

**CHILD LABOUR IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR: THE  
CASE OF GULELE SUB-CITY, ADDIS ABABA**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS:**

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**BY: ADDISU GEDLU**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
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JUNE 2008**

## **DECLARATION**

I here by declared that this thesis is my original work and that all sources of information used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Place and Date of Submission: Addis  
Ababa University June, 2008

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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Date: June, 2008

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Addisu Gedlu

June, 2008

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## ACRONYMS AND ABRIVATIONS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>AIDS</b>    | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome   |
| <b>ANPPCAN</b> | African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect |
| <b>AU</b>      | African Union   |
| <b>CRC</b>     | Convention on the Rights of the Child   |
| <b>CSA</b>     | Central Statistical Authority   |
| <b>EAMAT</b>   | East African Multidisciplinary Advisory Team                                      |
| <b>EC</b>      | Ethiopian Calendar  |
| <b>FDRE</b>    | Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia   |
| <b>FGD</b>     | Focus Group Discussion  |
| <b>HIV</b>     | Human Immunodeficiency Virus  |
| <b>ILO</b>     | International Labour Organization   |
| <b>IPEC</b>    | International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour                        |
| <b>MOLSA</b>   | Ministry Of Labour and Social Affairs   |
| <b>NGO</b>     | Non Governmental Organization   |
| <b>OAU</b>     | Organization of African Unity   |
| <b>OECD</b>    | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development                            |
| <b>RWG-CL</b>  | Regional Work Group on Child Labour   |
| <b>SIMPOC</b>  | Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labour                    |
| <b>STD</b>     | Sexually Transmitted Disease  |
| <b>UN</b>      | United Nations  |
| <b>UNCRC</b>   | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child                              |
| <b>UNICEF</b>  | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.                           |
| <b>USDOL</b>   | United States Department Of Labour  |
| <b>Wro</b>     | Woyzaero  |

## GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMS

**Addisu Gebaya-** a place located in the northern part of Addis Ababa beneath Entoto Mountain bounded by Giorgis in the south.

**Bullie-** a name given to leftovers by working children in the streets.

**Gebaya-** marketplace.

**Gulet-** neighbourhood market.

**Idir-** a traditional institution or self-help association for emergency.

**Injera-** a flat and round shape locally prepared pancake.

**Kashika-** a traditional dish of Gamo community prepared from maize.

**Kebele-** a small administration unit under sub-city.

**Kolo-** a roasted bean.

**Komche** – a nick name given to those lottery sellers who came from Gojjam, named after the former Gojjam local governor, Komche Ambaw, who is known by his jokes.

**Lekefu yemaisete**- something harmless.

**Shebellaw**- a nick name given to those lottery sellers who came from Gojjam and in Amharic

interchangeably refers to a tall person. People use the terms Komche and Shebellaw

**Shemma**- a traditional cloth made from 100 percent cotton.

**Shiro Meda**- a place located in the northern part of the city beneath Entoto Mountain bounded in the south by Six Kilo.

**Woyalla**- a boy whose role is calling and serving passengers in a taxi.

**Woyzaero**- married woman.

## ABSTRACT

This study aims at assessing child labour in the informal sector of Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa with particular reference to Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya. The study looks at the factors that contribute for the involvement of children in the labour market; the living and working conditions of child labourers; the negative and positive impacts of child labour on the working children; the perceptions of child labour from the perspectives of working children, employers and members of the society; the challenges and abusive practices child labourers face; and the legislations that protect children from labour exploitation. To undertake this study I employed qualitative research method, which is the dominant research methodology of the field of social anthropology, as the sole technique of data collection. I gathered information pertinent to the study through structured and unstructured interviews, observation, case study and focus group discussion. Theories of child labour such as the 'labour market', the 'human capital', the 'social responsibility' and the 'children-centered' were reviewed and used in order to shed light on the issue of child labour in the informal sector. All these theories were useful for this study.

Child labour in general and in the informal sector in particular is not exhaustively studied in the country. But this dearth of data seems serious in the informal sector of the city of Addis Ababa, especially in the study areas. There are limited anthropological studies on child labour. Nonetheless, they did not address the informal sector all in all. They focused only on a certain area of child labour in the informal sector.

Findings from this study show that poverty, migration, child trafficking, parental unemployment, the newly introduced education system (i.e., full-day schooling), and HIV/AIDS and family breakdown or displacement are the major causes of child labour in the study areas. It also shows the positive and negative impacts of child labour on the working children including the interface between child labour and education. Positively, work enables children to meet their basic needs, develop self-confidence, high self-esteem, a sense of self-reliance and responsibility, and good social interaction. It also puts negative impact on the holistic personality development of the child. It has physical, health and psychosocial impacts on the working children. Child labour and education are inversely related. Child labour affects the school enrollment and participation of children. High participation of children in school reduces the number of working children.

Different people may have different perceptions towards child labour. Children may see child labour from different angle than employers and members of the society. Some children view 'work' as useful for their survival. Some others perceive it as something detrimental to their holistic development. Employers have different views and stressed that they employ children to help them meet their basic needs. Members of the society perceive 'child labour' something 'useful' and 'harmful', and hold moderate attitude. The other most important finding of this study is the challenges child labourers face when they try to run away from labour exploitation. Some of these are poverty, language barrier, inability to afford transportation cost, violent employers, phobia created by employers, etc. They also encounter physical, verbal and psychological abuses from employers, 'parents' or 'relatives', colleagues, security officials, hooligans and customers.

Moreover, child labour legislations and their enforcements in the context of the study areas are assessed in this study. It highlights that Ethiopia has adequate legislations that protect children from abuses such as labour exploitation. But the main problem here is the ill enforcement of these legislations enshrined in different legal documents of the country. Therefore, there is great gap between the laws of the country and their enforcements. In short, this study ignites green light for further studies, and provide fertile ground for possible intervention policy makers on

the problem of children in general and child labour in particular in the study areas and the country at large.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The thesis discusses the issue of child labour in the informal sector which is believed to be the main harbour of working children in developing countries like Ethiopia and in major cities like Addis Ababa. This study was carried out in Gulele Sub-city with particular emphasis on Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya, North of Addis Ababa. The main aim of this study is to better understand the feature of child labour in the informal sector through qualitative research technique which characterizes the field of social anthropology and to assess the causes and impacts of child labour, challenges and abusive practices facing child labourers as well as the perceptions of child workers, employers and the society towards child labour.

Child labour is an important aspect of social and economic reality that surrounds us, although it is sometimes unnoticed. Many people, organizations and economies all over the world are concerned about child labour. The main concern is basically the kind of work children are doing, some of which is dangerous, and may cause physical and psychological damages or may even threaten the child's life. Children are engaged in child labour for a variety of reasons, among which poverty, parental unemployment, migration and HIV/AIDS are some of them.

The definition of child labour is a controversial issue. The concept is not as simple and straightforward as it may appear. But the United Nations, as highlighted by Nkurlu, defines child labour as "all forms of economic exploitation of a child or, any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development"(Nkurlu, 2000:1). Furthermore, in its recent global estimates of child labour, the International Labour Organization (ILO/IPEC, 2002:32) defines child labour as consisting of "all children under 15 years of age who are economically active excluding (i) those who are under 5 years old and (ii) those between 12-14 years old who spend less than 14 hours a week on their jobs, unless their activities or occupations are hazardous by nature or circumstance. Added to this are 15-17 years old children in the

worst forms of child labour.” Both definitions are highly reflected in this study. In the study areas there are many children who toil for more than 14 hours not per week rather per day and they are between the ages of 6 and 17.

International Conventions of the rights of the child and recommendations upon which different definitions of child labour are based have long been put in place, and many countries have in fact ratified them. Ideally, all ratifying countries including Ethiopia need to apply these conventions and recommendations as part of their respective national laws, so as to define and deal with child labour. Ethiopia, as a member state of the ILO and United Nations Organization, has ratified and incorporated these documents as part of the law of the land as clearly enshrined in the FDRE Constitution Article 9 sub-article 4. And it has also an article in its constitution on the rights of children, i.e., Article 36.

However, in Ethiopia more intensive and countrywide study has not been done and there is lack of information to estimate the exact number of working children. In the informal sector, which is an emerging sector, children constitute a good proportion of the labour force. The working condition or the working place, and the nature of work and the associated risks that affect physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of the working child is open for intensive studies. Thus, this study tries to shed an anthropological light on the subject child labour in the informal sector and it is the first attempt in its kind.

Thus, the issue of child labour in the informal sector, its impacts on the working children, the living and working conditions, challenges working children face and the perceptions of child labourers, employers and members of the society and legal concerns of child labour are assessed in this study. The result of the study is hoped to help policy makers, NGOs, civic societies and the public at large to design appropriate intervention policies and strategies to mitigate the problem of child labour in Ethiopia. This study incorporates six chapters including research methodology and Review of relevant literature parts. The last four chapters including the conclusion deal with the findings of the study in detail.

## 1.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

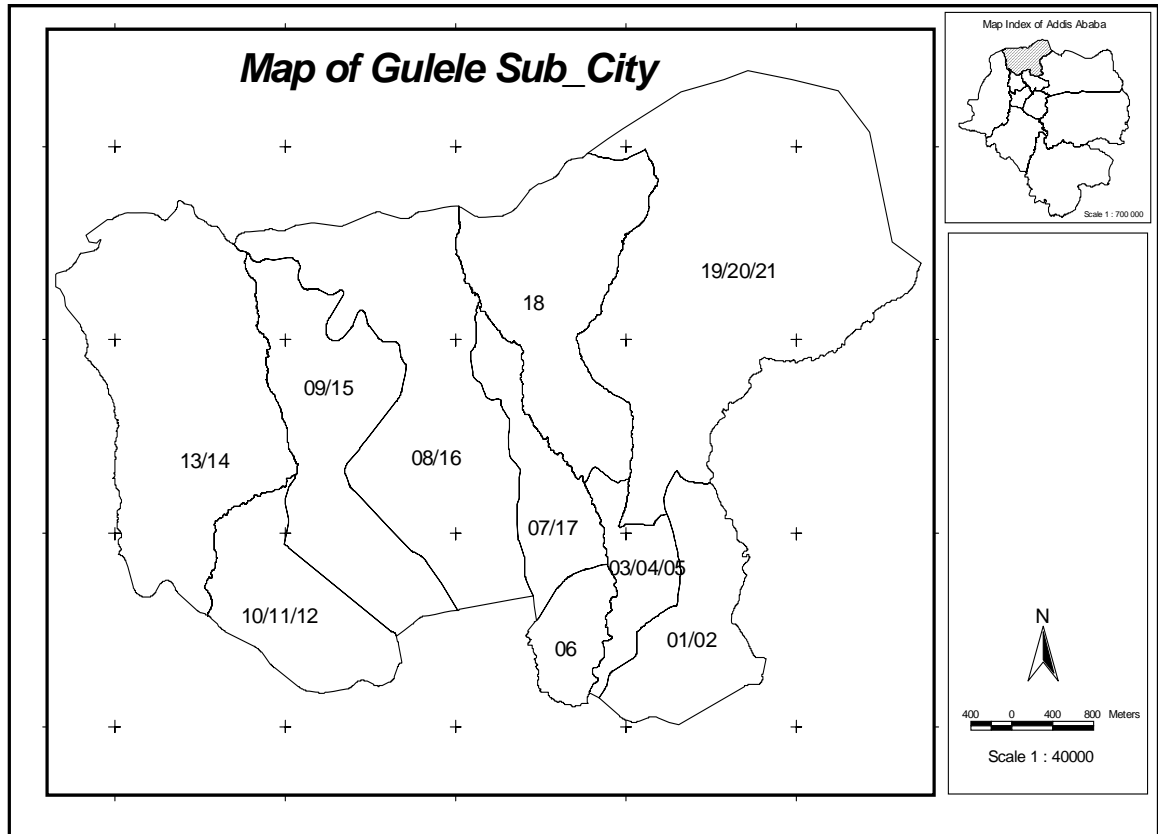
### 1.2.1. ADDIS ABABA

Addis Ababa was founded by Emperor Menelik II in 1886-1887. The precursor of Addis Ababa, the town of Entoto, was situated on the hillside, it was cold and windy. As a result of this, the soldiers sought to camp around Filwoha area which was later on received a new name *Addis Ababa* from Menelike's wife, Empress Taitu. The later victory of Adwa, in 1896, highly increased the power of the emperor and hastened the growth of the newly established town, Addis Ababa (Amare and Fassil, 1986:7). It is located in central Ethiopia at an altitude of about 2330 meter (8000 feet) above sea level on a Shoan Plateau that is crossed by many streams and surrounded by hills. Addis Ababa is now the capital city of Ethiopia and headquarters of African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa with a total population of 2,570,000 (according to the 2001 estimation) (Encarta, 2007).

In 2003, the Charter of Addis Ababa City Government, Proclamation No. 1/1995 E.C, divided the city into ten parts and structured in sub-cities for the purpose of realizing good governance and administration (Gulele Sub-city Strategic Plan 2000-2003:6). These ten sub-cities are *Bole*, *Nifas Silk-Lafto*, *Kolfe-Keraniyo*, *Yeka*, *Akaki-Kaliti*, *Arada*, *Gulele*, *Addis Ketema*, *Kirkos* and *Ledeta* Sub-city. *Gulele* Sub-city is one of the ten sub-cities of Addis Ababa with an areal extent of 31,237, 071 meter square. It is located in the northern part of Addis Ababa surrounded in the north by Oromiya Region, in the south *Arada* Sub-city, in the east *Yeka* Sub-city and in the west by *Kolfe-Keraniyo* Sub-city. The total population of the sub-city is estimated to be between 346,000 and 360,000. For administration purpose *Gulele* Sub-city is divided into ten *kebeles* (*Gulele* Sub-city Strategic Plan 2000-2003: 3).

As the Strategic plan of the sub-city further shows the inhabitants of the sub-city come from different parts of the country and with different ethnic backgrounds. They are engaged in diverse economic activities. Of these the weaving business which harbours 20 percent of the total population of the sub-city is the dominant one. However, they use

traditional technologies which could not take the industry even one step ahead. Moreover, Gulele Sub-city is one of the poverty stricken sections of the capital, Addis Ababa. Nearly half of the sub-city's population live in abject poverty or below the poverty line (Gulele Sub-city Strategic Plan 2000-2003:6).



**Source:** Addis Ababa City Government Urban Information and Documentation

Department.

### 1.3. Statement of the Problem

Child labour is a social predicament and an incident obstructing the normal and holistic growth of the child. This thought was realized especially following the involvement of the child in the labour market (Zerihun, 1996:89). Several studies show that the types of work children engage in are diverse. These works have exploitative nature and are hazardous to the children's lives in many ways (Nardos, 2006: 48; UNICEF, 2001). The situation is too serious for employed working children than those who are working with their relatives or families (Lomi, 2002: 60). Today child labour is virtually invisible to most people, but child workers are available everywhere in the world. Sold or exchanged as cheap merchandise, many children cannot escape bonded labour or prostitution. Others suffer, and may only barely survive, the long hours of work, the heavy burdens, the dangerous tools, the poisonous chemicals. The strongest will go on, bearing the physical and emotional scars of permanent labour. At a time when they should be at school and preparing for a productive adulthood, young boys and girls are losing their childhood and, with it, the promise of a better future (ILO/IPEC, 1999:1). To reinforce this argument the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said:

*Child labour has serious consequences that stay with the individual and with society for far longer than the years of childhood. Young workers not only face dangerous working conditions. They face long-term physical, intellectual and emotional stress. They face an adulthood of unemployment and illiteracy (<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/campaign/childlabourcamp.htm>)*

Today, child labour is viewed as a grievous issue throughout the world. Particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America the problem is very serious. It is a critical human rights problem because it denies the child's time to take part in activities that are useful for the 'normal' growth of the child like time to go to school and time to play. Many children work in occupations and industries which are plainly precarious and harmful (Mendelievich, 1979: 46). Child labour is one of the most prevalent causes and forms of child exploitation and abuse. Its negative effect is observed in the physical, intellectual and social development of the working children (Weston, 2005; Myers, 1991).

Currently, millions of children toil in non-schooling type of work mostly under hardship and hazardous conditions which are detrimental to their health and wellbeing. According to UNICEF (1998: 48-49), the majority of out-of-school children are likely to be working. Work prevents many children from going to or benefiting from education. But equally to blame is the state of the education systems which fail to take into account the special circumstances of working children.

In urban areas of underdeveloped nations like Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, “where child labour has increased steadily due to rapid urbanization; working children are mostly found in trade and services and to a lesser extent in the manufacturing sector” (Zerihun, 1996: 89). There is evidence showing that the worst forms of child labour have increased in the country. There are a growing number of street children in Addis Ababa and other urban centers and an increase in child prostitutes, a large number of them are also working in the informal sector and trade and small businesses. Many young girls are employed as domestic servants; working long hours for little or no pay and have no access to education (Forum on Child Labour in Ethiopia, 2000:5). Children are usually employed in different types of job and employment relations governing their work vary accordingly. The employment may be full-time or part-time. Instead of the larger and more mechanized companies, the unregistered and under capitalized enterprises, operating in competitive and often highly volatile or seasonal markets, are the major places of work for most child workers (Zerihun, 1996:89).

Child labour is a complicated issue in a country like Ethiopia. As in many developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, child labour is a widespread problem in Ethiopia (ILO/EAMAT, 1996: 5). Almost 48 percent of Ethiopia’s population is under 15 years of age (CSA, 2005:16). According to the 2001 National Child Labour Survey Report, around 18,197,783 of the estimated 55.9 million total population were children between the ages of 5 and 17. The survey result shows that about 85 percent of the country’s children were engaged in some kind of activity, that is, productive activity or housekeeping activity. Overall, 9,483,611 children (52.1 percent of the total children) were reported to have worked productive activities during the reference period (CSA,

2001: xiii). Ethiopia is currently facing this problem particularly in cities and towns where like in other developing countries the informal sector covers a significant share in the total urban economy (Mengesha, 1998: 1). For example, in Addis Ababa 65,171 children were engaged in productive activity especially in the informal sector (CSA, 2001: 47).

According to the 2005 National Labour Force Survey, out of the total 222,239 children between the age of 10 and 14, 769 were employed in the informal sector in Addis Ababa (CSA, 2005). The type of exploitation, in general, include low wages, long working hours, denying the child's right to education, denial of the rights of the child for constructive leisure, etc. (Dyorough, 1984: 51 as cited in Mengesha, 1998).

Review of some of the literatures show that children of the least developed nations are vulnerable to exploitation and abuses. The fact that Ethiopia is one of the least developed countries characterized by poverty and lack of social opportunity places it in the category of countries whose children are suffering from work related hazards. One can observe the seriousness of the problem in the informal sectors of the study areas. The real feature of the problem is well explained by Rodgers and Standing (1981: 31-32) as follows:

*The informal sector activities are characterized by their casual, low income, basically unproductive nature, typically not contributing to accumulation and often described as survival activities of a lumpen proletariat. As such they comprise both legitimate and illegitimate activities – the one often leading to the other among children and adolescents.*

The problem of child labour can not be redressed legally because often the informal sector is not recognized by governments. This is the case in many developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In this connection, Mendelievich (1979: 43) had the following to say:

*In the informal sector virtually none of the legal provisions relating to the minimum age for employment and to the protection of children in general are observed, and relationships between employers and workers are usually governed not by legislation but by tradition and custom. In fact, a very large number of employers and workers in this sector are quite unaware of the existence of the relevant legislation.*

In Ethiopia, there are a large number of working children in the informal sector mostly in cities and towns including Addis Ababa where such sectors exist. As it

might be expected majority of the Ethiopia's urban population live in a vicious circle of poverty. This shows that most of the families could not earn sufficient income to meet the minimum needs of the child. This creates strong push factors; pushing families to force their children to work and supplement the meager family income (ILO/EAMAT, 1995: 76). In other words, children must work if their families and themselves are to survive. Hence, child labour is mainly the outcome of poverty. According to Poluha (2004), there are children in Addis Ababa who are working and attending school in order to assist their families' insufficient income. In this regard, Darge (1996:13) argued:

*In Ethiopian context generally the factors that are correlated with child abuse [including child labour] and neglect include grinding poverty, illiteracy, recurring famine and drought, internal conflicts, wars, high rate of population growth and unworkable and sometimes downright adventurous socioeconomic policies.*

The participation of children in the informal labour market is not yet studied. So far there is no a single anthropological study dealing with child labour in the informal sector. But the sector accommodates a large number of working children mainly from poor families and is well appreciated by the existing demographic and economic studies as the main harbour of child labour. However, the information gap is still in existence and urges more anthropological studies to be conducted.

Earlier works on child labour in Addis Ababa focused on some sectors of child labour. Lomi in her study, entitled *Child Labour in the Informal Sector in Northern Addis Ababa: the Case of Weavers around Shiro Meda*, looks at the issue of child labour only from working children in the weaving business. Though there are many activities in the informal sector, she gave emphasis only to child weavers of Shiro Meda. Nardos in her part studied domestic child labourers, under the title *The Experience of Migrant domestic Labourers: the Case of Arada Sub-city*. Her focus was very narrow and stressed at the experience of a single group of child workers, i.e., domestic child labourers. Therefore, this study, *Child Labour in the Informal Sector: the Case of Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa*, is the first attempt in its kind to see the extent of the problem of child labour in the informal sector particularly in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa. As a result, it focuses on different working children from different categories in the informal sector. This study

looks at children from different activities of the informal sector such as employed, self-employed and children working with their parents are incorporated in this study.

However, still the issue of child labour is a wide subject and needs extensive study. Thus, the gaps and the questions raised in this study will open the gate for further anthropological studies on child labour.

#### **1.4. Guiding Questions**

This study aimed at answering the following main questions. On the basis of these questions I raised several questions to informants in the course of interviewing and focus group discussions.

1. Why do children work?
2. What are the negative and positive impacts of child labour on the working children?
3. How working children express their perception about child labour and to what extent they know their rights?
4. What are the challenges they face when they try to be free from labour exploitation and other forms of abusive practices?
5. Are child labour and legal instruments going together in Ethiopia?

#### **1.5. Objectives of the Study**

This study comprises of general and specific objectives. Both general and specific objectives are the core of this study.

##### **1.5.1. General Objective**

The main intention of the study is to assess child labour in the informal sector in the case of Gulele Sub-city with particular reference to *Shiro Meda* and *Addisu Gebaya* localities together with its causes, impacts, challenges, the perceptions toward ‘child labour’ and legal considerations regarding child labour. In order to realize this general objective, the study focuses on the following specific objectives.

### 1.5.2. Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives:

- To investigate the causes for the involvement of children in the labour market;
- To describe the social, economic, health, educational and psychological impacts of child labour on the working children;
- To explore the perceptions of child labourers, their employers and the society, toward child labour;
- To assess the challenges and abusive practices that these working children face; and
- To examine whether the legal instruments of Ethiopia give enough protection to child labourers; or to see the gap between child labour exploitation and the law enforcement to solve the problem of child labour.

### 1.6. Theoretical Approaches

According to Myers and Ennew, there are four main approaches to child labour (Pantea, 2007: 25). These theoretical approaches are significant and relevant to this study. They also serve as stepping ground to this study. Some of these approaches reflect the position of international organizations like ILO and UN. These theories are:

**1. The “labour market” discourse** focuses on legal measures meant to limit children’s participation in the labour market (Pantea, 2007: 25). According to Ennew, Myers and Plateau (2005:28), this perspective considers work and schooling as incompatible and insists that children should not be allowed to work until they have finished their basic education. In this discourse, children are regarded as unaware of their own best interest, highly vulnerable to workplace exploitation, and completely dependent on adults for protection, especially through the actions of the state. It demands that children under the legal minimum age not be economically active at all, it refuses such children both the right to work and join or form trade unions.

Hence, the “labour market” discourse has much to do with this study. This study clearly shows the trade off between work and education. When there is high primary school participation there would be low incidence of child labour. And work has its own impact

on the school participation and performance of the child. Therefore, the incompatibility of children's work and education is discussed in chapter four of this study. This study also clearly shows the impact of unsafe working conditions on the perpetrators. To maintain the health, social and intellectual status of children from poor families', children under the legal minimum age (14 in the Ethiopian Context) should be protected by the legal instruments of the country and banned from engaging in productive activities.

**2. The “human capital” discourse** aims to equip children with educational skills presumably able to increase their labour standards later on (Pantea, 2007: 25; Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:28) in adulthood. According to this perspective, child labour is seen as the result of underdevelopment and defined as work and/or working conditions that undermine development of health status, knowledge and skills that children will require to contribute in adult life to both national economic development and their own prosperity. In this discourse, there is no fundamental objection to children being economically active, as long as their “human capital” is not threatened and is not poorly nurtured (through apprenticeship, for example). Thus children are viewed as human potential that must be prepared for productive adulthood, and childhood as a period of economic investment that produces future return through taxes paid, increased productivity, and an expanded economy. The human capital discourse places great importance on education, at least in so far as this focused on schooling and skill training, and supports programs that ensure access by all children, including working children (Pantea, 2007: 25; Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:28).

The “human capital” discourse is more relevant to this study since poverty or economic slowdown is one of the major causes of child labour in the study areas. It also reveals that work in general and the working conditions in particular are detrimental to the physical and mental health of the child and it would also affect the holistic personality development of the child. And such involvement of children in the labour market at their early age would have its own positive impact on their future economic status if it is properly handled. These issues are described in detail in chapter three and four of this study.

**3. The “social responsibility” discourse** sees child labour as a consequence of “social exclusion” which prevents children from benefiting from society’s protection (Pantea, 2007: 25; Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:29). In short, this discourse is concerned with the separation of children from mechanisms of social protection, participation and opportunity; and conceptualizes child labour as a problem of social exclusion leading to work that exploits and oppresses children often because they are socially excluded in the first place. Therefore, according to this approach, the problem of child labour is explained as the result of social breakdown of family, community or nation (Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:30).

In the study areas, there are children who engaged in productive activities in the informal sector due to family disintegration which is caused either by HIV/AIDS or other socio-cultural reasons. This theory was serving as a stepping ground for me when I investigate the causes of child labour.

**4. The “children-centered” discourse** is given by CRC (Convention on the Rights of Children) (Pantea, 2007: 25; Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:28) and focuses on children’s own views on work (Pantea, 2007: 25). On the basis of this perspective, I identified two different attitudes of working children towards child labour. As Ennew, Myers and Plateau (2005:28) put it organizations with this perspective assess children’s work according to the effects it has on children, so that child labour is defined as work that is harmful to them. However, as this study revealed in the context of the study areas, the participation of children in the labour market has its own contribution for the survival of poor families. Occasionally drawing on recent sociological and philosophical work on childhood, the children-centered discourse proposes that children are resilient, capable and knowledgeable in some ways while vulnerable and dependent in others (Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005:28). This approach is relevant to this study. This is due to the fact that the perceptions or the views of child labourers are important to understand the state of their work and ultimately to seek solutions for their problems. The views of working children are also incorporated in chapter five of this study.

## **1.7. Methods of Data Collection**

To carry out this research different techniques of data collection have been used. Hence, this study is organized on the basis of both primary and secondary data.

### **1.7.1. Primary Data**

Primary data collection method was the main technique I employed to gather information from the working children and other concerned individuals in the study areas. To ensure the contribution of this study, I have collected first hand information through the following techniques from children and different members of the society.

#### **1.7.1.1. Structured and Unstructured Interviews**

**Structured (In-Depth) Interview:** To obtain more detail and meaningful answers on sensitive and personal topics, I undertook in-depth interviews with a total of 12 key informants, six from Shiro Meda and six from Addisu Gebaya, out of 35 working children in both sites, who have been identified working in the study areas. Participants in the in-depth interview were from both sexes, employed and self employed working children. I tried my best to be ethical while interviewing children especially not to degenerate the method into interrogation; not to mention the right name of my interviewee; and interviewed and I used tape-recorder on the basis of their basic interest. To this end, a more open ended strategy was adopted to solicit information on the forces that contribute to respondents' decision to take-up the current job or employment in the informal sector and to assess the impact of their respective occupation on their physical, health, intellectual and social aspects.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews have been used to seek more information on individual perceptions and personal experiences of informants in relation to their current occupation. However, sometimes I posed some semi-structured questions in the middle of the interview either to bring them back to the track when they go outside the concern of this study or on the basis of their answer for detail clarification.

**Unstructured (Informal) Interview:** I undertook unstructured interview methodology with 34 informants to supplement the information gathered from structured

or the in-depth interview. A good number of respondents for this unstructured interview were child labourers from different categories and modes of employment, two employers, and four individuals who came from the society (including the parents of working children), two government officials from the sub-city's Labour and Social Affairs Department, two concerned police officials in Addis Ababa Police Commission and Gulele Sub-city Police Department, two members of *Kebele* Administration, two primary school teachers, two employees of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working on children. I employed unstructured interview due to the work load of most of my informants, lack of patience and interest especially among the officials of different governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and limited experience in child labour. I interviewed them while they were working, walking or moving from one area to the other. Due to the abovementioned reasons most of them gave brief answers to my questions.

The informal interview with the abovementioned concerned bodies has a paramount importance to understand whether the issue of child labour in the sub-city goes in conformity with the legal framework of the country and the extent to which governmental and nongovernmental organizations work together to mitigate the problem. I will use the information gathered from in-depth interview to illustrate my major points with very real and concrete examples. All the names mentioned in this thesis are pseudo names.

### **1.7.1.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Focus groups were made up of seven working children from different occupations in both sites of the study. I formed the groups out of different categories who were willing to participate in the discussion. Twenty-eight working children were approached for the purpose of four focus group discussions in both sites of the study. Many of the children who took part in the FGDs have been previously interviewed in detail about their own private experiences. The selection criteria were based on sex (both male and female working children), age (younger and older working children) and mode of occupation (employed, self-employed and those who were working in family establishments). In addition to full time working children, those who were enrolled in school and engaged in work were also incorporated in the FGDs.

I undertook FGDs in both sites of the study with five main aims. One was to crosscheck and supplement the information gathered through other techniques of data collection such as structured and unstructured interviews; observation and case studies. My second intention was to gather information regarding the interaction or relationship between working children from different categories. The third objective was to see the difference between employed and self-employed children in terms of their perceptions about child labour, their knowledge about the rights of children and corresponding laws that protect children from labour exploitation; their self-confidence or self-esteem. The fourth objective was to identify if there is something in common among child labourers of different categories and modes of employment. In the fifth place, I employed FGD technique in each site to know the working conditions and their relations with their employers, abusive practices and the challenges they face when they try to escape from such exploitations. Therefore, FGD has been one of the major data collection techniques of this study.

### **1.7.1.3. Observation**

In addition to structured and unstructured interviews and FGD, observation technique has been one of the methods of data collection for this study. Observational evidence is often useful in providing information about a topic like this – child labour. Some relevant behavior or environmental conditions were available for observation that serves as a source of evidence in the study. In line with this, it has been a major means of data collection in such a research as it has provided a first-hand account of the situation in this study.

Hence, I employed observation as one of my data collection instruments so as to explore the type of work children were engaged in; the way they perform their day to day duties; the suitability of their living and working environment; whether the work they perform is beyond their physical capacity; and the proportionality between their work and their age. Moreover, a great deal of information was collected during the socialization among the working children themselves, and between them and their employers and adult co-workers.

#### **1.7.1.4. Case Study**

To get more reliable information and to make the study more meaningful and explicable, I closely or friendly approached five key informants and made them free to narrate their feelings and life histories. This allowed me to gather more information like the reasons for their participation in the labour market; the impact of their work on their holistic development; the challenges they face; their working conditions; the status or background of their families and other pertinent issues.

Thus, case studies were conducted to extract information from selected child labourers who were more vulnerable to the problem in both sites of the study. It also helped me to understand the emotional feelings of the child concerning family-sick, with his/her employer, and coworkers. Their future intentions and psychological issues like level of their self-confidence and self-esteem were also reflected in the course of the narration. Therefore, case studies yielded valuable information on several affairs of working children. And children involved in the case studies represented the most vulnerable groups of working children in the sub-city.

#### **1.7.2. Secondary Data**

Besides primary data, published and unpublished materials like books, reports, leaflets, brochures, magazines and newsletters related to the study have been reviewed and the map of Gulele Sub-city and other necessary materials were also collected to expand my understanding about the problem and support the first-hand information gathered in the field. Hence, secondary information helped me see the gap in the existing literatures on the subject child labour, make sure or show the relevance of my study with previously conducted studies, take grand theories to this study and to produce a more valuable research. To this end, I reviewed several literatures on child labour and other subjects pertinent to the study such as legal documents, and other written materials on the concept of child, childhood and child socialization.

### **1.8. Scope of the Study**

The research deals with the topic of child labour in the informal sector and its impact on the working children in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa. It focused on two research sites in Gulele Sub-city, north of Addis Ababa. These sites are *Shiro Meda* and *Addisu Gebaya*. Both working boys and girls in different informal productive activities such as those who were working in service rendering, street vending, shoe shining, construction, commercial sex work, firewood collection, crafts (such as weaving, blacksmithing and woodworking), car repairing (garage apprentices), car washing, transport and related activities were incorporated in the study. In addition to this, some members of the local community, concerned governmental and nongovernmental organizations were also contacted for the purpose of this study.

### **1.9. Significance of the Study**

The findings of the research highlight the problems facing child labourers in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa. This has ethical implications because accurate information on the circumstances under which such people engage in work, the conditions of their current work and the impact of their work will help governments (i.e. both Federal and Regional Governments), nongovernmental organizations and civil societies to adopt strategies that can mitigate the problem of children in difficult situations, such as child laborers. Understanding the causes, trends and consequences of child labor will help in planning intervention strategies aimed at preventing or at least minimizing the harsh effects of child labour and the number of children in the informal sector and other economic areas of child labour exploitation. For example, strategies to raise community awareness that would target employers in the urban areas will reduce the negative impacts that child labour represents. This study will also further contribute in the development of baseline information on children in difficult circumstances not only in Gulele Sub-city but also in the country at large.

Above all, this research will add to the limited knowledge we have on working children in Addis Ababa or Gulele Sub-city in particular and Ethiopia, in general. And as much as possible it will provide an anthropological insight into child labour and its health, social, economic, educational and psychological impacts on the working children.

## 1.10. Field Experience

This research is conducted in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa, with particular reference to Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya. Due to the prevalence of the problem these two localities of Gulele Sub-city are selected as favourable places for conducting a research on child labour. And as the Sub-city's 2000 -2003 Strategic Plan shows this part of the city of Addis Ababa is a poverty stricken area. Both sites of this research are market places of traditional cloths.

I spent two months, from February 18 to April 18 2008, in the field to gather information for this study. I really have got good lessons in my stay not only about the subject under discussion but also about many other issues for my future life. I had good friendship with working children in Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya. However, it was hard for me to establish this friendly relationship within a short period of time. This is due to the fact that children fear to approach me before they recognize who I am. As a result, I had to spend the first one week in both sites to identify a communicative child labourer in order to establish a rapport. I was chanceful in this regard because I had gotten good rappers and key informants in both sites who helped me much in collecting pertinent data to the study. I really spend an enjoyable time though the life of working children often touched my feeling/heart. Actually, the study was conducted in two phases.

The first phase was carried out in and around Shiro Meda from February 18 to March 17, 2008. I gave this area priority due to the seriousness of the problem than Addisu Gebaya. I followed informal way to enter in to the field. Because I am familiar to the study areas but latter on I made a request to the *kebele* administration to get assistance from the concerned body of the *kebele*, i.e., Women and Child Right Unit. During this time I tried my best to collect a great deal of information from child labourers, their parents, employers and member of the society. Before I made interview and FGDs, and establish rapport, I preferred to observe available environments for the first one week. But this doesn't mean that I kept silent during the first week of my stay there rather I made informal talks with many children, we shared dishes and tea. I often went to the study areas early in the morning and spend the whole day there. On Sunday I lead to Shiro

Meda early in the morning at 5:30 a.m. so as to visit the market which often held in the morning till 9 or 10 a.m. Sometimes I preferred to stay till 9 p.m. to see the last destination of working children and make sure the working hours.

However, everything was not favourable for me. I faced some problems to approach employers and win their trust. Some of the employers even did not want to deal about the issue. Even if they were volunteer to exchange some ideas, most of them tried their best to hide the reality and deny me access to their employees. As a result I decided to approach them not as researcher but as a person who liked or appreciated the products of weavers. And I intercepted child weavers on Sunday at their only rest day out side their work place. In this way, I got the chance to ask whatever questions pertinent to the study. Relatively younger employers or those who work independently were cooperative to feed me good information about the trade and the involvement of children in child labour. In this way I concluded the first phase of the research with enough information.

Addisu Gebaya was the focal point of the second phase from March 18 to April 17, 2008. The experiences I received in Shiro Meda helped me a lot to establish rapport as fast as possible. I got more children who are friendly. As compared to Shiro Meda the problem is less serious in Addis Gebaya. During this phase most of my duty was observation, and identifying and approaching informants for the purpose of in-depth interview, case study and FGDs. In this area of the study my main problem was winning the faith or trusts of girl child labourers who are afraid of approaching a strange person may be due to fear of harassments otherwise every thing was okay in Addisu Gebaya.

Doing a research on disadvantaged children is costly and affects the internal feeling of a beginner researcher. That is why I spent lot of money in the field by providing them with food, bread, tea, sometimes used materials like cloths. The personal histories of some working children are beyond my expectation. They came across several problems during this past short lifetime. I didn't expect such terrible life history from children. That is the issue which seriously touched my heart and forced me to help children as to my capacity. Most of the time my contact was limited with these disadvantaged children in the field and sometimes in the nearby cafes. When passersby saw me talking and recording the

voices of these forgotten children, some perceived me like a journalist and some others as a worker of a certain NGO. Some people even went to the extent of asking me who was I and the radio station whom I worked for. One thing that surprised me is the case of a relative of one unprivileged children who lost both of his parents begged me to register and take him to the NGO I work for. Anyways, I passed through several good and bad situations during my fieldwork for this study. Other than this I tried my best to keep the ethics of a researcher as much as possible. I did the best I could even to the extent of using the limited financial resource I had without greediness.

In the course of the fieldwork I visited many institutions such as the Department of Labour and Social Affairs of Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa Police Commission Child Welfare and Protection Unit, Gulele Sub-city Police Department Child Welfare and Protection Unit, Kebele Administrations in Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya. Furthermore, I also visited the Education Department of Gulele Sub-city to get letter to contact and collect relevant information from three primary schools of the study areas. However, to achieve this I passed through many ups and downs and I had to visit some of these offices repeatedly to get access to the heads and get relevant information.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITRATURE**

#### **2.1. Conceptual Framework**

##### **2.1.1. The Concept of Child, Childhood and Child Labour**

###### **2.1.1.1. The Child and Childhood**

The term “child” is not easy to define. The biological, legal and cultural considerations or variations in the meaning of the word “child” contribute to this theoretical complexity. Childhood can be defined in terms of age. But different communities may have different thresholds to distinguish childhood from adulthood (Fyfe, 1993:6). In some communities, age may not be an adequate ground for explaining “childhood”. The fulfillment of certain social rites and traditional obligations may well be significant requirements in defining childhood and adulthood. The integration of children into the socio-economic life of their community may begin so early and the transition from childhood to adulthood may be almost indistinguishable (Fyfe, 1993:6).

In short, the term “child” does not have a universally acceptable definition because it is subject to various factors such as biological, legal and cultural. Since Ethiopia is a cultural and social mosaic state, as might be expected, there would be different thresholds or social rites to put a distinction between childhood and adulthood.

Different literatures, international organizations and conventions, national laws and nongovernmental organizations define the term “child” in different ways. For example, according to the Oxford Dictionary, the term “child” means a young human being who has not reached the age of discretion, that is, the age at which one is fit to manage one’s own affairs. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the term “child” as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier” (UNCRC, 1989: Article 1).

In the context of child labour, under ILO Convention No. 138 Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973, a child is a person who is below the general limit of

fifteen years or in special circumstances fourteen years (ILO Convention No. 138, 1973). The Convention, however, sets the minimum age for hazardous work at eighteen years (Ibid, Article 3(1)). In the convention a minimum age of twelve or thirteen is set for the purpose of light work (Ibid, Article 7). Likewise, the latest ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999, Article 2) defines a child to be a person who is below the age of eighteen years.

The Revised Family Code (2000: Article 215) of Ethiopia, on its part, employed the term “minor” in place of the word “child”. It defines a minor as a person of either sex who has not attained the age of eighteen years. As far as my study is concerned, the above definitions, especially the definition of ILO Convention No.138 Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment 1973, are relevant. I employed the threshold fifteen as a benchmark in this study but in the case of hazardous occupations the threshold eighteen is used.

As Guarcello, Lyon and Rosati (2004: 5) point out “children can be classified into four non-overlapping activity categories – those that work, those that attend school, those that work and attend school, and those that do neither [idle children]”. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on working children and those that combine work and school.

#### **2.1.1.2. Child Labour**

One major difficulty with respect to the understanding of “child labour” is its definition (ILO/EAMAT, 1995:75). This is because of the fact that, the concept of child labour is notoriously hard to define and culturally bounded (Pantea, 2007: 7). Consequently, it may be understood differently in different cultures (White, 1999 as cited in Pantea, 2007). Generally, the concept is not as easy and direct as it may come into view. Therefore, answering the question “what is child labour?” is vital (ILO/EAMAT, 1995: 75) not only to explain the issue of “child labour” but also to formulate intervention policies that would mitigate the problem.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 1998a), on one hand, considers child labour to be “simply the single most important source of child exploitation and child abuse in the world today”. On the other hand, Anti-Slavery International<sup>1</sup>, USDOL (2002: 7), and Rogers and Swinnerton (2002:4) suggest that some types of work make useful contribution to a child’s development. Work can help children to learn about responsibility and develop particular skills that will benefit them, their families and the rest of the society. This kind of argument is important for my study in order to consider the pros and cons of child labour. So, I will try to see the positive contribution of children’s work and its detrimental impacts on the holistic development of child workers.

The definition of child labour is now becoming controversial and debatable issue. That is why different scholars and organizations define it differently. For instance, the UN (as cited by Nkurlu, 2000:1) defines child labour as “all forms of economic exploitation, any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”. Furthermore, in its recent global estimates of child labour, the ILO/IPEC (2002:32) defines child labour as consisting of

*all children under 15 years of age who are economically active excluding (i) those who are under 5 years old and (ii) those between 12-14 years old who spend less than 14 hours a week on their jobs, unless their activities or occupations are hazardous by nature or circumstance. Added to this are 15-17 years old children in the worst forms of child labour.*

Anti-slavery International<sup>1</sup> and UNICEF (1999:24) claims that child labour is exploitative if it involves any of the following:

- ◆ Full-time work at too early an age;
- ◆ Too many hours spent working;
- ◆ Work that exerts undue physical, social or psychological stress;
- ◆ Work and life on the street in bad conditions;
- ◆ Inadequate pay;
- ◆ Too much responsibility,
- ◆ Work that hampers access to education;

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/campaign/childlabourcamp.htm>.

- ◆ Work that undermines children’s dignity and self-esteem, such as slavery or bonded labour and sexual exploitation;
- ◆ Work that is detrimental to full social and psychological development.

## **2.2. The Dichotomy between ‘Child Labour’ and ‘Child Work’**

There have been simultaneous debates in underdeveloped nations on what make up ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ and how to deal with them. Different frameworks have been proposed for defining child labour. Some literatures define child labour on the basis of the patterns of children’s activities. Others define it based on the detrimental effects of work on children’s physical, mental, social and moral development as well as deprivation from education opportunities (Lieten, 2000; Anker and Melkas, 1996; Fyfe, 1993). Yet the difference between work and labour is made in different ways by different agencies (Regional Work Group on Child Labour, 2001:16).

As the ILO/IPEC (1995: 1) points out the phrase ‘child labour’ being employed to explain the more pejorative part of children’s work, whereas “child work” in itself could comprise performing light domestic tasks and can really have some learning importance. According to Anker and Melkas (1996: 49), child labour includes mostly the issue of children’s work in early age, long working hours, hazardous working conditions and insufficient access, attendance or progress in school.

However, Rahman (2004) in his recent work argues that there is no consistent and an established view on the question “what child labour is and how it should be tackled”. Any clear distinction between children’s work, i.e. “child labour” and “child work” is a subjective process. Several literatures on the topic under discussion (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998; Assefa and Boyden, 1988; Rodgers and Standing, 1981) focus on the nature of the work and its negative effect on children.

It is also argued that child activity considered as “child labour” when it takes place outside the child’s family undertakings and under dangerous circumstances on the basis of payment or wage. Therefore, a task that takes place in family environment is viewed as

harmless, i.e., “child work”. However, this idea seems to be misleading, because “it hides the fact that children’s work under the protection of family may equally be considered as child labour depending on the nature of the work and children’s lack of access to education” (Rahman, 2004).

As various studies reveal child work can be regarded as useful to acquire knowledge and experience and “natural” or “beneficial” for children. Harmless child work can sometimes be valuable for children and their growth if it does not affect their school performance adversely. There is also a view that work may give children the chance to break the adult control over them. In right circumstances, child work can really help children prepare for productive adult life through skill training and building self-reliance, self-confidence and self-esteem (Burra, 2003:83; Anker, 2000:257; Lieten, 2000; Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Fyfe, 1989:21).

However, Santha Sinha (2000: 152-3) criticizes the differentiation between “child labour” and “child work” as there is nothing to hamper children moving from one category to the other. And “any work done by a child is child labour and ... children out of school are, by definition child labourers”.

### **2.3. Perspective from the Global South: Working Children as Change Makers**

There are different positions one may take with reference to children’s work. From the extreme protectionist discourse considering work as “a pathology of childhood” to a more liberal approach viewing work as a right that cannot be denied of children (Pantae, 2007:8). For example, conventional approach to child labour is premised a labour market ideology that aims primarily to keep children away from the labour market and confined to school (Karunan, 2005: 295).

Many children and adolescents in Europe and North America also work, and the percentages that work may in some cases not differ very much from many developing countries. However, their reasons for working and their working hours and conditions

differ greatly from those of working children in developing countries (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998:23).

In the Global North, children have been banned by law from the labour market, and their economic contribution to the society is not accounted for in national budgets despite the fact that many of them are workers (Karunan, 2005:299). The implication is that they are working for pocket money or seeking to learn good work habits. Various literatures note that this perception is wholly inappropriate for many Southern contexts in which children have economic and other responsibilities to fulfill within families and communities (Karunan, 2005: 299; Rahman, 2004).

From a Southern child's perspective, work is learning, where the attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviour relative to living and interacting in society are nurtured and developed, closely tied with the family and community. If work is learning, then it becomes an integral part of the educational and developmental process of the child and of the family's obligation toward child rearing and upbringing (Karunan, 2005:299-300).

As Myers (1991: 11) put it, it is useful to think about who defines child labour as a problem. For governments and international agencies it may be a problem because it is against the law and contrary to international standards. For parents and children it may be a problem if there is no enough work, or the pay is not good enough. Some children may enjoy work and not see it as a problem at all. For others work is so hard, so dull, and so boring that the whole of their childhood is a problem because of it.

As Karunan (2005:301) argues, work, in the Global South, is part of the family lifestyle, they are valued for it, and they are initiated at a very early age; work is an important part of many children's self respect – “we are helping our parents' work even though we are young. We are not just another mouth to feed. We are helping the family survive”; child workers are very sensitive about being segmented for their work; children value many aspects of school and would like to combine work with school; and faced with new regulations preventing them from working, most groups would defy or evade the law.

Since my research has much to do with the perception of working children, this idea seems more relevant to this study.

Policies may aim at abolishing child work. But this may not be the best option. Children often need to work and are proud of their independence and the contribution they make to their own, and their families' upkeep (Myers, 1991:11). Likewise, O'Donnel, Van Doorslaer and Rosati (2002:3) points out that if a large ban on child work was to happen, it is likely to have limited effectiveness by virtue of the problem of controlling the informal sector. And it might not be in the best interest of the children from the poor families. Hoehn (2004) also disagrees with the ban on child labour and argued that experiences in other countries have clearly shown that a ban on certain activities made the children resort to even more uncontrollable and more inhuman activities.

Children who work hard, long hours and take a good deal of responsibility are not seen as capable human beings, but pitied because they are not having a 'childhood' (Myers, 1991:11). Generally, according to Crawford (2001:539), conceptualizing children as helpless and dependent on adults in times of crisis is not necessarily the most effective way of supporting children's coping mechanisms and resilience. It is to point out that children are not merely the products of adult beliefs, training, investment and intervention but are social agents in their own rights.

Karunan (2005: 310), to reinforce the argument of Crawford, says that a child-centered approach to child labour values the positive contribution of children to their family, community and society, and their resilience and capacity to change. It is no longer tenable to view children as "just innocent, vulnerable and susceptible," but as "active as social actors who can make a positive contribution as children to social development."

Ethiopia is part and parcel of the Global South. I believe that most of the preceded arguments work here in Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular. My attempt here is to show the relevance of these arguments with the findings of this study. I treated issues regarding the perceptions of working children and their parents, and the legal framework of the country in chapter five of the study.

## 2.4. Gender Issues in Child Labour

Child sex may matter due to the physical characteristics of the child (strength, etc) or due to the cultural and social outlooks (Bhalotra, 2003:51). In many societies, boys and girls are assigned different societal roles and therefore experience different perspectives of life as a result of their being male and female (ILO, 2004: 142). In African society for example, at about seven years of age, sexual differentiation is confirmed (Rodgers and Standing, 1981:119).

Most of the time parents expect their girl children to offer assistance in performing difficult works at their early age than their male counterparts. Evidently girls bear relatively more difficult tasks as compared to their male age mates, and this appears to be especially true between the ages of 10 and 13 (Bhalotra, 2003:51; Darge, 1996: 43-44). This clearly shows the prevalence of gender bias and gender based division of labour among child labourers.

As Black (1996: 53) and CSA (2001: 43) point out girls, in particular, are susceptible to terminate their schooling so as to carry out economic activities and assume family responsibilities in place of working parents. Illiterate parents believe that sending female children to attend school is to make them deviate from the existing norm of the society. Girls are better prepared for adult life by sending them to work than by investing in their education. In relation to this, Bhalotra (2003: 14) suggests

*Most countries exhibit large gender differentials in total child labour force participation. Even more often, the distribution of girls and boys across different types of work is different. A rough generalization is that the proportions in work and out of school are larger for girls than boys in Asia, the proportion in work but not necessarily the proportion out of school is larger for boys than for girls in Latin America, and the proportions of boys and girls in work and school is roughly similar in most parts of Africa, though there is gender segmentation in occupations.*

According to the ILO (2004: 143), gender can be crucial in determining whether a boy or a girl is employed and the type of work in which they are engaged in. Hence, female and male children tend to be concentrated in different kinds of economic activity. In an international overview, Ashagrie (1998 as cited by World Bank, 2005) finds that boys are more concentrated in manufacturing, trade, restaurants, hotels and transport, while girls

more concentrated in agriculture and personal services. In line with this Nardos (2006), Edmonds (2003:29) and many other studies assert the predominance of girls in domestic activities (Nardos, 2006; Edmonds, 2003: 29; USDOL, 2002:96; CSA, 2001:41). On the other side, Edmonds (2003:29), Lomi (2002) and CSA (2001:41) clearly reveal that boys occupy the central position in the informal economic activities.

The issue of gender is now regarded as an indispensable component in addressing child labour (ILO, 2004: 142). Recognizing such gender differentials in the world of children's work would have a paramount importance to formulate and implement intervention policies and strategies at global and national levels.

## **2.5. Child Work as a Socialization Strategy**

Child labour is a special vehicle of transforming the child and adopting it to the environment, a mechanism of socializing the child (Andvig, 2001: 51). The socialization process of children may to some extent differ from culture to culture and from one part of the country to the other (Kebebew, 1986: 83).

Rodgers and Standing (1981: 117-118) in their study of the developing world argue that since the age of about three years two main stages can be identified: until the age of six or seven, the roles or tasks of the child are concentrated on the life of the household; and from age seven to sixteen, child activities range over the whole area of the village. In the "household phase" the child takes part both in home-based tasks and more specialized works which are aimed at meeting household subsistence. In other words, the child involves in every work for household consumption which make up the economic life of the child's group. In such activities the child is assisted by adults, whose behaviour he or she is expected to imitate.

In this respect, Thorpe (1995:29) said that the attitude that work is beneficial or useful for the child's personality and skill development and the tradition that are expected to follow in their parent's footsteps in particular trade, and to learn and practice that trade at their early age is the cause of child labour particularly in developing countries.

Ethiopia is a land of many nations, nationalities and peoples with different cultural and traditional backgrounds. As a result of this and other social and economic reasons, as it might be expected, there may be differences in the process of child socialization and initiation. For example, in relation to child socialization among the Gurage community of Ethiopia, Kebebew (1986: 85-86) had the following to say:

*A boy stays with his mother until he is four years old during which he is breast-fed. Usually after four, the father takes over the instruction of the young boy and assigns him to activities outside of the home that are exclusively the domain of the men. The father particularly teaches the boy to be skillful and thrifty. Hence, a Gurage father expects his sons to assist him in his work and eventually release him for more respectable commercial tasks. Young boys are also expected to provide their father with cash and industrial products through trade.*

One may say child labour among the Gurage Community is very common and not viewed as 'bad'. This reflects the socialization process of this people and the attitude they have towards child labour. It is not hard to find Gurage children in most urban informal activities, especially in Addis Ababa.

Like the Gurage people, the Amhara and Oromo children of either sex are trained in the acquisition of skills and attitudes appropriate to a society characterized by inflexible gender-based division of labour (Kebebew, 1986:86). Rodgers and Standing argue that the early introduction of children into different economic activities is not the outcome of an intentional decision of parents rather it is the consequence of a socialization process adopted to a way of life and to the functioning of other social institutions (Rodgers and Standing, 1981:118-119). So far I know this holds true not only in the Gurage, Amhara and Oromo people but also in many other nationalities of Ethiopia.

As we have seen from the above-mentioned literatures, child socialization is one of the causes of child labour. Since one of the objectives of this study is identifying the reasons behind the participation of children in the labour force, this subtopic has its own contribution to this research.

## **2.6. Types of Child Labour**

Identifying the appropriate categories or forms of child labour is crucial to understand the nature and magnitude of the problem. It would also help governmental and

nongovernmental organizations to formulate feasible intervention strategies pertinent to each type of child labour.

Though it is difficult to classify the diversified economic activities of children, several literatures on the subject often categorize children's work into: *domestic work* – which is the most prevalent form of child labour (Tirussew, Hayyalu and Ayalew, 1997: 10). Working children in this category usually perform tasks which are traditionally left for women. As a result of this, the majority of domestic child workers is female (Nardos, 2006; CSA, 2001: 50; Tirussew, Hayyalu and Ayalew, 1997). The other one is *non-domestic or unpaid work* – which is mainly prevalent in agricultural societies or subsistence economies (Tirussew, Hayyalu and Ayalew, 1997: 10).

*Tied and bonded labour* is another form of child labour where parents lend out their children as labourers so as to take loan or repay a debt (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998; Tirussew, Hayyalu and Ayalew, 1997: 11). *Wage labour* is also an important form of child labour in which children receive payment in cash or in kind (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998: 26). Moreover, a non-negligible number of children are performing various tasks in the so-called “*marginalized economic activities*”. According to Tilahun and Tirussew (2000:18), this form of child labour comprises of “activities which are more informal and difficult to identify and measure.”

## **2.7. Child Labour and the Urban Informal Sector**

Child labour in the informal sector comprises of activities characterized by their irregular and interim nature (ILO/IPEC, 2002:22; Tirussew, Hayyalu and Ayalew, 1997); low income, basically unproductive nature, typically not contributing to the accumulation and often described as survival activities of a “lumpen proletariat”. As such it comprises both legitimate and illegitimate activities (Rodgers and Standing, 1981).

Furthermore, according to CSA's 2001 Child Labour Survey, a large number of (about 25 percent) of children in the urban centers, including Addis Ababa, were involved in “petty trade, repair of vehicle including repair of personal and household goods” (CSA, 2001:

48). In this regard, Mendelievich (1979: 31) points out that in big cities there are more opportunities for children to engage in diverse economic activities like services and handicrafts sectors than in small urban areas and, especially, countryside.

According to the ILO/IPEC (2004:23), working children everywhere, especially those in developing countries, are concentrated in the informal sector of the economy. Their activities are not “official” and as such, there is no government employment agency or tax authority that knows children are working because they are not officially employed. It further points out that children work for people that are not normally registered as employers.

In spite of the several disagreements regarding the feature of the informal sector, there is a consensus on “operational criteria” for identifying the businesses running in the informal economic activity, globally. It comprises various types of works, for example from the simplest services like “washing cars on the streets to manufacturing and transport system” (Tilahun and Tirussew, 2000: 18).

Amarteifo’s (1991 as cited in Tilahun and Tirussew, 2000: 18) lists of the characteristics of the informal sector seem to solve the controversies on the nature of this sector. According to this author, some of the characteristics of the informal sector are:

- a) ease of entry and exit,
- b) reliance on indigenous resources,
- c) family or one person ownership and/or operation,
- d) small scale of operation,
- e) long hours of work,
- f) bad working conditions,
- g) no records kept,
- h) skills acquired outside the formal system, and
- i) labour intensive and adaptive technology.

Hence, the informal sector in Ethiopia in general and in Addis Ababa in particular cannot be an exception and it is this conceptualization that will be used in this study.

## **2.8. The Incidence and Nature of Child Labour**

The issue of child labour has been a national and international concern for long period of time, particularly following the foundation of ILO in 1919. Following its establishment, several conventions were made to mitigate the problem of working children (ILO/EAMAT, 1995: 75). Throughout the world, children toil, but the activity they usually perform, the reason behind their involvement, and the working environments vary significantly from region to region, especially between developed and underdeveloped nations (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998: 23).

According to the latest estimates from the ILO, an estimated 246 million children between 5 and 17 were engaged in productive activities (UNICEF, 2006: 47). Of these, just about 70 percent or 171 million children were toiling in dangerous conditions, such as mines, with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture or with perilous equipments. About 73 million of them were below the age of 10 (UNICEF, 2006: 47). From the international perspective, most of these child labourers are found in the Third World nations, and more than half of the working children are in Asia – the populous region. There is some indication that the proportion of all children who work may be highest in Sub-Saharan Africa – the poorest part of the world (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998: 23).

### **2.8.1. The Incidence and Nature of Child Labour in Africa**

Poverty seems to be the main cause for child labour in Africa. Within this continent higher incidence of child labour depends on the level of economic development of the regions (Andvig, 2001:4-5). As the ILO (1998b) estimates, Africa, with around 41 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 involve in productive activity, has the largest incidence of child work in the developing world. In agreement with this, it further argues that the incidence of child labour is higher in Sub-Saharan Africa than any other region in the world.

In Latin America and Asia, a large number of children also toil in the informal sector for wage. This is much less common in Africa, where wage labour markets are often incipient (Bhalotra, 2003: 13). In this respect, Andvig (2001:6) argues that the bulk of the

child labour registered in Africa is not wage labour, but performed in the household where the children live. Bhalotra (2003: 14) argues about the relationship between child labour and education in Africa that child labour is not the inverse of school attendance. A non-negligible number of children work and attend school simultaneously and this is especially common when the work they do is on family-run farms or enterprises. It seems more common to combine work and school in Africa and Latin America than Asia.

### **2.8.2. The Incidence and Nature of Child Labour in Ethiopia**

In the case of Ethiopia, work is the main activity of children as young as four years of age (Cockburn, 1999: 17). The incidence and the nature of child labour are not well appreciated in Ethiopia. The existing data on the size and nature of the problem is incomplete and insufficient (ILO, 1994 as cited in Tirussew et al, 1997: i). However, it is simply believed that a large number of underage children are occupied in economic activities, often deprived of any form of education and other ingredients necessary for their proper growth. A large number of the Ethiopian children find themselves as victims of famine, disease, poverty, civil war, family displacement and social instability, all of which are contributing factors for a high incidence of child labour (Assefa, 2000: 17).

In 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 53.7 percent (3.9 million) of children between the ages of 10 and 14 were toiling in the country. The 2000's UNICEF report on Ethiopia reveals that children comprises of 50 percent of the population of the country and 20 percent of them live in extremely difficult circumstances. "They are exposed to a lot of dangers, disease and exploitation. These children include orphan victims of armed conflict, abused and neglected child workers, destitute children with or without families, street children, prostitutes and juvenile delinquents" (Save the Children Denmark, 2003: 6).

In the year 2001, the Central Statistical Authority (CSA) reports that around 18,197,783 of the estimated 55.9 million total population were children between the ages of 5 and 17. The survey result reveals that about 85 percent of the Ethiopian children are involved in some type of work that is productive activity or housekeeping activity. In general,

9,483,611 children (52.1 percent of the total children) were estimated to have engaged in economic activities during the reference period (CSA, 2001: xiii).

The reality of child labour in Ethiopia is different. Children frequently toil under perilous environment, work long hours and are low paid (ILO/EAMAT, 1995: 21). Child labour in Ethiopia may be explained from push and pull factors. Cockburn (1999: 29) in his study, *the Determinants of Child Labour in Rural Ethiopia*, depicts regional disparities of the incidence of child labour. The incidence of child labour seems to be high in Amhara Region and low in Tigray Region. The participation of children in education appears to be low in Tigray and high in the Amhara and, to a lesser extent, the Oromia Regions.

## **2.9. Child Labour Law and Enforcement in Ethiopia**

Like international organizations (such as the UN, ILO etc), the government of Ethiopia has been trying to do away with the problem of child labour. Its determination can be expressed by the series of actions it has taken so far. Some of these measures include: the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1959 and 1989 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Vienna Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1973 Convention are the major ones to be cited (Tadios, 2004: 19; Save the Children Denmark, 2003: 4). Moreover, Ethiopia has ratified the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment on May 27, 1999 (Save the Children Denmark, 2003: 4; USDOL, 2002:99).

The FDRE Constitution under Article 36 (1) (d) states that every child has the right ‘not to be subjected to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or well-being’. Furthermore, the Labour Proclamation No. 42/1993<sup>2</sup> places working children under the

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<sup>2</sup>The FDRE issued this labor proclamation, No. 42/1993 by:

- ◆ re-establishing the 1975 minimum age, 14, for employment;
- ◆ defined hours of work per day and prohibited overtime work, night work and provided for weekly and public holidays;
- ◆ Prohibited child work under hazardous conditions, more or less as defined in the ILO Convention.
- ◆ Ordering the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to list activities not to be performed by children.

category of special kinds of workers, i.e., “young workers”. “Young worker” as per article 89(1) is defined as “a person who has attained the age of fourteen but is not over the age of eighteen years”. Ethiopia’s Labour Proclamation No. 42/1993<sup>2</sup> sets the basic minimum working age at 14 years. Hence, it bans the involvement of children, under the age of fourteen, in productive activities (the Labour Proclamation No. 42/1993, Article 89(2)). As of children who have attained the age of 14 but are not over the age of 18, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) has prescribed the list of activities prohibited to children in this age group pursuant to the power given to it by Article 89 sub-article 4 of the Labour Proclamation Number 42/1993. These activities include:

- a) Work in transportation of passengers and goods by road, railway, air and local water;
- b) Work carried out on dockside and warehouses involving heavy weight lifting, pulling or pushing of heavy items or any other related type of work;
- c) Work connected with electric power generation plants, transformers or transmission lines;
- d) Construction work on high scaffolding;
- e) Working in sewers and digging in tunnels;
- f) Street cleaning, toilet cleaning, separation of dry and liquid waste materials and transportation of waste materials;
- g) Working on production of alcoholic drinks and cigarettes;
- h) Hotels, motels, night clubs and similar service giving activities;
- i) Work involving exposure to extremely high or low temperature or radiation;
- j) Grinding, cutting and welding of iron;
- k) Work involving the operation of electrical machine to cut, split, shape... etc wood;
- l) Felling timber;
- m) Work that involves mixing of chemicals and elements, which are known to be harmful and hazardous to health;
- n) Any other activity which endangers the moral and psychological growth of a child (USDOL, 2002:98; MOLSA, 1997).

Moreover, the working hours of children should not exceed seven hours a day; overtime work is prohibited; and children may not work between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., during weekly rest days, and on public holidays (USDOL, 2002:98).

The USDOL (2002:98) argues that the Penal Code of Ethiopia (Articles 605 through 613) also incorporates laws particularly dealing with the problems of child trafficking, child sex workers, and bonded child labour. The trafficking of women and children is prohibited in Article 605 of the Criminal Law of Ethiopia, and is punishable by imprisonment of five years with fines up to 10,000 Ethiopian Birr.<sup>3</sup>

Though the issue of child labour is a great challenge for Ethiopia, no long-range government policy on the issue has been put in place. There is no clear strategy or policy to protect children from abuse and exploitation and no systematic co-operation and coordination between NGOs and governmental agencies. The problem of child labour is not yet well appreciated nor understood among the society at large. Thus, there is a general information gap on the state of child labour in the country (Assefa, 2000: 42).

Enforcement of child labour laws in Ethiopia is reportedly weak. This is due, in large part, to insufficient number of labour inspectors. Currently, about 50 labour inspectors in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) enforce all the country's labour laws in the formal sector, and the government maintains child labour is not a problem in the formal economy (USDOL, 2002:98). This shows us the existing gap between the law and its enforcement. Hence, in chapter five we will see the legal framework of the country with respect to child labour in general and its role or enforcement to address the problem in the study area, in particular.

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<sup>3</sup>This discussion is incorporated in the review of literature of this study in order to show the existing literature gap on child labour law and enforcements. Because the discussion was carried out on the basis of the former labour proclamation No. 42/1993 and the Criminal Code, Proclamation No.214/82.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ISSUE OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR**

#### **3.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF CHILD LABOURERS IN THE STUDY AREAS**

Children need special protection by virtue of their immaturity. They are like breakable items and precious resources of a nation. Good protection of the safety of children might contribute to the improvement of the well-being of the society and their country at large. The “human capital” discourse strengthens this idea. According to this theory, “children are viewed as human potential that must be prepared for productive adulthood, and childhood as a period of economic investment that produces further return through taxes paid, increased productivity, and an expanded economy” (Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005: 29).

However, some members of the society use this resource before it ripens or the right time. They are, in general, exposed to various forms of abuses like using their labour for productive activities. Despite the legal protection at national and international level, children are still vulnerable part of the society to abusive practices either by their own parents, relatives or someone else. Among these forms of abuse child labour is one to be mentioned.

As Tilahun and Tirussew (2000: 22) argue, in the informal sector children are expected to constitute a good proportion of the labour force. During the fieldwork for this study, I have witnessed the seriousness of the problem of child labour. Many children were engaged in hazardous activities and have been working under dangerous conditions. The problem seems out of the site of legal institutions and child protectionist NGOs. As I have learnt from my fieldwork, it needs a top priority. Generally, there are a non-negligible number of children who toil in the informal sector. They are working as porters, weavers, metal and wood workers’ assistants or “apprentices”, garage apprentices, street vendors, shoe shiners, taxi boys (*Woyalla*), daily labourers (builder’s

assistant), car attendants and cleaners, child workers who cut trees, *injera* bakers, firewood collectors and sellers, waiters/waitress, child commercial sex workers, peddlers of various items like *kolo*, ice, soft papers, sweets etc.

The problem is too serious in *Shiro Meda* area than *Addisu Gebaya*. Many children in *Shiro Meda* engaged mostly in carrying goods, weaving, shoe shining, street vending, collecting and selling fuel wood and taxi calling (*Woyalla*) whereas in *Addisu Gebaya* children are engaged in diversified activities. The number of children working on taxi is larger in *Addisu Gebaya* than *Shiro Meda*. Child sex workers (albeit very small in number) are typical of *Addisu Gebaya*.

These working children in the sub-city are exposed to several problems. It is safe to say that they are far from family protection and from the site of the government. Everybody talks about child labourers in the study areas but no one puts his/her interest into place. The living and working conditions of these children is detrimental to their holistic personality development. As I have learned from my informants, especially from orphan child labourers and children living away from parents, they are really “abandoned children”. Nobody remembers them, no one watch over them and they are living in unpredictable situation. Their life is full of hardship and misery. As some people state ‘who cares for the dead fish?’ seems a motto for their disregard.

### **3.1.1. Gender and Age Determinants**

According to ILO (2004: 143), gender can be crucial in determining whether a boy or a girl is employed and the type of work in which they are engaged. Thus female and male children tend to be concentrated in different kinds of economic activities. Likewise, as I witnessed from the fieldwork certain types of work are gender selective. As a result of this, boys and girls are engaged in different forms of child labour in the informal sector. Boys tend to work more in environments away from parental control, or in jobs that are associated with men’s work, such as work outdoors or physical labour. Examples include in transporting goods and passengers (porters and taxi boys respectively), construction (as assistant builders), shoe shining, weaving, street vending (actually this is the domain of

both sexes), crafts, garage apprentice, metal and wood works and in other physical works. Girls, on the other hand, tend to work in protected environments near the home, or in jobs that are associated with women's roles like baking *injera* for sale, collecting and selling fuel wood, street vending mostly food items, commercial sex work, and in other home-based production activities.

Here I can say that girls have fewer options available to them, may be forced to choose among the few alternatives available to them in the informal sector. Because of the varied opportunities and options available for boys they choose less hazardous works. Girls are also less likely to get work outside their home. This is due to cultural or traditional outlook towards girls and parents are afraid of sending their female children outside their home due to fear of sexual harassment. As a result of this, the role of female children in the informal sector is invisible. Such less visible nature of the work can mostly be hazardous to children because this makes it easier for abuse.

Furthermore, female children are at a much higher risk of sexual exploitation. There are several gender discrimination-related consequences of child labour. Therefore, it is safe to say that male children outweigh in the informal sector. In general, child sex is a significant stratifying principle and influences the positions, responsibilities and actions of people (Poluha, 2004).

Boyden, Ling and Myers (1998: 33) contend that age is often considered only as an estimated yardstick; not an accurate evidence. In various societies, birth dates and their anniversaries are unknown. This holds true in illiterate societies, as it might be expected in many societies of Ethiopia. As far as the age range of working children is concerned, one can find child labourers below the age of six among the weavers of Shiro Meda who are helping their parents or employers in spinning. And it is usual to see children below this age engaged in begging with their beggar 'parents' and guiding blind beggars. No matter whatever the age, children are participating in such activities as far as he or she is living with his or her beggar 'parents'. But older children (above 12 years of age) work in garages, wood and metal working establishments as "apprentices" and in commercial sex

activities (especially, above 15 years old). In reality, however, ‘apprentices’ are working as actual employees. The only difference is that they receive some money once in a week.

### **3.1.2. Family Background of Child Labourers**

Different factors have contributed for the involvement of children in the informal labour market. As many studies have shown poverty plays significant role for the prevalence of child labour. Here not only income poverty but also other forms of poverty like lack of knowledge about the detrimental impact of child labour among parents and the society have contributed to the incidence of child labour in the study areas. This has much to do with the educational status of parents.

As I learned from both research sites, children of the poor families are more likely to involve in child labour than children of better-off families. Most of the parents of my informants are economically very poor and have no permanent source of income. From the interview and FGDs I learned that the parents of these child labourers are engaged in “marginal” economic activities due to lack of proper skills, education and the required qualification for most of the works in the formal sector. Consequently, their only option is engaging themselves in the informal activities. Hence the combined effect of poverty and lack of proper education resulted in lower living standard to the parents of these children. It is not hard to witness the living condition of the families of child labourers if one has the chance to visit their home.

Most of the parents of working children are engaged in different economic activities in the informal sector. These activities include, weaving, crafts, carpentry, daily laboring, farming (if they live outside Addis Ababa), and collecting firewood and producing food items (like *Kolo*, bread, *injera*, etc) for sale. However, the income they receive from such activities is insignificant. As a result of this, they couldn’t satisfy their children’s basic needs let alone extra demands such as stationeries, transportation and recreational costs.

As far as the educational status of the parents of the working children in the case of Gulele Sub-city is concerned, most of them are either poorly educated or totally

uneducated (illiterate). But most of them are keen on the education of their children though they are not able to afford their children's education. In this respect, one of my informants' mother, W/o Seble, strengths this idea as follows;

*I want to see the educational success of my only child. I hope in the future he would have a descent job in a certain government office. I am struggling to teach him to realize this end. I don't want to commit the same mistake as my parents did. I feel bad when I think of my illiteracy.... However, because of poverty he has to help me in his spare time. And some times he has to be off school (Interviewed April 2008).*

This seems true of children living with their parents but there are so many children living far way from their parents and are of orphans. As a result of this, they are not in a position to attend school. As Bhalotra (2003: 14) argued child labour is the inverse of school attendance.

Working children's parents, self-employed and employed children are living in the slum areas of the sub-city. As I have seen from the study areas most of them are living in bad conditions starting from the shelter to their nutrition. These people could not afford their three meals a day. In short, they are living in abject poverty.

### **3.1.3. Ethnic Composition of Child Labourers**

Child labourers in the study areas mainly come from different ethnic backgrounds such as Gamo, Walayta, Gurage, Oromo and Amhara. There are some activities in the informal sector dominated by certain ethnic groups. For example, weavers in Shiro Meda area are mainly from Gamo community. In this sector majority of child labourers are members of the Gamo ethnic group. Most of the Gurage and Walayta children are engaged in shoe shining activities. Amhara child labourers, particularly from Gojjam area, dominate the lottery selling activity. Other activities are the domains of members of all ethnic groups.

In both research sites, Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya, child labourers form groups on the basis of their ethnic backgrounds. As I witnessed from the study areas child labourers from the same ethnic group work together by isolating themselves from others who are engaged in the same business. For example, in Shiro Meda shoe shiners from Walayta

ethnic group work and live together. Likewise, as I have seen child shoe shiners from Oromo and Gurage ethnic groups also form their own group and work separately in Addisu Gebaya. Therefore, ethnic affiliation is common among child labourers.

In terms of number, working children with Gamo ethnic backgrounds followed by Walayta are dominant in Shiro Meda while Gurage, Oromo and Amhara are dominant in Addisu Gebaya. In Shiro Meda, the Gamo children are engaged not only in weaving business but also in carrying goods and shoe shining activities. But most of the porters are ex-weavers or runaways of bonded labour in the weaving industry. Generally, working children who came from different ethnic groups regardless of their number they work there.

### **3.2. CHILD LABOUR AND ITS CAUSES**

Children at their early age are expected to be in school and other constructive activities like playing with their peer groups. But in developing countries like Ethiopia they are forced to take up responsibilities at their early age either because of pressures from their parents, or their relatives, or other individuals, or their own respective living situations. As a result, many children voluntarily or involuntarily enter into the labour market either to meet their personal needs or family subsistence. The ways they take part in the labour market differ according to their vulnerability. Some children toil because of the abject poverty they experience. Some others engage in work to establish their own business. In general, socio-economic issues play vital role in the involvement of children in the world of work.

In the context of Gulele Sub-city, there are different factors that contribute for the involvement of children in child labour. These children perform from 'simple' to hazardous tasks. Some of these activities are detrimental to their holistic personality development. As many studies from different parts of the world indicated poverty, migration, lack of educational opportunities, population growth and unemployment, family disintegration, social and cultural pressures, armed conflict, etc are the main

reasons behind child labour (Assefa, 2000:17). With respect to the study areas, Gulele Sub-city, the following are the major cause of child participation in the labour market.

### **3.2.1. Poverty**

Poverty as a major cause of child labour is exhaustively discussed by different studies on the subject (Karunan, 2005; Hoehn, 2004; UNICEF, 1997). As I observed and learned from the interview as well as from the FGDs, poverty is central for the engagement of children in productive activities in the informal sector. Most of my informants came from poor families. As a result of their parents' terrible economic background, children are forced to perform difficult tasks at their early age to supplement their parents' marginal income. The "human capital" theory on child labour also argues the same thing. It considers child labour as the outcome of poverty or economic slow down in a nation (Pantea, 2007: 25; Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005: 28)

During the fieldwork, I had the chance to visit the house of working children, those who live with their parents. It was not hard for me to realize the economic status of the family. In such a situation one may say children should have to work in order to ease life in the household to a certain extent. Work is necessary for these children in order to satisfy their basic needs, particularly food. Children should go to the nearby street to get food or cash. Their parents are not usually in a position to feed them. So, where is the food for the child? It is on the street where they work manual labour like carrying goods and other activities they get.

Though the rising cost of living become apparent recently, parents of working children and poor households have felt since last year. The prices of many commodities including food items are doubled. Some of these items have become beyond the purchasing power of many households. As a result of this, the cost of living in Addis Ababa is rising alarmingly from day after day. It becomes beyond the reach of not only poor households but also better-off families. Directly or indirectly this problem forced children to engage in productive activities to get something useful in cash or in kind for themselves and for the survival of their families. One of the deplorable consequences of this problem is

aggravating school dropouts in Gulele Sub-city particularly around Shiro Meda. To strength this argument one of my informants, Deriba a twelve years old boy, told me that:

*My father is a carpenter and my mother sometimes collects fuel wood for sale. The work of my father is on and off. As a result of this, scarcity of food and other necessary things in the house is a common phenomenon. Last year I was working after school. But this year my father advised me to quite my schooling temporarily and to spend all of my time in shoe shining activity. Since then I am working all the day here to overcome the existing rising cost of living. Otherwise my younger brother and sisters' life and education would be at risk. Without food how can we live? I don't want to give up for poverty or scarcity of food. At least we have to get something to eat. That is why I took part in the labour market (Interviewed March 2008).*

As we can understand from the aforementioned case, poverty urges children to shoulder major household responsibilities. Moreover, some interviewed parents of child labourers also talked to me about their grievance on the existing rising cost of living in the city. As they further argued, without any doubt they encouraged their children to contribute something to the household by taking part in the labour market.

Besides their need for food, children are taking part in the labour market to buy shoes and cloths, and stationary, etc. But by virtue of an extreme poverty parents give ill consideration to these needs and think only of the nutritional need of their children. This gradually drives children to engage in productive activities without recognizing its effect on their development.

### **3.2.2. Parental Unemployment**

Though it is not a serious cause of child labour in the study areas, there are some parents who send their children to work to compensate their unemployment. As one of my informants, Mussie (a 14 years old boy), told me, his father is out of job for the last two years.

*My father has been working as a guard of a private enterprise in Addisu Gebaya. But in 1998 E.C because of the loss of properties under his protection, from his work place, he lost his job. Following his dismissal from job my elder brother and I began to work in street vending activities and my sister also assist my mother in **Gulet Gebaya**. Now he is working manual work*

*but we proceeded to work as before, otherwise how could we survive and finance our schooling? (Interviewed March 2008).*

As the above case shows, after they test the income generated by children parents couldn't decide to let their children free from work. Rather they assume that the contribution of children is very important in their life even after parents secure job.

As the Strategic Plan of Gulele Sub-city shows the unemployment rate is very high in the sub-city. This is mainly due to lack of job opportunities for illiterate adults, limited resource of the sub-city to provide job and the complexity of procedures to get credit and start their own business. As a result, they engage themselves in the informal sector activities like daily labouring, guarding, crafts, firewood collection and sale. Since these works are seasonal and less paid, they abandon the activity totally. Moreover, the informal economic activities invite children or young workers than adults. All these combined to remove parents from the labour market competition and finally force their children to take part in the labour market. Therefore, parental unemployment has much to do with the involvement of children in child labour.

### **3.2.3. Migration**

Migration takes place in various forms throughout the world such as rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural and urban-urban and are caused by such factors as natural calamity, conflict, "development, pastoralism or trade" (Adepoju, 1979; Shew, 1975 as cited in Nardos, 2006: 37). According to Nardos (2006: 37), of these forms of migration rural-urban migration is common in Addis Ababa. I share the same view with her, but in this study there are children who came from other urban centers together with their parents or alone and with or without the consent of their parents or guardians.

Migration seems to be one of the main causes of child labour in the study areas. Some of the children who participated in the in-depth interview, FGDs and case studies came to Addis Ababa from different corners of the country either to see the city or seeking of a better life. In connection with this, Tayetch and Poluha (1975: 25) argue that many children in the rural parts of the country perceive migrating to Addis Ababa as a very

interesting idea. As a result, a non-negligible number of children migrate to Addis Ababa for a number of reasons. Both push and pull factors have contributed a lot for the rural-urban migration of children. Children leave their place of birth for Addis Ababa because of their curiosity to see the city. One thing that surprised me in this respect is that many of the working children that I met were migrants or sons or daughters of migrant parents. However, this does not mean that there is no child labourer who is part of the permanent residents of the study areas.

There are many things, natural or man-made phenomena, in the rural parts of Ethiopia that push children to urban areas particularly to Addis Ababa. As most of my subjects argued rural poverty obliged them to leave their village for Addis Ababa. As a result, the main intention for their involvement in child labour in a strange city is either to subsidize their families' agricultural income or to ensure their own economic independence.

Moreover, there are socio-cultural factors in the rural areas of the country that push children to urban areas. For instance, the case of Eyob reinforces my argument. He came to Addis Ababa with his mother following the imprisonment of his father.

*We came here a couple of years ago. We had good economic status there [in the rural context]. We had everything we needed. But one day my father disputed with one of our neighbours for a plot of land. This conflict got worse as time went on. Finally he killed that man when he returned to his home from market at evening. And then he sent us to the nearby town to hide ourselves. Then he gave his hands up to the police. Later on we heard that the deceased brothers burnt up our house and took all the cattle. This increased our fear and we fled to Addis Ababa. Since then we four (two of my elder brothers and sister) are engaged ourselves in a sort of activities to get our livelihood (Interviewed April 2008).*

Hence, search of land, land dispute, conflict and the subsequent blood feud in rural areas caused rural-urban migration of innocent children. Here migration coupled with poverty brought children to Addis Ababa without any preparation from the side of parents. But as I understand from the interview they are afraid of the relatives of the deceased person. As a result of this, they work in a narrow radius till 6 p.m.

Among child lottery ticket sellers, most of my subjects migrate from Gojjam, particularly from *Merawi* and *Merto Lemariam*. These children left their home for Addis Ababa not due to push factors but pull factors like peer pressure and the desire to make a living. As most of them told me they came to Addis Ababa to work on a seasonal basis not permanently. All these children are out of school. Some of them are dropouts and some others have never started schooling before. They are known by the name ***Komche*** and ***Shebellaw***. Ayalew is a thirty years old lottery seller. I found him around Shiro Meda. I interviewed him and he said the following about the reason why he is here in Addis Ababa:

*I came to Addis Ababa four months ago to work and get money to establish my own non-farm business in my place of birth. Before I came here there have been neighbours who work here. They took different items to their family when they return home and bought cattle to be herd. Their activities initiated me to come to Addis Ababa. Since I had no enough information about the city, I consulted one of my neighbours. He told me everything and finally I decided to follow him. My parents were very happy because they were keen to change my life and they did not need any labour contribution from me because they have other children to help them. But after a month I will go there to celebrate Easter with them. And then I will come back soon (Interviewed March 2008).*

This case study clearly shows that children themselves without any push migrate to Addis Ababa and engage in different activities at their early age. The interest to establish their own business, peer pressure and the like are among the factors that facilitate the move and contribute to child labour. Two other children Suleiman (fifteen years old) and Daud (thirteen years old), who came from Jima, engaged in ***kolo*** vending share the same experience with Ayalew. They came to Addis Ababa for the same reason other than surplus household labour force. But they are runaways from parental control; they came here without the consent of their parents. The same holds true for child labourers from Gurage, Walayta (particularly shoe shiners in Shiro Meda), Oromo and Amhara.

In addition to this, the prevalence of surplus labour or the imbalance between the agricultural land and the labour force in the household is a contributing factor for rural-urban child migration and the subsequent child labour. Because of the imbalance between the size of farm land and family size, parents prefer other non-farm activities for their

children. As a result of this, they warmly welcomed their children's migration to Addis Ababa. This holds true for children who came from Amhara Region, particularly from Gojjam area.

#### **3.2.4. The Education System**

As many studies indicate, the education system per se has its own contribution to the prevalence of child labour (Rahman, 2004). It is obvious that child education plays a vital role to build up the personality of a child and the political, social and economic aspects of a nation as a whole. The government, particularly the Ministry of Education, is a responsible organ to prepare better educational policy that suits the needs of children of various families. However, sometimes it simply designs and put into practice a policy that does not consider the problem of various members of the society, especially the needs of children from poor family background. In this regard, Rahman (2004) argues that for any credible solution to child labour problem, there is a need to solve the educational problems of needy children and their families. This relates child labour firmly with educational failure of underprivileged children in developing nations.

The former education system was a shift program. But nowadays the Education Bureau of Addis Ababa City Administration is implementing a full-day schooling program. As most of my subjects claimed they are against this system. They prefer the former shift program to the current full-day program. This is due to the fact that if this is so they could have the chance to combine work with education. Otherwise they should prefer work to get something to eat to education for "nothing" as they highlighted. But as I have experienced from the fieldwork, those working children who work to supplement their parent's income (those who are living with their parents) have the opportunity to combine education and work. Those working children who are either orphans or live far away from their parents engage themselves only on work to meet their needs. To conclude this I would like to raise the idea of Abebe, one of my informants in Addisu Gebaya;

*Previously it was very simple to attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon shift. As a result of this, I had the time to work in my free time. But these past two years I couldn't attend school. Work is a matter of survival for*

*me. Since I have no one beside me I do not think of attending school. At the beginning of this system I was trying to combine work with education. But finally I couldn't even get food. Hence, I gave priority to survival and dropped my schooling since 1998 E.C. Now I am working all the day in taxi (as Woyalla) (Interviewed March 2008).*

According to the Labour Code of Ethiopia, the working hours of children should not be exceeding seven hours a day. Before the change in the education system, children had the chance to combine work and education and thus they were working for less than seven hours in a day. Due to the introduction of new educational system many children abandoned their schooling. **This is due to the fact that both work and education need much of the child's time. To get food and other materials for survival children should spend a lot of time in work or in the street. To get concentration in school they have to secure their survival. To secure survival work is unquestionably important. Not only work but also adequate time for work is also significant. To get knowledge and skill they should take part in the informal education. To attend education they need to spend from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in school as per the new full-day system. As a result, the education system could not allow children to share their time to work and education equally.**

Therefore, the change in the education system is a contributing factor to the incidence of child labour in the study areas and transforms children from part-time work to full-time labouring. And this program forced working children either to divert to night school programme or to abandon it completely and expose them to absolute labour exploitation. In addition to this, many children defy the importance of education to solve their immediate problem, i.e., the question of survival, in the study areas.

Moreover, child labourers who attend school criticize the ill concern of teachers to their problems. According to these children, there are teachers who insult them following their failure to fulfill school duties such as homework or other assignments. Ahmed, a 13 years old Gurage child labourer, strengths the view under discussion as follows;

*Some teachers couldn't understand my problem. They treat me as equal as other children. Especially my mathematics teacher always bans me from class and beats me. One day, I failed to do my task and, I told him my entire*

*problem why I didn't do. But he did not understand me. So education for me was becoming boring. He always ordered me to bring my parents. Through time my father became less interested and finally he sacrificed my education. Since then I am helping my family by working shoe shining (Interviewed March 2008).*

Irregular compulsory financial contribution for the construction of additional classrooms and other school facilities are also obliged poor children to quit school. There are also children who dropped schooling and joined the labour market for inability of fulfilling school uniform in the study areas.

### **3.2.5. HIV/AIDS and Family Disintegration**

The role of family is primarily the socializing and rearing of children. Children need love and affection from their parents, and parents have the responsibility to shape the behaviour of children when they grow up in a family. However, nowadays because of HIV/AIDS many children become orphans and remain out of family protection or guardians. Children who have well-to-do relatives receive good treatment even after the death of their parents whereas children without close relatives are forced to go to streets seeking food or other necessities.

To meet their need orphans enter into various productive activities in the informal sector. The spread of HIV/AIDS coupled with other problems likely to have contribution in keeping the incidence of child labour high in Africa (Bhalotra, 2003: 13), including Ethiopia. Therefore, HIV/AIDS plays vital role in aggravating the existing incidence of child labour. According to "Social Responsibility" theory, the problem of child labour is conceptualized as a consequence of family disintegration (Ennew, Myers and Plateau, 2005: 30). To strength this idea Ashenafi, an eleven years old working child who engaged in collecting scrap irons or metals, said:

*My parents died when I was a child. Now I am living with my aunt. She is a **Gulet** vender. To assist her financially I am working different activities like shoe shining; scrap iron collecting and carrying of goods. As my aunt told me I lost both of my parents due to HIV/AIDS. The only responsible person to take care of me is my aunt; she is a widow and has no child. She is helping me to attend my school and I am working in my spare time to supplement her income (Interviewed April 2008).*

Moreover, there are children who bear the burden of the household following the death or illness of one or both of their parents because of HIV/AIDS pandemic. I met two children from the same family around Addisu Gebaya who were working in street peddling. They lost their father and mother eighteen and fifteen months ago respectively. They have three younger siblings below the age of ten. According to these working children, their parents' *Idir* (community self-help association for emergency) ignite light to their living. Their parent's *Idir* provide them five hundred birr in two phases besides other material assistances. As they further told me they have the chance to get loan form the association if necessary. Hence without the help of it they could not have started this business and feed themselves and their younger siblings. These children took their parents' responsibilities at their early ages. They are now heads and breadwinners of the household.

From this we can understand that the impact of HIV/AIDS and its subsequent effect contribute a lot to the involvement of children to child labour. Children like Hailu (15 years old boy) and Rebiqa (13 years old girl) shoulder the responsibility of educating, taking care of and feeding as well as keeping the welfare of their younger siblings.

### **3.2.6. Child Trafficking**

Trafficking involves transporting people away from the communities in which they live, by the threat or use of violence, deception, or coercion so they can be exploited as forced or enslaved workers for sex or labour. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved; it is merely the act of transporting them into exploitative work which constitutes trafficking (<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/campaign/childlabourcamp.htm>).

In this case children are viewed like commodities that can be sold and bought. Some individuals play prominent role in child trafficking. Children are innocent by their very nature and they trust everybody around them so that some nonsense and irresponsible individuals in and outside of Addis Ababa try to make money out of children. There are also recipients in urban areas mainly in Addis Ababa. These unhelpful and irresponsible

people exploit the immature stamina of children for their own advantages without taking the interests of children into account.

As far as child trafficking as a cause of child labour is concerned, it is safe to say that working children particularly in and around Shiro Meda are victims of this process. It may not be hard to find a trafficked child in the streets of Shiro Meda area. These visible groups of child labourers are runaways from weavers of the area. But many of the trafficked children are exploited in indoor setting and are out of the reach of concerned bodies. Most of these children came from Gamo ethnic group particularly from Arba Minch or Gamo Gofa especially from Chenchu area. As I have observed from the field, it has been hard for me to find Addis Ababa born child labourer among the weavers of Shiro Meda, they all are from out of Addis Ababa. In this regard, Shaol, a 14 years old trafficked child labourer, said,

#### **Case 1. Shaol**

*I know him [the trafficker] very well; he is a husband of one of my neighbor's daughter. He met me when he came to visit his wife's family. In the first day he gave me candy and biscuits while I was looking after cattle and he told me not to tell this to any one. Next day he promised me taking to Addis Ababa and taught me the skill of weaving. Also he told me he would send me to formal education. I agreed with him and then he sent me to Arba Minch with one person and he came there after a week. Finally he took me to Addis Ababa. I have been living with him and working for him for the last six years.<sup>4</sup>*

Actors in child trafficking in the study areas are mostly adult weavers, brokers and to some extent relatives of the trafficked child. As I learned from the interviews and FGDs, these people deceive children to follow them. Moreover, they use incentives such as sweets, money, etc besides unmet promises like educating them in the formal education and training of weaving. By employing such kind of methods they persuade or force children to be trafficked. And then they exploit their labour since their arrival. To get these children they have to go to their birth place because they are familiar and have acceptance there. This social acceptance may ease the process of trafficking. Therefore, child trafficking is now becoming the major cause of child labour in the study areas, particularly in Shiro Meda.

As I witnessed from Shiro Meda most of the child labourers engaged in weaving are male and they are brought from Southern Ethiopia particularly from Arba Minch area. But ‘employers’ claim they are employed children. Regarding remuneration ‘employers’ are pretending paying the wage of the child to his/her parents who live in rural areas once or twice in a year. **But the working child him/herself receives very little ranging from Birr 2 to 10 in a week, on Sunday. This amount is disproportionate to the energy and times spend by the child.** Even some of them consider themselves not as traffickers rather ‘relatives’ or ‘parents’ of the working children. No matter how well the pretext used by employers, in one way or another, working children disprove the claim of their traffickers.

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<sup>4</sup>The case of Isaac on page 61 also reflects the contribution of child trafficking for the involvement of children in the labour market. He is also a trafficked child labourer in the weaving business.

### **3.3. THE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF CHILD LABOURERS**

#### **3.3.1. The Living and Working Conditions of Child Workers**

Children are immature and unable to care for themselves therefore by their very nature need special attention and care than anybody else. To realize their full development they seek emotional, social as well as economic assistance of others. However, due to abject poverty they couldn’t get the expected support from adults. As a result of this, they brought up not by getting the necessary things for their development but by the mercy of nature and their chance. To strength this, it is safe to say that since their early age, children are assigned to perform several tasks at household level or outside the family setting and thus exposed to hazardous working conditions.

Many of my informants are living and working either with their parents, relatives or with non-relatives such as employers, “guardians”, etc. These working children in both my research sites are leading a desperate life. As I have witnessed, especially employed children in the indoor setting and working children on the streets are living in bad circumstances starting from the shelter they live in to the type of food they take.

As I learned from many of my subjects especially among the weavers of Shiro Meda, in most cases the boundary between the place of living and working is blurred. They are working and living in a single room. Let alone living and working, they also prepare their daily food there. During day time they wrap their mattress and use the room for work. And at night time they spread the mattress and sleep in group. Moreover, lack of enough light is another thing that I witnessed among the weavers of Shiro Meda. The living and working conditions of child workers on the streets seems more severe than those who are working in indoor setting but the problem all are facing nearly the same. To reinforce this I can raise the case of those children who are engaged in carrying goods and living on the streets.

Working children who are living far away from their parents and work and live on the street lead a desperate life. The bad status of their living is reflected by the place where they rest to the type of food they eat. Child labourers in both research sites are taking leftovers or breads from nearby restaurants and cafes to meet their nutritional need. Most of these nearby restaurants and cafes give leftovers for children only when they perform a sort of tasks such as supplying tap water in times of water shortage, dump garbage or waste matters, and serve as messengers.

However, in the case of Shiro Meda, children also purchase leftovers from some individuals who have the license to get into Addis Ababa University students' cafeteria, and sale it at Shiro Meda. Working children like porters, shoe shiners, sometimes taxi boys and other working children in outdoor setting are clients of leftovers of Addis Ababa University students' cafeteria. To buy leftovers they have to pay one birr but recently it became two birr. They used to call it *Bullie*. However, child labourers among the weavers are given the traditional dish of the Gamo people known as *Kashika* (prepared from maize) by their employers. Sometimes employers provide them with bread or *Injera*. As most of my informants argued the amount of food they get is insufficient. Moreover, they take *Kashika* regularly.

As far as their place of rest is concerned, some self-employed children live in group by renting a small room and some others, like child porters, are sleeping either on veranda or renting rooms for a night. For example, child labourers in the streets of Shiro Meda spend the night in one video house (room). I have visited this room twice at night and during the day time. It is untidy and dusty. Generally, it is not suitable for living. Each working child pays 0.50 cents per night to sleep there. When they face shortage of money to pay, they spend the whole night on the street. This holds true mostly among porters. There are also similar situations in Addisu Gebaya where children pay the same amount of money to the owner of the house. However, their life or health is at risk. This is because of the fact that in Shiro Meda for example more than twenty child labourers are sleeping together in a small room. It is not difficult to understand the effect of such kinds of congested living.

Moreover, self-employed children in activities like shoe shinning, street vending, lottery sellers, wood cutters, taxi boys, assistant builders, waiters/waitresses, commercial sex workers and peddlers of various items like *kolo*, soft-papers, sweets, etc are living either with their parents or in a rented house or room in group. Relatively their living conditions seem stable since they pay the expected amount on time.

### **3.3.2. Working Hours and Remuneration**

In the informal sector, a number of children engaged in diversified economic activities such as street vending, weaving, crafts, carrying, lottery selling, shoe shinning, taxi calling (*Woyalla*), car guarding and cleaning. Just like such diversity of activities the working time and the amount of payment also varies from one category to the other. As I learned from the interviews and FGDs, children in weaving industry work for 17-18 hours in a day. From this we can understand that, among the working children child weavers spend much of their time in work.

This doesn't mean that only working children engaged in weaving activity are working for too long hours; there are also children that work for 15 hours in a day like taxi boys (*Woyalla*) and lottery sellers (see table 1 below for more information). They work from

5/6 a.m. in the morning to 9 p.m. in the evening. Among the working children in the informal sector builders' assistant and crafts children are relatively working for less. However, the nature of the work they perform is very serious or dangerous for their well beings.



**Plate 1: Some reflections of a child scrap iron collector**

**Table 1: Working hours of child labourers in the study areas<sup>5</sup>**

| <b>Types of occupation</b>   | <b>Duration of work in a day</b> | <b>Total working hours in a day</b>  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Child weavers                | 7 a.m. to 11/12 p.m.             | 17 /18 hours                         |
| Taxi boys ( <i>Woyalla</i> ) | 5/6 a.m. to 9 p.m.               | 15 hours                             |
| Lottery sellers              | 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.                 | 15 hours                             |
| Shoe shiners                 | 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.                 | 13 hours                             |
| Porters                      | 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.                 | 14 hours                             |
| Workshop apprentices         | 8 a.m. to 5/6 p.m.               | 9 hours                              |
| Girl commercial sex workers  | 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.                 | 12 hours                             |
| Street venders and peddlers  | 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.                 | 14 hours                             |
| Garage apprentices           | 8 a.m. to 6/7 p.m.               | 11 hours                             |
| Builders' assistant          | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.                 | 8 hours (excluding 1 hr. lunch time) |
| Car attendants and cleaners  | Part time                        | Part time                            |
| Scrap metal collectors       | Variable (not specified)         | Variable (not specified)             |
| Firewood collectors          | Variable (not specified)         | Variable (not specified)             |

As we have seen from the above discussion and table, children in the informal sector are working for long hours at their early age. They use their immature physical and mental stamina for long hours to produce something useful either to support their family or meet their basic needs. Moreover, they do not have time to play and interact with their age

mates and friends; especially employed child labourers couldn't get enough time for rest and to have their food. Nonetheless, self-employed children are different from employed child labourers in that their working time depends on their need. They can play and take rest when they feel tired. In this respect, I want to put the case of child porters in Shiro Meda. Most of these children are runaways of the bonded labour in the weaving trade. As they repeatedly argued they feel now a sort of independence though their situation is too serious. Abraham, a 14 years old ex-weaver child and porter claimed:

*I am very happy now. I spend all the day here on the street playing and working. When I get work I work otherwise I use the rest of my time playing with my friends. Before this time I had no time for rest and play and to interact with friends, but now I have enough time and so many friends to play with. All are my choice; no one is controlling me now (Interviewed March 2008).*

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<sup>5</sup>All the data in the table are collected from working children who are participated in the interview and focus group discussion. Car attendants in the study areas are part-timers in addition to their regular shoe shining work. And firewood and scrap metal collectors' working time depend on the amount of wood and metals available.

As it is usually argued poverty is the main cause of child labour. Because of poverty, parental unemployment, family disintegration and HIV/AIDS, children become heads of the households. Consequently, they shoulder all the responsibilities of the family. So as to successfully carry out the responsibility of taking care of the young siblings, educating them and paying rent for house, the elder children of the family work for long hours to earn money for the expense of their families.

Self-employed child workers are vending different items for profit, carrying goods, cleaning shoe and cars, collecting and selling scrap metals and firewood so that they earn relatively better return than employed children and are able to cover some of their personal needs and supplement the income of their parents in the study areas. However, the reverse seems true among child weavers of Shiro Meda. These children work longer hours than any other group of child labourers but they receive very little in return, ranging from Birr 2 to 10 in a week, on Sunday. From this we can understand how seriously employers are to exploit the labour of children. In this category, child commercial sex workers, from Birr 75 to 100 per night<sup>6</sup> and employed taxi boys, from 15 to 30 Ethiopian Birr per day, comparatively receive better

payment. As most of taxi-boy informants said earning this much money is seasonal, for example in times of good work they receive 30 Birr otherwise they often earn 15 Birr.

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<sup>6</sup>Child commercial sex workers earn 75 to 100 Ethiopian Birr per night. But the work is too dangerous not only for children but also for women. As they told me, the amount of money they earn is not regular rather it is seasonal. There are days they spend without 'work' (as they said).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LABOUR ON CHILD WORKERS**

The involvement of children in productive activities evokes strong zeal and causes heated debate (Tilahun and Tirussew, 2000: 8-9). This is because of the fact that their physical and mental immaturity exposed them to various problems. If we allow and/or force children to undertake difficult tasks, the consequence will be detrimental to their development. In this regard, some studies reveal that the kind of work in general and the working conditions in particular are detrimental to the physical, social and intellectual or the holistic personality development of the child (Nardos, 2006; UNICEF, 2001; UNICEF, 1997; Forastieri, 1997; Zerihun, 1996; Mendlievich, 1973). Some others argue that the participation of children in the labour market at their early age has positive impact on the socio-economic and psychological status of working children (Anker, 2000; Lieten, 2000; UNICEF, 1997; Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Fyfe, 1989). In this section of the study, I will discuss the negative and positive impacts of child labour on the working children of the study areas.

#### **4.1. THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE WORKING CHILDREN**

Child labour has negative effects primarily on the working children and then on the society and the country at large. As we have seen in the literature review section of this study, international organizations like the UN, ILO, UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations and national governments seriously condemn the

involvement of under age children into the labour market. The main reason behind this is that child labour has deleterious effect on the holistic personality development of children. In the following sub-section I am going to discuss the negative impacts of child labour on the health, physical and psychosocial developments of working children in the study areas.

#### **4.1.1. Health Risks of Child Labour**

The kind of risks children encounter differs according to the activities involved and the particular working environments (Forastieri, 1997: 1). As I have witnessed from the fieldwork, children are engaged in various activities in the informal sector. Some of these occupations are health threatening. Thus, it is safe to say that children in the study areas are exposed to different kind of health problems because of either the difficulty of the tasks they perform or the living and working conditions they experience.

Regarding health problem the most exposed group of child labourers are girls who involved in commercial sex work. Many of my informants who engaged in this business are below the age of 17 (or between the ages of 15 and 17). But most of their visitors are adults. As Bethlehem (2004:125) puts it, those who visit sex workers bring various forms of risks. “Men could be mean, brutish and very abusing.” In short, clients who come to commercial sex workers are different and cause varying degree of adversity. Though these child commercial sex workers are aware of the possible effects of sexual intercourse with multiple partners at their early age, they still continue to practice to solve the financial problems they have in their families. As different studies demonstrate HIV/AIDS is rampant mainly in Addis Ababa. It may be possible to say that these child commercial sex workers are susceptible to HIV/AIDS and other STDs. To reinforce this argument one of my informants named Hanna, a 17 years old child commercial sex worker said:

*I know very well that my life is exposed to STDs. But I can do nothing to escape from it. The only thing, I can do is using condoms with clients. However, sometimes we face clients who do not want to use condoms. I tried my best to convince them. Some of them understand our problem*

*even though they are too intoxicated. Some others try to deceive us by removing or tearing the condom. We always struggle with people like this. As a result of this, imagine! one time mistake might lead us to HIV infection. To keep and save my life I am trying to be free from alcohols*  
**(Interviewed April 2008).**

This information clearly shows that girls are highly exposed to STDs including the deadliest HIV/AIDS, and they are living in dangerous situations. Some of them also told me that they are always suffering from physical health problem especially after they make sex.

In addition to this, there are also many other child labourers who engaged in hazardous activities and toil in difficult working conditions. Most of these activities are really dreadful to the health of the child. Though some occupations are very easy, the environment in which they are working is unsafe. As I have learned from the interview and FGDs, some working children in the weaving industry are facing health problems like headache, stomachache, cough, typhoid, typhus, neck and back pain. Child porters also encountered the same health problem with child weavers. But I learned that amoeba or diarrhoea as the main problem of majority of child porters especially in Shiro Meda.

Besides working children who have direct contact with cars like garage apprentices, car cleaners and *Woyallas* (taxi boys), and scrap iron collectors and tree cutters face with minor and rarely serious wounds or injuries. As some of them claimed, it is the characteristics of the work they are engaged in. But the wound I witnessed from the right hand of a child who engaged in cutting trees seems very serious. In addition to the aforementioned health related problems, working children also experience such illnesses as skin disease and trachoma. These diseases mostly are caused by lack of keeping personal hygiene, the poor working conditions and the type of food and water they take.

In times of such health related problems, most of the child labourers could not get medical examinations. This is mainly because of their inability to afford medical expenses and their employers perceive such health-related problems as simple

problems of health (*Lekefu yemaisete*). Most of the time child weavers receive traditional treatment by “employers” in the work place. “Employers” of child weavers sometimes give them medicines like paracetamol or use traditional medicine and way of treatment to at least reduce the pain. This highlights how much the health status and the safety of working children is at risk.

#### **4.1.2. Physical Hazards of Child Labour**

As Forastieri (1997: 20) puts it “children are the most delicate parts of the society with delicate body structures who have to be raised by special care and protection”. In relation to this Assefa and Myers (1995: 9) argued that children are frequently observed performing activities incompatible with their age. These have a serious impact on their overall physical growth. The working environments in most cases are unsafe. They suffer from lack of proper sanitation and proper light. They are exposed to loud noise and excessive heat. Moreover, the duration of the work, the heavy lifting work result in feeling of fatigue and the continuous contact with dust and proximity to dangerous machines are some of the problems.



**Plate 2: Some reflections of a child porter carrying 70 kilo gram bean sack.**

As I have observed from the field, most of the children are working beyond the level of their ability and age. They work long hours without taking rest. This holds true especially to the weavers and taxi boys. This results in fatigue as Assefa and Myers (1995:9) contended. Child porters in the study areas are also being observed carrying goods weigh up to 70 kilo grams. Such kind of work as different writers like Mendlievich (1979: 44) argued would affect the posture of the child and causes physical deformity. In this regard, the above photograph shows a 14 years old child porter carrying 70 kilo gram bean sack.

Excessive heat, continuous contact with dust and dangerous tools and bad whether conditions are part of the life and work of children in the study areas. For instance,

child “apprentices” in blacksmith workshop are often exposed to excessive heat by which they used to heat the metal. The tools they employ to shape metals are heavy, dangerous and incompatible to their strength and age, but they are made to suit for adults. Girls who are employed to bake *injera* (local pancake) for sale by using electric power are the other group of child labourers exposed to excessive heat. Such an exposure to excessive heat will cause physical and health problems to the working child. In this respect, I have witnessed its impact on the skin of the children.

Moreover, garage and metal workshop apprentices are exposed to very dangerous light that emanates from the welding machine. They practice welding and learn how to use the welding machine from adults without using any protective wear like welding glasses, because these glasses are made to fit only to adults and they are not accessible for working children. Thus it would not be hard to understand the extent of the impact of such dangerous activities on the vision of the child.

Many of these working children are also exposed to physical abuses in the form of corporal punishment. Such an unwise use of force by employers to ensure the obedience or submission of children is common but consequently, affects the physical condition of working children. I have witnessed that some employers left scars on the children’s body. The scar is an obvious manifestation of the impact of child labour as far as it is caused by their labour relation.

Till the end of my fieldwork I was trying to search for the extreme form of physical hazards, for example disability or impairment, which are caused by work and working conditions. But my attempt was finally concluded in vain. This might be because of the inaccessibility of the problem in my stay in the field.

#### **4.1.3. Psycho-social Impacts of Child Labour**

The involvement of children in productive works can have negative impacts on the psycho-social growth of children, when it becomes arduous and exploitative or alienated them from their family. If the child is assigned to work for too long hours

he/she does not have the chance to play and to interact with his/ her peer group, their social and psychological development can be gravely hampered (CSA, 2001:65; Assefa and Myers, 1995:14). This view seems too relevant to this study.

Particularly in and around Shiro Meda, I have witnessed the same thing among child weavers and child porters who came from distant areas. These children perform tiresome tasks for long hours in inconvenient working conditions. Those children who are engaged in weaving trade have no time to play, have no time to interact with their peer and to establish friendship with other children as well. As a result of this, their social interaction is too narrow and limited in their workplace. Moreover, mental stress and anxiety is another psychological problem of these working children. For example, they are expected to accomplish the already started traditional cloth until Saturday night to provide it for market which is held on Sunday morning in Shiro Meda. Some other child labourers also experience stress and anxiety whether to get work or food, to finish the work they started or to sale the item they have in hand.

Since most of these children in the weaving business and porters (ex-child weavers) of Shiro Meda are trafficked children, they do not have link or communication with their parents. Even some of them are not aware of their place of birth or the place of their parents' residence. Consequently, they miss out their families love and affection. Most of them are trafficked at their early age and thus they do not know anything about family love and affection at all and Isaac, a 13 years old child weaver asserted that,

### **Case 2. Isaac**

*I don't know what family, parent, mother and father mean. They are meaningless for me. I know only about myself and the deleterious work I often perform. I was trafficked (yetetelefkute) 8 years ago when I was a 5 years old child. Since then I have had no chance to visit my place of birth. Therefore, how can I define these words? I always cry when I think of this. On Sunday I am free but I have no more friends. Simply I often spend it by watching movie in the nearby video home, playing play station game, sometimes football or wondering here and there in Shiro Meda. I always feel bad when I see children while they go to and come from school*

*because I have missed this chance. I always feel inferior when I compare myself with the children of my neighbours.*

From this case study, we can learn that trafficked child labourers missed family love and their right time for intellectual development. Through time some of them have developed bad feeling of life and resentment against their “employers”. They also develop ‘inferiority syndrome’ due to the imbalance treatment between them and their traffickers’ or “employers” children.

In this respect, Habtamu (1996: 62) argued that “the isolation and discrimination the children frequently experience may have negative effects on his or her self-esteem, sense of identity, ability to socialize and make friends”. All these gradually contributed to develop low self-esteem or low value about themselves. As I have learned from informants, most of the children view their future as something obscured by cloud or dark. As a result of this, they felt hopelessness and consider themselves as abandoned children. They do not see themselves as capable person to make a difference or to change their future life. Such kinds of self image erode the confidence of working children. This was also clearly reflected in the interview and FGDs.

In addition to the above negative impacts, child labour “may have a long term negative impact on the psychological development of children. Children may not get enough time for their educational development which in turn affects their wage earning capacity in their future life” (Forastieri, 1997: 30). Child labour has also the same effect on the society and the economy of the nation. Children are the future leaders and producers of a nation if we let them grow up in a proper way. But if we treat them in the contrary, they would put negative impact on the socio-economy of a nation.

#### **4.2. THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE WORKING CHILDREN**

Though several studies, international organizations and national governments claimed child labour has deleterious impact on the working children, some others also advocate the positive contribution of child work. Accordingly, Anti-Slavery International, USDOL

(2002:7) and Rodgers and Swinnerton (2002: 4) argued that some types of work make useful contribution to a child's development. Work can help children to learn about responsibility and develop particular skills that will benefit them, their families and the rest of the society. Often work is vital source of income that helps to sustain children and their families.

As was discussed in section 3.2.1.1, when we deal with the causes of child labour, one of the main reasons behind the participation of children in the labour market of the study areas is poverty or inadequate household income. In a situation where there is grinding poverty, survival is a matter that should be given a top priority. This is the goal of every member of the human race. To kick this goal productive work is significant. Children are not exceptions of this though meeting personal and family needs at early age is not an easy task. To get this they should work. As a result of this, they should make a fair choice between work and starvation. Unquestionably they would prefer work to hunger. Therefore, work provides them the means to survive. By realizing this, for example Northern NGOs' practitioners and their partners in the Global South favour the participation of children in the labour market. They further argued that children's right should also incorporate their "right to work" (Rahman, 2004).

There are children in the study areas who value their work as means to reach at the level of self-reliance. In this respect, self-employed children are the one to be mentioned. As some of my subjects, especially self-employed children, told me in the interview and FGDs, they feel independence and they are also proud of having their own source of income. They consider themselves as contributors not as dependants. They thought not about today rather about their future investment in a better business. As a result, I have learned the positive psychological impact of work on children. Some of these self-employed children are self-confident and value themselves well though they feel bad about their educational life.

Furthermore, working children who engaged in productive activities to supplement their family's meager income developed good sense of responsibility especially for their

younger siblings. In this regard, it is important to refer back to section 3.2.1. 5 and raise the case history of Hailu and Rebiqa (who lost both of their parents because of AIDS). They are the only breadwinners and heads of the household who stood on the footsteps of their deceased parents. They feel responsible for the well-being and schooling of their younger siblings. So, the death of their parents and their subsequent involvement in the labour market contribute much to develop a strong sense of responsibility to the survival of their family. Even employed children, in the informal economic activities have feeling of responsibility to arrive at their work place on time, to accomplish their task effectively and with good quality and to keep the production tools carefully. Therefore, though the deleterious impact of child labour is undeniable, work enables working children to be responsible since their early age.

The other most important contribution of work to children is that it helps them learn the skill of that particular business. And it enables them to be more interacting or sociable with so many people and working peers. In this regard, those who are working in outdoor setting like shoe shiners, taxi boys (*Woyalla*), car attendants and cleaners, child commercial sex workers, street vendors, peddlers and garage apprentices are good examples. Because of the nature of their work these children have good contact with many clients. Unlike child weavers and those who are working in home-based businesses they have good social interaction and chances to establish friendship.

### **4.3. THE INTERFACE BETWEEN CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION**

UNICEF (1999:25) points out that while schooling helps the child to grow ‘cognitively, socially and emotionally’, it is an area that is often seriously endangered by child labour. In this section, I will look at the impact of child labour on the education of children and the effect of education on the incidence of child labour. When we talk about child labour we can find two groups of children such as those who combine work and school and those who do not attend education but work full-time.

The impact of work on the intellectual development of children is unquestionably very great. Education has far reaching consequences for the child him/herself and the nation at large. They are precious resources of a nation. Without the participation of this group of the society, in the future, the continuity and the progress of the nation would be at risk. That is why different governments, national and international organizations stood against child labour and promote compulsory education.

Child labour affects the school participation of children since both of them, work and schooling, need much of the children's time. Children cannot be in two places simultaneously. It is hard now to combine school and work for most child labourers, especially for orphans and those who are living far away from their families. They have to make a fair choice between work and education. The reason behind this was that work is a question of survival for poor children since there is no one to finance their basic needs and schooling. As a result of such economic pressures, children are forced to quit schooling and engage in full-time work.

As it was discussed in the previous sections, poverty, coupled with many other problems, result in child labour in the study areas. Due to the rising cost of living, nowadays, the labour contribution of underage children is badly needed by parents. Consequently, a number of children abandoned their schooling and engaged in child labour on full-time basis. In Shiro Meda, for example, the number of dropout children is high but it seems a bit stable in Addisu Gebaya. To prove this I visited two primary schools in Shiro Meda namely, *Entoto Amba* and *Del Betigel* and one in Addisu Gebaya, i.e., *Belay Zeleke* Primary School.

Some children in the study areas tend to attend night schools instead of regular classes. As I observed in Shiro Meda, most of the night school students are children between the ages of 7 and 17. It is unusual as compared to many other schools in the city including *Belay Zeleke* Primary School in Addisu Gebaya. This may be because of the high incidence of child labour in Shiro Meda area. But in *Belay Zeleke* Primary School the number of children who attend evening classes is insignificant. However, those who have

got the opportunity to attend evening classes are either lucky children, who are benefited from the mercy of their employers or those who are living with their parents or kind relatives. There are so many school age children who seek to attend school but kept out of the system by their employers, “parents” or “relatives” in the study areas.

The other group of children, i.e., the concern of this section, is those who attend school and engage in certain economic activities in their spare time. These children are either self-employed or living and working with their parents or kind relatives. In addition to school participation, child labour has an adverse impact on the school performance of children who combine work and school. In Shiro Meda, I was trying to cross check the performance of child labourer students by taking their first semester results of mathematics, english and science subjects into consideration. As I learned from their results, most of them perform badly in their schooling. But undeniably there were exceptional working children who score good marks in their schooling.

I had the chance to exchange some ideas with teachers in order to understand their views about working children’s school performance in Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya. From the conversation, I learned about the weak class participation of working children. Tesfaye, an english language teacher, asserts:

*In this area there are so many children who combine schooling and work. They attend school in regular and night classes. Most of these children often come to school without doing home works or assignments. And when you teach they look desperate and lack concentration. You can read the fatigue from their face. They sit idle and try to hide themselves. We know all these problems as a result of this, we [teachers] tried to prepare tutorial classes for them. But for your surprise most of them did not come. When we ask them next day we have learnt that their workload blocked them from coming to school. Such problem is becoming too serious among child labourers who attend school in the evening program (Interviewed March 2008).*

Bhalotra (2003: 53) supports this argument saying “even when work activities do not prevent a child from attending school, they may reduce study time or tire the child to the point of impairing concentration and learning”. Most of the tasks carried out by children

are tiresome and take long hours with little or without rest. As a result of this, they go to school with tired body and mind. Because of this they sleep in class. After they go back to home they neither study nor do their school tasks by virtue of lack of enough time, interest and fresh mind (lack of concentration) and energy to undertake them. Therefore, combining school and work become a challenging issue for children.

Many people and organizations advocate compulsory education to reduce and if possible to eliminate child labour. In this regard, ILO (2004: 113) argued that “where compulsory education is effectively implemented, children will be less available for full-time work at least during school hours, parents will be encouraged to keep their children in school and employers will be dissuaded from hiring children”. In principle the view of the ILO is absolutely right. But for me this idea completely ignores the real problems of working children and poor families of underdeveloped countries. The main reason for the involvement of children in child labour – not only in the study areas or Ethiopia but also in many developing countries – is the prevalence of abject poverty. In such circumstances, what would be the choice of poor children and families – education or survival? Where do children get food unless they work or if they spend most of their time in school?

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF CHILD LABOURERS**

#### **5.1. THE PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD LABOUR**

There may be different perceptions about ‘child labour’ among the different groups of the society. Children may see ‘child labour’ from different angle since they are the victims or ‘beneficiaries’ of child labour than others. Employers on their part may encourage the participation of children in the labour market as long as they earn dividends at the expense of the immature stamina of working children. Members of the society may argue on the basis of their socio-cultural and economic backgrounds and knowledge or awareness about ‘child labour’. The following subsections of the study seek to examine the point of view of working children, employers and some members of the society in the study areas towards ‘child labour’.

##### **5.1.1. Child Labour from the Working Children’s Perspective**

Working children hold different viewpoints about child labour. Some children argue that ‘work’ is important for their survival and some others defined it as something that deters their development or it is against their proper development. These perceptions are forwarded by child labourers depend on the type of work they perform, the working conditions they experience and the ‘benefit’ they get. In addition to the working conditions, the type of occupation they are engaged in and the benefit they receive, the perception of child labourers also differ from one category to the other, i.e., from “employed” to “self-employed” children. In short, there are two different views among child labourers.

According to Ennew et al. (2005: 34), the International Save the Children Alliance contends “some working children argue that work is something that is ‘dignified’ and contributes to their own or their family’s survival. Others see work as harmful or exploitative”. This argument holds true in the case of this study. However, as I have

indicated at the outset it differs from one mode of occupation to the other, i.e., among “employed” and “self-employed” children. As it was discussed from the foregoing sections, employed children are the most exploited and abused child labourers in the study areas as compared to those who are self-employed and work alongside their parents or in their families’ establishments.

As most of the employed child labourers argued they abhor their work and involvement in the labour market at their early age. They perceive their work and their working conditions as detrimental to their physical, health, safety and intellectual development. This perception is mainly resulted from the unattractiveness of the incentives they earn from their work, the unsafe working conditions and the treatment of their employers. In this regard, child weavers are good examples. Most of my informants in this business were “employed”<sup>7</sup> children. Working too long hours with little or without any payment; awful treatment and abusive practices; denial of education, play, day off; workload; malnourishment, etc. have contributed for this kind of perception among employed child labourers. Shaol, a 14 years old child weaver, remarked:

*I seriously hate the work I do and the employer whom I am working with. My life is highly complicated because of this work. It is too boring, tiresome and the working environment is also unpleasant. But I have no option to give it up because it is the only means to survive. I don't want to go back to home [place of his family's residence] (Interviewed March 2008).*

The perceptions of many of self-employed children and those who work in their family's businesses are different from that of the employed working children. But the later group of working children, those who are working in family establishments, detests their work unlike those in the first category because they do not like to work together with argumentative parents (*wollajochachin chekchaka selehonuna selemikotune lebecha mesrate yimeretal*). This may highlight their desire to liberate themselves from family control. These working children claimed that work is the key for their survival even though some of them are aware of its detrimental impacts especially on their education.

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<sup>7</sup>When we examine the real cause of their participation in child labour, most of them were involved because of child trafficking and are not employed children. There is no term of employment among weavers. This seems common among the Gamo Community in the southern parts of the country especially Arba Minch or Chencha area. Traffickers or weavers brought them to Addis Ababa with or without the consent of parents.

Most of these self-employed working children are keen to attend school if they get the chance. They further argued that work is a source of income, self realization, skill or experience and self-confidence. In this respect, a child labourer, Adem, who is working with his parents, said the following:

*Now I am aware of working independently in case I withdraw from home. I need very meager financial resource to start my own business. Working with parents is boring and they always nag you whether you work or not or whether you sale or not. I don't know the reason why they often nag and beat me. If I get the money to start a business, I will make myself free from my pesky parents (Interviewed March 2008).*

Child porters perceive child labour from two directions; they like and dislike their work simultaneously. As most of them told me in the interview and FGDs they like their work since it is the only source of livelihood. They perceived this way since they are living far away from their parents and are orphans. On the other hand, they felt bad regarding their living and working conditions. Indeed, they are leading desperate life. As compared to many other groups of child workers, relatively porters' life is at risk in all aspects.

In child labourers, little is known about their rights and the laws that protect children. In this respect, I was trying to know the knowledge children have about their rights. However, these children know little or nothing about their rights. Only a handful of children who combined work and education know little about their rights. As they told me they learn this either from Civic and Ethical Education course or from the school community or clubs. One thing that surprised me in the FGDs is that most children value their work primarily by viewing it as the only source of livelihood. As a result of this, they told me as they would defy any law that bans children from work. To do this, they further said that the government should alleviate their or their parents' problems first.

### **5.1.2. The Perceptions of Employers about Child Labour**

The informal sector by its nature is dominantly a labour intensive sector. Entrepreneurs in this sector run their business with little capital and the return itself is also insignificant (Tirussew et al., 1997; ILO/IPEC, 2004; Rodgers and Standing, 1981). Thus, owners of such establishments could not be in a position to pay adult workers and they also claimed

that adult workers are unmanageable (*'enesun mazez yekebdehal'*). Because of this they prefer to employ child workers to adults. Therefore, you can find a non-negligible number of working children in this sector. Employers of child labourers in the study areas have different views about the subject – child labour. Most of my informants here are owners of weaving businesses, garages, cafés/bars, metal and carpentry workshops and taxi drivers. As most of the employers stressed they employ children to help them meet their basic needs. They observed that they do it as a way of helping children meet their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. This is because employers lack enough knowledge about child labour and the corresponding laws that protect the rights of the child. Yet, they are aware of the impacts of child labour though they do not want to speak about it. Some of these employers consider themselves as compassionate to the problems of children. That is why one of the employers argued as follows:

*I employ children as a way of helping them meet their basic needs. They are already unprivileged; I employ them as a way of helping them get food, clothing and shelter. Failure to employ them is not fair since they have nothing to eat, wear and shelter. Work for these poor children is a matter of survival. So, what is bad in employing children? (Interviewed April 2008)*

As I have learned from the interviews, employers use 'sympathy' as a pretext when they are asked the reason why they employ children. And if they were honest, they would view children's participation in the labour market not from the positive (work is beneficial for children) rather from the negative (work is detrimental for children) angle. In reality, however, children especially in the weaving business are trafficked children; they are not employees in a real sense. Hence, whatever "employers" in the weaving business said it is a pretext to hide the reality. Undeniably they may lack adequate knowledge about the rights of children as long as most of them are illiterate.

Furthermore, an employer in a garage argued that "most of the time I employ children to teach them automobile mechanical skill". The employment connection is largely done by relatives or friends of the owners of the enterprises and may be on the basis of the question of children's parents. The same holds true for the employment of one of my informants who engaged in selling sweet ice around Addisu Gebaya. One of the owners

of the garage told me that he likes children very much. That is why he tried to 'help' two working boys in his workshop. In this respect, he added that;

*They cannot repair car. They simply assist adult mechanics by providing tools and taking messages. It is easy to order them than adults. Their contribution is very great. I don't want to undermine their work. So far they are honest and reliable. I hope they would be good mechanics in the future. I often give them easy tasks and they perform it with great care. I really like these children. One day I advised them to attend school but they prefer continue working to education (Interviewed March 2008).*

Those who use their children's labour believe that the involvement of children in work is important for his/her socialization. Most parents need the labour of their child and the continuation of the family business; because of this they urge their children to follow their footsteps. Some parents give equal value for children's work and education. They know very little about child labour and its detrimental effects on their working children. After I gave them information about the meaning of child labour, they try to think about it but finally argued that they are teaching their children about the skill of the business. Some of them also give very little consideration for children's education. This is mainly because of their immediate demand of children's contribution in order to solve their pressing needs. Even among employers little is known about child labour, the rights of the child and corresponding laws that protect children.

### **5.1.3. The Perceptions of the Society about Child Labour**

The socialization process of children may to some extent differ from culture to culture and from one part of the country to the other (Kebebew, 1986: 83). By virtue of this there are different views or perceptions towards child labour among the society of the study areas. To examine the opinion of some members of the society about child labour in this subsection, I would like to start on their perceptions of 'child' and then 'child labour'.

In the study areas, there are people who come from different socio-cultural backgrounds. As a result of this, there might be some differences regarding their view of 'child' and 'child labour'. As I learned from the interviews, the perceptions of the society depend on the level of their literacy and economic status. Parents of working children put seven

years as a threshold of the end of childhood whereas neutrals put age 15 and some others age 18 as a demarcation line between childhood and adulthood by referring to the law of the country. The opinion of parents of working children emanates mostly from their inadequate knowledge about the subject and is guided by traditional outlooks of uprooting 'milk teeth', which is considered as a transition from childhood to adulthood. This highlights how parents of child labourers view child labour and this may be a way of sanctioning the involvement of children in the labour market.

Moreover, with respect to child labour I have experienced two different views in the study areas. On the one hand, there are people who view child labour from the angle of its positive contribution to the child and his/her family's survival. They contended that children's participation in the world of work is good to acquire skills, help the child and his/her family to survive and as means of socializing the child to the external world. In short, this group of people sees it virtually as harmless. Parents of working children also share the same view though both of them agree to some extent on its negative impacts on the child's education. They are supporting the participation of children in child labour and argued that it is normal for children to assist parents since it is one of the ways of training the child. Some members of the society, on the other hand, perceive child labour moderately, as something 'useful' and 'harmful' (or in between) to the child. They take several issues into account to judge it 'harmful' and 'useful'. They say for those children who have no food, clothing and shelter, and have no any other option to survive, therefore, taking part in the labour market is a must. These children might be orphans or live far away from family. Those who live with their parents or relatives should not take part in the labour market at this tender age rather they have to attend school. In this regard, one of the members of the *kebele* administration in Shiro Meda contended that;

*In Shiro Meda, there are many children who work in the streets and give indoor services for survival. The situation is very different in this area. There are so many children working on carrying goods and weaving activities. Child weavers are especially exposed to various problems including being highly exploited by their employers. As we heard this people are not employers rather they are traffickers but we lack evidence to bring them before justice. Unless they are orphans, parents are responsible to bring up their children properly whatever economic status they have. In fact, it is not only the*

*problem of poor families there are also children from the better-offs (Interviewed March 2008).*

In general, in the community little is known about child labour as a problem though there are billboards in both sites, Shiro Meda and Addisu Gebaya, which preach the illegality of using children's labour for any productive activities. This is because child labour is seen as work that every capable child can perform. After I tried to explain the literal meaning of child labour, many informants realized that what the children were engaged in was child labour. So, most of the informants became aware of the fact that all that existed in the area constituted child labour.

The communities perception, following my explanation about the issue, is child labourers do not only come from poor families but also from better-off families as well – delinquents who resist parental control. It is also a common perception that there are children who work part time in the evenings and on weekends to support the efforts of their parents or guardians in meeting family needs. The practice of working children thus appears to be tacitly accepted by the community members I talked to as child labour.

## **5.2. THE CHALLENGES AND ABUSIVE PRACTICES CHILD LABOURERS FACE**

### **5.2.1. The Challenges Child Labourers Face when they try to Escape from Child Labour**

The informal sector as repeatedly discussed is the main harbour of working children. These children engaged in child labour from 'simple' to deleterious forms. Some children seriously hate their work and the environment in which they work and live. Some others have positive attitude towards the type of work they engaged in without taking into account its long and short-term impacts on their well being. Whatever the attitude children have, they viewed it positively either because of lack of option to survive or knowledge about the detrimental effects of their work. However, if they get the chance, as most of them I talked to reported, no doubt they would run away from exploitation. But they have hindrances that tied them to exploitation as discussed below.

Children face several challenges in their endeavour to escape from child labour or labour exploitation. Though there were children who view their engagement beneficial, this does not mean that they perform their work with great interest or love it from the bottom of their heart. The main challenge for working children in this respect is abject poverty. Indeed, they are living in the vicious circle of poverty. This abject household poverty coupled with parental unemployment, limited opportunities, rising cost of living, and “*men ebelalehu? belo bemaseb*” (the question ‘what to eat?’) have contributed to the perpetuation of children in the labour market and hindered children from escaping labour exploitation.

Employers, ‘relatives’ and ‘parents’ often use different forms of ‘threatening mechanisms’ to make sure the obedience and the submission of working children. Most of the ‘employers’ of trafficked children use such methods of intimidation to realize the continuation of children’s labour contribution. Even children living with and working for their parents face similar intimidation from their parents. As one of my key informants said his father often beat him if he refused to do so. In his words he said “if I refuse to do the assigned tasks, I will severely be beaten, denied of food and dismissed from home by my father”. He frequently warns me: ‘what will you eat if you refuse to work?’ (*Satesera min letebela new*), ‘if you don’t work, leave the home!’ (*Yemaysera sew bet menor aychlem betun lekeh wuta!*). In addition to this, Asrat, a 14 years old ex-child weaver and now a porter in Shiro Meda remarked that:

*A person who trafficked and employed me always warns me to stay at home at any time. He told me so many bad things about the city of Addis Ababa. He also advised me not to trust people around us. He usually said ‘if you go far even on Sunday [his only rest day], cannibals will kill and eat you’ (kebet kewatahena erekeh kehedke sew yemibelu sewoch yebeluhal) because of this I was always afraid to go out let alone to visit my family outside Addis Ababa (Interviewed February 2008).*

The most important one in addition to the aforementioned is that of language barriers. This holds true for child weavers of Shiro Meda who came from Gamo Gofa, the Gamo community. The mother tongue of these children is Gamo (*Gamogna*) and they are not familiar with other languages dominantly spoken in the city such as Amharic and Oromifa. As a result, they believe they cannot escape from bonded labour unless they

communicate with other people. According to an expert in the Labour and Social Affairs' Department of Gulele Sub-city, although some escape, they return immediately to their 'employers' or traffickers. Therefore, until they adapt to their environment they prefer to stay there. However, even after they return their social life is also limited in a narrow area as it was, especially in the Gamo's social circle. Thus, they forward themselves for further exploitation (Interviewed April 2008).

Inability to afford transportation costs to go back to their families and even if they afford the transportation cost, they do not want to go home without taking anything to their family ('*men yezae lemelease*'). Moreover, they thought that one day their employer may fulfill his/her promises. Having such hope hinders children and then perpetuates their exploitations. This is mostly common among trafficked children, for example child weavers. Most of these working children work without any term of employment and with little or no remuneration. In short, they are victims of bonded labour. As a result of this, they have no chance to get money let alone for transportation even for supplementing their basic needs.

Lack of alternative job opportunities other than the occupation they engaged in, bad imagination (picture) of and fear of adaptability to the outside world have also caught up working children from claiming their independence from labour exploitation. Working children are trained in a certain business or occupation and most of them lack required skills to engage in other activities. As a result of this, they were scared when they thought of escaping. If they left their work without preparation, their survival would be at risk.

Generally, lack of alternative sources of income, poverty, language barrier, exaggerated imagination and fear of adaptability to the outside environment, inability to afford transportation costs, and limited job opportunity due to lack of proper skill impedes working children from liberating themselves. Furthermore, phobia created by traffickers and employers about the external environment, violent employers, expecting promises of their employers, etc played significant role in bonding children to the labour exploitation.

## **5.2.2. Abusive Practices Child Labourers Face**

Working children of either sex face various forms of abuses from employers, colleagues (older children and adult coworkers), security officials (policemen), hooligans and customers. This happens for the reason that people thought children are powerless to protect and defend themselves and absence of good legal protection for working children. Many working children I talked to reported that they oftentimes face abusive practices such as physical, verbal, psychological threats or intimidations.

### **5.2.2.1. Physical Abuse**

Children who do not obey employers or parents' order and do not do the assigned tasks would face different forms of punishments. This may extend from simple corporal punishment to banning from home. Most of the children I talked to reported that they encounter punishments when they refuse to work and fail to finish a given task on time. Moreover, when the qualities of products become lower and fail at market, and again when they lose money or saleable items and break tools they face the same problem. In addition, they are not expected to give answer when they meet insult or curse from their aggressive employers, 'parents', 'relatives' and from older colleagues. If they give answer or a counter response, they would face whip or smack. This is mostly because of the fear of employers that such kind of children would refuse to take orders (*'lej kalteketa yaschegeral'*) and thus would 'escape'. Sometimes working children may encounter physical abuses without any ground.

As it was stated in sub-section 4.1.2 and the foregoing paragraph, corporal punishment is the main form of physical abuse against child labourers. It is mostly true among employed children in the indoor setting. They meet maltreatment either from employers, 'parents', 'relatives' or adult coworkers. Whereas self-employed and employed (in addition to the aforementioned) children in the outdoor setting experience such kind of abuses from colleagues (older child labourers or adults in the same business), customers, security officials (especially common against street vendors) and hooligans.

When we talk about physical abuse it takes place in various modes in the study areas. As I learned from participants of the FGDs, especially ‘parents’, employers or ‘relatives’ use several punitive measures such as whipping with electric cables or sticks, food deprivation, smashing against the wall, slapping, hitting by throwing any accessible objects, etc. FGDs participant children reported that:

*Physical abuse is a common phenomenon and we consider it as part of our life. People around us do not care for working children. They slap us, smack us, and beat us using objects accessible to them. Some times employers and ‘parents’ or ‘relatives’ use food deprivation as punitive measure. Physical abuse comes not only from these people but also from customers, hooligans, older working children or adults in the same businesses. Especially older working children or adults in the same businesses beat us when we compete to work; when we refuse to follow their orders and sometimes without any reason (Interviewed March 2008).*

Though this is the problem of all working children in the study areas, it seems too serious among child weavers and porters. The main reason behind this punitive measure could be to make children more obedient, to realize the continuation of their benefits at the expense of the children, and to instill fear in children so that they could keep them.

#### **5.2.2.2. Verbal Abuse**

Verbal abuse takes place between the actors of the labour market and serves as a way of threatening the working child. One of the manifestations of verbal abuse is insulting. People use abusive terms or phrases against the working children in different circumstances where the child does something wrong or against the interest of his/her employers, ‘parents’ or ‘relatives’ and other people around him/her. Most employers or ‘parents’ used to insult working children even when they commit minor mistakes. As many of the children I talked to emphasized, it is the starting point of physical abuse. Relatively adult employers shout against working children before they kick off them whereas women and relatively older employers insult and curse working children continuously as compared to the former group of employers. The latter do not oftentimes take physical punishments like beating unless they are extremely angered by child workers. Tulu, a twelve years old weaver, remarked about the verbal abuse he faced and criticized the hot behavior of his employer as follows:

*When he wants to beat me, he starts by insulting and threatening me. If I keep silent, he often ignores the problem between us. But if I give him explanation or reason about the problem, he beats me seriously. He uses dishonorable and disparaging terms to attack me verbally. When he air these terms out I often struggle with my feeling and finally forced to cry. But the consequence is bad because he doesn't want to hear crying. So I always try to hold everything inside in order to escape from such punishment (Interviewed February 2008).*

Employers and 'parents' or 'relatives' usually abuse working children verbally. Most of the terms and phrases they use to insult and curse children are disgraceful and derogatory. Insults like a son of a prostitute ('*yeshermuta lej*'), bastard ('*yedikalla lej*'), a son of woman ('*yeset lej*' – it is to refer to a child who is not punished well and brought up properly), and more other abusive terms that the children do not want to repeat because they were ashamed of even telling me those.

### **5.2.2.3. Psychological Abuse**

In addition to physical and verbal abuses, working children also experience psychological abuse which come from their employers, 'parents' or 'relatives' and colleagues. As was discussed in section 4.2.2.2, some employers and 'parents' or 'relatives' threaten, intimidate, insult and curse child workers and they instill their impacts in the minds of these immature children. The psychology of children is like easily spoiled and breakable items. But employers or other individuals who are working with children could not understand children's morals and emotions. Because of this fact they usually use different threatening mechanisms mainly to keep children under their control, for the sake of improving the "quality" and "quantity" of products, to oblige children to work and accomplish the given tasks or sale the goods in their hand quickly.

Employers, 'parents' or 'relatives' oftentimes use different threatening methods. These may be verbal and action-oriented. Verbally they use such expressions as to make the child submissive and obedient. These are, 'I will kill you', 'I will expel you from home in the middle of the night and give you to *Entoto* jungle's hyena', 'I will hung you', and 'I will amputate your legs if you go away'. They also threaten children in action by showing them sharp tools like knife, screw driver and sharp "spear-like" objects.

In this respect, there is a story of one of my informants, Bekele – an eleven years old child worker, who is living and working with his ‘uncle’ since 2004. He came to Addis Ababa with the consent of his parents to learn the skill of making *shemma* (traditional cloth). I found him around Shiro Meda and he was one of my key informants but we meet only on Sundays without the knowledge of his uncle. He further remarked as follows:

### **Case 3. Bekele**

*My ‘uncle’ is a very aggressive person. I am afraid of him especially when he goes out and comes back. Before he goes out he usually tells me to stay working and he measures the work I did and put a mark on it. And he warns me that if I go out and work nothing or little, the consequences would be bad. Nobody will save me! He would cut me into pieces. Moreover, he insults me badly if I make a mistake. He does not care whatever the mistake but he simply try to find faults either to kick or intimidate me. He also threatens me not to tell our spoiled relation to my father when he comes to visit us once or twice a year. He intimidates me by saying ‘you should not tell any thing to your father. If you tell him, I will kill you in front of your father’. As a result, I don’t want to tell my father anything. He is really a bad guy.*

Generally, employers or ‘relatives’ use whatever mechanisms to threaten working children. As I learned from people I talked to working children encountered such kinds of psychological threats several times from their employers, ‘parents’ or ‘relatives’. But as I further learned from the FGDs, parents are less aggressive than employers. Here we should not forget the existence of merciful employers and relatives as well.

## **5.3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK: ETHIOPIAN CHILD LABOUR LAWS AND ENFORCEMENTS**

Since the establishment of ILO in 1919, child labour becomes the concern of international organizations like the UN, ILO itself and UNICEF and other regional and continental organizations like AU (or ex-OAU) and national governments like the Ethiopian Government. As a result of this international recognition, several laws were enacted internationally, regionally and nationally to address the problem. Moreover, NGOs also take significant position to mitigate the problem of child labour. Therefore, since Ethiopia is a member state of the UN, ILO, UNICEF and AU (the former OAU), it

has taken several measures alone or in collaboration with these regional and international organizations to solve the problem.

According to the Federal Constitution Article 9 (4), international conventions or agreements ratified by Ethiopia are part and parcel of the law of the land. So, Ethiopia has ratified the 1959 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1989 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the Vienna Convention on the Rights of the Child. On May 27, 1999, Ethiopia has ratified the 1973 ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment (Save the Children Denmark, 2003:4; USDOL, 2002:99). Thus the legal instruments of Ethiopia that deal with child protection and welfare are the reflections of the abovementioned international conventions pursuant to Article 9 (4) of the FDRE Constitution.

The FDRE Constitution under chapter three recognizes the rights of the person not to be held in slavery and servitude. Moreover, it also prohibited trafficking of human beings for whatever purpose (FDRE Const. Article 18(2)). It also bans any form of forced or compulsory labour under sub-article 3 of the same provision. When we come to children's right, article 36(1) (d) states that every child has the right 'not to be subjected to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or well-being'.

Among the legal documents of the country the problem of child labour is exhaustively dealt with in the Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003. For the purpose of this proclamation, "Young Worker" means a person who has attained the age of 14 but is not over the age of 18 years. And it is the only legal document that directly deals with child labour. Under Article 89 (3) it forbids the employment of children below the age of 14. Employment in detrimental working conditions is also forbidden for those below the age of 18. In addition to this, in the same article sub article 4 it puts limitations on the type of occupation allowed to young workers (above the age of 14). This provision incorporated list of activities prohibited to young workers previously stated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) pursuant to the power given to it under Article 89 (4) of the Labour Proclamation No. 42/1993. However, this provision in sub article 5 permits the

involvement of young workers in the aforementioned activities (activities stated under Article 89 (4) of the Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003)<sup>8</sup> following their vocational training that are accepted and scrutinized by competent authority.

The Labour Proclamation further deals with the conditions of employment of young workers under Article 90. As per this provision, the “normal hours of work for young workers shall not exceed seven hours a day”. Moreover, under Article 91 the proclamation forbids the engagement of young workers in night work between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., overtime work, weekly rest days and public holidays.

The Revised Family Code has relevance to the protection of children from productive activities not directly as the Labour Law rather indirectly. According to Article 257 sub-article 1 and 2, the guardian is responsible to keep the safety and the health of the child and in times of health problem he has to take necessary measures for his/her recovery. Therefore, indulging a child in labourious activities that may affect his/her safety and health is indirectly forbidden by this provision. Meaning if a guardian or a parent allows or forces a child to take part in the labour market, he/she will be responsible to the health problems caused by the child’s work. Article 260 also dictates that the guardian has to ensure that a minor has been given general education suitable to his abilities and is duty bound to protect the child from obstacles which may hinder the child from attending education. Since child labour in any form has its own negative impact on the school attendance and performance of the child, the guardian/parent who let the child to work will be answerable.

As in the Revised Family Code, in the Penal Code of Ethiopia, i.e., Proclamation No.414 /2004<sup>9</sup>, there is no provision that directly protects the child from economic exploitation and detrimental working conditions which may affect the physical, health, psychological

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<sup>8</sup>Article 89(4) of the Labour Proclamation No. 377/2003 says: the Minister may prescribe the list of activities prohibited to young worker which shall include in particular:

- (a) work in the transport of passengers and goods by road, railway, air and internal waterway, docksides and warehouses involving heavy weight lifting, pulling or pushing or any other related type of labour;
- (b) work connected with electric power generation plants transformers or transmission, lines;

- (c) underground work, such as mines, quarries and similar works;
- (d) work in sewers and digging tunnels.

and intellectual development of the child. However, indirectly it protects children from abusive practice including exploitative child work. Among these provisions, Article 576 (1-2) forbids ‘maltreatment of minors [children]’. This article shows the denunciation of child abuse – including child labour. Article 590 (1) (b) may also protect a child from exploitation. It prescribes a punishment of rigorous imprisonment ranging from ten to twenty-five years if abduction is committed on a minor to exploit him or her. Moreover, according to Article 659 (1) of the Penal Code, a parent or a guardian is responsible to protect a child from any form of practices which may have negative impacts on a child’s physical and mental development. According to Article 597 of the Penal Code, trafficking of children is prohibited. In sub-article 1 it further says;

*[W]hoever by violence, threat, deceit, fraud, kidnapping or by the giving of money or other advantage to the person having control over a woman or a child, recruits, receives, hides, transports a woman or a minor [child] for the purpose of forced labour is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from five years to twenty years, and fine not exceeding fifty thousand Birr.*

Furthermore, the trafficking of children is also banned by Article 635 of the Penal Law of the country, and is punishable by imprisonment of five years with fines up to 10,000 Ethiopian Birr. And Article 637 prohibited organization of child trafficking. The crime is punishable by imprisonment from simple to rigorous imprisonment not more than three years, and a fine not less than five hundred Birr. Here we can see the gap between the law and the practice of child trafficking in the study areas, particularly in Shiro Meda among weavers.

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<sup>9</sup>By considering the political, social and economic changes in the country, the 1982 Proclamation No.214/82 is replaced by a new proclamation, Proclamation No.414 /2004. This proclamation (Proclamation No.414 /2004) repeals the following proclamations since May 9, 2005:

- The Penal Code of the Empire of Ethiopia 1957, and
- The Revised Special Penal Code of the Provisional Military Administration Council 1982, Proclamation No. 214/1982

Hence, the above stated provisions regarding the Penal (Criminal) Code of Ethiopia is on the basis of Proclamation No. 414/2004. The same topic in the review of literature of this study is based on previous

researches. And they were conducted on the basis of the former proclamation, Proclamation No. 214/1982. This shows the gap between previous researches on child labour and this one.

Despite the existence of such legal provisions, a non-negligible number of under age children still continue working in the study areas. This may be due to the perpetuation of abject poverty, ineffective enforcement, lack of awareness in the society and among child labourers about child right and the corresponding laws that safeguard children. Furthermore, as Assefa (2000:42) and USDOL (2002: 98) put it, enforcement of child labour laws is weak, due in large part to an insufficient number of labour inspectors; there is no clear strategy or policy to protect children from abuse and exploitation and no systematic co-operation and coordination between NGOs and governmental organizations. There is also a general information gap on the situation of child labour in the country.

However, I witnessed some improvements in the study areas with respect to the enforcement of the laws. In Gulele Sub-city Police Department there is a Child Welfare and Protection Unit which is working in cooperation with an NGO, Forum on Street Children-Ethiopia. They work together to minimize the problem of child abuse in the sub-city. The structure of this connection is stretched from Addis Ababa City Government Police Commission to sub-cities' police departments. There are also other NGOs in the study areas which deal with the welfare of the child and child abuse. In addition to this, they are working in raising the awareness of the public about the rights of the child in general and child labour exploitation in particular. But still they have a long journey to go.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This study has examined the issue of child labour in the informal sector in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa. The informal sector is known by its irregular, interim and labour intensive nature. It is also unlicensed or out of the administration of the government tax system and even the gain itself is little. Hiring adult workers is very expensive to the entrepreneurs in this sector. Due to this fact, employers target young children for employment. This is because of their interest to harvest high profit at the expense of children. That is why many studies including this one characterize the informal sector as the main harbour of child labourers. In Gulele Sub-city, a number of underage children are engaged in diversified productive activities of the informal sector. As compared to other sections of the city, the study areas, especially Shiro Meda area, is relatively a poverty stricken part of Addis Ababa and experiences high incidence of child labour.

Children of either sex are taking part in the child labour market of the study areas for various reasons. In the context of this study, the participation of children is gender stratified. As a result, most of the working children in the informal sector are male children. It is safe to say that it is a male dominated economic sector. However, there are very few girls who are working in the informal sector particularly in businesses like baking *injera* for sale, in commercial sex working, serving clients in cafes, street vending and peddling and collecting firewood for sale. The domination of boys may be due to the traditional outlook of parents towards sending their female children outside their home for work and the harassments female children may face in the outside world.

Working children in the informal sector are child labourers and with disadvantaged background involving lack of or minimal access to education due to household poverty, being orphans and are migrated from rural areas or other urban centers. The parents of the working children are engaging in ‘marginal’ economic activities largely due to lack of appropriate skills and education. As a result of their illiteracy, mostly they develop very

little concern for their children's education and thus send them to the labour market to supplement the meager household income. In this way the child follow not only the footsteps of his/her parents in the labour market but also perpetuate as illiterate member of the society in his/her adulthood and then most likely he/she will also send his/her children to the labour market at their early ages too.

Undoubtedly, parents wish bright future for their children and want to raise them in a decent way. However, due to some reasons like abject poverty they are forced to deny their children's right to education and cut expenses of basic needs. And sometimes they may give their children for "blood sakers" (employers of children) or indulge them in the labour market to ease household poverty to a certain extent. Poverty as repeatedly mentioned in this study is the main reason behind the participation of children in productive activities. Poverty is not the only reason for children's involvement rather there are also unemployed parents who send their children to the world of work to get something useful.

Addis Ababa is the focal point or the 'best' destination of migrants from different parts of the country. Children migrate to the city alone or together with their parents, relatives or somebody else for several reasons. As a result, migration becomes another reason behind the participation of children in the labour market of Gulele Sub-city. There are pull factors like the 'good name' of the city, i.e., considering it as a 'place of prosperity', and push factors like rural poverty, absence of sufficient farm land, surplus rural labour force, limited rural job opportunities and other socio-cultural factors have contributed for the migration of children and their parents. After coming to Addis Ababa they prefer to engage in any work without taking into account the difficulty or its dangerous nature. This is due to the fact that they do not have any option to get their subsistence in a strange city.

Moreover, change in the education system is also another contributing factor for the incidence of child labour in the study areas. So as to improve the quality of education, the federal concerned body together with regional states' education bureaus changed the

education system from shift to full-day program. This program has contributed a lot for the withdrawal of children who had combined schooling and working. It also blocked the intention of orphan and migrant children to attend education in one shift program. Because of the introduction of this program they were forced to quite their education and forward them from part-time child labour to the more exploitative full-time work. The main reason for this argument is that earlier times the children had been working very little hours in a day but following the introduction of this program they quit education and engaged in child labour. The central issue when we discuss about work and education is time. Children need to allocate their time equally to work and education. The former one is their only means to survive while the later serve as a tool to achieve their future goal. What would happen when they clash? Which one needs a top priority?

It is obvious that children need special care, love and affection for their healthy personality development. In this respect, family in general and parents in particular play significant role. However, due to HIV/AIDS and family disintegration, these children are forced to lose one or both of their parents. If they do not have capable relatives to take care of them, they would go to the nearby streets and offer themselves for labour exploitation.

Furthermore, this study also dealt with child trafficking as another major factor for the involvement of children in the labour market. Largely, this has happened due to lack of government supervision on the movement of children from one part of the country to the other and lack of awareness about the illegality of child trafficking among the perpetrators. There are different people behind this process. These actors of child trafficking are either in the rural areas or in Addis Ababa. Entrepreneurs in the weaving business of the study areas are either traffickers or recipients of trafficked children.

Children are the future human resource of a nation who needs special protection and care like safe environment to upgrade its quality. But unwise use of this resource or before its right time would endanger not only the sustainability of the child but also the country at large. Some individuals try to increase their dividend at the expense of children. They let

children to work in completely unsafe environment with little or no pay. However, the living conditions of working children differ from one mode of employment to the other. Some self-employed children are living with their parents or in group in their own rented house while others like porters live either on veranda or by paying 0.50 cents for a night. Moreover, if they are remunerated it takes place in cash or in kind and is very little compared to the energy they invest and the difficulty of the work they perform. Generally, they are disadvantaged members of the society.

In its real sense 'work' is a source of income, social interaction and happiness. Human beings should also work to sustain their life and realize their goals. However, for children it has positive and negative effects. Though most people, including international, regional and nongovernmental organizations, and national governments, argue about the deleterious effect of the involvement of children in the labour market, this study tried its best to demonstrate the positive contribution of children's work too. In fact, the work per se and the working conditions children experience are detrimental to their physical, social and intellectual development. Employers also use different punitive measures to realize the submission and obedience of employed children. All these put their own short or long-term impacts on the child. Orphans and migrant children have no option to meet their basic needs other than work. For this reason they should engage in certain economic activities. Work for these children, therefore, is the question of survival.

Child labour and education are inversely related. Education is an influential factor of child labour. When there is high rate of primary school participation, there will be low incidence of child labor. High participation of children in the labour market would affect primary school enrolment or participation of children. By realizing this, international organizations and our national government target at increasing the school participation of children through "Compulsory Education" and "Universal Primary Education". However, in the context of the study areas "Compulsory Education" could not be an option to solve the problem of child labour. In fact, I believe in the role of "compulsory education" or high rate of school participation of children because it has the power to put influence on the involvement of children in the labour market. But priority should be given for the

means of survival of poor families in order to achieve the goals of this policy, i.e., “Compulsory Education”. Moreover, child labour has its own negative impact on the school performance of those working children who combine work and education.

In the study areas, children are assigned to perform very difficult tasks which are incompatible to their age and physical strength. Because of the arduous nature of their work and the unpleasant working conditions they experience, children develop resentment to their work and their living and working conditions. As a result, most of the working children want to liberate themselves from labour exploitation. But, they encounter different obstacles in their endeavor to escape. This study attempted to identify such hindrances on the basis of the point of view of working children in the study areas. Some of these are the prevalence of abject poverty which is coupled with parental unemployment, rising cost of living and lack of other opportunities; threatening mechanisms employed by employers, ‘parents’ or ‘relatives’; language barriers; inability to afford transportation cost; inadaptability and the phobia created by employers about the outside world. All these in part or together tied working children to the labour exploitation.

As this study disclosed, there is a varied perception about child labour among working children, employers and members of the society. The views of these people towards child labour depend on the knowledge they have about the problem; their level of involvement in the situation; and the benefit or risks they get from it. Hence, there is limited awareness about child labour as a problem that needs to be addressed through awareness raising campaigns. The attitude of working children towards child labour depends highly on the benefit they earn, the working condition and the treatment of their employers or individuals around them. In the society, there are people who support the involvement of children in the labour market by viewing it as part of the child socialization process and still lack information about child labour. Thus, the perception of members of the society varies in accordance with their level of literacy and awareness about the rights of children. According to employers, children are employed based on their compassion to help them meet their basic needs. But they do it largely to reduce labour costs and benefit

more at the expense of working children. In short, there is an information gap among child labourers, employers and working children about the rights of children and the corresponding legislations that protect children.

Working and getting something to eat and supplement one's family income is not an easy task for child labourers. To get it they should have to pass through several challenges like doing onerous work, hazardous or less conducive working conditions and unfair treatments of employers, 'relatives' or 'parents' and even clients and coworkers. These abusive practices can be grouped as physical, verbal and psychological. All these happened due to lack of adequate legal protection and cruelty of employers and other people whom they work with. These abusive practices in turn have their own impact on the physical, social and psychological well-being of the child. Most of the time the victims of such kinds of abuses are passive, lack self-confidence, have low self-esteem or self concept. In their later life, adulthood, they would develop aggressive behavior and may isolate themselves from the rest of the society.

According to the FDRE Constitution Article 9 (4), all international conventions and agreements signed by Ethiopia are part and parcel of the law of the land. Ethiopia has signed different international conventions regarding the rights of the child and child labour. To safeguard the rights of the child various legislations are incorporated in the Constitution, the Labour Code, Criminal Code and other legal documents of the country. Thus, it is safe to conclude that Ethiopia has adequate legislations to protect the rights of children in general and working children in particular.

However, enforcements of child labour laws are weak and they lack good coordination among government agencies and the justice department (law enforcement organ), and the government lack political commitment to deal with child labour. In spite of the presence of several laws in different legal documents dealing with child labour, still the gap between the laws and enforcement is beyond exaggeration. It is undeniable that there are some improvements concerning the enforcement of child labour law especially in the police department of the sub-city. But still they need report either from the victims or the

society to bring the perpetrators before justice. Generally, the rule and the game seem to be two different things in the same playing ground.

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