

*Child Domestic Workers
in Zimbabwe*

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by

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*with Tinashe Pfigu, Jeremiah Chinodya,
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Michael Bourdillon

October 2005

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Foreword	ix
1. Introduction	1
Children's Rights	6
How we think about children and childhood	9
Methods used	11
The Survey Sample	13
2. Forms of engagement in Domestic work	17
Help in the home	17
Helping kin	19
Fostering	23
Formal employment	27
3. Reasons for seeking employment	35
Choice and duress	35
Poverty	38
Sickness and death in the family	41
Broken homes	45
4. Finding a job	49
Reasons for employing children	50
5. Employing Child Domestic Workers	53
Age of worker	53
Willingness to work	53
Contact with family and relatives	54
Working for kin	56
Contracts	57
Education	58
Recommendations	61
6. Conditions of work	63
Complaints	63

Hours of work	63
Payments	66
Kinds of work	68
Working environment	71
Lack of respect	72
Fears of child workers	74
Recommendations	75
7. Living Conditions	79
Recommendations	82
8. Abuse	85
Recommendations	89
9. Clubs for Child Domestic Workers	91
Recommendations	93
10. Conclusion	95
Appendix 1: Tables	99
Appendix 2: Guidelines for Employers of Child Domestic Workers	113

Foreword

Child domestic work has given rise to controversy throughout the world. Many people justify employing children to look after the house as a way of providing an income for poor children and their families. In our situation in Zimbabwe, it is sometimes a route to providing orphans with a means of livelihood. Some children use their labour to fund the expenses necessary to complete their schooling.

Others condemn child domestic work as one of the worst forms of child labour. Child domestic workers are often humiliated and abused, verbally and physically. They often work long hours, with no time when they are formally off duty. They are prevented from completing their education, or from leaving the home of the employer, because they are physically locked into the house. In addition, the pay is often very low as employers want to ensure that they do not have the means to return to their own homes. As a result, their self-esteem is low and their development is impaired.

Professor Michael Bourdillon's study shows both sides of this argument. This work shows that some children see their position in domestic employment as helpful, even to the extent of taking pride in how they have used such a position to see themselves through difficult times. On the other hand, many of the children are working under duress. They are unhappy in their work, and particularly with the lack of respect shown to them by employers and their families.

Children are our future. If someone wants to help a child from a poor family by employing him or her to do tasks in the home, they need to ensure that the child is able to develop – physically, socially, intellectually, and psychologically.

In light of the foregoing, Save the Children Norway-Zimbabwe supported the work of the Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union and the research process spearheaded by Professor Bourdillon because of our passion and commitment to Zimbabwe's children. It is imperative for SCN to support work for and with children as this forms the core of our values.

This book points to areas to which those who employ children need to pay particular attention. It also serves to remind us of our respon-

sibilities to the young in our society, and especially to those children who suffer harsh treatment, so compounding the traumas they have already experienced in their troubled lives.

Lois Mushonga

Country Director: Save the Children (Norway)
Zimbabwe, 2005