

2

[Handwritten signature]



CHILD LABOUR IN AFRICA

*Proceedings of the First International Workshop on
CHILD ABUSE IN AFRICA
held at Enugu, Nigeria*

27th April — 2nd May 1986

THEME: Child Abuse And Neglect In Africa

Production by Courtesy of
UNICEF

p. 39

AGRICULTURAL CHILD LABOUR IN NIGERIA A CASE STUDY OF ANAMBRA STATE

By

Dr. D.S. Obikeze
University of Nigeria
Nsukka

Child work may be exploitative and abusive or non-exploitative and societally approvable. In the second category, child's work becomes part of the child socialization process. As has been pointed out, "traditionally, child rearing customs in Nigeria (as in most other developing countries) prescribe that the child should be assigned some domestic work or activity commensurate with the age, sex and physical ability" (Obikeze, 1985:21). Such work activities serve to provide the child with necessary skills and training required for future adult roles. Psychologically, they help to provide the child with a sense of personal worth, pride and accomplishment. In addition, child work also provides essential supplement to family income.

On the other hand, exploitative child labour, as Rodgers and Standing (1981) have pointed out, occurs when a child is made to engage, on a regular basis, in some productive or income — yielding activities for which the primary beneficiaries are persons other than themselves. This takes a variety of forms according to the country concerned (Obikeze, 1985).

This paper is concerned specifically with familial work. There are a number of reasons for choosing to focus on familial work. In the first place, although familial work is the commonest and most prevalent type of child labour in agrarian societies, such as Nigeria, concrete data on the magnitude as well as trends in familial child work are rare to come by. In most cases they are simply non-existent. Part of the explanation for this situation has been suggested by Schildkrout (1980). According to him, "the definition of work that is most frequently used in surveys and censuses is largely based on participation in the formal wage sector, while most children's work (within the family) occurs outside this arena" (1980:484).

Secondly, familial child labour has recently attained some prominence and significance among demographers as an explanation for high valuation placed on children in most agrarian societies, which in turn provides the normative support for continuing high fertility rates in those societies. According to Professor J.C. Caldwell (1976), as long as the family derives *net* gains from the economic contributions of children in the form of unpaid agricultural labour, children will continue to be valued as an economic asset and consequently large family size will continue to be favoured and desired. In view of this proposition, the need to provide more concrete data on quantum of familial child labour becomes all the more pressing.

In the third place, from the point of view of child-welfare and development, exploitative child labour runs against article 9 of the 1959 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of children which states that:

“The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development”.

The extent of which this declaration is being observed or violated in Nigeria remains a matter of guess without empirical data. Besides, the eradication of such an abuse calls for a child welfare policy and an intervention measure. In each case, necessary starting point is factual information on the magnitude and epidemiology of the phenomenon.

The study data

Data for this study are obtained from the Report of a *Rural Economic Survey of Anambra State, 1977/78* conducted by the Statistics Division of the State Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, Enugu.

Familial agricultural labour

One important feature of familial labour is that it is usually not paid for in monetary terms or wages. The individual's labour constitutes his own contribution to the up keep of the family unit. And since children are generally excluded in the process of deciding how the product of familial labour is to be allocated, they easily fall victims of exploitation by the adult groups.

Table I presents the available data on the quantum of unpaid agricultural child labour in the state under study during the 1977/78 year.

Table I

Estimated number of unpaid agricultural workers in rural Anambra State by age groups, May '77, August '77, November '77 and February '78.

Age Group	(in 000)				\bar{X} for 1977/78
	Quarters				
	May '77	Aug. '77	Nov. '77	Feb. '78	
5 — 9	94.2	80.0	104.6	89.6	91.98
10 — 14	193.1	193.0	223.8	214.6	206.13
Total children	287.2	273.0	327.9	304.2	298.10
Total Adults					
15 +	1275.9	1439.0	1461.6	1408.1	1396.15
All Ages	1563.2	1712.0	1789.5	1712.3	1694.25
% children	18.4	15.9	18.3	17.8	17.6

Source: *Derived from Rural Economic Survey of Anambra State, 1977/78.* Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, Statistics Division, Enugu, Tables 39-43.

The table shows that during the 1977/78 farming year, the estimated number of unpaid agricultural workers in the state was 1.7 million. Out of this number about 298,000

(representing 17.6%) were children under fifteen years of age. As would be expected, children in the older age group (10-14) account for a much greater proportion (69%) of the child workers.

It is also worthy to note that there are fluctuations in the reported number of child workers from one quarter to the other. This reflects the seasonal demands in agricultural labour in the state. In this connection, the study shows that agricultural labour in the state is needed most during the harvesting season October to December. This is true for both child and adult workers, and thus provides an empirical evidence for the views of E.K. Wilson (1971) quoted above.

Sex Bias in familial Child Labour.

One issue that needs to be investigated is possible existence of bias in favour of any one of the sexes in agricultural child labour utilization in the state. The data are presented in Table II.

Table II
*Estimated unpaid agricultural child labour by sex,
rural Anambra State 1977/78*

(in '000)

Age	Sex	Quarters				X for 1977/78
		May '77	Aug '77	Nov '77	Feb '78	
5 — 9	M	31.2	33.0	44.1	58.6	41.73
	F	63.0	47.0	60.0	31.0	50.25
	% Female	66.9%	58.7%	57.4%	34.6%	54.6%
10 — 14	M	90.3	93.8	118.6	104.6	101.83
	F	102.8	99.2	105.2	110.0	104.3
	% Female	53.2%	51.4%	47.0%	51.2%	50.6%
Total (5 — 14)	M	121.5	126.8	162.7	163.2	143.55
	F	165.8	146.2	165.2	141.0	154.55
	% Female	57.7%	53.5%	50.4%	46.3%	51.8%

Source: Same as Table I

The table shows that there is but very little difference in the sex composition of unpaid agricultural child labour force in the state during the 1977/78 year. The differential, however, is in favour of the males. On the whole, females accounted for 51.8% of the child labour force.

Among the younger children (5 — 9 years), the female bias in agricultural child labour is a little more pronounced with females accounting for 54.6% of those working. For the older children (10 — 14) on the other hand, there is virtually no difference in the proportion of male and female children working. Specially, females account for 50.6% of the child workers.

With regard to seasonal variation; the data show that slight variations exist in the proportion of females in the agricultural child labour force. The highest fluctuations occur among the younger children (5 — 9 years). Here the range is from 66.9% in May to 34.6% in February. Among the older children, on the other hand, the variations are more gentle ranging from 53.2% in May to 47.0% in the November quarter.

On the whole, the data suggest that the demand for female agricultural child labour is highest in the state during the planting season — that is in the May quarter. This somewhat clarifies the data on Table I which indicates that although the number of children in familial agricultural work is highest during the November quarter (harvest season), the proportion of all unpaid agricultural workers that is below 15 years of age is highest during the May quarter.

Local variations

Next, we would consider local variations in the sex composition as well as utilization of agricultural child labour. To this end, the Local Government Area is used as the unit of analysis¹. Table II presents the data.

1. The data in Table III are given by Agricultural Zones which are made of one, two or more Local Government Areas.

Table III

Estimated unpaid agricultural child labour by Local Government Areas, Rural Anambra State, 1977/78

1	2	3	4	5
Local Govt. Areas	No of unpaid agric. child Labour	% of all children 5 — 14 years	% Female	% of total unpaid agric. labour force
1. Abakiliki, Ezza and Ikwo	23,000	14.9	53.4	17.5
2. Aguata	26,600	25.5	50.6	23.0
3. Anambra	37,300	45.9	74.5	26.6
4. Awgu & Oji River	13,600	13.6	36.4	25.9
5. Awka & Njikoka	20,400	11.4	62.7	28.4
6. Idemili & Nnewi	15,900	13.1	60.4	16.7
7. Igbo Eze	69,200	--	38.5	24.0
8. Ihiala	8,400	14.7	33.3	23.3
9. Ishielu	10,500	15.6	70.8	7.7
10. Nkanu, Ezeagu and Udi	29,600	39.9	71.4	9.3
11. Nsukka, Igbo-Etiti and Isi-Uzo	20,400	12.5	17.3	11.0
12. Onitsha	12,200	14.9	55.0	34.2
13. Uzo Uwani	10,900	23.5	66.0	23.0
State Total	298,000	23.1	51.8	17.6

Source: (1) As in Table I

(2) Quarterly Abstract of Statistics, Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, Tables 1.4 -- 1.26, 1981.

our is
This
er of
rvest
age is

ation
nit of

ment

nbra

5

total
agric.
orce

17.5

23.0

26.6

25.9

28.4

16.7

24.0

23.3

7.7

9.3

1.0

4.2

3.0

7.6

1.4

The second column of this table gives the estimated number of unpaid agricultural child workers in each Local Government Area (or group of Local Government Areas forming an agricultural zone). The number of child workers in each area varied widely ranging from 8,400 in Ihiala Local Government Area to 69,200 in Igbo Eze Local Government Area. However to obtain a fairer picture of the prevalence of agricultural child labour in each area it is essential to relate the number of child workers to a population base. To this end, column three of the Table gives the number of child workers as a percentage of children aged 5-14 years in each area. The data show that during the year in review, 23.1% of children aged 5-14 years in rural Anambra State were engaged in agricultural labour. Within the Local Government Areas (agricultural zones), the proportion varied a great deal ranging from 45% in Anambra Local Government Area to 11.4% in Awka/Njikoka Local Government Areas. This means that agricultural child labour is a common practice in all parts of the state and as has earlier been suggested, this is likely to have considerable impact on school enrolment and school attendance particularly in areas where 20% or more of the children are engaged in agricultural labour.

Column four (of Table III) gives the percentage of unpaid agricultural child labour force that is female, thus providing information on the extent of sex bias or sex preference in agricultural child labour in the Local Government Areas. There is again a wide variation in sex ratios of child workers among the Local Government Areas ranging from 17.3% female workers found in Nsukka, Igbo-Efite and Isi-Uzo group of Local Government Areas to 74.5% female workers in Anambra Local Government Area.

If we take areas with less than 45% female child workers as showing preference for male over female workers; areas with more than 55% female workers as showing preference for female over male workers, and areas with 45% to 55% as showing no clear preference for either male or female workers¹, the table shows that about half (six out of thirteen) areas covered tend to prefer female child workers, three areas appear not to have sex biases in agricultural child labour while four areas show a preference for males over female child workers. The data also show no relationship between the quantum or magnitude of child labour in an area and preference for one or the other of the sexes.

The fifth column of the Table gives information on the level of dependence on child labour among the various Local Government Areas by presenting the number of unpaid agricultural workers in the area. The table shows a high level of child exploitation or dependence on child labour in rural Anambra State. The highest level of dependence is found in Onitsha Local Government Area where as many 34.2% of unpaid agricultural labour is contributed by children. In more than half of the areas (seven out of thirteen) child labour accounts for 20% to 30% of unpaid agricultural labour. In three areas children provide 10% to 20% of unpaid agricultural labour while only in two areas do child labour account for less than 10% of all unpaid labour. The least contribution of 7.7% of all unpaid agricultural labour is found in Ishielu Local Government Area. The State average is 17.7% of unpaid agricultural labour force.

The extent of exploitation of child labour in the state — indeed in the whole country — becomes even more glaring when we compare the number of children engaged in paid agricultural labour with those whose labour is unpaid for. Table IV provides the necessary information:

1. This is based on the assumption that the sex ratio for the 5 — 14 year age group in rural Anambra State is between 90 and 110.

Table IV*Forms of agricultural labour force in Anambra State, 1977/78*

(in '000)

Labour Status	Form of Labour		
	Child Labour (5 — 14 years)	Adult Labour (15 + years)	Total
Unpaid Labour	11.0 (3.6%)	1,190.9 (46.0%)	1,201.9 (41.5%)
Unpaid Labour	298.10 (96.4%)	1,396.15 (54%)	1,694.25 (58.5%)
Total	309.10 (100%)	2,587.05 (100%)	2,896.15 (100%)

Sources: (a) Table I above

(b) *Rural Economic Survey of Anambra State*. Op. cit. Tables 44-47.

The table demonstrates clearly that while virtually all the agricultural child labour in the state is unpaid for only about half of adult labour is in the same category. Specifically, it shows that while as much as 96.4% of the agricultural child labour is unpaid for, only 54% of adults paid for. While child labour accounts for less than 1% (precisely 0.91%) of the paid agricultural labour, it represents 17.6% of unpaid agricultural labour in the state. In other words while about half of familial adult labour is paid for, virtually all the familial child agricultural labour in the state is rendered free of charge. This is manifestly undue exploitation of the dependency status of children.

Summary and discussion

Based on secondary data, we have tried in this paper to provide empirical evidence on the magnitude and prevalence of about the most pervasive forms of child labour found in the developing countries. The data show that during the 1977/78 year, as many as 298,000 children were engaged in familial agricultural labour in Anambra State. This represents about 23% of all children aged 5 to 14 years in the state. This includes both boys and girls.

Further, the data show that the demand for agricultural child labour in the state is spread fairly throughout the year. This means that the children are engaged in the farms all through the year leaving no time for school or formal education. Besides educational deprivation, it is known that in many cases, the health and physical development of these children are also adversely affected by the nature of their employment. These clearly violate the provisions of the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of children cited above. And, the magnitude of this violation as revealed by the data calls for urgent Governmental action to bring it to an end.

Another important factor highlighted by the data presented here is the heavy dependence of parents — in fact the entire rural economy — on child labour. It was found that in some areas of the state, as much as 34% of unpaid agricultural labour was contributed by children. For the whole state, average contribution was 17.6%. This finding substantiates the views expressed by Schildrout when he said, "while the dependence of children upon adults is universally acknowledged as a biological and cultural given, the dependence of adults on children is often ignored... In many societies, however, the dependence of adults on children is considerable and often has a significant material base" (1980: 481). This factor of adult dependence on children has a direct connection with the demographic significance of agricultural child labour discussed earlier in this paper. Specifically, our findings have lent empirical support to J.C.

Caldwell's proposition that the desire for large family size observed in most agrarian societies is based on rational economic considerations on the part of the parents. For, if, as our data have shown, children under the age of 15 years can provide up to 34% of unpaid agricultural labour, it is economically advantageous to have a large number of children. Ironically, this leads to the unfortunate conclusion that provision of child labour, which is itself abusive, is one important motivation for having many children in traditional agrarian societies.

To eradicate this wide spread form of child abuse requires a strong government interventive measure. Such a measure must include, among others, a compulsory, free primary education for all citizens.

REFERENCE

1. Rodgers and Standing (Eds.) 1981. *Child Work Poverty and Underdeveloped Countries*. Geneva. ILO.
2. Obikeze, D.S. (1984). "Perspectives on Child Abuse in Nigeria". *International Child Welfare Review*, No. 63.
3. Obikeze, D.S. (1985). "Child Maltreatment in the Developing Countries: A Framework for Analysis" in Proceedings of the XIXth. CIOMS/WHO Conference on Battered Children and Child Abuse, Berne, Switzerland 4 -- 6th December, 1985.
4. Pitt, David C. (1985) "Child Labour and Health" in Naidu, U.S. and Kapadia, K.R. (eds.), *Child Labour and Health: Problems and Prospects*. Bombay, Tat Institute of Social Sciences.
5. Wilson, F.K. (1981) *Sociology, Illinois*, The Dorsey Press.
6. Schildrout Enid, (1980). "Children's Work Reconsidered" *International Social Science Journal* Vol. XXXII No. 3, 1980.
7. Caldwell, J.C. (1976). *The Socio-Economic Explanation of High Fertility*. Canberra. The Australia National University Press.