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## Forced Child Labor in El Salvador: Contemporary Economic Servitude

### Abstract

In 2005, over half of the rural population in El Salvador was living on less than U.S. \$2 dollars per day (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2003: 42). The harsh reality of economic subsistence obligates children in El Salvador to contribute to their family's survival. Employers providing this frail economic lifeline inevitably acquire control over the children. This economic control is a prominent aspect of contemporary slavery and is manifested through violence or exploitation. The enslavement of children in El Salvador not only steals their youth and opportunity to receive an education, but it also places innocent beings into a dangerous work force.

### Keywords

Human rights, Slavery, Contemporary slavery, Child labor, El Salvador

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## Forced Child Labor in El Salvador: Contemporary Economic Servitude

By Michelle Doherty

In 2005, over half of the rural population in El Salvador was living on less than U.S. \$2 dollars per day (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2003: 42). The harsh reality of economic subsistence obligates children in El Salvador to contribute to their family's survival. Employers providing this frail economic lifeline inevitably acquire control over the children. This economic control is a prominent aspect of contemporary slavery and is manifested through violence or exploitation. The enslavement of children in El Salvador not only steals their youth and opportunity to receive an education, but it also places innocent beings into a dangerous work force.

This essay addresses the problem of forced child laborers in El Salvador, along with the government's failed enforcement of legislation, and binding international laws. Solutions to the complex problem of contemporary economic enslavement in El Salvador call for a broad-based collaborative effort linking legal structures to educational advancement.

### The Worst Forms of Child Labor in El Salvador

The enslavement of youth is an all too common attribute of the informal employment sector, where some of the worst forms of child labor are encountered. These seldom regulated industries employ a disproportionately high percentage of children. In El Salvador, the agricultural sector is responsible for fifty-one percent of all forced child labor. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the second most prominent employer of marginalized, underage youth is the service industry at 35 percent.

#### *The Agricultural Industry*

In El Salvador, children's forced agricultural work is commonly unacknowledged due to its interconnectedness with culture, tradition, and overall way of life. Many of the children who work alongside their family members are not paid; rather, they are seen as *ayudantes*, or "helpers."

Sugarcane harvesting is recognized as one of the worst forms of child labor under the Worst Forms of Child Labour [*sic*] Convention, held in 1999. This agricultural industry in El Salvador has a dominant presence of forced child laborers, particularly in the most dangerous part of the harvesting process known the *zafra*, or cutting. The underage *zafra* workers are often given food rather than monetary compensation for their time. Within the rural population, females, impoverished children, and young adults have the highest risk by participating in this hazardous agricultural practice.

Failure to understand risks, immaturity, and a lack of experience are common causes of emotional, mental, and physical harm among child laborers. Aggravated health issues in sugarcane production involve skin exposure to irritants, headaches, respiratory problems, physical overextension, and lacerations with sharp tools. Many of the youth economically enslaved in the *zafra* are not listed as employees, and consequentially they are not eligible for medical aide if injured.

### *The Service Industry*

The domestic sector in El Salvador is guilty of enslaving children within the service industry. Children are specifically at risk of isolation and a power imbalance, both of which can result in psychological and physical abuse. Forced confinement and familial economic pressures inhibit the report of abuses to peers or family members. Females are most at risk, as they comprise ninety-five percent of all forced child domestic workers in El Salvador. Forced domestic labor is considered to be one of the worst forms of child labor by the 1999 Convention, but El Salvador has decided to not consider it a priority, possibly due to difficulties in enforcement.

### *Connection between Education and Child Labor*

The economically marginalized population is in a position of contemporary servitude that incites undesirable and disheartening consequences. One of these includes placing a child in the work force rather than in school. In El Salvador, although legally compulsory, primary education is not accessible, affordable, or even feasible for many families, particularly in the rural area.

Child labor studies, when compared with school enrollment rates, demonstrate that many Salvadorian children attempt to manage a low paying job while attending elementary school. Child agricultural workers miss an incredible number of school days during the harvest season. Due to physical exhaustion or time constraints, children often decide to stop attending class altogether. Not surprisingly, the average education level reached by the Salvadorian population is only the fifth grade.

In rural Salvadorian regions where forced child labor is prevalent, poor educational institutions are commonplace and do not necessarily facilitate actual education. Even if a family can make the economic sacrifice to send their children to school, this decision weighs heavily on the quality of education to be provided. If certain standards are not reached, “from the perspective of impoverished parents, sending children to school is seen as nothing but a waste of time and money” (Arat 2002: 188).

### **Legal Framework**

Aside from passing legislation, the government of El Salvador has historically demonstrated little, if any, genuine interest in eradicating forced child labor. The labor codes in El Salvador are mostly in agreement with the Minimum Age Convention of 1973, which was ratified in 1996. This Convention permits flexibility regarding minimum age restrictions for work in countries like El Salvador, which has not sufficiently developed its economy or educational facilities. This flexibility is seen as an opportunity for complacency in enforcement.

One of the government’s most recent aspirations has been to eradicate hazardous contemporary slavery by the year 2015. This decision followed the ratification in 2000 of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, which was established in 1999. El Salvador is now responsible for eliminating all forms of hazardous child labor which are considered harmful to adolescent health and physical development or as intrusive to children’s education. In this Convention, each state has the discretion

to define the parameters of hazardous child labor. El Salvador considers the following as hazardous labor for children: commercial sex work, work in garbage dumps, fishing/shellfish harvesting, sugarcane farming, and firework production.

El Salvador's proposal includes policy interventions that are conducive to the eradication of child labor in combination with community-based service activities. The national plan for implementation focuses on the legal framework, institutions, educational intervention, health care, recreational and cultural activities, income generation, and communication-awareness campaigning.

### *Difficulties with Enforcement*

A poor infrastructure and dire economic conditions are the excuses most prevalently used by the state for its apparent failure to respond to issues of child labor. Other challenges include the illusiveness of the informal economy where the majority of child laborers are forced to work. The repressed voice of children and their "patrimonial invisibility" pushes them out of the legal realm of prosecution (Brysk 2005).

Multi-national corporations are also culprits, undermining adherence to child labor regulations in El Salvador. The overwhelming favoritism and blind support provided to these wealthy foreign investors creates a highly unregulated informal economy. These work "opportunities" perpetuate forced child labor. Financial oppressors have more than sufficient power and money to pressure El Salvador to enforce national and international laws concerning child labor. The more important question is: if they have the capacity to indirectly force the government to be respectful of children, what holds them back?

### **Proposed Solutions**

Education and economics are two themes that continuously reappear within different sustainable solutions. These proposals create an environment in which the eradication of contemporary enslavement of children becomes a possibility. El Salvador's plans for socio-economic development must integrate educational opportunities, broad based community participation, and positive policy improvements with guarantees of enforcement. All constituents must take part in the solution, cooperation, and progress among governments, employers, and workers who provide valuable attributes necessary for the elimination of forced child labor.

Rapid economic growth is a poverty reduction method which concomitantly reduces the prevalence of forced child labor. The relevant factors for change, like urbanization and the importance of agriculture, are of deep concern. These "improvements" tend to incite migration toward an urban center and redirect cultural focus away from traditional agricultural products in order to create a larger income. The core issues of forced child labor are not addressed by this method.

Flexible or transitional schooling is a possible alternative for children forced to work for survival. Unfortunately, this program requires a substantial monetary investment and integration into the national school system. This option is claimed to be out of the realm of economic possibilities.

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are a specific solution used to address the root of poverty in order to eliminate child labor and to encourage the enrollment of children in educational facilities. The allure of child servitude is reduced through monetary incentives that are directly related to a child's attendance and performance in school. Forced child labor is reduced, and a child's education is advanced through this program. However, this proposal is vulnerable to critiques about its high economic commitment, extended duration of the project, and the actual quality of education.

## Conclusion

El Salvador's system of economic servitude is cyclical: "child labor is both a cause and a symptom of poverty" (UNESCO 2004: 10). This contemporary enslavement and its restrictions on children's health, education, and development in El Salvador are examples of the ways in which the governing system's failures perpetuate violations against children. Whether utilizing direct or indirect intervention, a broad-based collaborative effort by the international community is in order. Salvadorian children have the right to not work in hazardous environments. They also have the right to an education and to a healthy physical development. We have a legal and moral commitment to empower children's desperate demands for justice.

## Selected Bibliography

### *Child Labor and Poverty*

Arat, Zehra F. 2002. "Analyzing Child Labor as a Human Rights Issue: Its Causes, Aggravating Policies, and Alternative Proposals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 24 (1):177.

Annotation: What are the root causes of child labor? This article successfully examines this implicitly complicated global issue from a passionate, yet realistic point of view. The author begins by describing diverse economic and moral concerns of child labor critics. A more prominent apprehension expresses that child labor perpetuates poverty by depriving children of an education and a healthy physical development. The author strongly critiques simplistic efforts towards the eradication of child labor and supports the argument through an investigation of the realm of actors that are involved in perpetuating child labor at the global scale.

Bales, Kevin. 2000. Disposable People. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Annotation: Slavery, whether new or old, is intertwined into the international economy and thus thrust into the lives of the globe's population. This book does a wonderful job explaining the reality and context of contemporary slavery. The underlying theme around this exploitation is economics. Due to the cheapness of today's slave labor, people have become disposable. The book uses case studies from distinct continents in order to explain modern slavery, and it concludes with valuable suggestions for what can be done to end this perpetual exploitation of human beings.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Annotation: This book gives a brief description of the history of slavery and then leads into a discussion about contemporary issues. This “how-to” guide gives useful advocacy advice from an experienced perspective and includes distinct examples of instances in which slaves have been saved. Chapter eight discusses the importance of ending poverty in order to end slavery and determines that their relative successes are interrelated. The author emphasizes another relationship, that between economy and slavery, where the latter has an unexpectedly depressing monetary effect on any nation. The conclusion focuses on increasing awareness and the better utilization of resources, both of which are vital in the fight to eradicate slavery.

Cortes, Rosalia. 2007. “Remittances and Children’s Rights: An Overview of Academic and Policy Literature.”

[http://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/files/Remittances\\_And\\_Childrens\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/files/Remittances_And_Childrens_Rights.pdf).

Annotation: Can remittances reduce poverty and child labor? This working paper attempts to address the growing belief that remittances can contribute to progress in social development. The author is specifically concerned about the residual effects on children’s and women’s rights. Little data exists on the social impact of remittances, but anthropological case studies reveal a range of negative effects of migration. Remittance flows can increase income, but this pressures others to emigrate; as a result, children are left behind and in vulnerable positions where exploitation may increase without the presence of a parental guardian.

Global March Against Child Labour. 2005. “Worst Forms of Child Labour Data: El Salvador.”

<http://www.globalmarch.org/worstformsreport/world/el-salvador.html>.

Annotation: This brief statistical report provides important information regarding issues relevant to the worst forms of child labor. The simplistic statistical information offers documentation links for further investigation. An overview is presented that is specific to El Salvador, including all forms of child labor that are considered under the Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The data expresses the prevalence of child labor in multiple sectors of the informal economy. Related topics on child slavery, trafficking, and prostitution are also included. This document gives useful information, but primarily serves to direct the reader to specific sources for more detailed investigation.

Human Rights Watch. 2004. “Turning a Blind Eye: Hazardous Child Labor in El Salvador’s Sugarcane Cultivation.” 16 (2 (B)).

Annotation: This report begins by reviewing country-specific information with regard to sugarcane production. The author then assesses sugarcane’s relative importance to the local

economy in El Salvador, as well as typical illegal practices seen in the fields. The international laws prohibiting these incidents are mentioned, but more focus is directed towards the root causes of the presence of child labor in sugarcane fields, and to the direct consequences of these causes. The origins of child labor and the culprits that perpetuate it are described and critiqued in this report. This case study could be useful for a wider comparison between regions where child labor is a common occurrence or an economic necessity.

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\_\_\_\_\_. 2006. "Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around The World." 18 (7 (C)).

Annotation: This detailed report assesses international and national bodies concerning widespread criminal offenses committed against domestic workers. It also addresses possible methods that can be used to combat these abuses. Children often find themselves working as domestic laborers where, according to the International Labour Organization, some of the worst forms of child labor are encountered. The ramifications like denial of education and separation from family are described and are exemplified through country specific accounts. In the conclusion, the author demands that action is taken to reduce this hidden and often unprosecuted violence. These demands are supported by suggested plans of action.

International Labor Rights Fund. 2004. "Legal, Political and Practical Obstacles to the Enforcement of Labor Laws in El Salvador." (March).  
<http://www.laborrights.org/files/POLICYElSalvadorLaborLaws.pdf>

Annotation: The International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) completed an exhaustive case study in El Salvador, where typical labor practices and laws were the focus. The findings include discrimination in employment, forced labor, and the use of child labor, which is defined as pervasive in this context. This study reviews and condemns some of the worst forms of child labor, which include sex work, fishing/shellfish harvesting, sugarcane farming, work in garbage dumps, and fireworks production. The difficulties in complying with the law reflect a lack of interest on the government's behalf, the poverty crisis, and family perceptions of work and education.

International Labor Rights Fund, and CENTRA. 2005. "Labor Conditions in the Sugar Industry in El Salvador." (May). [http://ilrf.org/publications/elsalvador\\_sugar.pdf](http://ilrf.org/publications/elsalvador_sugar.pdf)

Annotation: One of the worst forms of child labor is in sugarcane production in El Salvador. These conditions are explained in meticulous detail in this article. This study provides quantitative information about the demographics of employees and typical working conditions in the context of sugarcane cultivation, production, and exportation. The analysis details wage comparisons, job types, education levels, possibilities for union organization, and the international market. Child labor was only found in the cultivation step known as cutting, where the monetary compensation is often supplemented with payment in food. The lowest level of formal education is also found among the "cutters."

International Labour Office. 2003. "Working out of Poverty."

<http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/kd00116.pdf>.

Annotation: The International Labor Office (ILO) states that child labor is a cause and a symptom of poverty, which, in turn, is a trap for families. This lengthy report addresses and critiques this vicious system and some of the structural failures that cause it. The ILO contends that "working out of poverty" requires the identification of issues like child labor, school attendance, low wages, and informal economies. The overall proposal details many solutions relating to education, economics, and development strategies, but the ILO stresses that success is not probable without a broad-based community effort.

International Labour Organization. 2007. "IPEC Action against Child Labour: Progress and Future Priorities." <http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=7650>.

Annotation: This progress report of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) presents a hopeful sign of advancement. This worldwide update on the reduction of child labor explicates successful strategies, the benefits of tripartite cooperation, and organizational issues. The central thematic foci provide extensive detail on children in the agricultural sector, the relationship between employers' and workers' organizations, and conditional cash transfers (CCTs). This report affirms that child labor concerns must be integrated into the structural components of socio-economic development on a national and global scale in order to ensure progress.

Lobe, Jim. 2004. "Sweet and Sour." (June 23). <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=11379>.

Annotation: CorpWatch is a non-profit organization whose aim is to hold corporations, particularly multinationals, accountable for their actions. This article in particular focuses on the sugarcane industry in El Salvador and on Coca-Cola's indirect benefits of utilizing child labor. Coca-Cola does not purchase their sugar from the plantations where child labor is rampant. Rather, they buy from El Salvador's largest refinery, where sugar harvested by children is sent for processing. This article criticizes Coca-Cola's response to a Human Rights Watch report in which multinational corporations were blamed for indirectly supporting child laborers in a dangerous workplace. The company claimed that they would strengthen their outreach programs and monitor enforcement activities. CorpWatch criticized the company for avoiding a concrete solution.

Manacorda, M., and F. C. Rosati. 2007. "Local Labor Demand and Child Labor." In *Understanding Children's Work Project* Rome: UNICEF.

Annotation: This working paper argues that increasing the labor demand to curtail poverty may actually have negative repercussions on children of a particular age group. This determination is based on economic theory and empirical research on children's time allocation in relation to local labor demands in urban and rural regions. In this study, where a strong demand for labor existed, an increased participation among children was found. However, no official change in school enrollment was noted. Further investigation reveals that it was not younger children (ages ten to twelve) who responded to this work incentive, but rather those ages thirteen to fifteen who responded. This is speculated to be caused by parental consideration regarding an appropriate age for work.

U.S. Department of Labor: Office Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2000. "Knocking Down the Barriers: By the Sweat and Toil of Children."  
<http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/media/reports/iclp/sweat6/overview.htm>.

Annotation: This document is the fifth in a series of reports on specific aspects of child labor that was requested by the United States Congress. The focus of this document is on greatly reducing barriers that inhibit the elimination of child labor. This process was initiated in 1992 with the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). This report focuses on the continual motivation of a broad alliance of world-wide partners. Target projects that have specifically addressed these discriminatory barriers are explicated, and provide regional suggestions. Child labor and poverty are inevitably bound together; the appropriate allocation of state resources is one possible solution.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2007. "2006 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor."  
<http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/PDF/2006OCFTreport.pdf>.

Annotation: This comprehensive global report on child labor proves to be logical and useful for comparative studies. Over one hundred country profiles provide quantitative data on child labor and education. The qualitative explanations include the following: the incidence and nature of child labor, child labor laws and enforcement, current governmental policies, and programs designed to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. A glossary is included that defines necessary technical terminology, international laws, and current programs. The country-specific indicators described here illuminate sectors in which improvement is needed. The authors emphasize that a collaborative effort is vital to the elimination of child labor in its worst forms.

UNICEF. 2007. "Women and Children, The Double Dividend of Gender Equality: The State of the World's Children 2007."

[http://www.unicef.org/pfo/files/2007\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_Worlds\\_Children.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pfo/files/2007_State_of_the_Worlds_Children.pdf).

Annotation: This annual update by UNICEF addresses the duality of the world with regard to gender-based opportunities; it calls for the enforcement of equality. A cycle of gender-based discrimination is investigated through regional comparison. The central argument focuses on distinctions between opportunities in politics and government, education, the household, and employment. The lack of possibilities available to women creates a double dividend; the repercussions are determining factors in human development. Children suffer when women are denied opportunities, but they prosper when women are empowered. UNICEF expresses the importance of the relationship between gender and development, as the female population is plagued by discrimination, disempowerment, and poverty.

### *Education*

Guarcello, L., S. Lyon, and F. C. Rosati. 2006. "Child Labor and Education for All: An Issue Paper." In *Understand Children's Work Project*. Rome: UNICEF.

Annotation: The information presented in this article argues that "education of good quality up to the minimum age for entering into employment – is a key element." The authors use an uncommon but effective quantitative analysis to provide greater global understanding of the relationship between child labor and education. Some of the comparisons made include school attendance of children working in a family versus a non-family economic activity. An essential conclusion of the data redirects the focus strictly from school attendance records to academic achievement, which is a more descriptive indicator about the effects of child labor on education. The evidence that leads to the conclusion supports suggestions for policy design changes.

López, Ramón, and Alberto Valdés. 2000. "Fighting Rural Poverty in Latin America: New Evidence of the Effects of Education, Demographics, and Access to Land." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 49 (1):197-211.

Annotation: Using case studies in Latin America, this article investigates differences in education levels, land distribution, and family size between rural and urban populations. The authors are interested in theories about why the poor are poor; they explicate the relationship between low levels of poverty and education. This study illustrates that even if the rural population were to receive an education, the return, or economic gain, would be insignificant unless a non-agricultural, urban job was attained. If migration to an urban center was not desired, the significance of an education could only result in the slight transition from extreme poverty to poverty.

Melchiorre, Angela. 2004. "At what age?..." In *The Right to Education Project*, edited by D. Wilson: Right to Education.

Annotation: This country intensive report completed by the Right to Education organization thoroughly analyzes the national legislation of children's rights, and compares it with the reality of each country. A comprehensive report is given describing the following: the age at which children are legally bound to complete a primary education, when they can begin to work, to marry, and to be incarcerated. This information becomes a useful tool for comparing global issues concerning children's rights and the discord between national legislation and reality. A strong link between the minimum age of employment and the completion of a compulsory primary education is exemplified through this research.

Rosati, F. C., and S. Lyon. 2006. "Non-Formal Education Approaches for Child Labourers: an Issue Paper." In *Understanding Children's Work Project*. Rome: UNICEF.

Annotation: This article addresses one of the complexities inherent in the relationship between child labor and education. One possible solution, a transitional education, considers children and their economic necessity in impoverished environments. The rationale behind programs like flexible schooling and transitional education is described in this article. Although these strategies are labeled as critical for children, they are difficult to maintain due to financial limitations and due to problems concerning their integration into the traditional system of education. A diverse range of successful non-formal educational programs is presented with clarifications made about their focus. The authors see these programs as necessary in order to provide education and to reduce child labor globally.

Rosati, F. C., and M. Rosati. 2007. "Impact of School Quality on Child Labor and School Attendance: the case of CONAFE Compensatory Education Program in Mexico." In *Understanding Children's Work Project*. Rome: UNICEF.

Annotation: This article investigates the effectiveness of a poverty reduction strategy that has been implemented in Mexico, which aims to reduce the prominence of child labor and to increase school attendance. The framework of this program, which is used primarily in rural impoverished regions, is detailed and then questioned. One of the solutions involves a contingent cash transfer, which provides monetary incentives for school attendance and performance. The economic value of school attendance is twenty-two per cent higher than a typical rural wage, and thus positively reinforces education. The article, although emphasizing the relative success of the program, identifies an underlying problem with the quality of the education being received.

U.S. Department of Labor. “An Economic Consideration of Child Labor: By the Sweat and Toil of Children,”

[http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/media/reports/iclp/sweat6/sweat6\\_html/sweat6\\_chap\\_1.html](http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/media/reports/iclp/sweat6/sweat6_html/sweat6_chap_1.html).

Annotation: This document is the sixth in a series of reports requested by the United States Congress on specific aspects of child labor. Interestingly, it investigates economic benefits to be attained through the elimination of child labor while simultaneously increasing enrollment in educational facilities. The economic benefits described are encountered on the global level but also specifically in individual countries. Statistical data is presented that shows how in countries where school enrollment is higher, the prevalence of child labor is significantly lower. The report attempts to persuade an audience with strong economic concerns that monetarily, the elimination of child labor would positively affect economic growth.

UNESCO. 2000. “The Right to Education, Towards Education throughout all Life.” In *World Education Report*. <http://www.unesco.org/education/information/wer/PDFeng/wholewer.pdf>

Annotation: This overwhelmingly extensive but equally valuable report emphasizes the importance of the universal right to education and its significance in building peace worldwide. The report explores basic primary education, the value of literacy, and lifelong learning. An explanation is given suggesting how to provide free primary education, and the most successful methods for doing so are provided. This section concludes by reporting some of the improvements that have been made by specific countries in providing free primary education. However, these developments are often undermined by national legal limitations.

———. 2003. “Gender and Education, The Leap to Equality for All.” [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa\\_report/summary\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa_report/summary_en.pdf).

Annotation: This lengthy report is centered on Education for All (EFA), and more specifically on equality in the opportunity for an education. Literacy rates are detrimentally affected by those who don’t have access to education, as they are for children who leave school prematurely. Work is the primary reason why children are held back from obtaining an education. This situation is shown to change where economic development increases, as child labor is a result of poverty. The conclusion highlights initiatives for improving gender equality, which reciprocally would improve educational opportunities for women.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2004. “Global Education Digest 2004: Comparing Education Statistics across the World.” [http://www.unesco.org/education/docs/EN\\_GD2004\\_v2.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/docs/EN_GD2004_v2.pdf).

Annotation: This report is a statistical analysis that compares many elements of institutionalized education on a global scale. The quantitative information spans pre-primary to tertiary levels of education and includes details about access and completion of schooling. The state has a legal

commitment to provide compulsory education, but failures are often excused due to monetary difficulties. UNESCO found an extremely low level of state-sponsored economic support through a comparison of educational expenditures as a percentage of GDP. This document can be used as an operational tool to determine where progress is possible through universal primary education, which would reduce education-based exclusion in adulthood.

The World Bank. 2007. "Raising Student Learning in Latin America."

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Raising\\_Student\\_Learning\\_in\\_LAC\\_Document.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Raising_Student_Learning_in_LAC_Document.pdf).

Annotation: This extensive World Bank Report decidedly focuses on the essence of education in Latin America and theorizes its importance. Economic, political and social conditions are considered interrelated in the structural system of education. Primary school attendance has improved tremendously in recent years, but this study emphasizes the more prevalent significance of educational quality. The current challenge seen in the Latin American region is in providing tertiary education indiscriminately; family wealth is demonstrated as a clear advantage. The study aspires to link an increase in educational spending with resulting economic growth, which in turn could reduce social and economic inequalities.

### *Legal Structure and Possible Solutions*

Betcherman, Gordon, Jean Fares, Amy Luinstra, and Robert Prouty. 2005. "Child Labour and Access to Education." In Human Rights and Development, Towards a Mutual Reinforcement. Edited by P. Alston and M. Robinson. New York: Oxford University Press.

Annotation: The focus of this book is the development of human rights and inherent challenges that accompany this process in the private sector and within legal and economic issues. The third chapter contains many graphs which support the authors' conclusion that the most sustainable losses children incur while working are correlated to their health and education. In order to ensure a truly effective policy change, an understanding must be reached about how children commonly work alongside their parents. The final statement firmly claims that the incidence of child labor is directly related to poverty.

Brysk, Alison. 2005. Human Rights and Private Wrongs: Constructing Global Civil Society. New York: Routledge.

Annotation: The author of this book asserts that globalization now affects almost every aspect of our lives, regardless of our geographic location. The third chapter is comprised of investigations of the effects globalization has on children, who are in a particularly vulnerable position. The author reflects on the idea that children should theoretically be entitled to a wider range of rights than adults, but claims that their "patrimonial invisibility" pushes them out of the

legal realm. This insightful proposal concludes by providing various institutional instruments that could be useful in eradicating child labor.

Human Rights Watch. 2003. "Deliberate Indifference: El Salvador's Failure to Protect Workers' Rights." New York City.

Annotation: Why is El Salvador so indifferent to labor laws and practices? This report claims that employers are aware of the laws' weaknesses and the government's apathetic attitude towards compliance, so they take advantage of the system's deficiencies. Lack of enforcement could be caused by resource constraints, privatization, or the power of globalization. The case studies analyzed present examples of the difficulties workers confront in contrast with the companies, which often act in overall disregard for basic law or human rights. Global powers such as the United States, which direct millions of dollars in development assistance and yet take no definite action towards obvious violations, are sternly criticized.

———. 2003. "El Salvador: Government Ignores Widespread Labor Abuse." (December 4)  
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/12/04/elsalv6557.htm>

Annotation: The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which involves the United States and El Salvador, among others, was said to have strong implications for assuring labor rights. This article follows up on a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report that offered recommendations for rectifying serious human rights violations. HRW strongly criticizes CAFTA for its informalities, since it requires no international legal standards on child labor. The article details current "inexcusable" violations that were documented in a previous on-site visit to El Salvador where recommendations were given for change. HRW concludes by forewarning a continued abuse of human rights and international laws, primarily due to CAFTA's encouragement.

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. 2005. "Pro-Poor Growth in the 1990s."  
[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPGI/Resources/342674-1119450037681/Pro-poor\\_growth\\_in\\_the\\_1990s.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPGI/Resources/342674-1119450037681/Pro-poor_growth_in_the_1990s.pdf).

Annotation: This report proposes economic strategies for the reduction of poverty, which is established through a comparative study of fourteen countries. The author directs this work primarily to policy makers, and provides many recommendations for successful pro-poor growth approaches. Relevant factors for growth include urbanization, income equality, climate, fertility, institutions, and the importance of agriculture. The report suggests general policy options to raise the income of the poor, improve investment climate, increase female education, design labor market regulations, and increase available infrastructure. The underlying theme of the report's overall plan insinuates migration towards urban centers and movement towards non-agricultural employment.

International Labour Office. 2005. "A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour." In Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Edited by International Labour Office. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Annotation: The International Labour Organization (ILO) is continually working to eliminate forced labor; the introduction of this report clarifies the framework being used in the process. The general history of international labor standards is extensively reviewed along with more recent legal implementations. Interesting quantitative and qualitative studies are examined to express the current presence of forced labor on a global scale. The graphic data presented is successful in demonstrating the complexities of forced labor and its regional trends. The ILO then proceeds to recognize the actual problems with eradicating forced labor, such as impunity. The conclusion offers future solutions towards this global problem and proposes improvement in policy, laws, advocacy work, and awareness.

International Labour Organization, and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. 2003. "Entendiendo el Trabajo Infantil en El Salvador." [http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/trabajo\\_infantil\\_elsalvador.pdf](http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/trabajo_infantil_elsalvador.pdf).

Annotation: Providing an understanding of child labor in El Salvador is the main goal of this document. The extensive report begins with the national context in which specific factors are presented that encourage child labor. The report successfully explicates statistical information and transfers the data into qualitative references. Additional factors like education, health, poverty, and culture are investigated in the context of the prevalence of child labor. A section is dedicated towards all of the forms of child labor that El Salvador considers hazardous. All of the legal structures that protect children from forced labor are presented in the hope that the government and the society will encourage, if not demand, their enforcement.

Smolin, David M. 2000. "Strategic Choices in the International Campaign against Child Labor." *Human Rights Quarterly* 22 (4):942-987.

Annotation: The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been actively working on child labor issues since 1919. This article offers an interesting historical account of the ILO's specific goals during its four stages of activism. The definitions of child labor and its "worst" forms, although apparently convoluted, are explicated here to provide a greater understanding both within this article, and in the general context of child labor issues. With the hope of catalyzing improvement, the author critiques the current stage of child labor activism and specifically the 1999 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention by calling it irrational, misdirected, and irresponsible in its priorities and direction.

Soares, Fabio Veras, and Tatiana Britto. 2007. "Confronting Capacity Constraints on Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America: The Cases of El Salvador and Paraguay." Brasilia: International Poverty Centre.

Annotation: Conditional Cash Transfer programs (CCTs) are considered a possible strategy for reducing poverty and for ensuring social protection. This working paper explicates the CCT program in general, and then proceeds with a comparison between levels of effectiveness in El Salvador and Paraguay. Although CCTs can provide basic nutrition, health, and education to the impoverished, the potential for conflict can arise between the short term goal of alleviating poverty and the long-term aspiration of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The authors question the methodology of CCTs due to major weaknesses like sustainable financial resources and institutional constraints, but still indicate the program's considerable success.

Tomasevski, Katarina. 2005. "Globalizing What: Education as a Human Right or as a Traded Service?" *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 12 (1):1-78.

Annotation: The International Human Rights Law, which guarantees a free education and the International Trade Law, which is influenced by globalization, have created two parallel but disconnected regimes. Although primary education may be universally compulsory, the author argues that national governing powers are becoming increasingly complacent. Education has made a transition from being free to being a luxury for those who are less economically fortunate. After reviewing educational opportunities on a global scale, the author concludes with proposals to revert the current bifurcation in education with suggestions for legal and civic action.

U.S. Department of State. 2007. "El Salvador: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006" <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78891.htm>.

Annotation: This government report, written by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, reviews human rights issues in El Salvador in 2006. The section regarding children states that El Salvador claimed to be committed to improving children's rights and welfare, but failed to allocate sufficient resources to do so. Despite this setback, the Ministry of Education coordinated a semi-successful program, APRENDO (to learn), which focused on raising awareness among teachers, students, and parents regarding sexual and commercial exploitation and harmful forms of labor. The report concludes that El Salvador has much room for improvement since child labor is still a widespread and serious problem.

Vides de Andrade, Ana Regina, Anabel la Larde de Palomo, and Lissette Calderon Martinez. 2002. "Geographical Exclusion in Rural Areas of El Salvador: Its Impact on Labor Market Outcomes." Washington D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.

Annotation: This working paper considers the correlation between social exclusion and geographic isolation in El Salvador from a study where micro-level data was obtained. The connection between exclusion and isolation was determined through various factors of the rural area, such as poverty (sixty-one percent ), the average years of schooling completed (3.2), and average labor income (less than minimum wage). Within the rural area, the study found three primary impacts on labor market outcomes: labor force participation, the sector of employment, and labor income. The conclusion reveals that education does not necessarily result in an increased income in geographically isolated regions.