

Child Labour in Morocco

The Socio-economic Background of the “Little Maids” Phenomenon

Prof. Mehdi Lahlou
Ministry of Planning, Morocco
melahlou@hotmail.com

Abstract:

The existence of young servants, commonly known as “petites bonnes ” or “little maids” in numerous homes, rich and modest, is a well-known phenomenon that constitutes part of the general child labour problem in Morocco.

Children who are placed in families other than their own (most often, but not exclusively, urban), do not necessarily work. It seems evident that this is determined by the same reasons which push certain parents to place their children “in the employment market”, in the service of other families instead of going to school. “Petites bonnes” are part of a group of children between the ages of 7 and 15 (sometimes even younger) who do work or who can work.

In reality, child labour has long been a taboo topic in Morocco. It could not be mentioned without provoking discomfort amongst not only the employees and their parents but also government officials and the employers of underage children who are theoretically supposed to be going to school and protected against precocious employment.

Since the end of the 80s and especially since the beginning of this decade, the debate has become somewhat “dispassionate” and is now politically acceptable for reasons relating to the protection of children’s rights (an essential component of human rights) and the will by Moroccan authorities to respect them.

The existence of this phenomenon is recognized now. The will to confront it is present, even though it still seems to be economically and socially risky. Facts on child labour are still limited. First of all there is an insufficient amount of numerical data. Secondly there is the contradiction between concept and reality. This is due to a lack of pertinent information and an absence of national inquiries which shed light on the problem.

Political decision makers, NGO’s, and other interested organizations or researchers find themselves reduced to computation and extrapolation based on observation, written work, oral history or partial or false statistics (generally limited in their area of interest).

A. How many children work and how many of them are “petites bonnes”?

The determination of the child labour phenomenon, along with that of the “petites bonnes”, is difficult on a numerical plan. This can be approached and analysed in a general manner by referring to data produced by the Bureau of Statistics which depends on the Moroccan Ministry of Planning and Economic Previsions.

This contribution contains an estimation of the number of working children between the ages of 7-15 in Morocco. Based upon this amount, we can estimate the number of little girls who work as servants or “petites bonnes”. It also contains essential elements that enable a better understanding of the existence and the extent of this phenomenon. This chapter studies working children’s legal situation on both a real life basis as well as in ink, while insisting on certain important consequences lived by them.

At this time, there is no credible official count that can accurately quantify and display the structure of the child labour phenomenon and which can precisely indicate the number of “petites bonnes”.

For social and economic reasons, the global number of working children is underestimated. The following hypothesis states that all non-schooled children are likely to work for an employer or their family, with or without remuneration. It is realistic to say that the number of children in the employment market falls between the official data and the total number of uneducated children between the ages of 7 and 15.

1. Estimation of working children; difficulties: data sources and methodology.

Difficulties in finding numerical data: The determination of the number of children between the ages of 7 and 15 and that of the “petites bonnes” is made delicate by an ensemble of challenges. They are related to the concept and definition retained not only during the general census but also by employment investigations and by reserves that reduce the information collected during those operations.

Keep in mind the following principal elements on the subject:

a. Displaying a number which indicates with a minimal amount of reliability the reality of the phenomenon is limited by the difficulties linked to the definitions adopted for the activity and the employment of uneducated children between 7 and 15.

The active population consists only of adults (15 and over) who spontaneously declare working or searching for a job during the reference of the investigation. Unschooling children who do not work are not included in this population, they are simply classified as “young”. These youngsters are not directly interrogated. Their parents or employers are the ones who respond to the questions. In both cases, information is withheld or misinterpreted, denying the affiliation of the child with the economical sphere.

b. Child labor is not visible, especially when it occurs behind the closed doors of homes. If the employer or child’s parents do not manifest it, discovery is difficult. In a country where the registration of a child with the municipality is not necessarily automatic, the child’s age can be based on his or her physical appearance, meaning that the placement of a child in the adult category can happen.

c. The definition of work for many is associated with paid employment. Unpaid labour is still widespread in Morocco, especially among women and in rural regions. 80.2 percent of rural women are considered to be unpaid family aids. This rate is 6.2 percent in urban areas¹. Unpaid employment is often considered to be a simple occupation rather than a job relating to the economic sphere, especially when it is done for family or for the benefit of someone else.

d. 1994’s general census questionnaire evaluated the number of children living in homes other than those of their parents. This was given to “emitting” and receiving families. All surveyed families were interrogated about the age and parental link with the head of the house (or his or her spouse) and the number of family members (not counting visitors). If a family member was absent, they were asked to state the motive and duration of absence.

The exploitation and verification of the collected data could have led to information on the number and eventual occupations of 7-15 year olds who were present during the period of the

¹ National Investigation “Activité, emploi et chômage” 1999. Synthesis report, p. 14, Statistics Direction, Rabat

census in homes other than their own or that of their families. The information was not exploited with this perspective. It led to an analysis of information relating to the entire 18 and younger category of the population with its demographic and socio-economic characteristics without precise information on the 7-15 age category whose presence on the employment market is subject to controversy.

2. Basis of the estimation: methodology and data sources.

By keeping in mind the reserves mentioned above, it is possible to estimate the number of working children based on different available sources of information and an ensemble of data deduced from the Moroccan reality.

Two hypotheses can be made for such an estimation:

- a. The number of children aged between 7 and 15 who are susceptible to being on the employment market can correspond to the ensemble of unschooled children or children who leave school before the age of 15. This number is obtained by comparing school statistics and population projections of different ages taken from the general census of 1994.
- b. Based on prior reserves, data taken from the general census or employment inquiries underestimates the number of working children.

Logically, the real number of working children is situated between the number of active children between the ages of 7 to 15 and the group of uneducated children.

3. Statistical data and its sources.

The available statistical data is from the Ministry of National Education and from the Bureau of Statistics.

The first data indicates that in 1999/2000 there were approximately 2 millions children between the ages of 7 and 15 who were not enrolled at school or stopped before finishing the fundamental instruction cycle, which they are theoretically supposed to complete.

The following table displays the educational situation in Morocco 2001/2002. It should be noted, here, that learning minimum age was set at 6 in 2000 and that compulsory schooling extends now to 14.

Table 1: Schooled and unschooled population (in 2000) and schooling rate of children ages 6-14, 2001-2002

Age category of the Population	6-11 years	12-14 years	6-14 years
Instructed	3,332	1,222	4,554
Non-instructed	0,370	0,715	1,085
Teachable	3,702	1,937	5,639
Rate of instruction	90 %	63.08 %	80.76 %

Source: Ministry of National Education, educational statistics for 2001-2002².

According to this data, one child out of ten between 6 and 11, almost one out of five between 6 and 14 and one out of three between 12 and 14 do not attend school. (1999/2000: one child out

² The data concerning the population which can go to school are (36,000 children give or take a few) contained in the projection of the population made by the Study and Demographic Research Center (CERED) for the period 1994-2014, meaning 3,822 million children between the ages of 7-12, and 1,942 million children between the age of 13-15.

of four between 7 and 12, almost one out of three between 7 and 15 and one out of two between 13 and 15 do not attend school.³).

These children will end up working to take care of themselves or to help their families economically. The data collected from the general census and employment investigations refers to this level as active, working, children below the age of 15.

The general census of 1982 calculated that 46,230 children aged 5 to 9, and 367,782 aged 10 to 14 were working at the beginning of the 1980s. Among them, 259,303 were labelled as family aids, including “little maids”.

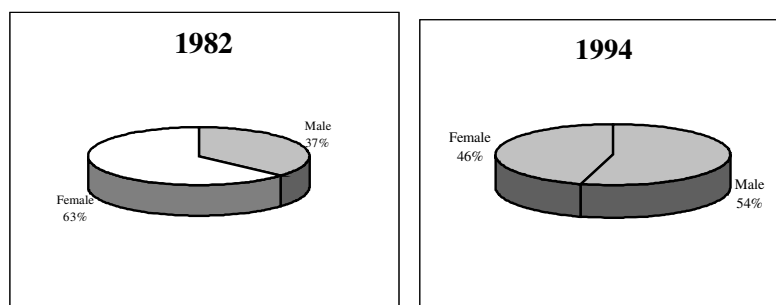
The most recent census is from 1994. It does not show an improvement in this subject. Hence, the number of children below the age of 15 considered as active has risen to 356,530, 4.3 percent of the total number of actives and 5.1 percent of the occupied population on a national level. This proportion is clearly higher for girls (7 percent) than boys (3.5 percent).

Even though a partial expenditure of these results focused on people younger than 18⁴, it brought out the following indications concerning minors below the age of 15 in their evolution according to sex and backgrounds between 1982-1994.

Table 2: The evolution of working children below the age 15 in relation to their gender and area of residence, 1982 and 1994.

Area of Residence	Gender		
	Male	Female	Ensemble
<i>1982</i>			
Urban	28,583	49,412	77,995
Rural	214,057	121,960	336,017
Ensemble	242,640	171,372	414,012
<i>1994</i>			
Urban	51,005	42,723	93,728
Rural	182,608	80,194	262,802
Ensemble	233,613	122,917	356,530

Source: Statistics Direction, General Census of the population, 1994.



³ The difference in schooling rate for 7-12 year olds and 13-15 year olds is due to a relative increase in school inscription rates during the past few years and the withdrawal by many others. In addition, the Ministry of Education completed two national annual inquiries (end of November and end of May). The results of these inquiries, (which are not published) indicated that 2-5% of students dropped out of school in the middle of the year.

⁴ General census of the population and of the habitat of 1994. “Les moins de 18 ans au Maroc- caractéristiques démographiques et socioéconomiques”; thematic set; Bureau of Statistics, Rabat.

The following major traits have been retained in the evolution of this category:

- The declaration of work by children is characterized by a strong male contribution. In 1994 they constituted 65.5 percent of the active, occupied population under the age of 15.
- With rural depopulation and the development of urbanization, the number of young active city dwellers significantly increased from 18.8 percent in 1982 to 26.3 percent in 1994.
- The number of working children under the age of 10 has dropped. In 1994 these children formed 6.9 percent of the working children population versus 14.2 percent in 1971. Furthermore, based on the 1994 census, the majority working children below the age of 10 were boys (59 percent) and essentially lived in rural areas (81 percent).

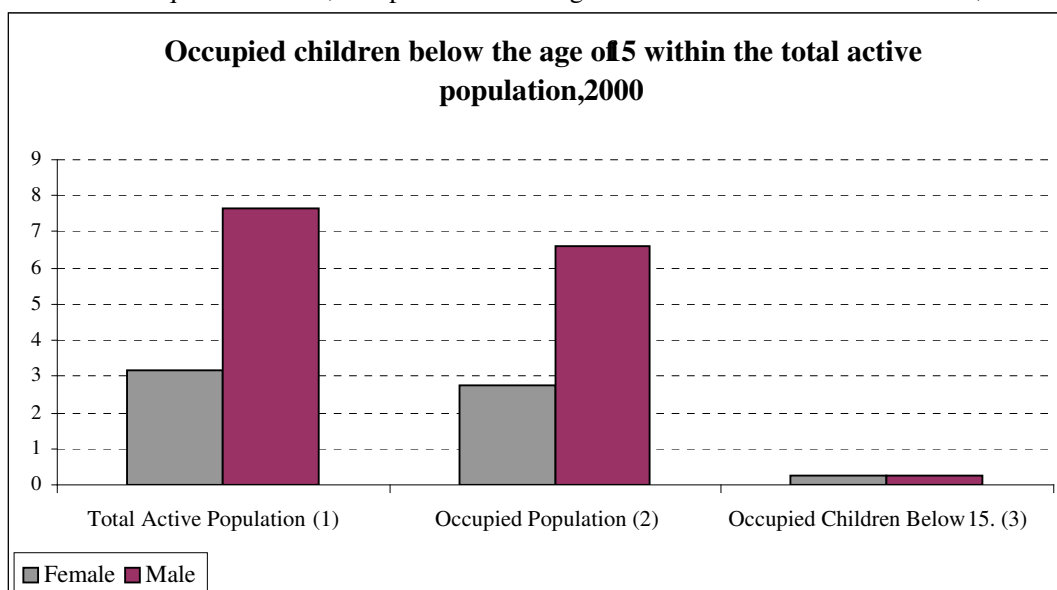
Concerning the determination of the weight and structure of children's (under the age of 15) work, we can replace the data from the 1994 census by the employment inquiry of 1999⁵. This investigation made by the Bureau of Statistics is the most recent to date on a national level. It was based upon a sample of 48,000 homes of which 16,000 were in rural areas.

In this investigation it has appeared that children below the age of 15 who were considered active (employed) represent 4.8 percent of the number of total active people on a national scale and 5.5 percent of active workers. In other words, it is at the same level as in 1994.

Table 3: Number of active children below the age of 15 within the total active population, 2000 (millions)

	Female	Male	Total
Total Active Population (1)	2,970	7,790	10,759
Occupied Population (2)	2,584	6,715	9,299
Occupied Children Below 15. (3)	0,216	0,258	0,474
(3)/(1)	7.3 %	3.3 %	4.4 %
(3)/(2)	8.3 %	3.8 %	5.5 %

Source: "Enquête activité, emploi et chômage – 2000". Statistics Direction, Rabat.



⁵ Investigation called, "enquête activité, emploi et chômage".

In relation to the census of 1994, there are two eye-catching changes confirmed by the evolution of poverty on a national scale:

- During a six-year gap, the number of qualified active children below the age of 15 rose to 474,000⁶, an increase of 117,500 in absolute terms in relation to 1994 and 33% in relative terms. From this perspective, you can see that between 1982 and 1994, and 1971 and 1982, there is a complete switch in historical tendencies.
- 88.6 percent of active children live in rural areas, while 11.4% (54,000) are in cities. The decrease in the number of active children in relation to 1994 and the important increase in rural areas, unlike what occurred in 1982 and 1994, is a clear indication of the existing relationship between increased child labour and that of poverty. This concept will be analysed further in this chapter.

The inquiry reveals that children (under 15) are fully engaged in the private sector and that 2.8 percent among them work in the branch labelled “other”, which is the term used to qualify domestic employment. In comparison to the total number of active children, this represents about 14,500 children younger than 15, from which a miniscule part is from rural zones (about 1,300 children). In the absence of data expressing age and gender, we can hypothesize that the majority are girls.

3. What important data should be retained for working children or “petites bonnes”

The number of active working children between the ages of 7 and 15 represented, until 2000, about a fourth of the non-educated population (26 percent).

The use of the collected information from the general census of 1994 has enabled us to conclude that out of 100 non-educated children between 7 and 17, 30 were in the employment market. By applying this rate to the young non-educated population in 2000, we would have 597,600 (representing 123,000 more people than indicated by the Bureau of Statistics in the same year) active 7-15 years olds, of which 16,800 would be “petites bonnes”.

Meanwhile, for a more precise estimation, one has to take into consideration the uncertainties indicated above. One also needs to consider the economic and social changes in Morocco since the mid 1990s, as well as the increase in rural poverty parallel to the last successive year of drought. We can conclude that 60 percent of uneducated children are active without counting the unpaid children who work in homes.

Consequently, it could be said that the number of employed children between the ages of 7 and 15 was 1.2 million at the end of 1999, the majority residing in rural areas where schooling is weakest and poverty is highest. The number of “petites bonnes” would be 30,000 if the employment structure remains unchanged.

We can estimate that the number of little girls working as “petites bonnes” or living with families other than their own is between 60 and 100 thousand, being two to three times more than the estimation of an active population of 1.2 million children. Such a hypothesis takes into consideration the difficulty to define “domestic employment” and to determine those concerned. It is also based upon the rate of schooling for girls in rural areas, which is below the national average. Many needy parents avoid placing their girls in companies or other similar jobs, fearing to see them in strenuous or unprotected work.

⁶ At this level it is apparent that there is a disagreement in the synthesis document between the number of active children (514,694 of which 65,993 are in urban zones) and those obtained based on reports on the active and occupied population. This is the number which is stated in the text.

B. Why is there child labour and “petites bonnes” in Morocco? What determines its evolution?

Child labour in Morocco is linked to the underdevelopment and the low GNP per capita.

The placement of young children on the employment market is mainly due to:

- Parental poverty. This forces children to work in order to satisfy basic family needs.
- Too many children receive inadequate or no education.
- The absence of legal protection.
- Cultural and social environment

The situation declined because of the increased competition of economic globalization. This concerns countries whose possibility to increase the productivity level resides in more flexible work and reduced salaries. In both cases, recruitment of children seems to be the best way to compensate for weak technological development and to remain competitive, both locally and internationally.

Working children and their parents poverty:

The parents' poor economic state comes from different available macroeconomic and social data. We can conclude that the average national income in Morocco is 1.250 USD⁷. Morocco has had several successive years of drought and a significant variation in its GNP, affecting the earning capacity of its population. The following table indicates that from 1991 to 1999 the increase of the absolute value of the GNP and the constant price is +16.9 billion DH. This represents 14.9 percent of the entire period and an annual average of 1.8 percent for a rise of population of over 2 percent (2.065 percent annual average between the last two censuses of '82 and '94⁸). The real annual progression of the GNP per person is only 0.8 percent between 1991-96 and is negative, being equal to -0.2 percent from 1997-1999. This see-saw progression principally concerns primary activities such as agriculture whose production varies greatly with the climate.⁹

Table 4: Variations of the GNP 1991-2001 (market prices of 1980).

Years	Variation
1992/1991	- 4.0%
1993/1992	- 1.0%
1994/1993	+10.4%
1995/1994	- 7.0 %
1996/1995	+12.0 %
1997/1996	- 2.2 %
1998/1997	+ 6.5 %
1999/1998	- 0.7%
2000/1999	+ 0.3 %
2001/2000	+ 6,5 %

Source: Bank Al- Maghrib Annual report, 1990-2001.

⁷ Annual development report, 2000. World Bank. According to Bank Al Maghrib last report (June 2002), GNP per capita represents only 1,147 USD in 2001.

⁸ The rate of demographic increase is not calculated annually. It is obtained at the end of each census, generally every 10 years. This rate was of 2.8% between 1960 and 1971, and of 2.6 % between 1982 and 1994.

⁹ The variations which affected the production of this sector during the past few years was of : -36.9% in 1992; -4.7% in 1993; +61.4% in 1994; -43.9% in 1995; +78.8% in 1996; -26.5% in 1997; +23.6% in 1998 and -12.5 in 1999. Between 1995 and 1996, the amplitude of 122.7 points was extremely strong.

In a more precise way, and parallel to the global evolution of the GNP, poverty¹⁰, particularly of agricultural origins, which had decreased in Morocco between the mid 1980s and 1991, has significantly increased since then, affecting 19 percent of the population in 1999.

The number of peasants was estimated at 4.6 million in 1984-85 and 3.3 million in 1990-91. The population increased between these two dates by 15.4 million to 25.6 million. This number has brutally risen since the beginning of this decade, reaching 5.3 million people, of which 3.5 are from rural zones. This data comes from the last inquiry on family/consumption made between 1998 and 1999 and published by the Bureau of Statistics in January 2000.

Table 5: Poor population and rate of poverty in relation to the area of residence. Evolution between 1994 – 1999.

Area of residence and time period	Poor Population (in 000)	Rate of poverty (in %)
1984/1985		
Urban	1,300	13.8
Rural	3,300	26.7
Total	4,600	21.1
1990/1991		
Urban	912	7.6
Rural	2,448	18.0
Total	3,360	13.1
1998/1999		
Urban	1,814	12.0
Rural	3,496	27.2
Total	5,310	19.0

Source: National Investigation on the level of living of families 1998/1999, Statistics Direction, Rabat. p. 95.

The gap between rich and poor has increased. In 1998-99, the richest 10 percent of the population consumed 11.8 times more than the poorest 10 percent.¹¹ Sixty-four and a half percent of homes and 81.7 percent in rural areas have a lower purchasing power than the national average. Fifty percent of homes spend less than 32,645 DHs per year and 2,720 DHs per month¹². The poorest families have the most members. Hence, two-thirds of the population on the edge of absolute poverty live in homes composed of more than five people and 30.9 percent contain at least nine people.

This study enables us to understand the relationship between poverty and the natural tendency of parents to make their children work .

- 65.8 percent of poor families live in rural regions

¹⁰ The method adopted to determine “the threshold of poverty” is that which determines the annual expense per person, considered as the brink of poverty. The brink of expenses which was obtained using this method was in 1998/1999 of 3,922 DH in urban zones and 3.037 DH in rural zones.

¹¹ National inquiry on families level of living in 1998/1999, Statistics Direction, Rabat. According to this inquiry, the richest 20 % of the population have 46.6% of the national spending power, while the 20% poorest spend 6.5%.

¹² Data from the national investigation on families level of living, 1998/1999.

- 44.2 percent have children under the age of 15, of which 37.5 percent reside in urban zones versus 47.7 percent in the rural areas.
- 8.2 percent of peasants live homes composed of at least seven people.
- The rate of poverty goes from 1.8 percent for small families (1-2 people) to 3.9% for homes composed of over nine people.

These elements are evident in the available qualitative investigations. Thus, according to a study on the “petites bonnes” working in families (see following table), it appears that parental poverty or death results in the placement in urban zones of young girls as servants.

Table 6: Invoked reasons for working as a “petite bonne”

Employment Motivations	Number	%
Poor parents	325	72
Deceased father	73	16
Deceased mother	19	5
Deceased parents	6	1
Abandoned	4	1
Other situations	23	5
Total	450	100 %

Source: Ligue marocaine pour la protection de l'enfance; Journée d'étude et de réflexion sur les petites filles travaillant dans les familles. P. 43. January 1996.

Similarly, an inquiry made during the summer of 1996 by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs concerning 100 young active workers ages 17 and under, confirmed this result by indicating that low family income and minimal purchase power made child revenue a necessity.⁵

The relationship between the size of the family and children's work is apparent in both inquiries. Out of the 450 interrogated girls, 217 (48.3 percent) are from families composed of 5 to 7 members and 174 (38.5 percent) are from families of at least 8 people.

The investigation “Working Children” recognizes a semi-identical situation. Therefore, only 3 percent of interrogated children have between 1 to 2 siblings, 20 percent have 3 siblings, and 66 percent live with families of at least 6 members from which 42 are percent in homes of at least 8 members.

C. Children's work and the deficiency in the school system:

The existence of working children in Morocco is strongly linked to high numbers of unschooled children and their uneducated parents. The inquiry “Working Children” presented above indicates that 34 percent of interrogated children have never been to school and 68 percent left at the koranic school level or, at best, during primary years. The study on “petites bonnes” reveals that 59 percent of young girls placed as servants have never gone to school. Those who did go were taken out because of the lack of financial resources. The general census of 1994 indicated that 62.2 percent of children aged 7-13 were not at school. In 1993-1994 the general rate of primary education reached only 64.4 percent on a national level, 96.9 percent in urban zones and

⁵ “Children at work”, Ministry of employment and social affairs – UNICEF, p.23; Rabat, 1996.

37.7 percent in rural areas. Illiteracy of adults is about 50 percent. This situation prevailed following Moroccan independence.

This data, confirmed in Table 1, indicates the widespread problems in basic instruction, especially in rural zones. It also indicates the inequality between regions and gender. The rate of inscription of the first year of fundamental education varies between 58-100 percent depending on the province. The schooling rate of children between the ages of 6 and 15 was 54.8 percent in 1999 in the region of Tangier and Tetouan (lowest) and 89.3 percent in Casablanca (highest).

The situation of rural girls' schooling is more critical than for boys or urban girls. During 1987-1990, the access and the maintenance rate was estimated at 89.9 percent and 100 percent for the urban males, 85-100 percent for urban females, and 32.1 percent and 39.6 for rural girls.

There are multiple causes for these differences. The census of 1994 showed that schooling for children between the ages of 8 and 13 is almost two times higher in urban regions (83.9 percent) than in rural areas (43.4 percent).

In reality, the educational opportunities in rural regions are insufficient and inappropriate. Weak instruction in rural areas is due to economics, culture, society and infrastructure. A 1995-96¹³ inquiry led by the National Council of the Young and the Future (CNJA) confirmed that the living conditions and infrastructure in rural areas were deplorable. Only 5.2 percent of homes have potable water and 11.4 percent have electricity. The accessibility to school is difficult for 10 percent of the students who have to travel at least four kilometres. One out of three students needs to travel over two kilometers and 30 percent of rural students travel over 5 kilometers to reach their middle school. 98 percent of these students have no mode of transport other than walking. Schools have no electricity, water, bathrooms, and cafeteria. Such a situation makes the education of these rural children difficult, especially girls, who will most likely, become "petites bonnes" in the cities later on.

The absence of bathrooms inhibits the integration of girls in schools. Because of family and tribal honor, girls must be protected and her and her parents' reputation preserved in the hope of getting married. Early marriages prevent young girls from going to school. The Moroccan educational system continues to be strongly affected by a weak rate of schooling girls in comparison to that of boys in urban and in rural zones.

Another inquiry¹⁴ by the Planning Direction, which is part of the National Education Ministry, sampled 800 homes in rural areas. This study highlighted the obstacles linked to the weak number of schools in *douars* (villages) and the distance to secondary schools. The net rate of coverage reached 33 percent in 1993 versus 22 percent in 1982. Even though the rate increased, it still fell short.

Paradoxically, along with the existence of a great number of *douars* without schools, there also was a lot of unused potential. Thus, before the teaching reform of 1984-85, (which introduced the fundamental cycle), there were 2,600 unused classrooms. In 1993-94 this number decreased to 2,300.

The lack of usage or under-utilization of buildings is explained by school mapping systems which retain regional and local demographic data. This expresses the number of schools needed. Often the demographic information furnished by the statistical department (that of planning and

¹³ National Inquiry – Education –Formation (1995/1996)

Vol. 1 Descriptive summary and table of contents

Vol. 2 Level and structure of household expenses alternative financial perspectives.

Vol. 3 Educational system and formation of human resources: what are the results?

¹⁴ Cited by Radi, M. (1995) in his book: *Le Développement de l'Éducation en Milieu Rural : propositions stratégiques*. Edition- diffusion. Dar Nachr Al Maarifa.

economic provision) does not contain sufficient reliable information to quantify the inhabitants. Since the Ministry of National Education builds schools without discussion with other ministries, this often leads to the construction of a classrooms far from inhabited zones or else at the intersection of many villages in which there is no communication, water, electricity or sanitary equipment.

To this we must add the lack of maintenance and the dysfunctional state of the classes, as well as the bad living and working conditions of the instructors who are forced to work far from everyone and everything, in an indifferent and geographically inhospitable environment.

Bad management and the absence of discussion among public services are largely responsible for this extensive waste of financial and material sources.

This explains the lack of attraction that schools exert on the rural population. They are unwilling to travel the distance to send their young children, especially their young girls, to school. Hence, the access of rural children to secondary school is limited. Scholarships are awarded to only 16 percent of students.

Geographical, social, economic and cultural characteristics are responsible for the limited performance of the educational system. An example of this is the insufficiency of basic infrastructure and the absence of cultural and extra-curricular activities in the Moroccan countryside. Other factors are rural exodus, along with an absence of teachers' and administrators' motivation.

The census of 1994 displayed a national schooling rate of 62.2 percent for children between the ages of 8 to 13. This corresponds to 72.4 percent for boys and 51.7 percent for girls. In rural areas, this gap widens to 59.6 percent and 26.6 percent and in urban zones from 87.5 percent to 80.4 percent.

Young rural girls' education suffers from all the normal causes which affect both girls and boys, but also because of social, cultural considerations, safety, and in many cases economic needs which often push certain rural families to place their girls as "petites bonnes" in urban homes. The last investigation on the standard of living of families during 1998/1999 allowed us to approach the link between the parents' situation and their children's schooling, the reasons for which their children are not sent to school and the respective weight of each reason as an ensemble.

Table 7: Reasons for the lack of schooling (not enrolled or taken out of school) of children aged between 7 and 15, in %; 1998/1999

Reasons for not being in school	Urban zone	Rural zone	Total
Lack of financial capabilities to pay for studies	46.9	34.4	35.9
Distance from school/ Access difficulties	1.2	15.2	13.5
Absence of school in the area of residence	0.5	14.5	12.9
Parents perception of schooling	4.8	10.1	9.5
Help parents	0.4	7.1	6.3
Lack of interest in studies	2	5.4	5
Family difficulties	2.4	1.9	2
Obligated to work	1.5	0.3	0.4
Other reasons/ undeclared	39.7	11	14.5
Total	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Direction, National investigation on the standard of living of families 1998/1999; synthesis report, p. 128.

From this table we can see that in addition to “other reasons” and “undeclared reasons”, economic reasons (in the general sense) dominate the parents’ incapacity to pay for their children’s education (42 percent). The absence of or distance from school comes in second (26.4 percent). The parents’ attitude towards school comes in third place (9.9 percent).

The parents’ negative attitude towards school is due to the reasons stated above. This particularly concerns young rural children. It is also linked to the high standards which parents expect but do not get. Parents, particularly in the countryside, do not believe that an education or a diploma of any sort can help find a job (confirmed by official statistics). Hence many parents do not give their children an education, and instead place them as soon as possible in the employment market. In 1999, of an average national unemployment rate of 13.9 percent, only 8.1 percent without a diploma didn’t find a job, while 32.2 percent of college graduates were unemployed.

In rural areas, this employment will constitute many diverse jobs for their own family, depending on the season and the opportunities (animal herder, picking olives and other fruits and vegetables, water chores) against an exterior remuneration principally for boys. In urban areas work is home based crafts, small commerce, various reparations, “petites bonnes”, and carpet weaving for girls) even though many parents (artisans, small merchants) keep their children near them as an extra hand, eliminating the need to hire someone else.

D. The working children’s situation: lack of effective juridical protection and difference between reality and fact.

Morocco is one of the six African countries (Egypt, Chad, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania)¹⁵ whose theoretical access to active living is the lowest (12 years). Its surrounding geographical zone represents a special case¹⁶. Among the central Maghreb, Algeria set its legal working age at 16 in 1978. In addition to this limit, the generalization of primary schooling led to an insignificant amount of working children towards the end of the 1980s, its rate being 0.47 percent below the age of 15. Tunisia’s high educational rate makes child labor improbable. This appears in a study made in 64 countries by the BIT in 1995¹⁷.

In Morocco the age of admission to work was fixed by the *dahir* at a minimum of 12 years of age on July 12, 1947 and is still in effect. This limit is lower than convention n° 138 adopted by the OIT (International Work Organization) in 1973. It stipulates in its second article that the minimum age for work shouldn’t be less than the age in which mandatory schooling (14 years¹⁸) ceases or before the completion of the 15th year. In the fall of 1998, Morocco ratified this convention and planned a work code (which started to be discussed in the beginning of the 90s) in which remunerated children in internships or in apprenticeships cannot be employed or admitted into any production establishments or any other employment before the age of 14.

It does not seem that the situation will change rapidly. Furthermore, it appears that the 12-year age rule is generally unknown, as has been shown by the rare qualitative inquiries on this subject.

In spite of the formal prohibition of the employment of children below the age of 12, this phenomena is so widespread that it has become part of the definition of the active population

¹⁵ Le travail des enfants, l’intolérable en point de mire, pp. 41-42. ILO, Genève, 1998

¹⁶ See l’Etat du Maghreb, ouvrage collectif; éditions la Découverte, pp.492-494. Paris – 1991.

¹⁷ Certain data from this study are cited in “les enfants au travail – cas du Maroc”, p.11. Ministry of employment and social affaires – UNICEF.

¹⁸ The Moroccan parliament adopted in 1998 the obligatory schooling policy for all children between the ages of 7 and 14. In its preamble, “The educational charter” adopted by a royal commission in June 1999, which was theoretically practiced in September 2000, plans to have a pedagogical place in elementary school for every 6 year old Moroccan child starting September 2002, and in 2004, the inscription for preschool will be generalized.

during census and employment investigations. “Occupied active” is defined as all people of at least seven years of age who are working during the census or the investigation.

With the admission of Morocco to the United Nations and the International Labor Organization (ILO), it has had to conform to the existing international laws. The Moroccan legislature has attempted to establish rules and rights in order to avoid sending children to work and to assure maximum protection in case it occurs. Certain aspects of a child’s work have been regulated notably that of their first employment, working conditions, health protection, the prohibition of employment in dangerous or night jobs, salary, vacations, social coverage, formation and apprenticeship etc. Legislative and regulatory tools exist for the essential problems.

In reality, the laws are not respected. To begin with, close to a third of the concerned population does not go to school because of the parents’ relative indigence or ignorance, the limitation of scholarly opportunities, and the conditions of instruction, especially in the countryside.

The following presents the essential legal conditions for the employment of young children before approaching the reality of the situation.

1. **The principle laws and rules**

- a. The minimal working age: Children cannot be employed or admitted in a commercial establishment, industrial or with employers exerting a liberal profession before the age of 12 (article 9 from the *Dahir* of July 2, 1947). For strenuous work, they must be at least 16 years old (article 23, from the *Dahir* of July 2, 1947). For agricultural exploitation, the minimum age is 12 (article 13, *Dahir* of July 2, 1973).
- b. Children’s salaries: The minimal salary for worker below the age of 18 and working in commerce, industry, and liberal professions varies between 20 percent and 50 percent, depending on the age of the worker (article 6, May 16, 1945 law). It is the same for an agricultural worker (article 5, April 24, 1973 law).
- c. Annual paid vacation and weekly rest: The legislature, keeping in mind the vulnerability of the young workers, has regulated their right to annual vacations in order to preserve their mental development and physical health.

In pursuance of Article 2, from the January 1946 *Dahir*, modified by the *Dahir* of October 29, 1961, the length of vacation attributed to young workers and apprentices is 15 days, after having been employed for six consecutive months. This increases by two days per month.

- d. Length of the work day: A child below the age of 16 cannot work more than 10 hours per day, as stated in the *Dahir* of July 2 1947, Article 2. They should have at least one break of not less than an hour, during which time work is prohibited.

2. **The reality**

The reality of the application of this legislative text can be summarized by a comment from an investigation by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs/ UNIEF on child labor. According to the interrogated employers, “*We don’t have any other solutions. We are constantly confronted with unmerciful competition. It’s the only way or else everything crashes for everyone... the work legislation does not support competition. It’s against employment...*”¹⁹

¹⁹ Investigation “Children at work”. P. 30.

The 12- year age minimum for employment is rarely respected. The two previous studies concerning children who work for their parents or in the countryside indicate that the employment of children below the age of 12 is a constant.

In the study, “Working Children”, out of the 100 interrogated children below the age of 17, 51 were 11 or younger, 17 were 8 years old or younger, and 59 were 12 or younger²⁰. In the study on “petites bonnes”, 26.4 percent of sampled girls were younger than 10, and 45.4 percent were between the ages of 10 and 12. The total proportion of girls below the age of 12 was of 71.8 percent²¹. In general the salary attributed to these young workers is lower than legally recommended. Thirty-nine percent of interrogated girls received less than 200 DHs per month, from which 17 percent received less than 150 DHs per month. This represents less than 10 percent of the SMIG²² (which is equivalent to 1,650 DHs per month, for 26 days of work and an eight hour work day), 34 percent received between 200 and 300 DHs per month, and the rest received at least 300 DHs per month²³.

Thus we are still far from the abatements planned by the work legislation, as indicated above. The “petites bonnes” are “privileged” to be fed and housed by their employers. This represents a complement to their salary. For those who work away from home, their situation is much different, but their salaries are lower and less consistent.

Out of the 100 questioned children during the study “Working Children”, 46 received between 25 and 100 DHs per month, 27 between 100 and 200 DHs per month, and 10 received between 200 and 300 DHs per month. Thus, 83 percent received less than 18 percent of the SMIG²⁴. The following table shows that the annual vacation and weekly day off are often ignored. This summarizes the working child’s situation as it was analyzed during a partial inquiry made by the UNICEF in the city of Salé.

Table 8: Main Conclusions reached by an Inquiry made in Sale on working children.

Parameters	Description/Observations
Origins	65% immigrated
Parents’ situation	Parents are either: deceased, divorced, or one of them is absent. 50 % of children do not live with their parents
Number of children per family	Between 5 and 12
Legal situation	Frequent lack of registration
Situation in relation to school	31 % of children never went to school, 46 % never reached secondary school.
Hygiene at work	Most often: lack of light and aeration, pulverized paint, emanation of garbage of nearby dumps; frequent absence of water and lavatories.
Work hours	Reaches 12h/day. Non regulated/respected weekly rest
Uniforms and work equipment	Absence of equipment, no gloves or goggles to protect hands and eyes.

Source: An analysis of women and children’s situation in Morocco, UNICEF. September 1995.

This table indicates that the workday is 12 hours, while the present legal workday for an adult is eight hours. In 1947 it was 10 hours. This statement was confirmed by the study “Working

²⁰ Investigation “Children at work”. P.18.

²¹ Etude sur les petites filles “bonnes”. P.41.

²² SMIG- Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti.

²³ Etude sur les petites filles “bonnes”. P. 69.

²⁴ Study on “Children at work”. P. 36.

Children”, which says that, in 93 percent of the cases, children work more than 9.5 hours and in 59 percent of the cases they work 10 or more hours²⁵. For the “petites bonnes”, it was difficult to accurately indicate the daily period of work, which can go from 7 a.m. to 10/11 p.m.

3. **Serious social consequences:**

The working conditions of children are laborious. The duration of the workday is constantly longer than the legal eight hours per day and can even reach 12 or 14 hours; vacations are unknown or unpaid and social security is non-existent. In many cases, apprentices receive no “salary”, but sometimes get a few of dirhams per week (between 10 and 20). For domestic occupations, and so for “petites bonnes”, monthly remuneration is generally given directly to the parents. For a continuous job, the salary averages between 100 and 300/400 dirhams, depending on the child’s age and the city in which she/he works. In general, employers prefer employing children for less than the minimal wage (SMIG) which is given to workers over the age of 18.

Placing children in the employment market at a young age leads to four main consequences:

- It amplifies the unemployment problem: numerous employers would rather engage children which are more “controllable” and less expensive than older workers. Parents’ unemployment is one of the elements which forces their children to work and leave school.
- It helps to maintain pressure on salaries and limits the amount of revenue for many social classes. In this sense it reinforces poverty, the origin of this situation.
- It represents an incentive for the poorest to produce numerous children as a natural income source. This ensures that the cycle of poverty remains unbroken.
- Children’s work maintains a low level of qualification. Added to this are the risks of work-related illnesses and growing disorders which affect the child’s physical and mental development.

What to do?

To reduce the extent of child labour before completely eliminating it necessitates political, social, economic, institutional and judicial actions. We do not intend to suggest a general strategy, but simply indicate different options towards which action should be directed.

To reduce poverty, the government must increase national revenue, reduce the disparities of distribution and create employment opportunities by using the national savings and investments. Unemployment is a main cause of poverty.

The need for a national policy which battles poverty is intimately linked to the creation of a national school which should be obligated to integrate all school age children, especially rural children and girls, to at least 16 years of age. This will permit the foundations of the child labour phenomenon to disappear, for it is preferable for a child who does not go to school to integrate him or herself into the active life and be formed by work. We can also aid the most underprivileged parents by using reserves from the compensation funds.

Bibliography

²⁵ Study on “Children at work”. P. 34.

- *Alaoui, Mohamed Tahar 1996. "Resultats de l'Enquete sur les Petites Filles 'Bonne' Travaillant dans les Familles" in Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance & UNICEF: *Journee d'Etude et de Reflexion sur les Petites Filles "Bonne" Travaillant dans les Familles*, pp. 33-69. Rabat: Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance & UNICEF.
- *Appadurai, Arjun 1986. "Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value" in padurai, Arjun (ed.): *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, pp. 3-63. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- *Benradi, Malika & Noureddine El Aoufi 1996: *Les Enfants au Travail. Cas du Maroc. Une Enquete d'Etape Qualitative*. Version Provisoire. Rabat: Ministère de l'Emploi et des Affaires Sociales & UNICEF.
- *Black, Maggie 1997. *Child Domestic Workers*. Anti-Slavery International's Child Labour Series no. 15. London: Anti-Slavery International.
- *Direction de la Statistique / Royaume du Maroc 1996. *Recensement 1994. Les Caracteristiques Socio-economiques et Demographiques de la Population, Niveau Nationale*. Rabat: Direction de la Statistique.
- *Direction de la Statistique / Royaume du Maroc 1999: "Le Maroc en Chiffres 1999" at www.statistics.gov.ma/poptotal.htm
- *Direction de la Statistique /Royaume du Maroc 2000. *Enquete Nationale sur les Niveaux de Vie des Menages 1998/1999. Premiers Resultats*. Rabat: Direction de la Statistique, Ministère de la Prevision Economique et du Plan, Royaume du Maroc.
- *Direction de Travail / Departement de l'Emploi & UNICEF 1997: *Les Enfants au Travail: Legislation Nationale et Normes Internationals*. Rabat: Imprimerie de la Tour.
- *Grimsrud, Bj?rne, in press. *What can be done about child labor? An overview of recent research and its implications for designing programs to reduce child labor*. World Bank Social Protection Unit Discussion Papers. World Bank.
- *Gunn, Susan E. & Zenaida Ostos 1992. "Dilemmas in tackling child labour: The case of scavenger children in the Philippines" in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 131, no. 6, pp. 629-646.
- *Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance & UNICEF 1996. *Journee d'Etude et de Reflexion sur les Petites Filles "Bonne" Travaillant dans les Familles*. Rabat: Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance & UNICEF.
- *Ministère du Développement Social, de la Solidarité, de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle & BIT/IPEC 1999. *Le Travail des Enfants au Maroc. Diagnostic et Propositions de Plan National et de Plans Sectoriels d'Action*. "Rapport rédigé par: *Mohammed Mounassif, Abderrahim Molato, Driss Benghabrit". Rabat: Ministère du Développement & BIT.
- *Myers, William & Jo Boyden 1998. *Child labour: Promoting the best interests of working children*, 2. ed. London: International Save the Children Alliance.
- *Rabi, M'Barek 1996. "Aspects de mutation dans la société Marocaine: Le cas de la famille et des valeurs" in Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance & UNICEF: *Journee d'etude et de reflexion sur les petites filles "bonne" travaillant dans les familles*, pp. 20-32. Rabat.
- *Royaume du Maroc / Service des Etudes et de l'Information Sanitaire 1998. *Santé Reproductive au Maroc. Résultats préliminaires de l'enquête nationale sur la santé de la mère et de l'enfant PAPCHILD, 1997*. Rabat: Royaume du Maroc / Service des Etudes et de l'Information Sanitaire.
- *UNICEF 1997. *The state of the world's children 1997*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- *UNICEF 1999. *Child Domestic Work*. Innocenti Digest no. 5. Siena/Florence: Innocenti Research Centre/UNICEF International Child Development Centre.