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# Social mobilization and child work - with a case study of some companies and NGOs in Delhi

Report from a Minor Field Study in Delhi, India. Feb-April 2004

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*Problem statement:* Child work is a serious global issue that has been widely covered by the international media since the beginning of the 90s. The international community has increasingly realized their own link with the amount of childwork in the export-oriented industries. This has resulted in an increase of international pressure of various kinds, and to various campaigns which combat child work. Some campaigns have, however, resulted in worse conditions for the children involved.

*Aim:* My aim with this project has been to look further into how different parties that come into contact with working children on a daily basis believe that civil society should act to help working children and eliminate child work in the long run.

*Brief description of points of departure and disposition:* I have chosen to do a qualitative study where I have carried out interviews with employees at companies as well as with NGOs in Delhi. I have also reviewed literature concerning this subject.

*Conclusion:* Today, boycotts and strikes of different kinds are powerful tools for consumers to affect producers (corporates). However, boycotts can also be counterproductive. Social mobilization, I believe, is a fundamental element for abolishing child work. However, before measures are taken to boycott child work, mechanisms that will protect the children involved and their families are needed. Consumers that are sensitized about child labour, as we have seen throughout the paper, will know that simply boycotting might not be the answer that is in the best interest of the children involved.

*Keywords:* child work/labour, boycotts, globalization, social mobilization, India

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## Abbreviations

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BBA Bachpan Bachau Andolan (Hindi for SACCS)  
BGMEA The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association  
CCC Clean Cloth Campaign  
CWA Child Workers in Asia  
DBS Delhi Brotherhood Society  
ILO International Labour Organization  
IMF International Monetary Fund  
IPEC International Program for Elimination of Child Labour  
MOU Memorandum of Understanding  
MFS Minor Field Study  
NGO Non governmental Organization  
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
UN United Nations  
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund  
SACCS South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude

*In this chapter I will introduce my topic of interest and the aim of the paper. This is followed by; delimitations, definitions, an outline of the paper, method, and a discussion on doing interviews/ fieldwork which is important for the credibility of the text.*

### 1.1 Introduction

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Due to the impact of globalization, governments around the world are increasingly inclined to allow markets to regulate themselves. The trade and investments that multinational companies carry out, are also increasingly affecting labour standards and environmental conditions around the world. The competition among these companies seems to be based on minimizing labour costs rather than maximizing the skill of labour.<sup>1</sup> In order to increase the economic growth of their country, many governments around the world are competing to attract trade and investments and in doing so, the labour standards are often lowered.<sup>2</sup> Child work and bad working conditions are often related to this phenomenon, and this is a universal and serious global issue which has been in focus lately. In the world today there are over 200 million working children, of these at least 180 million are in the “worst forms” of work, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).<sup>3</sup> Over the past decade, child work in the developing countries has received a lot of international attention, and it is mainly the child work connected with the international trade that has been in focus. However, only about 5 % of working children are actually working in the export industry.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, child work exists all over the world but is concentrated in the developing countries (98%).<sup>5</sup> Since the 1990s, the fact that children around the world are used by many manufacturers, processing and mining industries has been widely covered by the international media. Some of the reports on these children have been quite shocking, for example showing children in the carpet industry in India and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.indianet.nl/liw\\_f\\_e.html](http://www.indianet.nl/liw_f_e.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/decl/download/global3/intro.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc97/report/>, Boyden 1999:288

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

Bangladesh. Due to the fact that the international community increasingly has realized their own link with the poor working conditions, as well as with the amount of child work in export-oriented industries, the result has been various campaigns to combat child work. International pressure of various kinds has also increased, for example a proposal made by the US government to ban all imported products which are made by children, called the Harkin's Bill, was formed in 1993. This draft law proposed to ban imports of products to the US market from countries that at any stage of production were using child work. It originated from the fact that American labour and consumers organizations threatened to sponsor a boycott of clothes manufactured in Bangladesh. The wide publicity that this proposition received sent shock waves throughout the garment industry in Bangladesh, since the US was their largest market. Fearing to lose this market, the Bangladeshi garment industry began firing the children. No one knows exactly how many, but an estimated 50.000 children under the age of 14 lost their jobs.<sup>6</sup> An ILO-UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) follow-up study of several hundred of these children showed quite clearly the negative consequences of their dismissal. Not one of the children dismissed from the garment factories had gone back to school. Half of them had found other occupations, mainly in the informal sector and street activities, including domestic service, brick chipping, selling flowers on the street and prostitution, most of these with reduced earnings. The other half was still actively seeking work. The children still working in garment factories were better nourished and had better health care than those who had been dismissed.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created between the The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), ILO and UNICEF in 1995 with the aim to remove all underage workers from garment factories and to enrol these children in schools. Other goals of the memorandum were to forbid the hiring of underage workers, provide the children whose family depend on their income with a monthly stipend of approximately seven dollars, and finally to offer employment to the adult family members of those underage workers whose employment was terminated.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cleanclothes.org/publications/unst11.htm>, <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/vol12-4/interest.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Gay 1998:65f



With the Harkin Bill as one of the reasons in mind, doubts have been raised if campaigns of this kind have been beneficial for the children involved or if some of them have ended up affecting the lives of child workers negatively. Child work can be, and is in many ways harmful but sometimes the alternative to child work is even deeper poverty for the children and their families. This is also verified by, among others, the World Bank which points out that legislation concerning child work is unevenly enforced, and sometimes result in a situation far worse than the previous one.<sup>9</sup>

As I will write more about in the chapter *International and Indian legislation*, the UN convention states that the best interest of the child should always be considered in all actions involving children. However, as mentioned above, many of the actions taken to help working children have not in an effective way helped the children concerned, but have often been counterproductive. A reason for this could be that a lot of the actions taken by the international community are based upon the western point of view of what a childhood should be. There are two different main approaches that exist on how to look upon child work. One approach originated from the industrialised countries of Europe and North America and believes that all forms of work / labour, whatever the occupation, condition and context is not good for a child's well being. The other approach states, that in many parts of the world, work is considered to be a normal part of childhood, which facilitates learning, socialisation and economic well being. The latter want to regulate the working conditions and ban all dangerous work for children, and usually argue for a combination of work and schooling. Social mobilization is still, according to among others, the ILO and the UNICEF, necessary in order to abolish the worst forms of child work.<sup>10</sup> Social mobilization can derive from the collective sharing a set of beliefs and values, in today's globalized world, social mobilization does not have to be a feeling of solidarity with people in one's territory. The question is how this mobilization should be structured to achieve the best possible results for the children involved.

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<sup>9</sup> Fallon and Tzannatos 1998:iv f

<sup>10</sup> Boyden 1999:16-20

## 1.2 The Child work situation in India

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The regions with the largest number of child workers in the world are the Asian and Pacific regions where 127.3 million children between the ages 5 to 14 are child workers.<sup>11</sup> Out of the children involved in child work around the world, 61 per cent of are between the ages of 5 and 14, and are living in Asia.<sup>12</sup> This implies that 19 per cent of the children in these regions are working.<sup>13</sup> Even though child work is a universal phenomenon, India is a significant exception having the largest number of child workers in the world.<sup>14</sup> India is the second most populated country in the world, with a population of 1.03 billion. Out of this population, an estimated 400 million are children between the age 0 and 18.<sup>15</sup> 6 out of 100 Indians are, according to an estimate, child workers and the number appears to be rising. Official estimates on the number of child workers vary between 17 and 44 million child workers under the age of 14. Estimates made by respected Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) range between 55 million and over 100 million. The latter number includes all the children between the ages of 5 and 14 years who do not attend school. The majority of the child workers in India work with their parents in the agricultural sector. Often the girls are housemaids, and both boys and girls are found working in factories and workshops where they weave carpets, sew and embroider garments, glue shoes, carry molten glass, cure leather, make matches, locks and firework, polish gem stones, clean and pack food to just mention a few occupations. Many children also work in restaurants and others are self-employed, selling everything from cigarettes to flowers on the streets.<sup>16</sup> The export industries that most commonly employ children are garment, carpet, shoe, small-mining, gem polishing, food processing, leather tanning and furniture industries.<sup>17</sup> India's economy with a fast acceleration in economic growth has made India one of the ten fastest growing developing countries. However, the country's per capita income remains low and 26 per cent of the population lives below the income poverty line.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc97/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc97/>

<sup>14</sup> Jaiswal 2000:1

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc97/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

<sup>17</sup> Boyden, Ling, Myers 1998:289

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/sowc97/>

Socially conscious consumers groups, action of the trade unions, the creation of International Program for Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), and NGO's, have all contributed to the public outrage at the exploitation of children. The increase in organizations dedicated to the elimination of child work, public debate and media attention, as well as industry based initiatives, such as codes of conduct and social labelling all derive from the growing awareness that child work is an exploitation of children's most basic human rights. Efforts to combat the exploitation of children require a combination of steps. If the work is dangerous or involves abuse and severe exploitation, removal and rehabilitation is the only solution. In these areas there is no possible way of transforming child labour into child work (for a definition see under *definitions 1.5* below).<sup>19</sup> As shown by the example of the Bangladeshi children in the garment industry, sometimes the solution for children involved in labour might not be removal, but to improve their situation. As one child worker said, *If you will not buy the carpets I make, please come and show me how to eat.*<sup>20</sup>

Social mobilization around the world has led to boycotts, as well as threats of boycotts, that have affected the situation of children in a way that was not intended. I will look into how NGO's and some of the Swedish companies in India reason around how international consumers should act in this matter. My aim with this project has been to look further into how these different parties believe that civil society should act in the best possible way to help working children, and in the long run eliminate child work.

### **The key questions are:**

- Different views existing on the ideal childhood have over the past led to boycotts initiated by the civil society on the base of common moral issues. How do these consumer boycotts work? What impact do they have in today's global society?

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/vol12-4/interest.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Molake, Magazine 1997

- How do employees of companies involved with export from India, as well as people working for NGOs concerned with working children in India, reason and handle this moral dilemma? How do they believe that consumers can help working children in the best possible way and how do they think that child work can be eradicated?

## 1.4 Delimitations

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Child work is a matter that has received a lot of attention in media in the last decade or so. Even though the children working in the export industry constitute only about 5% of all working children I have chosen to concentrate on these 5 %. The development of children is affected by many aspects of their lives, including play, family relationships, and friends and not merely school and work.<sup>21</sup> In this project, I have chosen to focus on a single aspect: boycotts of child work in the export industry conducted on the basis of moral issues by the civil society and how this issue is viewed by the people that in their daily life come across these issues. One of the reasons, often mentioned as one of the causes for child work, is the economic policies of the country in question. Despite that this is a very interesting issue to look closer at, I have chosen to focus on what NGO's and companies think that civil society can do to help eliminate child work, and what power the civil society has. Therefore, I have limited myself to look deeper into these aspects to try to reach a deeper understanding of the questions posed. I am aware that this is a complex issue, and my aim is not to reach a conclusion about how social mobilization should be designed to combat child work in the best possible way. My ambition is just to look a bit closer at the opinions of some of the actors that deal with this issue on daily basis.

## 1.5 Definitions

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Some people point out that it is important to make a distinction between *child labour* and *child work*. Child work means that the child has time for play and education besides work. Child labour, on the other hand, refers to children who are being forced to carry out the full-time work of adults. Child labourers can also be bonded, which

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<sup>21</sup> Boyden 1999:11

means that the children are forced to work for an employer to pay back loans, often with high interest, which his or her (grand)parents once received from the landlord/ employer.<sup>22</sup> Bonded Labour is since 1976 forbidden by the Indian legislation; this however has not stopped it from existing in India, especially among children.<sup>23</sup> However, in this paper I have chosen to use the term *child work* as Jo Boyden uses the term. She believes that the term *work* should be used for all children working, since the term *labour* limits the discussion to only concern children that are working in harmful conditions. The term *work*, is broader since it also includes work that is harmless for children. She also mentions that there are problems with separating labour from work. This is evident when it comes to translating these terms into other languages than English, since in some languages it is not possible to distinguish between the two terms.<sup>24</sup>

To clarify the meaning of some of the concepts widely used, I have chosen to also give the sociological definition of the following words. *Civil Society*: Several definitions of this concept exists, but the main attribute is that it refers to the public life rather than private or household-based activities and that it *exists within the framework of the rule of law*. Civil society is also seen as dynamic *and it embraces the notion of social movements*. *(Social)Mobilization*: This is the process by which a group goes from being a passive collective group to actively participate in public life.<sup>25</sup>

## 1.6 Outline of the paper

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In this first chapter I provide the reader with a background to the forthcoming text. In chapter two I look closer into some additional background information concerning, why children work?, the role of the Indian government, and what the International as well as the Indian legislation say about this matter. The different approaches existing on how to combat child work is also brought up. In chapter three I look into a sociological perspective of how social mobilization is created on the basis of moral

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>23</sup> Berg and Karlsson 2000:61

<sup>24</sup> Boyden 1998:19ff

<sup>25</sup> Marshall 1998:74+426

issues, and look further into the importance of social mobilization for the elimination of child work. In chapter four I analyse my empirical material and answer my key questions. In chapter five I provide the reader with a summary of the paper.

## 1.7 Method

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Before going to India I acquainted myself with a large amount of secondary material that concerned boycotts against child work. I also read a great deal of material concerning moral. I looked closer into the contemporary debate concerning child work in India as well as in other parts of the world, this in order to see how different parties address this question differently. To reach a deeper understanding about this issue I have chosen to do a qualitative study where I have carried out interviews. The reason for using a qualitative method is that it is a method that searches deeply for information and tries to find underlying causes to the approach of the problem in question. This kind of information is difficult to quantify, since it involves, for instance, attitudes, values and conceptions, so called soft data; this is a flexible and changeable method.<sup>26</sup>

My intention with the field work has been to get an overview and reach a deeper understanding of how people who deal with these questions daily handle the moral dilemma of child workers. I also looked into what they believe should be done to eliminate child work and how civil society can help with this. I have carried out focused interviews with employees at companies in Delhi, as well as with individuals at NGOs in Delhi. In my interviews I did not use formal questionnaires. Instead, I had a set of research questions which formed the basis of the most important questions. The interviews covered questions related to the view that the interviewees have on how civil society best can help children involved in child work.

The foundation of science is often considered to be objectivity, generalisation, and explanations. Social science can provide us with knowledge about the social world that sometimes is impossible to get to with other means. Science is therefore something more than just our reproduction of views and prejudices; it is something

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<sup>26</sup> Repstad 1993:14

that structures our theories and produces results that do not only challenge our own opinions but also the opinions that generally are valid in society. Therefore, the question of objectivity in research is raised. In the idealistic school it is said that people produce the social world with their ideas and that we are not merely a product of the social world. They say that researchers should focus on *how* people create their social life. The important factor for this approach is not to explain why people act in a certain way but how they interpret the social world.<sup>27</sup>

I started off by interviewing some of the Swedish companies that have offices in Delhi, being Ikea where I interviewed Marianne Barner, Ikeas Ombudsman for Children, and Vandana Verma employed at Ikea Delhi working as Ikeas Ombudsman for children in South East Asia. At H&M I interviewed Veronique Rochet, Code of Conduct Inspector. I also performed an e-mail interview with Reneé Andersson at Indiska since Indiska said that they did not have a suitable person for me to interview in India. The interview with H&M led me to among others Jothi Chetty at the organization Delhi Brotherhood Society (DBS) which led me to Child Line which is a collaboration between the Union of Social Justice and Empowerment and DBS. The contact with my supervisor Vidyasagar Ramamurthy, led me to the interviews at Global March Against Child Labour and to South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) where Prabhat Kumarant (P.K Roy) works. This in turn, led me to Ms. Suman at Mukti Ashram. Hence, the method I have used to find my interviewees have been by the so called snowball method.

## **1.8 Interviews/ field work**

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Interviews are carried out in order to establish and develop conversations with people about specific areas of interest, the way that the interviewer interprets the information given in an interview is the foundation for the different kinds of interviews.

Interviews can give a good insight in people's experiences, opinions, dreams, attitudes and feelings. When doing focused interviews the establishment of trust is very important, since this interview is shaped so that a deeper understanding of the

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<sup>27</sup> May 1997:19ff

interviewed person's perspective will be reached. To overcome official and standardised answers from officials *the interviewer must avoid sensitive subjects and try to get the informant to come with descriptive statements. One can start with simple questions concerning for instance what their job involves, what they do at different times in their work and how their work is connected to the whole production of the company. When getting to the sensitive questions it is important that they are formulated in a good way.*<sup>28</sup> Interviews that are relaxed and more similar to spontaneous conversations than real interviews can be good to avoid tense moments.<sup>29</sup> When doing research on social phenomena, researchers enter areas where the existing people have already ascribed themselves some meanings. Before we enter the areas with our questionnaires and notebooks, our research therefore includes interpretations of social environments, events or processes where we as researchers need to take into account the meanings that people have already ascribed to these phenomena. People on the contrary to molecules are engaged and participate as interpreters as well, social scientists have to tie together the vocabulary used in science with the interpreting methods that people already have applied themselves in their social surroundings, the theories used must take into account the everyday interpretations of people.<sup>30</sup> Doing interviews should be a flexible method it should also try to get an overview but at the same time be goal oriented; a well performed interview needs a well prepared planing of what themes should be focused on in the interview. This in order to avoid that the discussion is just superficial and does not touch the important points that are searched for.<sup>31</sup> According to Repstad among others, being a woman doing fieldwork can have positive effects, sometimes women are seen as being harmless, and the actors therefore do not feel threatened so easily. However, at the same time women can be closed out of some man-dominated spheres.<sup>32</sup>

This was my first real experience with serious qualitative interviews. The succes of qualitative field work is related to access, acceptance, membership, trust and

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<sup>28</sup> May 1997:148ff

<sup>29</sup> Repstad 1993:57f

<sup>30</sup> May 1997:53ff

<sup>31</sup> Repstad 1993:60f

<sup>32</sup> Repstad 1993: 50ff



understanding.<sup>33</sup> The issue of child work is a sensitive one and it can in India as well as in other parts of the world be a sensitive issue to bring up. I did not encounter any major difficulties in finding people to interview, in all the organizations and the companies I interviewed I was very well received. Unfortunately I was not able to interview people from Indiska in a face to face interview since they did not have a suitable person for me to interview in Delhi, but I was able to get some of my questions answered by an e-mail interview with Reneé Andersson from Indiska. When doing interviews one always have to take into consideration the credibility of the text, but also as Becker talks about in his book *Tricks of the trade*, the trick of dealing with anyone in power (hierarchy). Becker writes *doubt everything someone in power tells you* and continues by saying *institutions always put their best foot forward*. In order to collect material with the right kind of skepticism, Becker recommends collecting information from others than the officials in power. In my case this was not possible since I was not able to choose who to talk to. Instead I got appointments with suitable people to interview, and these people were of course very knowledgeable in the field of child workers. Unfortunately, I did not have the resources to look further into the credibility of what the interviewed people told me.<sup>34</sup>

Most of the material I have used is secondary material. Often while conducting the interviews with the companies as well as with the NGOs I was given a great deal of written information instead of the interviewee in person given me that information. Becker also talks about how a social scientist should use other people's information. He claims that this can *leave out of account whatever these people left out*. Here, I ran into the same problem as mentioned above with accepting the credibility of people. I did not have the resources, time, money and personal availability to not accept the information given. I of course I can question it but it was not really possible to get away from it. Becker continues by saying that social scientists often have to rely on information from others, no matter if we trust it or criticize it. Becker says that the trick is easy, *ask where the information came from, who gathered it, what their organization and conceptual constraints are, and how all of that affected what the table I am looking at displays*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Denzin, Lincoln:84

<sup>34</sup> Beckers 1998:90ff

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

I have used a tape recorder as Repstad among others recommend since this allows the interviewer to focus on the interviewed person and not have to write down what is being said. The negative aspect can be that some people feel uncomfortable with the recorder. I however feel that bringing the recorder into the interviews did not affect the interviewee persons, they all seemed comfortable. Since all my interviews were carried out in English and all the persons interviewed had a good standard of English I therefore did not have any need of a translator which indeed did facilitate the interviews. Initially I thought to interview Indian families and working children but after a while I realized that this would lead me to having more material than I could possibly analyze in a paper of this size. Overall the fieldwork has been a very valuable experience and I have enjoyed it.

## **-Chapter 2 - Background factors**

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*Before introducing the more theoretical part of this paper I will start with giving the reader an overview on some of the reasons to why children around the world work and what the international and the national legislation in India say about child work as well as some of the existing different approaches on how to combat child work. This in order to facilitate the understanding of the forthcoming interviews.*

### **2.1 Why do children work?**

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What is the reason that so many children are found working in the developing countries? Poverty is the main cause of child work in the world, families that are poor to a much larger extent than families that are well off, put their children to work. Some sociologists maintain that the major cause of child work is parental poverty.<sup>36</sup> Recently growing information about the issue has brought forward other reasons as well such as: the exploitation of the poor, social exclusion, inequality and injustice. The majority of the children found in child work are from the most excluded and exploited groups of society; unregistered immigrants and refugees, the internally displaced, ethnic minorities and the very poorest families in society. Working children

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

often come from families and environments where there is no choice or alternative and often no respect for human rights; it also seems that girls suffer the most.<sup>37</sup> According to Boyden it has also been emphasized in research that large household size and child work has a connection (the larger the family the more likely that they have to put their children to work) it has also been noted that *the effects that household size has varies largely according to place, living conditions, occupation and gender*.<sup>38</sup> Indian sociologist Prachi Jaiswal in her book, *Child labour a sociological study* wrote: *Children are compelled to work by a combination of desperate poverty and community tradition, other factors including, armed conflicts, natural disasters and rural-urban migration contribute to the number of working and street children*. She further explains this by saying that child work is the product of the socio-economic conditions that are existing in the society, child work cannot be explained by economic factors alone, the institutional factors are also important. Absence of compulsory schooling is another main factor behind the practice as is the fact that schooling is so expensive that parents cannot afford to send their children to school. The states failure to spread social safety is another reason mentioned as well as *the overall apathy of the administrative machinery*.<sup>39</sup> Also ILO/IPEC verify that poverty is a reason for child work but they also state that another cause is culturally derived attitudes and values that help to sustain child work.<sup>40</sup>

As a macro economic reason for child work, economic globalization is sometimes brought forward, since it can be seen as one of the factors holding down the developing countries development and employment.<sup>41</sup> Also national economy adjustment plans are stated as an underlying reason for child work sometimes, as well as unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity.<sup>42</sup> The globalization of the economy and the increasing competition for foreign investment have resulted in that child work has been drawn into the more visible export sector in many of the developing countries.<sup>43</sup> Kathlyn Gay author of, *Child Labour- a global crisis*, also believes that globalization has played a major role in sustaining child work. However since 1994

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<sup>37</sup> UNICEF 1997:2f

<sup>38</sup> Boyden 1998:135f

<sup>39</sup> Jaiswal 2000:12, 51ff

<sup>40</sup> ILO/IPEC 1994:14

<sup>41</sup> Boyden et al 1998:134

<sup>42</sup> Boyden et al 1998:127ff

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF 1997:2

some reports have indicated that child work may be declining in some countries, perhaps due to the widespread publicity and public pressure to eliminate the practice.<sup>44</sup> According to Manuel Castells, the major reason for childwork is poverty and the *globalization of economic activity*. Due to this families are forced into focusing on surviving, the children cannot attend school since the families need as many income earners as possible, this is according to Castells due to *the impoverishment of large segments of the population* and the crisis in the *subsistence economy*.<sup>45</sup> Developing countries, often have huge debt problems combined with unemployment, therefore it is important for them to have access to the International market. Due to this developing countries often stimulate export-oriented industries to be able to improve the situation of their debts and unemployment. Many of the developing countries like for example India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are competing with their products, often garment and carpets on the International market, their competitive edge is based on the availability of large, cheap and flexible workforce, mainly women and children. Some parts of the production of the labour intensive industries in the developing countries are, subcontracted to smaller units. These are often unregistered and divide the industrial establishment into smaller units to escape the laws which regulate working conditions. This process of subcontracting often leads to exploitation of the workers, the workers are often unregistered, temporary employed, and get less than the minimum wage and without social protection. This process also makes it harder for labour inspectors to control that labour laws and human rights are followed.<sup>46</sup> The competition among countries to entice foreign investors has to an even larger extent worsened the already bad working conditions of employees. This is also very clear in the *Free trade zones* that have been established directly for the foreign investors in some countries, and where these companies are provided with cheap labour and the workers are not allowed the right to form trade unions.<sup>47</sup> Since the new global economy is not a planned economy, it does not include all the economies in the world: *the new economy is excluding, dynamic and unstable in its boundaries*. The structure of the global economy is shaped by the competitive dynamic between the economic agents and countries (positions). One of the factors that explain the power of competition in the global

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<sup>44</sup> Gay 1998:31

<sup>45</sup> Castells 1998:152f

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>47</sup> De Vylder 2002:119f

market is the difference between production costs at the production position and the sales price on the destination market.<sup>48</sup> The international trade has pushed more workers into the informal sector in developing as well as in developed countries. In the developing countries (more than in the developed countries) this has led to economic exploitation of children in the production of goods, for export as well as for the domestic market.<sup>49</sup> Globalization of the economic activities therefore also means that there is gain by employing children, since the difference of the cost of hiring children for production and the price of the product on the market is very large, this results in more profit for the companies.<sup>50</sup>

But at the same time the World Bank points out that economic globalization has driven down world poverty. The cause of child work is not always so easy to isolate. It is not only the world economy that affects; also single countries have responsibility to decide their priorities concerning their economies. Studies show that in about one third of the world's countries, more money is spent on military costs than on education. However the economy should at least seek to have a fairly even distribution of income and ensure that adequate investment is being put into basic services for the poor, especially health and education.<sup>51</sup> Poverty of large proportions of the population is possible even in environments of strong economic growth. Since the 1980 the interest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, to pay attention to the wellbeing of individuals and families has arisen, often by lending money to poor countries.<sup>52</sup> However, the conventional macro economic perspectives that are child oriented are mostly policies that are good for the parents. This does not mean that macro politics can not be good for the children. Food prices, inflation and employment are examples that for instance can be controlled by macro economic policies, and these factors can to a high degree affect the children's wellbeing, if for example the parents are employed or not.<sup>53</sup> Stefan de Vylder has summarised the differences between macro economic policies that benefit children and those which don't. According to him the policies that promote children are those

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<sup>48</sup> Castells 1996 :101ff

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>50</sup> Castells 1998.152f

<sup>51</sup> Boyden et al 1998:134

<sup>52</sup> Boyden, Levison 2000:11ff

<sup>53</sup> De Vylder 1996:41f

policies that focus on equity, predictability, stability, human and social development, job creation, the accumulation of social capital, long term perspective, and gender and age awareness.<sup>54</sup> During the *International Seminar on Macroeconomics and Children's Rights*, (South Africa, Nov1998) efforts were made to engage economic planners to learn what the effects of macroeconomic policies can have on children, and take these into account when planning.<sup>55</sup> The most important factor why children are hired for working seems to be the defencelessness of children, resulting in that it is easy to impose minimal pay and bad working conditions that children often face.<sup>56</sup> As stated in an ILO report: *Since the children do not have irreplaceable skills and are often not much less costly than adults, a major, important explanation seems to be non-economic. There are many non-pecuniary reasons but the most important seems to be the fact that children are less aware of their rights, less troublesome and more willing to take orders and to do monotonous work without complaining, more trustworthy, less likely to steal, and less likely to be absent from work. Children's lower absentee rate is especially valuable for employers in informal sector industries where workers are employed on a daily, casual basis and full contingent of workers must therefore be found each day.*<sup>57</sup>

Is child work really a factor that is necessary in order to maintain competitive prices for the highly labour intensive industries? According to studies made by the ILO the answer is *No*. A study made in India by the ILO showed that the carpet industry for example is not dependent on child workers for its economic survival. First of all the study shows that there is no truth in the argument often made, that children's small hands are of importance when weaving carpets, the finest carpets are on the contrary made by adults. Neither is the argument that there are large economic savings in hiring children instead of adults true, it is only about 5-10 % that is saved on hiring child workers instead of adults, so competitiveness is not the issue either. The study showed that the answer in the decision to hire child workers lies in *who* gains; it is the small loom-owning contractors, who usually work in their own home who gains on childwork. These contractors are usually poor themselves, and work on very slim profit marginal. By increasing the carpet price to the consumers very modestly, these

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<sup>54</sup> De Vylder 1998:10f

<sup>55</sup> Boyden, Levison 2000:44f

<sup>56</sup> Castells 1998:154F

<sup>57</sup> ILO 1997:3f

small contractors could be subsidised so that they could use adult labour only.<sup>58</sup> Two important causes of child work are stated by many experts; the first being the interest of employers to have a cheap labour force, so they can pay low wages and maximise profit, and children do not protest. The second is the inefficiency of the primary education, if the schools are poorly run this can result in that children lose interest in going to school.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.2 The role of the Indian government

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India is a country that has a lot of issues to handle, high infant mortality rate, malnutrition deaths, scarcity of drinking water and basic health facilities, and the issue of child work has been a large issue that also has had effects on the country's image overseas. Some say that cheap child work is also needed to fill in the need for cheap and unskilled labour.<sup>60</sup> In 1991 India had an economic reform, and the country has since then actively opened up its market to the world market. India is a country that is competing to become a part of the world trade, this in order to be able to start to try and solve its debt problem, increase employment and solve the poverty problem of the country. India changed from a situation where the economy was regulated by the government into a market economy, where the country welcomes foreign investments. Hence, export oriented industry like the jewellery and garment industry are supported by the government with investment and tax exemptions. This is because they bring employment opportunities and foreign exchange to the country.<sup>61</sup> Many of these industries use child workers since these children are paid less and the demands for social security are less among children. Even though reports from ILO show that several of the industries in India can do well even without the child work, child work does however increase the profit. These industries that receive support from the Indian government to increase their exports are at the same time neglected by the government when it comes to inspections and regulations of terms and conditions of work. Mr. Joseph Gathia, Director of the *Centre of Concern for the child labour*, said that; *child labour is not just an issue of poverty but it is also linked with the economic*

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<sup>58</sup> Boyden et al 1998:133

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

*policies of the government.*<sup>62</sup> India's competitive position in the world is partly due to that it can provide foreign investors as well as domestic investors with a cheap and flexible workforce, this cheap workforce to a large extent consisting of children and women.<sup>63</sup> Professor Myron Verner in the book, *The child and the state in India* makes a similar point as that of Mr. Joseph Gathia (above) saying that India's failure in child welfare is based not in economic backwardness and mass poverty but instead in the belief system and the interest of those in power. Mr. Verner argued for compulsory schooling through legal enforcement of school attendance as being the most effective method to eliminate child work.<sup>64</sup> India is a country that has a colossal task at hand, bringing oppressed children out of the workers list.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.3 International and Indian Legislation on child work

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Social mobilization without the cooperation of politicians will not produce long-lasting change. Many of the existing laws regarding child work are not enforced due to lack of political will and lack of enforcement mechanisms. Sometimes these laws are simply ignored because there is little pressure and demand for the implementation of them. Many of the affected persons are not aware of their rights and therefore cannot claim their legal entitlements. According to the UNICEF *the lack of respect for existing laws demonstrates the deep-rooted social and cultural values implicated in the persistence, even acceptance of child labour as an unavoidable reality for the poor.* It is further often accepted that children have to provide for themselves or help in supporting their families. The international legislation about child work is rather extensive and was created in the beginning of the century. This occurred in order to protect children from being abused in factories and mines under the stage of industrialization. The most important legislation today concerning child work is *The Convention on Rights of the Child* from 1989 and the *ILO convention 138* from 1973. The original ILO convention was adopted in 1917, and its purpose was to stop the employment of children in the industries in Europe and North America. It prohibited children under the age of 14 to work in industrial establishments. In 1973 this

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<sup>62</sup> Jaiswal 2000:14

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>64</sup> Jaiswal 2000:14f

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>



convention was renewed, and called *The Minimum Age Convention*, No 138, it now includes work in all sectors. States that have ratified this convention are obliged to abolish all children involvement in employment or work. The United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, is a convention that is supposed to force the ratifying states to take a holistic view of children where physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and educational factors are looked upon.<sup>66</sup> In this convention it is stated, *in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*<sup>67</sup> This fundamental principle should always guide the policies and actions that are taken to help children. This convention has been signed by virtually all countries in the world, and therefore it is the most accepted human rights treaty in the world. Article 32 in this convention is devoted to the work of children, stating that children should be excluded from all hazardous work, economic exploitation and any work that will interfere with the education of children.<sup>68</sup> The Indian Constitution prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 in any hazardous industry.<sup>69</sup> In India the latest child work Act from 1986 prohibits child work in hazardous occupations, but allows it if these occupations are carried out in family-run workshops. The occupations that are not mentioned in the prohibition Act are regulated in another Act, but the hazardous occupations in the family run workshops are not regulated, so this act really just regulates 8-15% of the child work force.<sup>70</sup>

## 2.4 Combating child work

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The development of children are affected by many aspects of their lives, including play, family relationships, friends, school and work.<sup>71</sup> To figure out a common ground on how to help working children is a difficult task, since there are several different

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<sup>66</sup> Boyden et al 1998:77ff

<sup>67</sup> Article 3, Convention on the Rights of the Child

<sup>68</sup> Boyden et al 1998:189ff

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.globalmarch.org/cl-around-the-world/i-a-child.php3>

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.indianet.nl/chadlab.html>

<sup>71</sup> Boyden 1999:11

views on how a childhood should be. The subject has turned out to be quite controversial, since it is not always clear if working is harmful or not to children. What the best ways to protect children from harmful work are, and if these approaches work in all countries or are sometimes specific to some countries.<sup>72</sup> In order to have a discussion on how to eliminate child work it is necessary to look closer at the ideas of the childhood, since these are what lay the ground to how people reason around child work. In recent years an international debate has emerged concerning how to eliminate child work. The question has been on how child work can be eliminated through for example compulsory schooling, minimum age legislation, and trade policies. Some of these arguments for the elimination of child work are based on concepts of what a childhood is from the point of view of developmental psychology and educational science in Europe and North America. The northern childhood has been structured as: *extended economic dependency and protected innocence, a period of rapid learning regulated by natural growth process and enhanced through universal schooling, which is largely separated off from economic and community life*. These thoughts derive from the northern point of view, and working children are therefore often looked upon as victims and that work should not be part of a childhood. This has contributed to that little scientific research has been done on the effects that work has on children. According to Boyden a major problem with the policies made for the elimination of child work is that they rarely look at the issue from the best interest of the child, she says that it is very important to include the views of the children in question.<sup>73</sup> In an ILO report from 2002, called: *A future without child labour*, one can read: *Child labour is part of a wider social reality at local, national, international level. Only through understanding and action at all these levels, in mutually reinforcing ways can its effective abolition be achieved*.<sup>74</sup>

Genetic factors are sometimes brought forward as important explanations of child development by policy makers. The idea that the development potential of children is limited by the children's genetic endowment has for a long time been a major factor in forming the education for millions of children, even though scientists often have

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<sup>72</sup> Boyden 1999:7

<sup>73</sup> Boyden et al 1998:27

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/decl/download/global3/part2chapter2.pdf>

distanced themselves of incriminate use of intelligence test to generalise the measure of human capacity. Today most scholars believe that genetic as well as environmental factors form the individual development of children. It is however the social aspects of child development that mostly attracts the attention of policy makers. Children's development is affected both by their immediate surroundings like their siblings, caregivers etc, but also by the broader situation in which they live, like for instance the political structure, the system of social stratification and physical environment.<sup>75</sup> Different childhoods include very heterogeneous experiences, in different parts of the world there are children that live under very different realities and challenges and that are raised in various ways. With the realisation that there are many childhoods, policymakers and programme planners wishing to mobilize society with simplistic assumptions should be warned, and aware of the very complex nature of this issue. Not only are there misunderstandings and different opinions between people from different countries but also between different socio-economic groups in the same country,<sup>76</sup> gender is also a major reason to differences between childhoods; therefore children experience different development possibilities.<sup>77</sup> Boyden, Ling and Myers say that *for a number of reasons, the idea of a universal process of child development appears quite appealing*. Recently research has suggested that child development is not as it was earlier thought, a single built in process with set stages of development that all children go through, but that these theories were instead built on a particular childhood, experienced by children in the North. It is now instead suggested that children's competence is formed by cultural practices, and that there is no standard pattern for development. It is also pointed out that children are not passive recipients of experience but that they also contribute to their own development.<sup>78</sup>

In some societies children are believed to be best off if they are protected by excluding them from all kinds of work since this perspective believes that childhood is a time of special need, vulnerability and innocence and it is believed that children should not work, no matter what the occupation, condition or context is. This because it is believed that children should not take economic and social responsibility and that working for children is bad for their well being. So people who believe in this

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<sup>75</sup> Boyden, Levison 2000:20ff

<sup>76</sup> Boyden et al 1998:31

<sup>77</sup> Boyden, Levison 2000:25

<sup>78</sup> Boyden et al 1998:31ff+62ff

perspective often believe in the removal of all children under a certain age. A general assumption is often that if the children in question, are released from work, will instead have time to study, play and so forth. It is not always considered that removing children from work in the export sector can also just as well result in that the children get a job elsewhere, sometimes a job that is even worse than the former one.<sup>79</sup> In some societies the family group is valued more than the right of the individual family members, and children in these families often have productive responsibilities that are of significance for the family. These responsibilities of domestic obligations are often seen as necessary for the development of positive moral codes. In the industrial world, the values of social integration and social responsibility often are very different to those of the developing world, since in the industrial world personal autonomy is one of the most important factors of child development. In these societies the factors individual freedom, personal integrity and individual rights are highly valued.<sup>80</sup> There it is encouraged that children work, since this is seen as a strategy for self protection that will develop physical strength, endurance, confidence and self discipline. It is often stressed that people involved in protecting children, should consider that work does not affect all children in the same way, or in the same way all the time, because the way that the children perceive their job can change as well.<sup>81</sup> People who do not agree on the former perspective usually argue that in many parts of the world work is considered a normal part of childhood that, on the contrary from the “western” perspective, facilitates learning, socialisation and economic wellbeing. For many children in different parts of the world work is considered to be a normal part of childhood. People who believe in this perspective argue that children even if quite young have the capacity for and also can benefit from the right kind of work under the right conditions, still condemning abusive work. It is sometimes argued that children who grow up without learning responsibility which comes from working can get problems. Proper schooling is important for this perspective as well, but they do not believe in forcing the children out from work to attend school without having a proper alternative to offer the children.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Boyden et al 1998:290ff

<sup>80</sup> Boyden et al 1998:71ff

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Boyden 1999:16f

*In this chapter I will provide the reader with an overview on how social mobilisation is created on a moral basis and look further into how the different actors like companies and NGOs reason around this dilemma.*

### 3.1 The creation of social mobilisation on the basis of moral issues

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There are no universal ideologies, the circumstances we live in affect our understanding of the surrounding world. Especially living in our Swedish welfare system creates a natural and automatic dependence to, and a belief in the state that is not always the case in other countries. Our western perspective can therefore be very narrow hence we need to interpret our own goals, actions and their consequences. Blomqvist says it is important to let all people express their opinions, instead of believing that our way is the right way. Ideologies are dependent on their coherence and they are changeable, all to suit different interests. Ideologies are sometimes also used as an excuse for discriminatory action (often indirect), by governments etc.<sup>83</sup> Boycotts raised by the consumer society create special moral and practical problems which make these boycotts more complicated than they first seem. *Ben White* pointed out that: *consumers should have the right to know about the condition under which goods are produced (whether in their own country or at the other end of the world) and to make informed choices based on that knowledge. But any boycott or international sanctions must first select the right target; and second, ensure that the objective is one with which the 'target group' (in this case, exploited working children) can agree.*<sup>84</sup>

With globalization, there is an increase in local movements and resistance that are mobilized to protect local traditions and act against global problems. Mobilizations are also resulting in that the mobilizations are not only aimed at national level, but also are aimed at international problems.<sup>85</sup> The early American collective behaviour

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<sup>83</sup> Blomqvist 1998: 22f+48ff

<sup>84</sup> Boyden et al 1998:291

<sup>85</sup> Della Porta et al 1999:2f

school, regarded collective movements as irrational actors, saying that collective actions were related to the malfunctions of the social system. These actions therefore came to be regarded as reactive behaviour, incapable of strategic rationality, and looked upon as being isolated from the conflicts it wanted to express. In the 70s American sociologists researching about the processes of collective actions and mobilization, on the contrary said that collective movements constitute an extension of the conventional forms of political action. The actors according to them are engaged in rational actions, where they follow their interests, and organizations have an essential role in the mobilization of collective resources, on which action is founded. Protest actions is according to this perspective a product of a calculation between cost and benefit that is influenced by the presence of resources. The capacity for mobilization is dependent on material resources (work, money, concrete benefits, and services) as well as non-material resources (authority, moral engagement, faith, friendship) that are available to the group in question. In analysis of the groups internal resources attention has often been focused on material and symbolic resources such as moral engagement and solidarity that creates mobilization and organization.<sup>86</sup> There are four major characteristic aspects of social movements: *informal interaction networks, collective action focusing on conflicts, use of protest and shared belief and solidarity*. It is the latter aspect that I believe suits the social mobilizations aimed at boycotts of child work best. This aspect emphasizes a mobilization of mobilization where the collectivity shares a set of values and beliefs and a sense of belonging. These social movements often raise new public issues and give new perspectives to existing issues. New collective identities and value systems sometimes continue to exist even after public activities, demonstrations and so forth are no longer taking place, and they therefore provide continuity for the initiated movement for some time.<sup>87</sup>

It is important to distinguish between social movements, political parties and interest groups; these are often compared with each other due to that they are assumed to be different styles of political organizations. According to the definition by *Della Porta* and *Diani*, however, the difference between social movements and various other organizations are that the social movements are not at all formed as organizations.

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<sup>86</sup> Della Porta, Diani 1999:7ff

<sup>87</sup> Della Porta, Diani 1999:14f

Instead they are built up by an interaction between different actors which can either include or exclude formal organizations. A single organization can not be a social movement, even though it can be a part of one. Social movements do not have members but participants. The factors that allow social movements to grow to become larger than just a single isolated protest is that the social movements include a vision of the world and that of a collective identity. This allows the participants from various protest events to place their actions in a wider perspective. Collective actions can take cultural and symbolic dimensions. According to those perspectives, values influence the ways in which actors define specific goals and how they identify behavioural strategies, which are efficient as well as morally acceptable. Collective actions can be interpreted as a consequence of social disintegration and also as a proof of the formation of a new value system. This is sometimes referred to as “new politics”, that is the emergence of new conflicts and the value dimensions, connected to environmental issues, peace and civil rights.<sup>88</sup> In the industrial society, social relationships were based on territorial proximity; today this has become less important. The collective identities today are less dependent on face to face interaction, and this has led to an emergence of public opinion integrated via not only the printed world, but also via the expansion of media and the Internet revolution. This has led to that it is possible to identify and have feelings of solidarity with people, that you as an individual do not have personal contact with.<sup>89</sup> Who participates in social movements? According to Della Porta and Diani the existence of solidarity networks today questions the earlier assumptions that these form of movements are joined mostly by individuals that are isolated and rootless.<sup>90</sup> People are usually more prone to join a protest movement if they have connections with other people who are prone to get involved in collective actions. It is often through these links that other people acquire information and develop a certain vision of the world.<sup>91</sup>

So what are the underlying reasons for individuals to engage in these social mobilizations? To create justice can be a reason. The thought of justice is based on the thought that all individuals have the same rights. Nobody should be discriminated on

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<sup>88</sup> Della Porta, Diani 1999:16+60ff

<sup>89</sup> Della Porta, Diani 1999:7ff+ 88ff

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Della Porta, Diani 1999:122f+163f

the base of race, religion, gender, or social background. Everyone should have the same chance to compete and all people should be subjected to the same rules. The base of the thought of justice is quite radical. A liberal that has a central role in the contemporary debate about justice is John Rawls. He accepts the lack of equality that can be created when hardworking individuals are rewarded for this, but only if this is shown to gain the poor as well. For instance, it is in the gain of society that for example that scientists progress. Rawl says that it should only be economic and social injustices where the less privileged individuals can gain that should be allowed. Another theorist Ronald Dworkin believes that the state should treat all citizens with equal respect and consideration. No group or individual should have more privilege or be given more value than any other, the state should not limit certain groups freedom or give preferential treatment to any groups (as long as their way of living doesn't affect any other people). For the classic conservative theorists, freedom from intrusion of the state is more important than equality. Justice presupposes that someone can intervene, and therefore all slogans of justice have an addressee with power and authority, someone who will *create* justice. A common factor for most moral philosophical discussions about justice and equality is that the actual problems often prove to be the demands of what the public sector should and should not do. The discussion of justice making is far more complicated when put in an international perspective however; the only side that can remain consequent is the extremely conservative side, since they firmly believe that everyone should just take care of their own business. The demands for global justice lack an addressee.<sup>92</sup> In the UN conventions concerning human rights it is clear that it is the national states that are the addresses of who has the responsibility over that the human rights are followed. Today it is constantly getting harder to demand that the national states take their responsibility since there globally is an increasing decentralisation, privatization and fragmentation of the responsibility in the area of basic rights areas, like education and medical care. This makes it easier for the national state to abdicate from its former responsibilities.<sup>93</sup>

Participation, that emphasises the decision making role of the community, has come to be recognised as a powerful imperative for development. It is still a complex issue,

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<sup>92</sup> De Vylder 1995:66ff

<sup>93</sup> De Vylder 2002:87f



because in the end it is a political act that cannot be neutral. It is important to look at who participates, what they participate in, how they participate and for what reasons. Participation is considered to help structure policies so that these will correspond with the needs of the people who they are directed to. NGOs often play an important role in local and community based development in many countries. Many of these NGOs are dependent on local participation, but not only NGOs but also many other popular movements that regard many different issues have been established.<sup>94</sup> These popular movements are *forms of collective action with a high degree of popular participation, which use non-institutional channels, and which, at the same time that they formulate their demands, also find forms of action to advance those demands and to establish themselves as collective subjects, that is as a group or a social category.*<sup>95</sup>

### 3.2 Local participation

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Traditional knowledge of poor and marginalized people is important knowledge that has often been overlooked by professionals when trying to find solutions for the poor. By looking and considering the local knowledge development, programs can be made more accurate to help the local solutions, and to help to create a higher self-esteem and feelings of self-worth among local people. With this an increase in popular participation in the local communities can occur and this can create empowerment. In order to do this, development programs should assume that poor people are knowledgeable of their own environment and that they can provide good solutions for their local communities. The help given to poor areas need to be designed to assist the poor, and they should be flexible approaches that make room for local knowledge and practices. Poor communities should be allowed to decide for themselves, through their local institutions and popular organizations, what mix of traditional and modern approaches and technologies best suit their particular needs. Otherwise technological change can instead continue to be associated with destruction of local cultures, a widening of the inequalities and increased marginalization of the poor and disadvantaged. In order to create environments where local people can express their knowledge and creativity within development, conditions that are favourable for this have to be created. These conditions can for instance include that outsiders show

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<sup>94</sup> Brohman 1996:251ff +266ff

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

respect, humility and interest in learning from the local people, to use local knowledge, practices and materials when possible.<sup>96</sup> By looking and paying attention to the local needs it might be easier to escape these kind of problems that have been said to occur; *development, in theory and in practice, is a slave to fashion, and current fashion dictates the promotion of community organizations and the involvement of the community in the assessment of needs and the planning of projects.*<sup>97</sup>

### **3.3 Social mobilization and its importance regarding the elimination of child work**

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Social mobilization is a critical process that ensures commitment to change. It can be everything from diverse collective agreements, ranging from those which challenge existing orders through change in laws and policies, to those which promote change in societal behaviours and attitude. In this last century social mobilization has been used in many different ways to achieve different goals, from enforcement of laws in the issue of racial and gender equality to voluntary behaviour change that to help protect the environment. Consumers, human rights groups and NGOs concerned with children, trade unions and employers continuously organize various efforts around the common goal of protecting children from exploitative work. These efforts have globally raised the awareness about the complexity of the problem and have resulted in several actions that sometimes have been beneficial for the children involved and sometimes not (as in Bangladesh). The term social is according to UNICEF a broad term that currently describes a wide variety of group actions and the views of its nature, the objectiveness and the roles of social actors varies. There is however an agreement that social mobilization that results in sustainable and permanent changes needs to be based on a willingness and commitment to change. Further, the action taken derives from *awareness, dialogue and negotiation that facilitate respect for differences and coordination efforts; and sharing of power through the transfer of information, knowledge and capacities.*<sup>98</sup> In order to successfully remove children from abusive work situations, it is necessary to mobilize society and the creativity of

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Brohman 1996:279f

civil society. Social mobilization is according to the ILO and UNICEF necessary in order to obliterate hazardous child work. This mobilization needs to most importantly mobilize the working children and their families, employers, educators and organizations that deal with working children. This mobilization is necessary in order to induce change in the ideas that a large number of people have. It is also important with the mobilization so that the cultural and political environments can encourage the public attention to protect children and not allow them to become exploited. A third reason for the mobilization is that in order to end hazardous child work there needs to be a number of actors involved, it cannot be done by a single actor. Change may be needed in legislation, research, statistical methods, private sector employment and supervisor practices, media communication about children, health, recreation and welfare for children.<sup>99</sup> In a survey done by Jo Boyden for Save the Children, people working for NGOs concerned with working children, were asked about their opinions concerning if children should work and why they work etc. When asked about the influence of boycotts, the answers found in the survey by Boyden showed that support was given to boycotts in some senses since they raise public awareness and political will against child work, but one of the correspondents also said that the pressure to help the working children should not come from abroad but from domestic consumers. Many of the answers in this survey said that boycotts and trade sanctions can be ways to encourage governments to implement National legislation that can help to close illegal operations and to raise the employment age. The main reasons stated for opposition to trade sanctions and boycotts were that they do not cover all sectors where children work, but only the export sector and this can result in that the children who are closed out of the export sector due to boycotts just transfer to the informal sector, which is often more hazardous and exploitative than the export sector. A correspondent said *boycotts absolutely hurt children on the lowest rung of the ladder. They cause them to lose their jobs and their income, so they are frequently worse off.*<sup>100</sup>

Most of the boycotts and pressure initiated from public pressure are focused on removing children from production of goods that are produced for export. These actions initiated from the public are made believing that they are defending the

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<sup>99</sup> Boyden et al 1998: 214ff+280ff

<sup>100</sup> Boyden 1999:62ff

involved children's well-being and rights.<sup>101</sup> Supports for these boycotts are often given on the grounds that they can help to build awareness of and political will against child work and to attract public attention to children's rights in general.<sup>102</sup> The export industries are not always such a bad working place, but there are exceptions, for example the carpet industry, tobacco industry and the sugar cane industry are considered to overall have bad working conditions for children. Mass media reports showing children working in bad working conditions in different manufacturing businesses in the developing world have made people in the West aware of the economic exploitation that is taking place. Some say that by refusing to buy products that are made with the involvement by children, this reduces the market for the countries that have child work, and therefore force these countries to exclude the children from the production of export goods. There have been several campaigns initiated by, NGOs, trade unions and consumer groups to boycott products made by child workers.<sup>103</sup>

Today many companies have adopted *codes of conduct* (sometimes referred to as *best practice*) to handle the question of child workers. Codes of conduct are concerned with the export sector only, they don't have implementation mechanisms and they are not binding. They are often drawn up by the companies themselves, and the company voluntarily commit themselves to initiate economic and social improvements, for instance the elimination child work. These codes of conduct also assure that the company will carry out supervision and control over their production conditions.<sup>104</sup> They are sometimes argued to be used by companies to advertise their products and win points against consumers, also saying that there is no guarantee that the codes of conduct that help the companies to avoid criticism and bad publicity also protect the children involved. As an alternative to codes of conduct there is also, social labelling which is another strategy where the consumer is offered to buy a product that is made without involvement of child workers. Sometimes the aim is not that the consumer will buy a product that is made without child involvement, but that it will raise the welfare of the children. The labelling initiatives often besides removing children from production also aim at contributing directly to improvements, and setting up projects

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Boyden 1999:62f

<sup>103</sup> Boyden et al 1998:290ff

<sup>104</sup> Kruijtbosch 1995:1ff

in the local communities that will improve the situation of the child workers, their families and communities. Social labelling therefore also has an economic part. Social labelling is voluntarily and not installed due to government legislation or import requirements.<sup>105</sup> A labelling brand of this kind is *Rugmark* that started up in 1990s in India initiated by SACCS and became a legally binding international trademark in December 1995. Carpet exporters with a Rugmark licence among other things are legally binded not to employ children under 14 years of age. The reason this label was initiated goes back to that SACCS launched a large consumer campaign in Europe and United States in the beginning of the 90s and this resulted in a drop in the carpet sales from India, which was not SACCS intention. Their intention was to eliminate bonded labour and child work. SACCS therefore worked out the idea of labelling carpets that are not made by children. The main concern for SACCS however is the rehabilitation of the freed children, which are released from the carpet industry as the carpet manufacturers, decides to let adults and children make their carpets.<sup>106</sup> The Rugmark labelling certifies that routinely inspections are done to certify that the logo is valid; importers also pay a 1% of the value of the rug to the Rugmark foundation. This money in its turn is used to pay for schools and education programmes in carpet producing countries.<sup>107</sup> Similar labelling systems are STEP, Care & Fair and Kaleen.<sup>108</sup> Other initiatives taken by consumers include *Clean Cloth Campaign*, (CCC) that is a initiative taken by consumers in order to get fair working conditions for workers in the garment industry. The problem that these initiatives face is to be able to control the production as long as there is subcontracting taking place, since this is very hard to control.<sup>109</sup> The Swedish Clean Cloth Campaign (Rena Kläder) does not support the idea of consumption boycotts saying that if we do not buy what is manufactured in the developing countries this only leads o that the companies in the end stop manufacturing in these countries. According to Rena Kläder this leads to that the workers, whose situation we aim to help, instead end up being unemployed, which is only negative.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Hilowitz 1997:4

<sup>106</sup> Kruijtbosch 1995:1ff

<sup>107</sup> Gay 1998:84

<sup>108</sup> Boyden et al 1998:305fff

<sup>109</sup> Blomqvist 1998:104f

<sup>110</sup> Anti slavery International report :3

A problem with social mobilization is that it can take the wrong direction as in the Bangladesh case. How social mobilization is conceived and implemented can have a large impact on the outcomes for the children. Therefore social mobilizations against child work need to be managed, and it requires sufficient knowledge of how the reality of the working children is so that simplistic assumptions about how the children live are not taken.<sup>111</sup> Antislavery International wrote in the report *Helping business to stop child labour*, that the possible effects of making trade conditional on child work is as seen in the case of Bangladesh, that the effects of the pressure could be counterproductive. Therefore a number of lessons can be learned from this like for instance how the process should ideally be developed. They say that local activist should be involved and that the decisions taken should be based on the actual situation in the country where the children are working.<sup>112</sup> Boyden, Ling and Myers in their book, *What works for working children*, conclude that more research is needed to determine the negative as well as positive effects of child work on the society, as well as on the children. More research is also needed to find out how economic incentives can protect children from harmful work. A weakness of the trade sanctions that I have earlier mentioned is that these do not take into consideration that child work often can be part of a survival strategy for impoverished families. Working children themselves also often agree to this. With such a simplistic view upon how these children live, it is easy that the actions intended to help, instead hurt the children. The case of Bangladesh is one in which the international media's attention paid to the child workers situation, resulted in boycotts, and a threat of import ban. This resulted in that thousands of children were dismissed with nowhere safe to go. After this many local NGOs began questioning the dismissal of children over the age of 12. It was argued that the real problems were the conditions of employment, the hours worked and the fact that these children were not attending school.<sup>113</sup> Boycotts based on social mobilization by civil society can run in to a problem of not being able to distinguish between what are good and bad working conditions for the children involved. According to some it isn't where the children work that should matter but instead the working conditions. When consumer boycotts are initiated in order to exclude children from work in the export sector little is often said about what will happen to

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Ibid

<sup>113</sup> Boyden et al 1998:289ff

these children after their exclusion. The initial thought from the consumer's point of view is often that the children will be put in school instead, but this is as seen in the example with Bangladesh not always the case. NGOs as well as working children themselves often ask consumers from rich countries to take an interest in the welfare of the working children in a more constructive way than through boycotts of products made by poor people.

The actions that earlier have been aimed at child work have often been diverse and spontaneous, and these actions should today be used as an important lesson to plan social mobilization aimed at the eradication of child work. The efforts taken need to be a broad, consciously directed process that is aimed at improving the lives of the poorest and most excluded groups in the society. This process is according to the UNICEF most effective *when it is built on social alliances that share an understanding of the problem, and can agree on goals, benchmarks, time/frames, objectives and strategies. Campaigns or other mobilization efforts must be accompanied by measures that enable families to better protected and provide for their families.* A very important aspect of social mobilization is dialogue, which includes debate, disagreement and negotiation. Information sharing and discussions are elements of effective communication. This builds consensus and unites different sectors of society in the direction of a common purpose, sometimes mediation is needed to bring discussions and debates to agreement. Dialogue is often a way to empowerment, and it may overcome resistance and lead to compromises or new ideas. *Dialogue may be slow but it is sure and the cost of failure is very high.* Interventions from outside without discussions and debates often are either not accepted nor understood by the people they are suppose to help.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> UNICEF 1997:2f

*In this chapter I will present and analyse my fieldwork with the help of my theoretical framework.*

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NGOs have largely led the movement against child work in the world over the past decades. Their persistence and spoken efforts have largely been responsible for the importance of the issues on the international agenda today. Awareness raising and other social mobilization is an essential part of their work.<sup>115</sup> Even though, as I have mentioned before, it is only 5% of the working children that are involved in the production of goods related to the international trade, these 5% are under a lot of focus. The NGOs working with child workers cannot easily avoid the question of what to do with child workers in the export industry. Many of the NGOs that are involved with working children do not believe in direct removal of the children in the export industry. Some say that the right sort of work opportunities in combination with education can be more beneficial to the children than a total exclusion of the children from working in that sector. The NGOs concerned for the working children can find themselves caught between the pressures from various campaigns to ban all children working in the export business, to other pressures who believe that it is better to improve the working conditions.<sup>116</sup> Important when discussing this issue of child workers is also to look at the role of corporate business. Do they have any responsibility other than the responsibility towards their shareholders? Let's look briefly into what Amnesty International says regarding this matter. The human rights issues that companies are confronted with today are larger and more difficult than the environmental issues. Therefore companies have realized that a well organized policy is essential if they are to deal with this issue in a proper way, so that they can avoid being accused of human rights abuses since this can cause damage to the company and by this ruining their reputation, damaging the brand name, getting negative reactions from consumers and investors as well as making it difficult to employ well qualified staff. Even though, as Amnesty points out, it is important to remember that companies are not the *moral arbiters of the world*, and companies are not to take over the role of

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<sup>115</sup> UNICEF 1997:5f

<sup>116</sup> Boyden et al 1998:288ff



the state in the country where they work.<sup>117</sup> The private sector however is an increasingly important player in the issue of eliminating child work, corporate responsibility is more and more seen as a good business. Many employers' organizations are mobilizing their members and industries to improve efficiency by introducing practices that increase the motivation for hiring adult workers instead of children. The way of doing this is mainly through Codes of Conduct and Social Labelling, which I looked closer at in the chapter; *Social mobilization and its importance regarding child work*.<sup>118</sup> There are four main ways for a company to increase profit, cut down on employment costs, increase productivity, enlarge the market, and to speed up the capital turnover.<sup>119</sup> As I also mentioned before, in order to entice foreign capital, governments in the third world countries have created special zones where transnational companies are allowed to work freely, and even get some exceptions from the national laws, especially concerning work regulations. The acceptance of the governments of the developing world to adopt working regulating laws for the transnational companies has had a clearly negative effect on the formation of work unions and regulation of work in many countries. *The transnational companies often say that they contribute to development, but they come to our countries only for one thing- cheap labour. If the labour costs become too expensive they move on. Is that development? Companies are dependent of poor people that remain poor*.<sup>120</sup> On the contrary, sometimes surveys done also show that the transnational companies do often offer better working conditions and working environment than the local companies.<sup>121</sup>

To look deeper into different companies' standpoints, I have interviewed representatives from Ikea, H&M and Indiska (for further presentation of interviews, see chapter 1.7 *Method*). Ikea with the slogan *Low prices but not at any price* claims to have committed themselves to take social and environmental responsibility in the supply chain. They believe that traditional business objectives and social environmental responsibilities can work together to benefit all stake holders. This slogan is reached by the help of Ikeas vision which is; *to create a better everyday life*

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<sup>117</sup> Amnesty International 2001:10ff

<sup>118</sup> UNICEF 1997:7ff

<sup>119</sup> Castells 1996 :92f

<sup>120</sup> Blomqvist 1988:58ff

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

for the many people. Ikea, like H&M, has developed codes of conduct. Ikeas code of conduct is named; *The Ikea way on purchasing home furnished products* and as a special supplement to this Ikea has also developed the *Ikea way on preventing child labour*. Their code of conduct is based on: *UN declaration of human rights from 1948*, the *International Labour Organization declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work 1998* and the *Rio declaration on sustainable development 1992*.<sup>122</sup> Marianne Barner commented on Ikeas vision by saying;... *of course this vision was created while thinking about the company...but to incorporate child labour and other social issues into our vision was no problem for Ikea, whereas other companies have had headaches rewriting their visions...* And continued by saying;... *one of the very crucial things which we believe very much in is being present, I mean that is when we can actually influence and this active business cooperation, trading aid we can put it, that enables us to influence and being able to be part of development and if we leave, I mean we could have left India and Pakistan in 1994 when the wind was blowing very chilly around discussions around child labour, but we would then never have been able to interact and that then would have meant that we were not acting in the best interest of the child...*<sup>123</sup> Veronique Rochet at H&M, also talked about responsibility, and that in H&Ms code of conduct it is written, ...*H&M as a strong multinational company feels that it is increasingly important for us to take responsibility for all our actions, in Europe as well as in the rest of the world. Most importantly we have a responsibility towards the thousands of people taking part in the production of our garments. We have to make sure that nobody whose work is contributing to our success is deprived of his or her human rights, or suffers mentally or bodily harm...* H&Ms code of conduct regarding child work is based on the UN convention on the rights of the child article 32.1. H&M does not accept child work, but also acknowledges that child work can not be eradicated with rules or inspections as long as the children's social situation is not improved.<sup>124</sup> One of the organizations that I interviewed is Bachpan Bachau Andolan, (BBA) also known as South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude was formed in 1980 by Kailash Satyarthi. On SACCS home page one can read *menace of child labour and bonded labour has been widespread and deep rooted all across South Asia the society has accepted it as part*

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<sup>122</sup> A summary of how Ikeas works with social and environmental responsibilities.

<sup>123</sup> Interview at IKEA with Marianne Barner and Vandana Verma, 25 February 2004

<sup>124</sup> H&Ms code of conduct

*of their lives throughout generations. SACCS vision is, to create a child labour free society, where all the children receive quality education, and their mission is to identify, liberate, rehabilitate and educate the children in servitude through direct intervention, coalition building and mass mobilization.*<sup>125</sup> Prabhat Kumarpanth (P.K Roy) working at the SACCS said that the antithesis to poverty, being the main reason for child work is that it is the social economic system of India with the need of cheap labour that is the main factor behind the child work in India. Child work is the cheapest labour he says, and it is unorganised which makes it easier for the employer to control its workforce. He also said that what is needed to reach an end to child work is consciousness of the whole society on the issue of child work, so that if a child is dismissed from one industry because people boycott child work the child cannot move to another job either.<sup>126</sup> Veronique Rochet from H&M also discussed the problem of consumers not being aware of the complexity of child work by saying: *they (read consumers) are not really informed about our policies. They don't know what we want to do if we find children working and why we buy in poor countries. The society in the US and Europe is well organized and we can take care about others, in Asia this is not the issue, not all these countries are so concerned about child labour.*<sup>127</sup>

My interviews have been focused towards the influence that consumers can have today in a globalized world. While conducting my fieldwork many of my interviewees for instance Prabhat Kumarpanth (above) stressed the importance of raising awareness to consumers about child workers as a very important factor for eliminating child work. As read in Chapter *The creation of social mobilisation on the basis of moral issues*, Brohman says that participation, which takes into account the decision making role of the community is a powerful imperative for development. Creating a broad social alliance is a necessary condition for the elimination of child work, the awareness of this problem must reach from the highest levels of global power and influence to the poorest and most powerless communities and families. This also includes all branches and levels of government, civil society organizations, employers and trade unions, consumer groups, the media, families, children, teachers,

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<sup>125</sup> <http://bbasaccs.org/>

<sup>126</sup> Interview at BBA with Prabhat Kumarpanth, 31 Mars 2004

<sup>127</sup> Interview at H&M with Veronique Rochet, 4 Mars 2004

health professionals, social workers and street educators.<sup>128</sup> The use of mass media is also a critical element in spreading ideas and to create new social norms in regard to human rights to a population in a short time. Mass media does seem to strongly influence the consumers as well, if we look at for instance the Bangladesh case. Marianne Barner also commented on the effect of media when saying; *a lot of children in Sweden have got a very wrong view about child labour because of this film that I am referring to that has toured around schools in Sweden without the correct information, now it has been taken away. That was not to act in the best interest of the child, I understand the good purpose and everything about it, but when you think about the consequences for that and what it then causes among many Swedes in that generation, they think that in India and Pakistan everything is made by children and can you imagine something more wrong and also how harmful this is for a country, when what we need to do is instead to buy more so that they get more jobs and then we need other actions all well.* Initially the focus of the media on dramatic situation can raise awareness but it does not always produce the desired response according to the 1997 UNICEF rapport. The Ikea representatives I interviewed however still said that they believe that *a lot of the media attention in the beginning of the 90s proved to be harmful for the children, but at the same time I think it was somehow needed as well to get more people on board, so here I am a bit split perhaps it is so that to get it up on the agenda that trouble was needed. The trouble today I think is that nobody asks you what is going on, to show the complexity, in Sweden we have only had these sensational news about child labour, but no one has really gone in and explained the complexity around this matter.*<sup>129</sup> To reach the correct measures according to the 1997 UNICEF report, in-depth coverage by the media is needed so that the actual information about the long term as well as short term dangers of child work is revealed.<sup>130</sup>

The ILO and IPEC say that child work cannot be solved in isolation but must be tackled in a broad manner through policies and programs which focus on national policy and integrated development, legislative reforms and strengthening of law enforcement, research, data collection and analysis and awareness raising. Further,

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<sup>128</sup> Unicef 1997:5

<sup>129</sup> Interview at Ikea with Marianne Barner and Vandana Verma, 25 February 2004

<sup>130</sup> UNICEF 1997:5ff

mobilization of a broad social alliance of all the partners; governments, employers and workers-organizations, NGOs, academic institutions, the mass media and other professional associations need to be involved in order to develop successful models and strategies. Legislation by itself cannot eradicate child work, but legislation does have an important role especially at a certain stage in a countries development, and to guide initiatives taken towards the elimination of child work.<sup>131</sup> Planned social mobilization can contribute to change because it contributes to a growing consensus on what needs to be changed. There is a growing global consensus that children have to be protected so that neither their physical, mental, moral or psycho-social development is affected, that all children have the right to quality education, removal of all children from the most intolerable forms of labour, giving opportunities to the families so that the adults do not have to rely on the financial contribution of the children. By looking at child work through a human rights perspective this can help to set the question and shape the actions, for example what actions are needed to prevent children from becoming involved in child work; how to transform the education system so that it reaches all the children; how to identify and target immediate actions aimed at the most intolerable form of child work; what support is needed to assist children who are removed from the most intolerable conditions; what strategies are needed to enable families to be able to fulfill their obligations and to claim their rights and what are the most effective ways of reaching the most excluded groups.<sup>132</sup>

The importance of raising awareness at all levels of society against the negative consequences of child work and the importance of investing in the future of the children concerned, is also widely discussed. According to Ikea the awakening of the child work issues to consumers (the world) was thanks to the film made by a report in a number of villages in Pakistan. This film revealed the cruelty of child work and bonded labour. Before this, little was known about the conditions under which the carpets were manufactured.<sup>133</sup> National campaigns are, according to ILO/ IPEC, effective in reaching a broad audience and helping national consciousness on the seriousness of the problem.<sup>134</sup> Also according to Child Workers Asia (CWA), the best

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<sup>131</sup> Antislavery International report:13

<sup>132</sup> UNICEF 1997:4

<sup>133</sup> Amnesty International 2001:20ff

<sup>134</sup> ILO, IPEC 1997:5ff

way to create change is through grassroot involvement and local advocacy.<sup>135</sup> The *National Labour Institute* of India verifies that by saying that *media propagates, disseminates information and creates awareness* and that there is now a need to use the media that it will lead to the development in the implementation of programmes. That in its turn will lead to improving the situation of child workers, media this report states can *create awareness with regard to child labour at different levels, from sensitising people in a subtle manner, showing the problem of child labour and its effect on the child and its future life, media could also motivate people at local level to take action against the employment of children.*<sup>136</sup> Regarding using community mobilization as a measures to eliminate child work, Bhargava the author of the book *The elimination of child labour- whose responsibility?* writes; *community mobilization is a prerequisite for the eradication of child labour*, and she talks about the importance of strengthening women and the need of self help groups for women, since investing in women capabilities and empowering them is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and development.<sup>137</sup> Mr. Pinto from UNICEF also verified the point made by several others, saying that child work cannot be the subject of a single department or even a ministry even though there is a fairly detailed knowledge of the subject. Child work has to be addressed by all, and therefore there is a need to create public awareness not only for disseminating the information about child work. But also it should be designed so that it becomes a contribution to initiate communities and societies to take action to eliminate child work.<sup>138</sup> UNICEF further concludes that the design of social mobilization must be combined with a variety of actions, for example public media campaigns, agreements with local school authorities to facilitate ‘second chance’ schooling for children. Social mobilization strategies must anticipate resistance to change from many of the powerful groups in society.<sup>139</sup> The importance of social mobilization and especially mobilization of the local communities is a factor that as I mentioned before has been stressed by the literature as well as by the people I have interviewed. However, this mobilization needs to be aware of the very complex nature of this issue and that it is the best interest of the child that needs to be in focus. Simply boycotting products made by

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<sup>135</sup> Gay 1998:93

<sup>136</sup> Bhargave 2003:62ff

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> National Labour institute 1992:8f

<sup>139</sup> UNICEF 1997:4

children without providing the children with alternatives is not the right way to deal with this according to most parties. Marianne Barner also emphasized this in the interview by saying...*we don't at all believe in boycotts we think that that is the most dangerous thing we can do and where we harm the children.*<sup>140</sup> As mentioned before social mobilization strategies need to take into account both legal and national policy issues, as well as cultural and behavioural issues at community and family level. Social mobilization that is in the best interest of the child and respect the full rights of the children, clarify the direct relationship between child work and the broader social and economic environments; between the supply of the child work and the demand of it. The social mobilization must also take into consideration how the demand for child work might be linked to globalization and structural adjustment programmes, discriminatory policies and programmes, unfair resource distribution and political interest sometimes help to keep children in bonded labour and exploitation.<sup>141</sup>

Globalization is characterised by economic interests, therefore multinational companies have an important role in the creation of a global market. However, other forces like social mobilization can have an important effect in the creation of a global world. When social mobilizations in the form of boycotts are directed against companies, these companies become very vulnerable, since boycotts can have large effects on the future of companies. People are becoming more aware of the global world, and the influence they can have on it. I do believe that what is needed is better education of the public in the developed countries about the realities of the children in other countries, so that these children can be helped in the best possible way. The economic power of the developed countries can have an enormous effect on the children, with for example financial support of different kinds that are aimed at improving the lives of these children. A risk with globalization as Bauman talks about is that it can lead to globalized elites and the even more localized rest.<sup>142</sup> De Vylder makes a similar point saying that in today's world there is an increasing polarization of nations regarding the aspect of incomes and opportunities and the gap between rich and poor countries is increasing.<sup>143</sup> BBA runs the Mukti Ashram which is a transit and rehabilitation home for children released from bonded labour; at the Mukti Ashram

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<sup>140</sup> Interview at Ikea with Marianne Barner and Vandana Verma, 25 february 2004

<sup>141</sup> UNICEF 1997:5

<sup>142</sup> Bauman:3

<sup>143</sup> De Vylder 2000:22f

the children are prepared for returning home to their families and villages.<sup>144</sup> During my talk with Ms. Suman at the Mukti Ashram she expressed how consumers should act when buying things that are produced in countries where there is a lot of child work. Consumers should ask questions to the companies; ask under what conditions the things they are buying are made, and if the conditions are not good for the workers and if child work exists they should not buy, *As consumers are concerned with the quality of what they buy, and they do not buy bad quality they should also not buy things that are made by children or made under generally bad working conditions.*<sup>145</sup> On this issue of how consumers can influence towards making the working conditions better and to help eliminate child work Mr. Satiyarthi from SACCS, has said that consumers cannot be a passive group and that they can change the whole scenario. According to him, consumers can actually be the most active group. He says that in a nutshell if consumers are sensitised, they can pressure the industries not to employ child workers. If consumers in India were also sensitised to not buy bangles (bracelets), firecrackers etc. prepared by children, change could be brought in the situation of child workers.<sup>146</sup> Veronique Rochet at H&M when asked if there is a lot of pressure from consumers shopping at H&M to know where the products are made said: *I think yeah, because the consumers are very concerned, also because H&M is a very low price company, on the label it is also written where the country of manufacture is, so this also raises a lot of questions on peoples mind.*<sup>147</sup> At Ikea when I asked the question – how do you think that consumers should act then if not with boycotts, in order to help the working children in for instance India? I was given the answer; *Buy buy buy buy buy buy, buy products made in these countries, that is the best thing you can do to contribute to development* – Because child work is a consequence of poverty? *Part of it but I am also of the opinion that child labour causes poverty; It is more complex than only poverty, of course poverty as well.*<sup>148</sup> Reneé Andersson from Indiska when asked - Should child work be abolished or the working conditions bettered? Answered *When it comes to harmful child work we believe that it has to be stopped, when it comes to other forms of child work this is a very complex issue, and every child therefore has to be individually evaluated.*

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<sup>144</sup> Brochure from SACCS

<sup>145</sup> Talk to MS Suman at Mukti Ashram 4 April 2004

<sup>146</sup> Brochure from SACCS

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Veronique Rochet, 4 Mars 2004 at H&M

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Marianne Barner and Vanadana Verma, 25 February 2004 at Ikea



*Boycotts have to be carried out with a great deal of knowledge otherwise, they can cause more harm than benefit for the people they are aimed at helping. To raise the knowledge among consumers about the reality and complexity of child work Indiska always answers questions and also has a brochure called 'child work' in the shops.*<sup>149</sup> Vidyasagar at Global March when asked how he thinks that consumers should act said; *They should be made sensitized about the real situation of the children, the local people should have a saying they know what are the problems they face, and it is the problems that need to be faced, just putting a label won't do much.* But I asked him then - *Would you still recommend consumers to buy from this brands (Rugmark) he answered, it is good but again it is not addressing the source, they should also involve the people who are sending the children to work and look at the root causes. The initiatives taken I believe should come from bottom, up not initiated from top, this is the problem with a lot of the initiatives taken.*<sup>150</sup> According to Indiska what is needed to eventually eliminate child work is *That adults are informed of their rights and also have the chance to use their rights. It is also necessary with a massive change in attitude about child labour in the countries where child work is present. In the meantime we have to work together on eliminating the most hazardous forms of child work. We can only affect the export industry, in the informal sector, children are working in much worse conditions, for example domestic helpers, but by changing the attitude to child work in the export industry eventually also the attitude to child work in the informal sector will change. But it is also of course a question of economy, politics and power.*<sup>151</sup>

The differences between the traditional ideas of childhoods and the modern one can as we saw in chapter two be very different. The newer research points at that we need to pay attention to diversity, cultural relativity and self organizing nature of childhood.<sup>152</sup> The development strategies that are most likely to be of help to children are strategies that gives priority to growth with equality and makes sure that there is a balanced development where all forms of capital, social capital included, as well as respect are taken into account. This approach also stresses the importance of participatory approach, which favours local solutions over large scale, attempts to

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<sup>149</sup> Interview with Reneé Andersson from Indiska

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Vidyasagar Ramamurthy from Global March

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Reneé Andersson from Indiska

<sup>152</sup> Boyden et al 1998:73ff

modernization, which comes “from above”.<sup>153</sup> There are often disagreements between the adults “helping” children and the children who are being “helped”.<sup>154</sup> It has been shown that often when poor families and their children argue against the protective measures taken by others, these disagreements are dismissed with factors like that these families are ignorant and stupid.<sup>155</sup>

In November 2003 the first ever high level talk on the issues of how child work, poverty and education are interlinked and how these issues must be targeted together to eliminate child work was held in Delhi. It was organized by ILO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global March, and the World Bank. In the introductory speech by the director of the World Bank Mr. AD Melkert said; *multilateral and bilateral partners are becoming more aware of their potential to assist governments in setting a social and economic policy framework that will strongly encourage the adoption of a new vision on the future of children and their values for the development of the society as a whole.* During this meeting it was identified that free, compulsory education of good quality is one of the most important factors to successfully end child work at the same time child work is a major obstacle in the aim at ensuring education for all children. Mr. Satiyarthi also commented on the triadic relationship between the three factors; child work, poverty and education, and said that these factors need to be worked out in the specific context of the country otherwise progress will be tardy and poverty will be cited as the prime reason for child work. Also, Fallon talks about a circle where poverty, illiteracy and child work are connected. Economic growth is necessary to combat poverty but it is not sufficient even though child work is one of the most devastating consequences of persistent poverty<sup>156</sup>, economic growth is not enough, the pattern of growth is as important as the rate of growth.<sup>157</sup> The key policy issues that came up at this high level talk were:

1. the elimination of child labour, achievement of quality universal primary education

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<sup>153</sup> De Vylder 1996:41f

<sup>154</sup> Boyden 1999:221f

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

<sup>156</sup> Fallon 1998: v

<sup>157</sup> De Vylder 2000:15f

2. addressing the economic poverty of the families, also that government policies address the overall problems of the labour market and that the lack of access which poor people have to effectively reduce their debt and preventing future indebtedness
3. Government policies need to strive for universal primary education and providing freed former child labourers with education so that they afterwards can enter mainstream education.
4. To address child labour within wider national frameworks such as poverty reduction strategies in the elimination of child workers.
5. Accelerate the mobilization of public opinion against child labour.<sup>158</sup>

I believe that it is not only national measures that can help the child work situation but as Stefan De Vylder talks about macro economic planning needs to take into account the welfare of children as well, their integrity and self-respect. Especially in these times of globalization, social mobilization is an important factor, but the efforts made by societies like all other efforts need to take into account the wishes of the children involved, and take into account the social and economic realities that these children live in. Children need to be looked upon from a holistic point of view where it is not only work, but also school, play, recreation, family life that need to be taken into account. As I read in Gay 1998 which I think is a really good point; *even though a low pay job in Honduras or in the Los Angeles garment district may seem horrible...for many adults and children it is the best choice they have, you don't make someone better off by taking away the best of her bad options.*<sup>159</sup> Education is an important factor. Improving the schooling is important to keep children in a meaningful learning situation. A World Bank study reviewed that out of 105 million Indian children supposed to go to school (in the ages 6-10) there were 33 million children not going to school. One out of five Indian children who start school does not finish primary education. The World Bank points out that schooling for the poor is the single most important development factor. They take as an example the Indian state Kerala that in the last 40 years have succeeded best out of all the states to reduce poverty, due to improved schooling.<sup>160</sup> The World Bank believes that solutions that go beyond the

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<sup>158</sup> Global March 2003:1ff

<sup>159</sup> Gay 1998:77

<sup>160</sup> Berg, Karlsson 2000:65-6

conventional thinking are needed. Programs aimed at improving the welfare of working children can not be successful unless they are based on relatively accurate knowledge of the magnitude, nature, and effects of child work and the needs, constraints and opportunities of the target group (children themselves as well as their families).<sup>161</sup> To merely remove children from exploitative situations is not the answer to a problem that is so deep rooted and concealed. According to Child Workers in Asia efforts are needed to adapt school access and school hours to the needs of the working children, to transform children's employment *from more to less detrimental, from full-time (over-time) to part time, from harmful to neutral or even beneficial*. Children in the labour market must be incorporated in efforts to achieve better working conditions, and trade unionists should support these efforts rather than insisting that they should not be working. Paradoxically, they say, it will most likely be much easier *to achieve such improvements for children in formal-sector employment and in the commercial sector than for those working in informal-sector occupations and particularly those in the isolated conditions of domestic work, whether in their own homes or as domestic servants*). *Those 'hidden' forms of child labour, in the end, represent the most difficult challenge of all.*<sup>162</sup> Other measures that are mentioned to actually combat child work and to do this with regard to the best interest of the child are:

1. Modify parents' attitudes with respect to the need of health, education recreation for children; inculcate appropriate values with respect to rights of children and responsibility of parents, special strategy is needed to emphasize girls' education and vocational training.
2. Provide neighbourhood childcare-service so that girls are not retained at home for babysitting when mother goes to work
3. Use mass media for creating awareness with respect to the needs of the children and the rights of children and awareness with respect to exploitative child labour.
4. Strengthen employment generation, minimum wage and such other programmes to provide employment for men and women in the family.

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<sup>161</sup> Fallon 1998:14

<sup>162</sup> <http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/vol12-4/interest.htm>

5. Reorganize implementation of legislation pertaining to child labour and plan for rehabilitation of ex-child labour.
6. Cooperation of government and voluntary organizations including trade unions and strong activist lobby is needed to eradicate child labour completely.<sup>163</sup>

Point number five made in this list by Kanhere regarding the importance that laws have, was also stressed in the Ikea interview by Marianne Berner who said: *the whole start of the focus on child labour issues I would say on a broader scale, it was in fact this constitution that came in 1989 (read UN convention on the rights of the child) it is very much a 90s phenomenon that we at all are discussing child labour on a international level. I think it is interesting because I feel very much that it is very much thanks to this convention and it shows what a role a convention like this one can have.*<sup>164</sup>

Berg and Karlsson in their book *I Asiens tid*, go back to the Ferozabad, India, where they had been in the 70's and seen children working in the bangles manufacturing industry, when they now returned in the late 90's, almost 30 years later, they are not able to find any children in the factories. Talking to people in the city they are told that the children are still working but they mostly now work nightshifts and in unregistered sweatshops where child work can not so easily be found. The reasons for this are traceable to the international pressure, and sharper legislation against child work. They conclude that the major difference to their visit 30 years earlier is that now the children are hidden. It is the poverty that forces the children to work and the poverty is still existing in India. In India the economic growth has in the last decades expanded, even though if not as fast as in South East Asia, this has lead to a reduction of poverty in India. However if we look at what is the existential minimum when it comes to provisions, which is 2400 calorie, 320 million Indians cannot afford to get the provisions needed to get to this calorie intake.<sup>165</sup> *There are enough resources in this world to satisfy all the basic needs of mankind, but not enough to satisfy the*

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<sup>163</sup> Kanhere 1993:29f

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Marianne Berner and Vandana Verma, 25 february 2004 at Ikea

<sup>165</sup> Berg, Karlsson 2000:35f+57ff

*greediness of a few. Still it is these peoples hunt for profit, using their power that has controlled the development in the world.*<sup>166</sup>

That awareness of the consumers is needed, is stressed by many, the consumers needs to be correctly informed about the reality of the children and this is already happening but it needs to be on an even larger scale and to involve several actors on different levels to really be able to combat child work as, Marianne Barner said; *The attitude has changed a lot towards child labour since 90's it has been a gradual change in the right direction from all actors. We have had a role mass media has a role; the NGOs have a role all of us have a role to explain this to consumers, that this is not so black and white. The important thing is to address the root causes and then the preventions, the proact. The only thing that we can say is that there is no doubt that less children are working in the carpet industry today, if we take that as an example you can ask any NGO or UNICEF, we have been following this since 94-95 just go there today and see all the children going to school, you only have to see that and that shows a change plus that you see a totally different way of discussing this subject with suppliers with everybody we are not saying that everybody is on board but it is a huge difference, it has taken such a big step when thinking of that it in 94 was never discussed in newspapers.*<sup>167</sup>

While conducting my fieldwork and reading a great deal of secondary material concerning the subject I realized that to address the *addressee* of child work is really difficult (impossible), the reasons for child work are many, the economic systems, the governments, the multinational companies, the consumers and globalization to mention a few. Especially with the increasing globalization, consumers possibility to act and to affect producers and multinational companies have increased. As we have learned though through studying for instance the Bangladeshi case, consumers in order to act in the best interest of the child need to be correctly informed about the realities of the children involved, otherwise the intervention of the consumers can be counterproductive. Therefore mass media also have a moral responsibility in giving the correct information to the consumers.

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<sup>166</sup> Blomqvist 1998:23

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Marianne Barner and Vandana Verma 25 February 2004 at Ikea

If we look back at the key questions asked in the beginning of the paper we can see that consumers can play quite a large role in working for the elimination of child work. There are as we have seen many factors that play in to this, but in today's globalized world consumers have the possibility to act in a way that will suit the best interest of the child. According to some of the people I have interviewed, consumers have a large influence on the multinationals and this should be used to help eliminating child work. Media has a very big role as well, it is important that correct information about the reality of the children is available to consumers and that consumers are sensitized about child work and its consequences for the children involved. The people interviewed all seemed to agree that raising the awareness of the reality that the children live in, is a very important factor to facilitate for consumers to act accordingly. I am aware of that there is not much contradiction in the answer to the keyquestion posed; How people working at NGOs and companies in India believe that consumers best can help working and how do they think that child work can be eradicated. All the parties seem to agree on that the factors. schooling, consumer awarness, senzitizing consumers, the role of the media and addressing the economic poverty of the families, and countries. All the interviewed agree on that boycotts and social labeling do not address the source of the problem, which are factors like politics, power and economics. Community mobilization of the local communities was also mentioned by several as an important factor.

## **-Chapter 5- Conclusion**

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*In this chapter I will provide the reader with a conclusion of the matters discussed in this paper.*

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As we have seen the consumers' possibilities to act have increased with globalization. Boycotts and strikes of different kinds are today powerful ways for the consumers to affect producers (corporations). However, boycotts can also be counterproductive. When the export industry receives too much negative attention and the image of their company is threatened the children are either fired and then have trouble supporting themselves or the production is moved out of the factories and into sweatshops or in to the homes of the families. Hence, it becomes even harder to monitor. Social mobilization, I believe, is an essential element in abolishing child work, but before measures are taken to boycott child work, measures are needed that that will protect the children involved and their families. To eliminate harmful child work, it is important that many different actors work together, trade unions, NGOs, private companies, consumers and governments. Boycotts, import bans, and social clauses must be organised so that they benefit the children and do not harm them. The social, cultural, and economic background of the children needs to be understood and the consequences of these boycotts on children must be investigated. Perhaps the media should investigate more about why children work in the first place, so that consumers are shown the whole complex issue on why children work.

Boycotts are not the solution; instead it is important that the companies that are using labour in countries where child work is present establish effective rehabilitation and preventative measures. Otherwise, the children often end up suffering from the boycotts. In order to help children around the world measure taken must focus on the child's interest. This has to be the central issue of all the different policies concerning working children. Children ought to be treated with full respect of their rights, opinions, potential and individuality. When it concerns working children, the children need to be looked upon with respect for their person as well as for the contributions that they make for their families and communities, as well as from their right and



capacity to shape their own lives. The decisions made about working children have to derive from an in-depth consideration of the children and their work. The approaches taken to help these children should develop as a response to the children's work problems in collaboration with the children and on the basis of what is best for them.<sup>168</sup> As consumers we are always looking to buy products cheaper but I think that consumers who are sensitized about child labour and the harm it can cause for the children would often rather pay a bit of extra money to insure that they were contributing to making the lives of children better. As Ms. Suman at the Mukti Ashram said which I think is a very good point; is that consumers who often are concerned with the quality of the product they are buying also should be concerned about not wanting to buy things that are made under generally bad working conditions. As we have seen throughout the paper simply boycotting might not also be the answer that regards the best interest of the children involved.

As a conclusion I would like to end with a saying I read while doing my research and I think that it is very important to keep in mind while trying to eliminate child work also. *Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not: unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent; the slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.*<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Boyden et al 1998:200ff

<sup>169</sup> Srinivasen 1993:30

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