migrate for work stated they would prefer to stay with their families if there were any money generating jobs in the community itself. For example, Jaime, a 34-year-old father working as a wage labourer on a plantation near Izcuchaca remarked: "I don't like to leave my wife and kids for the whole week. I know they suffer and have to work more when I am not around. But I have to earn money. If there was any work here the story would be different; I would be happy to be here and my wife and kids would live a more comfortable life". Jaime had some ideas on how to create job opportunities: "We could use investments to improve our cattle breeding; to increase the amount of cattle and improve the milk production. In that way we could sell our animals and milk to the surrounding villages and have a steady income. However, we lack the knowledge and money to make the improvements". Another father added:

If I could only hire wage labourers then my wife and children would not suffer like this. But there is no work here to earn a living. It would be great if we could develop tourism a bit here. For example, there are some Inca sights nearby; we could be guides, offer food, and offer our houses for them to sleep. In this way the tourists learn our history and we earn some money.

The president of Ccasacunca commented:

What we need here is agricultural innovation. We all work with manual labour, which has a negative effect on the education of our children. If we could just mechanise a part of our agriculture, with a tractor, for example, or other machinery, then we could produce more and the children would not have to help so much during harvesting and sowing seasons.

Solving the problem of child labour in traditional agriculture needs a multidimensional approach in which improving education is important, but should be combined with strategies for poverty alleviation and agricultural innovation.

4.2 Codeh-Ica and the Movement for Working Children

Codeh-Ica (Human Rights Commission of Ica) has been working on human rights issues in the region since 1982. In 1994 they commenced the *Program for Working Children and Adolescents* (NNATs)¹⁸, which started with the foundation of the “*Home of the Working Child*”¹⁹. In 2000 they initiated a new project called *Promotion and Protection of Children and Adolescents who Work*²⁰. According to their own mission statement this project demands that the working children and adolescents become social subjects of rights, and it tries to solve some of the daily problems working children face such as discrimination, poor sanitary facilities and precarious labour conditions. This project consists of several services, such as lunch at public schools, tutoring and homework services for working children, education about child labour and guidance for teachers and representatives of local child-centred governmental agencies. However, one of the most fundamental activities is stimulating the local organisation of working children in the region of Ica. These local groups are motivated and guided by adult educators. Through a system of representation these local groups of organised working children and adolescents form the Sub-Regional Movement of Working Children and Adolescents. On a regional level this movement is part of the Coordination of Organised Working Children and Adolescents of Ica (CONAO)²¹, another Codeh-Ica initiative. On a national level the regional movement of working children and adolescents is part of the National Movement of Organised Working Children and Adolescents of Peru (MNNASTOP).

4.2.1 Identifying the problem

As an active member of MNNASTOP, Codeh-Ica identifies itself as *regulacionistas*. According to the *regulacionistas* the real problem of child labour lies with the conditions under which children work, not the actual work itself. This position became apparent during interviews with the Codeh-Ica educators:

National laws prohibit working under the age of 12. However, child labour exists in many forms and conditions, which makes it very difficult to say that children under the age of 12 can't work. For example, the government says children shouldn't work on the street, but when the mother is present to look after her child, is it equally bad? In the end it is the conditions that count, not the age or working in itself.

Working under favourable conditions is considered to have potentially positive aspects for children: “Children who work on the streets are often more forward, know how to count better and have a bigger feeling for solidarity than children who don't work. So working is not all bad, it has some positive effects as well!”

In addition, Codeh-Ica (and *regulacionistas*) feels that children generate a necessary income:

¹⁸In Spanish: Program de niños, niñas y adolescentes trabajadores (NNATS)

¹⁹In Spanish: Casa del niño trabajador.

²⁰In Spanish: Promoción y Protección de los Niños y Adolescentes que trabajan en Ica

²¹ Coordinadora de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Organizados de Ica. Participants of the CONAO include student councils, youth church groups, scouting groups and representatives of the governmental bodies DEMUNA and INABIF.

The laws that prohibit child labour in the context of Peru are really unrealistic. These families often need the income generated by the children. By banning child labour you criminalise the survival strategies of these families, and make them the guilty ones instead of the victims they really are.

4.2.2 Improving working conditions

Codeh-Ica's *regulacionistas* way of defining the child labour problem has obvious consequences for their intervention strategies. Because the labour conditions of working children are identified as the main problem of child labour, most Codeh-Ica projects strive to improve these conditions. For example, Codeh-Ica organises a greeting card making workshop, during which children are paid for the cards they produce. The workshops are offered as a labour alternative to children who were previously working under poor conditions. One of the educators explained:

These kids were working during the night, for example, which we consider to unfavourable as they come into contact with drugs, or prostitution. At the same time they come from needy families and can't afford to stop working. So we offer them work in a safe environment, and we improved their working conditions.

Besides supplying the children with paid work within the structures of the organisation, Codeh-Ica also tries to improve the existing working conditions of children. One such strategy is their micro-credit program. Through the system of loans they try to motivate children to make certain changes. For example, one educator explained:

We encourage children who were working during the night to start working during the day. Also we suggest they change the place they are working. For example, if they are working in a dangerous spot, like along the highway, we try to get them to sell at a safer location - perhaps rent a market stall.

Their main strategy, however, is to encourage working children to organise local groups of working children. Both the process and the final result are seen as relevant. The process of organisation is valued for lessons learned along the way; during the meetings, when organising a local group, representatives of Codeh-Ica (the *educators*) teach the children about their rights and they also learn how to participate and voice their opinions within group settings. In the words of an educator: "That children learn to organise themselves, participate in groups and learn how to voice their opinion is a goal in itself". In addition, the existence of an organised group gives the children bargaining power when negotiating with employers. The group also presents a stronger voice when informing other organisations of their needs. An educator explained: "We organise the children so that they can learn about their rights and so that they can claim them. We teach them they have a right to good treatment and to work in good conditions and that if they are not in these conditions they should speak up!" Another educator added: "United one always stands stronger. This is what we want to teach the children as well, that when they get organised they can claim their rights and improve their situation".

During this research project we attempted to establish the impact of the Codeh-Ica interventions; two specific local groups were selected: the first was the *Farmer Group of Working Children and*

Adolescents (CANNTA) from La Venta, and the second group was *Children First* (Niños Primero) from Santa Cruz de Villacuri.

4.2.3 Results of the projects:

The first remarkable observation was that there were very few rural child labourers participating in the different Codeh-Ica projects, such as the greeting card workshops and the micro-credit programs. The main problem seemed to be that these projects are offered in the city of Ica. The city of Ica is difficult to reach for rural child labourers in terms of distance and cost.

An educator admitted: “We hardly have any rural children participating in our projects here in Ica; it is too far for them to come. Also because poverty in rural areas is even worse than in the cities, I guess it is also too expensive for them to come, as they have to buy a return ticket for the bus”.

Another educator commented on the micro-credit program: “In rural areas it is more difficult to start a new business as there are fewer opportunities in the countryside than in urban centres. Also perhaps they don’t know our program as they live too far away”.

Self-organisation is slightly more successful in attracting the rural working children, but again there are more urban groups than rural ones. Of the 29 groups, only 3 or 4 groups consist of rural child labourers. A combination of large distances and lack of volunteers and paid staff seems to be the main reason why the organisation of groups in rural areas is lagging in comparison to the urban settings. An educator remarked: “In some rural areas they don’t even have telephones, so we are dependent on people going there. We only have a little bit of funding for educators, and so we have to focus a bit more on urban sectors, which are more easily accessible”. Another educator added: “We would like to be working more with rural child labourers but we don’t know exactly where they are. To be able to identify the regions where they work and start forming the groups we need educators and volunteers. And currently we don’t have any money to send people”.

The group in La Venta had a very committed volunteer educator. She herself had once been a member of the group, and now worked as an educator for Codeh-Ica. Because of her efforts this group was very involved in meetings with Codeh-Ica and the other representative bodies of the Working Children’s Organisations (MMNATSOP and CONAO).

Unfortunately, in Santa Cruz de Villacuri this was not the case. Here it concerned a relatively new group, formed after the 2007 earthquake. Finances had dried up and the responsible educator had not visited the group for months. As a result, the working children from Santa Cruz de Villacuri were neither aware of nor informed about the activities organised by Codeh-Ica, MMNATSOP and CONAO.

In both La Venta and Santa Cruz de Villacuri, several activities have taken place within the groups. The educators teach the children about their rights through discussions, educational games and specific educational television programs. In both groups the children and adolescents had participated actively in the planning and construction of a playground in their respective communities. Several participants of the La Venta group also represented their group in several regional meetings of working children and attended meetings with representatives of child-centred organisations, organised by Codeh-Ica. Other activities mainly included celebrations, such as a mothers’ day party. Most children seem to like the informal and playful atmosphere of the groups:

“I like to share with my friends; the talking and playing”, said 10-year-old Ilona from La Venta. Herman (12) from Santa Cruz de Villacuri mentioned: “I like the games we play and sharing with my friends”. In La Venta, those who were able to represent their groups also liked attending the meetings: “It’s nice being able to travel and meet children from other parts of Ica and Peru”, commented 16-year-old Maribel, the group representative from La Venta.

The children in the groups were generally unable to mention any particular child labour related activities they had been involved in. Only the children from La Venta could mention one such case; they had participated as a group during the May 1st Labour Day parade, in the neighbouring village Santiago. They joined the march to claim their rights for better working conditions. Julia (14) commented: “We participated in the demonstration in Santiago for which we made banners that demanded better working conditions”. The children in the groups were, despite the lack of activities, very outspoken about the child labour theme. In the words of 14-year-old Jesus, who has experience in picking cotton: “I think it is okay if we work, as long as we do so under good circumstances; it’s not good if we are exploited or abused. Then they are violating our rights.” Elisa, 13 and working during school holidays on an asparagus plantation stated: “We learn about child labour and that there are some organisations that want to prohibit child labour, such as the ILO. And we are against the prohibition, as we need the money to survive. Working is okay, but under good circumstances.”

Although many children mentioned they have the right to work under better conditions, not one child or adolescent could mention a specific activity when actually exercising this right to improve their working situation. “No I have not claimed my rights, the supervisor would fire me, and where would I find another job to cover my costs?” explained Berta, a 15-year-old working on an asparagus plantation. This fear was heard again and again. As mentioned above, supervisors admit to hiring children and adolescents because they find them easier to deal with; they are more docile workers than adults are. When children start claiming their rights they are reportedly fired immediately. This happened to 13-year-old Juana, who worked on an asparagus plantation. One day she failed to complete the tasks set by the supervisor, and so he decided not to pay her. Juana demanded her wage and yelled at him that he was treating her unfairly. “And then he just fired me all of a sudden; and as I am a kid and only few plantations will hire me, what can I do? So now I am stuck with nothing and we are short of money to eat and to buy clothes”. In retrospect she regrets standing up for her rights: “There are few plantations that hire kids, so I should have shut up, but sometimes I just have such a bad temper”. As a result, children and adolescents rarely make a fuss, and will endure exploitation instead of risking a loss of income.

During this research the children of the organised group in La Venta all expressed their knowledge of the extreme working conditions on the *fundos* (large-scale plantations). Some of them already had their own work experience, others knew about the conditions from family members, and were warned that working within their own communities would be safer (for example, on smaller plantations). Nevertheless, they all felt that the *fundos* would provide a better income: “On the *fundos* the supervisors are bad, but at least they pay better”, explained 13-year-old Martin. “I would like to work on one of the *fundos*, but most don’t want children. It’s true that the work is hard and the supervisors sometimes horrible, but one earns almost twice as much, and I would have

more money to buy food, clothing and pay for school,” added Mariela, a 14 year old girl from La Venta.

The educators also admitted that their attempts at improving labour conditions are limited. They see structural constraints, such as poverty, as significant obstacles to improving the labour conditions of children. As one educator explained:

We have achieved little to improve the labour conditions of the children. There are sectors where children are working in very bad conditions, are paid a low wage and where healthcare is horrible. But they come from poor families and children often prefer this situation of abuse to losing the necessary income.

Codeh-Ica feels that the relevant governmental organisations fail to safeguard the rights of labourers. An educator commented: “Children often work in informal sectors. They create their own work. In that sector it’s difficult for children to improve their own situation, because authorities don’t care if the situation of children improves or not”. She then added: “In the countryside it is even more difficult. The government doesn’t control the plantations and when they do they don’t take the side of the children, they just kick them off the plantations and children lose their income, which in the end doesn’t help the children.”

These last remarks bring us to the last section of this chapter on interventions: governmental bodies and other institutions involved in improving the situation for rural child labourers.

4.3 Other actors

The Regional Ministry of Labour is a significant governmental body responsible for controlling labour conditions on the plantations. It is responsible for coordinating the labour inspections, which monitor whether national labour laws are implemented and secured in the various economic sectors in the department of Ica. This includes the implementation of child labour legislation. When interviewing the different employees of the Department of Labour it was striking to note the difference in opinions on the presence of child labour on the export plantations.

The director of the Department of Labour stated that, based on personal experiences, he suspected many minors to be working on the plantations: “I live in Tiquiña and there every morning you see the workers standing on the street corners waiting to be picked up by the plantation owners. There are many adolescents among them as well”. However, when talking to the labour inspectors, the existence of rural child labour on the plantations was in first instance denied. “We haven’t seen any minors working on the plantations, and I don’t know of any case in the past of minors who were working illegally on plantations,” remarked the labour inspection coordinator. However, when confronted with the remarks made by the director of the Department of Labour, the coordinator did admit that there are probably many youngsters working. But, she also defended their position: a lack of personnel and resources, which is why the labour inspectors are unable to check and control all plantations. “We have two labour inspectors and we need at least 6. Secondly we don’t even have a car. How are we supposed to check the labour conditions on a plantation of several hundreds sometimes thousands of hectares, when we don’t have a car?”

One of the labour inspectors confirmed these restrictions: “Child labour is just one of the themes we have to check, and the plantation is just one of the sectors we are inspecting. For all labour themes and sectors we need at least 10 inspectors and more equipment, at least they should assign us a car!”

In the year of our research the Labour Department in Ica performed 50 visits to the plantations. No child labour was found. Not once in the whole history of labour inspections in Ica have they found working children or adolescents on the export plantations. Last year the labour inspection found two cases of child labour in total, among all formal economic sectors in Ica (these children were found in construction). The coordinator explained that she has frequently requested more employees and resources from the Ministry of Labour, but her appeals have always been denied: “We asked for it, but they don’t seem to be interested. It seems then that at the level of the national government, labour inspections is not one of their top priorities”.

The local chapter of the national Union CGTP (Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú) has an important role in improving the labour conditions on the plantations. However, as explained by the director of the local CGTP chapter in Ica, child labour doesn’t have a priority in the work of the CGTP:

We want to improve the working conditions of the adults. Trying to improve the working conditions of the children would give the right to work for a child a legal status. And we are against the right for children to work. Children should play and go to school; additionally, children’s right to work undermines the struggle for the labour rights of adults.

Although the focus is on improving adult labour rights, there is nevertheless a link between the work of the CGTP and child labour on the plantations: “We focus on improving the labour rights of adults, hopefully when these improve, the situation of the children will also improve. When adults labour rights are respected the wage would go up and social security would improve, and therefore part of the reason why children work would be solved”.

The plantations workers, however, are very difficult to organise, because of the threats they receive by some of the plantation owners:

Many labourers are afraid to affiliate themselves with a union because they are threatened with labour termination by the supervisor or sometimes the supervisor simply doesn’t contract union members at all. In this way, being a union member might have several negative consequences for your wages.

These practices were confirmed by the labourers themselves. One labourer in Santa Cruz de Villacuri even mentioned an additional threat often used by the plantation owners: “Some of the plantation supervisors don’t sack the union members themselves, as that would be against the law. What they do is that they start sacking their family members and friends, using the arguments that they don’t work hard enough. In this way the supervisors create a social pressure against unionists.”

An additional difficulty for the CGTP, in their attempts to organise workers, is the fact that many of the labourers are migrant labourers who return home after working a limited amount of time on the plantations. This makes structural union work difficult. The CGTP therefore tries to organise

workers per plantation. However, there are only few plantations that allow the unions on their land, as the director of the local CGTP chapter explained: “The difficulty in our work is that every time we want to enter a plantation we are chased off by the supervisors, sometimes even threatened with guns. Therefore we only work on some plantations, which leave thousands of labourers working unprotected by the union”.

It serves recommendation to take the structural difficulties, of improving the labour conditions of the parents of the working children, into account. As the CGTP director remarked: “The child labour problem is linked to the situation of the parents. If we want to solve it in a structural way, we need to also improve the labour situation of the parents.”

4.4 Conclusion

The NGO CESIP works on education and rural child labour within the context of traditional child labour in the department of Cusco. Two of its projects contribute to the eradication of child labour; both interventions were found to have limited effects.

Some parents commented that improvements made to the quality of education have led them to start sending their children to school more often, especially during harvest and the sowing season. In addition, the percentage of children, especially girls, who attend secondary school, has increased. It is also clear that the traditional norms concerning education have changed. The changing norms, breaking with the traditional cultural patterns, have resulted in a decrease of child labour in traditional agriculture, again especially during harvest and sowing seasons. The change in norms has partly been a consequence of the improved educational facilities and the child rights classes given by CESIP. However, there are also other factors that play an important role in this respect. Migration of (one of) the parents brings them into contact with modern norms on education prevalent in urban centres. Furthermore, progressive leaders use the village’s general assemblies to stimulate the *comuneros* to change their traditional ideas on education, and emphasise the importance of going to school for the development of the communities. Certain problems nevertheless prevail, and parents complain that children are taught in Quechua, rather than Spanish. Parents and children alike also dislike how physical punishments continue to be employed by teachers.

The increasing interest in education has had only a limited effect on the phenomenon of child labour. There continue to be several structural constraints related to child labour, which are not solved by improving the quality of education. One factor is migration; the workload for children increases as parents migrate to earn money to pay for basic needs. Additionally, parents depend on the labour force of their children as they have no money to hire wage labourers, and considering that they generally only produce for self-consumption. For as long as these economic structural constraints are not taken into account by intervention strategies, rural child labour will continue to exist despite improved educational standards.

CODEH-Ica does not identify child labour as a problem in itself; it is the labour conditions that need to be improved. The NGO has a number of projects, but the majority of working children involved come from urban contexts. The children and adolescents in the local groups were enthusiastic about

organising parties and events, sharing and playing with their friends, being invited for meetings with officials of child-centred organisations and they also expressed a high level of knowledge about their rights. However, despite all their efforts, better working conditions have not been successfully attained. The main problem concerns the risk of losing one's job if one complains too much; thus children and adolescents, whose labour terms are not protected by law, will often put up with a situation of exploitation out of fear for losing their jobs and a very necessary income.

The Ministry of Labour, and its local departments, is responsible for controlling for child labour. The local departments, however, have an extreme shortage of manpower and resources, and are unable to successfully fulfil their tasks. They do, however, suspect that many children and adolescents are active on the plantations.

The National Union CGTP is mainly concerned with the improvement of adult labour conditions, but recognises a direct relation between the struggle for better adult labour conditions and the eradication of child labour. Improving the wages of adult workers would decrease the need for children to work as well. In improving the conditions of workers the Unions meet a lot of resistance on the part of plantations owners, from violence against unionists to the sacking of the organised workers and their family and friends. Adult workers who voice their concerns and complaints run the risk of losing their jobs; the much weaker child labourers stand even less chance of having their grievances heard and responded to.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the 2002 ILO/INEI study, more than 2 million child labourers were registered in the 6-14 age group, which accounts for 29% of all children in this age group in Peru [INEI & OIT 2002]. The statistics even suggest that child labour is on the rise: between 1993 and 2001, child labour in Peru tripled in numbers. Of all these working children, 70% (1.4 million children) are stated to work in the countryside. The majority of them are the younger children between 6 and 13 years of age. Given the fact that rural child labour statistically forms the majority of the child labour problem, it is striking to note that the theme has received so little attention. Studies on rural child labour are few, and where available relate to rural child labour in traditional agriculture [see Alarcon 2001, 2006]. There are no studies on child labour in the commercial agricultural sector in Peru. Also in terms of policy programs, there are only a small number of active interventions. Both government programs, as well as child-centred NGOs, tend to focus on child labour in the urban context. By focusing on child labour in traditional and commercial rural agriculture, this research project fills the information void and aims to stimulate new interventions as well as improve existing ones.

Our study has indicated that practically all children in the traditional agricultural communities are working. Labour migration of (one of) the parents - due to economic deprivation and lack of opportunities in the village - results in an increase in the workload for those who stay behind, which are usually the mothers and children.

Economic deprivation in the community also means that the families cannot pay for wage labourers to help them cultivate their land. In addition, because they live off the products of their own land, families depend on all members to pitch in, including the children. The youngest children are mainly occupied with herding. As children get older, they become involved in more physically demanding labour, performing heavy agricultural activities (sowing, harvesting and maintenance) on the family land. Most children combine their work activities with education, engaging in agricultural activities before and after school hours. The combination of the different activities (work, education and domestic chores) is a heavy burden on the physical and emotional capacities of the children; children are often exhausted at the end of the day. They miss classes or, because they are engaged in relatively demanding work in the mornings before going to school, are tired in class and have difficulties concentrating. Obviously this has negative effects on their educational performance. The work, despite the lack of any serious direct physical consequences, can thus form a threat to the “health, safety or morals” of children, as is specified in Convention 182.

In the villages with commercial plantations, most children and adolescents were also found to be working in agriculture, although at a later age: on the small-scale plantations from 10-11 years

upwards, on the large scale plantations from 13-14 years onwards. They are often hired along with their parents. Almost all children work mainly during school holidays and occasionally in the weekends. Only in exceptional cases do children skip classes for work on the plantations.

During the holidays children and adolescents work from 6 am to 5 pm. The labour conditions on the plantations are extremely demanding, especially because of the environment and climate, the physical strain, the sexual intimidation and the use of chemicals. Working on the large scale plantations in Ica definitely harms the health and safety of minors and should therefore be classified as a Worst Form of Child Labour according to ILO norms. Consequently, the admission age for working on these plantations should be raised from 16 to a minimum of 18 years of age.

In the communities of Ccasacunca and Cusibamba the Peruvian NGO CESIP tries to improve the situation for rural child labourers. Their main strategy is to improve the quality of rural education (*escuela amiga*) and to provide child rights education to the parents (*escuela de padres*). The assumption is that when the quality of education is improved, children will be stimulated to spend more time on education instead of work. Furthermore, by stimulating child rights education, children and parents will start to understand the basic rights of children and will hopefully put education before work.

Teachers, children and parents mentioned that the interventions of CESIP have improved access to and quality of education. It also appeared that the norms concerning education have somewhat changed. Particularly the young generation is clearly more interested in sending their children to school, which is especially obvious in the case of girls. Earlier generations used to spend the time, which these children now spend in school and doing homework, working on the land or helping in and around the house. The changing norms, breaking with the traditional cultural patterns, have resulted in a decrease of child labour in traditional agriculture.

The changing norms have partly been a consequence of the improved educational facilities and the child rights classes given by CESIP. The new understanding of childhood and particularly the increasing importance given to education for boys and girls has also been stimulated by the migration of parents into urban areas where they are introduced to alternative ideas. Progressive community leaders, commenting on the value of education in the general assemblies within the community, have also influenced the norms concerning education in the community.

However, in spite of CESIP's efforts, the local people question the use of teaching in Quechua rather than Spanish, which is much more useful for the children if they would like to find a job outside the village. Parents also blame teachers for not keeping to school hours, by leaving too early or not turning up at all, for making insufficient contact with the parents and for sometimes using physical punishment.

In addition, when evaluating education as a strategy against child labour, it is important to note that the increasing interest in education has had only a limited effect on the phenomenon of child labour; improved education does not tackle some of the structural constraints that lead to children working in traditional agriculture. These structural constraints mostly have to do with poverty in Ccasacunca and Cusibamba, and consequently parental migration, which increases the workload of the children who stay behind. The low returns on agriculture make it impossible to hire outside

labour, meaning that families must depend on the labour force of their children during harvest and sowing seasons. As long as these structural constraints are not taken into account by intervention strategies rural child labour will continue to exist, despite improved educational standards and child rights education.

Codeh-lca also implements several projects to improve the situation of working children and adolescents on commercial plantations. The NGO clearly has difficulties reaching *rural* child labourers, as the vast majority of working children involved in the projects are from urban areas; this can generally be explained by the fact that most projects are offered in the cities, which are difficult to reach for rural child labourers in terms of distance and cost.

The one intervention in which a relatively large percentage of rural child labourers participate is the project of “self-organisation”. Through this intervention Codeh-lca stimulates the formation of local groups of child labourers. These children learn how to participate, become educated on child rights and learn about group values such as solidarity and friendship. At the same time it is believed that organised children are more able to defend their rights and claim better working conditions from their employers. The children and adolescents in these local groups indeed had enthusiastic responses. The children were excited about organising parties and events, holding official meetings with officials of child-centred organisations and also expressed a high level of knowledge of their rights. However, neither the children nor the educators could mention examples in which rural child labourers, through their self-organisation, had been able to improve their working conditions on the plantations. Children and adolescents actually mentioned that they often voluntarily endure situations of exploitation and abuse rather than risk losing a necessary income.

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for controlling for child labour. The labour inspectors claimed that on their visits to the plantations they never encountered working minors below the legal age of 16. However, they also indicated the short supply of personnel and resources (such as cars) to be able to efficiently inspect the plantations, and suspected that many child workers are going by unnoticed.

The National Labour Union CGTP, and its local chapters, is also an important player. It takes a stand against child labour on the plantations, but unfortunately, in daily practice, does not have a specific strategy for the eradication of child and adolescent labour. Child labour in their view is related to the improvement of adult labour conditions. Improving the wages of adult workers would decrease the need for children to work. They indicated that the attempts at improving the conditions of adult labourers has met with considerable resistance on the part of plantations owners, who have been using several strategies to discourage unionism, including physical violence, termination of contracts among the organised workers, and removal of them and their families from the plantations. If this happens to organised adult workers, the much weaker child labourers may stand even less chance of having their complaints heard and responded to.

There seems to be a direct link between an increasing acceptance of education as the mainstay of childhood and a decrease in child labour activity. However, the quality of rural primary education

remains a problem and schools do not function properly. The limited access to secondary education affects adolescent girls particularly. Thus more efforts are required to provide accessible and good quality primary, as well as, secondary education. Traditional norms are changing, but they can only be fully overturned if education offers a better alternative. The focus on education for all should be accompanied by plans to combat the structural and economic reasons why children work in the first place. Children work because parents migrate in search of an income. Mechanisation of agriculture and livestock breeding were options mentioned by the inhabitants of both communities to increase the local income generating possibilities. Mechanisation would have the additional advantage of a decreased demand for the manual labour of children during harvest and sowing seasons.

In commercial agriculture, since the younger children appear to be working because of the dire poverty of the family, the possibilities of improving the labour opportunities of the adult plantation workers and of strengthening the trade unions should be explored. The first step to improve the inspection system and have the national legislation implemented would be to provide the labour inspectors with more personnel and material support. One of the reasons why children work is that there is usually not much to do in their communities during school holidays. It would thus be helpful to organise creative and educational activities during school holidays in the villages where the children and adolescent workers come from.

Resources

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