Girl Farm Labour and Double-shift Schooling in The Gambia: the Paradox of Development Intervention

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Abstract

This article examines the intensification of Gambian girls' domestic and farm labour contributions as a result of the introduction of double-shift schooling. Drawing on fieldwork among female farmers and their daughters in Brikama the article puts forth the following arguments: double shift schooling facilitates the intensification and increased appropriation of surplus value from girls' household and farm labour because girls are more readily able to meet gendered labour obligations that are central to the moral economy of the household and to the demands of agrarian production; secondly, double shift schooling highlights the paradoxical nature of development intervention where, on the one hand, legislation and policy call for a reduction in child labour by increasing access to school and, on the other, neo-liberal educational policy serves to facilitate the intensification of girls' domestic and farm labour. It maintains that the intensification of girls' work must be placed within a wider context where children's, particularly girls' cheap, flexible and/or unremunerated labour is central to the functioning of local and global processes of accumulation.

Introduction

When research has been carried out to capture children's views about their working lives, they claim to want to work and have very positive experiences of work. They also see work as 'an inevitable and necessary part of growing up' (Woodhead 1999).[i] Part of this recognition of children's voices stems from an increasing emphasis placed on the importance of listening to children and treating them as agents and social actors in their own right (Miljeteig 1999). Although children may indeed have positive experiences of work, there is a real danger in using children's expressed need and desire to work, and in privileging the centrality of work to processes of socialisation and household livelihood strategies, in failing to understand and appreciate the conditions under which such work may be intensified

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and exploited.[ii] This is particularly the case for children's domestic and unremunerated work, which is not seen as real work, or productive, and is therefore undervalued.

Historically particular types of child labour have been morally judged as more harmful and exploitative than others: nineteenth century European legislation outlawed certain types of waged labour for children that were seen as particularly exploitative, whilst, by their very omission, accepting other types of work that were seen as less exploitative and / or central to processes of socialisation (Nieuwenhuys 1996, 239; Standing 1982, 614).[iii] Indeed, such legislation has partly informed taken-for-granted assumptions that children's unpaid household labour contributions are not open to the same levels of intensification and exploitation as paid labour because they are central to processes of socialisation, and household livelihood strategies (Miljeteig 1999; Nieuwenhuys 1996).[iv]

This article examines the intensification of Gambian girls' domestic and farm labour contributions to the household and age related work groups (*kafo*, s.) as a result of the introduction of double-shift schooling. Girls' domestic and farm labour contributions are a "necessary part of the process of reproduction" and central to the moral economy of the household (Standing 1982, 616; Lange 2000). The nature of this contribution is deeply gendered: there is a strong cultural expectation, based on hegemonic notions of appropriate gendered behaviour, that girls perform particular domestic and agrarian tasks. Although young boys may contribute their labour to the household, there is not as strong an expectation that they do so. At the same time many parents and grandparents invest in and support their daughters' and granddaughters' education because of a strong belief in the future rewards such an investment may bring. Consequently, those girls who attend school have had to juggle

domestic and *kafo* labour obligations with schooling. This has given rise to tensions between children's household and *kafo* labour contributions, on the one hand, and school, on the other.

With the introduction of double-shift schooling in The Gambia in 1990, a World Bank neo-liberal policy initiative in which two sessions of school and two cohorts of students are taught by the same teacher in one school day, some of these tensions have been eased: girls attend school in the afternoon or the morning for one session and spend less time at school. They are therefore more readily able to meet gendered labour obligations that are central to the moral economy of the household and to the demands of agrarian production. Drawing on fieldwork in Brikama, Western Division from 1996 to 1997 and in November 2005, the article uses case studies and in-depth interviews among female farmers and their daughters, many of whom were either attending or had attended Brikama Primary school, to put forth the following arguments: firstly, double shift schooling facilitates the intensification and increased appropriation of surplus value from girls' household and *kafo* labour contributions. Children's, particularly girls', household labour contributions can be likened to that of women's unpaid labour contributions, in terms of the way in which it serves as a flexible and undervalued source of labour (Elson 1982; Nieuwenhuys 1996). Consequently, the process of the intensification of girls' labour has not been sufficiently problematized or researched because of the flexible and undervalued nature of their labour. Secondly, double shift schooling highlights the paradoxical nature of development intervention where, on the one hand, legislation and policy call for a reduction in child labour by increasing access to school and, on the other, neo-liberal educational policy serves to facilitate the intensification of girls' cheap and unremunerated domestic and farm labour.

Following a brief description of the methodology, the first section of this article provides an overview of the wider political and economic context, with a focus on education within the postcolonial period. The second section further situates the research by providing a descriptive analysis of Brikama, the social relations of agrarian production and the role of children, particularly girls, as a source of labour. The following section describes the nature of double-shift schooling and the effects of this policy on girls' farm and domestic labour contributions in Brikama. It highlights the necessity of girls' and women's unpaid labour contributions to the reproduction and survival of the household, reflecting on the wider processes of accumulation within which the intensification of girls' domestic and farm labour must be situated. The final section provides a critical analysis of the costs of double shift policy on children and girls in particular.

Methodology

Initial research for this article was carried out from 1996 to 1997 as part of research for my Ph.D. on female farmers and the changing relations of agrarian production in Brikama. The research consisted of fifty-one interviews with farmers, the majority of who were female and ranged in age from twelve to their late seventies. Further research, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, was carried out in November 2005 for a period of three weeks with: a small sample of eight girls, ranging in age from nine to twelve years of age, who attended Brikama Primary School; their mothers, who worked as farmers; and an additional ten adult female farmers. Although I stayed with a Gambian friend in a neighbouring ward (*kabilo*), my days were spent in Suma Kunda *kabilo* and Kembujeh interviewing and observing farmers, their daughters and other members of the compound. Access was facilitated

as a result of established friendships and contacts from my previous stays in Brikama. These friendships were further cemented once I became a mother myself. (Many of my initial friendships and contacts with Gambian colleagues, students and local people were established from 1993 to 1995, while I was employed by Voluntary Service Overseas (UK) and the Gambian government to teach Gender Studies to students who were training as secondary teachers at The Gambia College, a teacher training college in Brikama.) Interviews were carried out in Mandinka, with the help of an interpreter.

The Context

The Gambia, located on the Atlantic coast line and bordered on three sides by Senegal, is one of the least developed countries in the world. It can be most accurately described as an agrarian neo-mercantilist state in crisis. Groundnut production served as the main source of state revenue until the late 1960s when the Sahelian drought began to affect yields. From the mid-1970s, in the search for new modes of accumulation, Gambians engaged in the re-export trade in increasing numbers, importing goods then re-exporting them to Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Togo (Wright 1997, 229). At the same time there was increased dependence on tourism, which is now the main earner of foreign exchange. Throughout this period Dawda Jawara, the first postcolonial head of state who was later deposed in a military coup in 1994, took on more loans from the World Bank and various private commercial banks. In order to re-service existing debt the country began a process of structural adjustment in 1985, resulting in a World Bank led imperative to liberalise and privatise the economy through free market investment. Gambian farmers, approximately seventy-five percent of who continue

to work as smallholder farmers, have felt the effects of Structural Adjustment particularly strongly with the removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs and particular food items, such as the staple food rice. As part of this World Bank led imperative to liberalise the Gambian economy a series of five-year development plans have emphasized the need to increase export production and diversify the agricultural base through the promotion of horticultural production. Consequently, corporate farms and contract farming schemes producing, and in some cases exporting, a variety of horticultural products have expanded throughout the coastal region.

EDUCATION IN THE POSTCOLONIAL ERA

With a population of 1.5 million, forty-five percent of who are under the age of fifteen, education serves as a key development issue for the country (Grey-Johnson 2003, 1). "Western" education, the most common type of schooling in The Gambia, particularly in the urban and peri-urban areas, finds its roots in Catholic and Methodist missionary schools.[v] Until 1945 the colonial government was very reluctant to fund education of any kind, whereas the Catholic and Methodist missionaries saw education as the only way in which to convert the local people and established schools throughout the nineteenth century (Roberts-Holmes 1998, 104). Dawda Jawara followed in the footsteps of the colonial government by failing to sufficiently fund education. Indeed, he failed to build a single secondary school in his thirty-three years of office. (The education system consists of six years of primary education and six years of secondary education. Children start primary school at the age of seven). As a result, by the 1980s the Gambian education system suffered from several problems: many children were unable to access schools, particularly secondary schools, because of a limited number of places and the distances they had

to travel; the cost of schooling discouraged many children from attending; and the quality of schooling was poor because of the lack of qualified teachers working within the system and the lack of key educational resources within schools (Community Mobilization in School Mapping n.d., 4). As a result of sustained public demand to address these problems, and pressure from the World Bank and other development organizations, Dawda Jawara's government introduced and piloted a number of different initiatives in the early 1990s: community participation in school mapping, which focused on the distribution and location of schools; community participation in the management of schools; and the introduction of double-shift schooling in the urban and peri-urban areas (Community Mobilitization in School Mapping n.d., 4). However, shortly after Dawda Jawara had secured World Bank funding to build schools he was deposed in a military coup d'etat in 1994 by Yahya Jammeh. Eager to win support from those who were against the coup, Yahya Jammeh claimed credit for the expansion of schools: between 1995 and 1999 six senior secondary schools, fourteen junior secondary schools and thirty-eight primary schools were built. However, he also inherited an education system, which had been severely under funded in the past and was suffering from the effects of Structural Adjustment: these included, amongst other things, the introduction of user fees and book rental charges (Amadiume 2000, 28).

INCREASING GIRLS' ENROLMENT: THE GAMBIAN SUCCESS STORY

Throughout the 1990s and into the millennium, as part of a "children's rights" agenda, children who were not attending school became one of the main targets of development intervention. Consequently, despite the harsh effects of structural adjustment, the Gambian government, in conjunction with the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and various other international development organisations supported and funded basic education for all; one of the main aims of this policy has been to increase both the number of girls attending primary school and rates of retention. The impressive speed with which this increase in enrolment has occurred has helped to earn the country a great deal of praise from UNICEF, the World Bank, and Gender and Development advocates. In 1990 net primary school enrollment was 56% for boys and 40% for girls. This figure increased in 2000 to 71% for boys and 62% for girls. The net primary enrollment ratio for boys and girls has increased from 66.7% in 2000 to 75.2% in 2004. Indeed, the World Bank has rated The Gambia as one of the 'best performers' in the provision of access to education. It is also only one of four African countries to be relatively close to achieving the Millennium Development goal of universal primary education by 2015 (Grey-Johnson 2003, 2).

An increase in girls' enrolment has been largely achieved by addressing the factors that prevented girls from going to school. These include: the cost; perceived irrelevance of the curriculum; cultural / religious factors; the distance of schools; and the need to protect girls from unsolicited male attention (UNICEF 2003, 1). Significantly, with the help of UNICEF the government established a national scholarship trust fund for girls to provide financial assistance to those who are unable to attend school. A "girl friendly school initiative" funded by UNICEF, was implemented in 2001 ensuring that separate toilets and water for personal hygiene were made available to girls (Grey-Johnson 2003, 4; UNICEF 2003, 1). In addition, grass roots campaigning in areas with low female enrolment, highlighting the benefits of education for girls and the need to address factors that keep them away from school, have been largely successful (UNICEF 2003, 1). Teachers have been trained

in gender issues and more qualified female teachers are entering the profession.[vi] It is also maintained that double shift schooling, initially implemented as a temporary measure, has helped to accommodate the increasing numbers of students (Grey-Johnson 2003, 4).

The increase in girls' primary school enrolment in the 1990s had an impact on the availability of girls' farm labour. During my initial period of fieldwork in Brikama in 1996-1997, just prior to the introduction of double shift schooling in Brikama towards the end of 1997, girls were rarely available for farming work because they were being educated in increasing numbers. Sarjo Camara's case was typical: a Balanta refugee from Casamance, she cultivated red peppers and tomatoes on a plot she borrowed from a host in Brikama. Occasionally she would sell the produce in the morning to women traders in the market. She was unable to make use of paid labour. Despite the fact that she had six children (two girls and four boys), she did most of the work herself because they were all at school. However, her sons helped to dig the well and clear the land before she planted vegetable and rice crops.

During my initial period of fieldwork many farmers bemoaned the loss of children's and, in some cases, grandchildren's agricultural labour. They maintained that educated youth no longer farmed because they felt "too good" for farming. For instance Darboe, a grandmother and host from Suma Kunda, Brikama expressed highly contradictory emotions in that she claimed 'not to be suffering' because her children had gone to school. However, on other occasions she maintained that, "it's bad for girls to be at school because they are leaving their culture." Many of those who bemoaned the loss of children's farm labour contributions and the effects of education on children's attitudes towards farming had nonetheless chosen to invest in or support investment in their children's and grandchildren's education because of

their desire to fulfill particular life long aspirations and to end the suffering of poverty. (The majority of farmers I interviewed in Brikama in 1996 / 1997, who had school age children, supported their children's and grandchildren's education at all costs. Those who did not send their children to school were generally unable to afford it.) The introduction of double-shift schooling in Brikama has helped to ease the tension between girls' labour obligations and school, as they are more readily able to fulfill these obligations. Yet, there are real costs associated with double-shift schooling, which will be explored later in the article.

Brikama

Historically a subsistence agrarian settlement, Brikama has developed into a growing market town of approximately 70,000 inhabitants. The city has three nursery and primary schools, five secondary schools, a University, an Islamic Institute and a number of Arabic schools. Although the Mandinka are the majority ethnic group the city is richly diverse, inhabited by Wolof, Jola, Fula, Aku (Creole), Serer, Serahuli, Caroninka, Manjago, Balanta ethnic groups, a number of other minority groups and foreign nationals (West Africans, Europeans, North Americans and Asians). Most of the land surrounding Brikama consists of farming land. However, low rates of return as a result of the removal of subsidies, the decreasing market value of groundnuts, persistent drought and the attraction of non-agrarian forms of employment have meant that increasing numbers of male farmers, particularly young men, are moving out of groundnut production. Many work as taxi drivers, traders, factory workers, diamond miners in Sierra Leone, carpenters, metal workers, tailors, corporate farm employees, marabouts, fishermen, money lenders and agrarian daily wage labourers. Many invest in livestock as an additional source of income. Some combine this work

with agrarian production, cultivating orchards of fruit trees, and cassava, millet and groundnuts in compounds and fields scattered throughout Brikama, and the surrounding villages. Female farmers cultivate rice as a subsistence crop on uplands and lowlands in the rainy season and vegetables, ninety percent of which is sold in local markets, on lowlands in the dry season. They grow a number of different vegetables using intercropping techniques: tomato, cabbage, onion, lettuce, okra, aubergine and maize, all of which are highly marketable. It is not uncommon for them to cultivate vegetable crops on small plots (*dandango*, s.) in their compounds. This division of labour is somewhat flexible as female farmers often choose to cultivate groundnuts, millet and fruit trees. (However, male farmers do not cultivate rice and vegetables). They also work as traders, paid domestic workers, corporate farm employees and daily wage agrarian labourers.

Brikama is made up of twenty-three *kabilolu*. The term *kabilo* can be defined both as a ward and as a patrilineal kin group, a lineage of several families who usually have a common last name but who are not necessarily in a position to trace common descent (Dey 1980, 152). In a town the size of Brikama, which has experienced in-migration since its inception, a *kabilo* may be made up of many different patrilineal kin groups. Suma Kunda, one of the oldest *kabilo* in Brikama, consists of approximately eighty-two compounds and 2000 residents. As many as four generations may reside in one compound. Such cramped conditions serve to exacerbate the material poverty in which many of its residents live. A compound consists of a man and his wives, his married sons and their wives and children, unmarried brothers, younger brothers and their families, divorced sisters and / or daughters, widows, other relatives and visitors. There are various forms of relatedness within the compound: *sinkirolu* (consumption units or cooking pots, which are

responsible for buying, preparing and cooking food together); *dabadalu* (production units); and kinship, friendship, patron-client, fosterage, and / or strict landlord – tenant relations.

Domestic Labour and Agrarian Production

Most of the female farmers of Suma Kunda, Brikama farm in Kembujeh, located approximately two miles to the northeast of Brikama, near the Gambia River. Female farmers began cultivating vegetables in the dry season in Kembujeh approximately forty years ago. Many of the horticultural fields in the coastal areas are funded by NGOs and the government. However, female farmers in Kembujeh are self-financing. They have grown rice there in the rainy season since the area was originally settled. Consequently, the land in Kembujeh is under permanent cultivation. A rapidly growing urban population has meant an increased demand for food crops, which has been met by the development of vegetable production in this region. Further, a fall in household income as a result of a decline in groundnut prices, inflation and devaluation has resulted in an increased need for cash amongst households and the subsequent expansion of horticultural production throughout The Gambia (Barrett and Browne 1989, 6; Cornia 1987). Indeed, female farmers are reliant on the income vegetable production generates to support themselves and their households (Schroeder 1996, 73). An expansion of horticultural production has resulted in an intensification of women's labour because it has required increased labour input throughout the year.[vii] Female farmers are also responsible for domestic work. Indeed, within agrarian economies women's farming work 'is often an extension of domestic work' (Beneria 1979, 211). Further, the individuation and commodification of agrarian labour has led to an increasing shortage of labour (Berry

1993; Baker 1992; Guyer 1997; Hoggart 1992). Despite some instances of farmers working cooperatively with other family members, as in the cultivation of rice because it is in the interests of members of the *sinkirolu* to avoid having to purchase too much rice, few farmers can rely on the regular use of pools of family labour. However, they can generally rely on the use of children's labour, unless they are at school. Despite competing claims on children's labour, daughters' and sons' primary labour obligation is to their mothers and fathers respectfully. Female farmers have relied heavily on their daughters' labour to support the intensification of their own labour and to increase productivity (See Schroeder 1993, 1996, 1999; Barrett and Browne 1989; Carney 1992, 1993).

CHILDREN'S DOMESTIC AND AGRARIAN LABOUR

In The Gambia, as in other parts of West Africa, adults have rights in children on the basis of their seniority (Guyer 1993). Yet these rights extend beyond the household and are part of what Shipton (1990, 381 quoted in Linares 1997) terms a larger "cultural economy": "…the complex networks of social, economic, and political relationships that reflect, simultaneously, cultural values surrounding age, gender, and power relations and the more tangible demands of ecology, economy, and production." Indeed, children, within a Gambian 'cultural economy' have historically served as a source of unremunerated labour and as items of exchange. They may be formally adopted, permanently or temporarily fostered for educational purposes, including training as an apprentice or a marabout's disciple (*talibo*). Frequently a child may be given to his or her namesake, to a member of the family who has no children, or to a person of a higher status (e.g. a patron), who is not related, as a sign of respect and deference. The child may reside with them until they are adults or

return to their natal kin after a few years. Newly acquired children in virtually all of these situations represent a new source of labour, the potential for claims to resources, and access 'to the rights to which the rearing relationship gives rise' (Goody 1982, 271).

Children usually begin to help with domestic work and farming from the age of five. The nature of their contribution largely depends on the composition of the household. In cases where the husband has a second wife then the domestic workload is significantly less for the first wife and her daughters (Schroeder 1996, 80). Agrarian economies are characterised by hierarchies of gender, age and class. These hierarchies largely dictate the varying types of labour, unremunerated and paid, which members of the household perform, with girls often performing some of the least desirable and / or valued work. Girls engage in a wide range of domestic activities from washing clothes, sweeping the compound, cooking (a task usually reserved for junior women and girls) and fetching water, to babysitting, and going to the market in the morning to purchase food. They may also trade vegetable produce, water, ice and other foodstuff (roast groundnuts, palm oil, ginger, dried fish and textiles) in local markets and compounds. If children have access to fridges they may sell bags of water, frozen ice, and juice on a table just outside the compound, or in the compound itself. In addition to fetching firewood for cooking, performing general house repairs and fetching water from the public tap, boys may perform some of the same domestic tasks as girls, particularly if there are no female siblings in the compound to help. However, once boys reach their early teens there is no longer an expectation that they carry out domestic duties.

Prior to the introduction of double-shift schooling in Brikama in 1997 school-going children had little extra time in which to farm either independently or

cooperatively. Consequently, their contribution was greatest during the school holidays in the rainy season in July and August when they were free to till the earth, weed and transplant rice crops and, in the case of boys, help with the production of groundnut and millet crops. In the dry season school-going girls would support their mothers by watering, weeding and harvesting vegetable crops in the afternoon and early evening after school and during the weekends. Vegetable production is extremely labour intensive because of the need to water the crops twice daily. Most adult female farmers either carry out some domestic chores early in the morning and then leave for their gardens mid-morning, spending the day there and returning early evening. Alternatively, they go to their gardens first thing in the morning to water and weed, return to the compound late morning to prepare lunch, and go back to the fields in the late afternoon / early evening for further cultivation of plots. However, the four mile return journey from Suma Kunda to Kembujeh, some of which is over rough paths, requires a great deal of time and energy. Consequently, many women would send their daughters to the gardens after school, thereby avoiding a second journey later in the day. (See Haswell 1963, 1975; Barrett and Browne 1989; and Schroeder 1999 for detailed discussions on female farmers, intergenerational relations and daily work routines).[viii] In addition to relying on their daughters' labour those female farmers who can afford to make use of *kafo* labour, or the labour contributions of recent migrants (Kea 2004).

KAFO LABOUR

Regional ethnographic literature on age-gender systems highlights the variety of institutions associated with age and gender, and the purposes they serve in enforcing social hierarchy, and generational and gender differences (see for example

Meillassoux 1981; Abeles and Collard 1985; Linares 1992; Piot 1999; Ferme 2001). As a central feature of local West African cultural and political economy, age grades, and age-gender systems more generally, also serve as key integrative institutions within society, which foster particular sets of social relations (Rubin 1975, 177); for instance, age grades frequently act as work groups throughout West Africa. Further, in The Gambia the term *kafo* is defined as a group or assembly and *kafu* means to come together. *Kafolu* (associations) refer either to age grade associations or simply interest groups, established as a result of shared identities (e.g. religious, ethnic, political, residential etc.) and / or interests.[ix] Although *kafolu*, usually reflect the residential make up of the *kabilo* in which they are organized they can also transcend compound, ward, class and caste distinctions (Hopkins 1971, 104; Weil 1968, 85). They vary in size from as few as ten members to over 300 (Shipton 1992, 30). Larger *kafolu* are organized hierarchically, with members holding different positions. *Kafolu* are generally single sex, depending on the nature of the association. Most women belong to two different types of *kafolu*: those they have belonged to since they were approximately nine years of age and those they join if they marry into another *kabilo*. In this sense *kafolu* enforce marital, generational and gender difference. In addition to engaging in public works and providing mutual support to members (e.g. in the common preparation of feasts for marriages, naming and initiation ceremonies), *kafolu* serve as credit institutions, and as cooperative labour groups for agrarian production (Haswell 1975:63).

Recruitment of age grade work groups is crucial to the accomplishment of particular agrarian tasks. Adult female farmers make use of *kafo* labour for clearing before planting, ploughing, weeding and harvesting rice and vegetable crops. Ideally *kafo* work is carried out in the morning. However, the time period depends on the

task to be completed, the size of the plot and the size of the *kafo*. If female farmers make use of *kafo* labour they tend to rely on their own *kafolu* as this is cheaper. (With the commodification of these relations use of unpaid *kafo* labour is now virtually unheard of.) Alternatively, and more importantly, they make use of girls' *kafo* labour, which represents an even cheaper form of labour. A group of eight to ten girls are paid approximately twenty to twenty-five dalasis, depending on the size of the plot and the task, a third to a half of the going rate for a women's *kafo*. A woman who is a member of a *kafo* of ten people, may pay them forty dalasis and cook them breakfast. Those who are not members may have to pay up to fiften dalasis a day, for each person or ten dalasis for a morning. The group then entrusts the money for safe keeping to a female elder. They usually use the money to buy clothes (*asabi*) at the end of Koriteh or Tobaski, holy holidays for the Islamic community.

Many female farmers expressed a preference for adult *kafo* labour because they maintained they were faster and more experienced at carrying out agrarian tasks. They nonetheless used girls' *kafo* labour. Their preference for adult *kafo* labour was used to justify lower pay to girls *kafolu*, despite the fact that they carried out the same tasks as those performed by adult female *kafolu*. This representation of girls' labour as slower and less skilled essentially legitimises the lower value attributed to it and their lower pay. Yet, this pay differential does not so much reflect a difference in the quality of the work as it does a difference in the status of the worker. In analysing the "differentiation of children's labour in the capitalist labour market" Elson (1982) highlights the way in which children are often attributed with a different status, which is reflected in their lower pay. Just as labour markets are gendered institutions so "economic relations" are "bearers of seniority." Consequently, children are rarely properly remunerated for their work. Yet this representation of their labour as

somehow of an inferior quality is one that some resist: Amie, a fifteen year old girl, pointed out to me: “Any work my mother can do I can do. It has always been this way, since I was small.”

Double-shift schooling and Girls’ Labour

One of the main policy approaches, supported by international agencies and development organizations, for reducing child labour calls for an increase in school attendance by expanding school places and building more schools (Todaro and Smith 2003, 375). “Compulsory education policies and the legal elimination of child labour are also emphasized to compel governments to work towards children’s rights” (Subrahmanian 2002, 402). Double-shift schooling serves as a “cost effective way in which to increase enrolment” (Colcough 1994). A World Bank publication outlines the benefits: “increased efficiency of human and capital resources” (i.e. student intake can be doubled without having to employ two teachers or build additional schools); increased access and provision by increasing the number of school places; and facilitates pupils’ ability to more readily combine schooling with work because they only attend for one session in the morning, the afternoon or at night (Linden 2, 2001). Indeed, one of the stated policy objectives is to allow children of secondary age to undertake paid or unremunerated farm or domestic labour work. Such flexible school provision is designed to increase access by providing school places for all children who wish to attend (Bray 2001).

Double-shift schooling was initially introduced in selected schools in 1990 in the urban and semi-urban areas of The Gambia where the population and school attendance is highest (Community Mobilisation in School Mapping n.d.). Indeed, the large majority of primary schools in the coastal urban and peri-urban regions now

operate a double shift system. However, this is not the case in the rural areas. The main purpose of double-shift schooling within The Gambia has been to: increase access through the provision of more places; reduce class sizes (in urban areas these can be as high seventy-five students in one primary class); improve the quality of teaching and learning (by ensuring that qualified teachers, rather than teaching assistants, teach a higher number of students); and increase the efficiency of use of resources, such as textbooks (Njie n.d.). It is claimed that double shift schooling increases access in The Gambia by providing extra school places. However, there is no research, to my knowledge, which has been carried out in The Gambia to support the assumption that double shift schooling encourages children who would not ordinarily attend school to do so.[x] Rather, one could argue that enrolment amongst girls has increased, not because schools have been able to increase their intake, but because the previously mentioned factors that have kept girls from going to school have been and are being positively addressed. Within this context double shift schooling serves to accommodate the increased numbers within schools.

JUGGLING WORK AND SCHOOL

At Brikama primary school, where double-shift was introduced in 1997, the first shift of school begins at 8:15 and ends at 1:15, where upon the school is vacated for the second shift, which runs from 1:30 to 6:00pm.[xi] Most significantly the same teacher teaches throughout the day and receives an extra fifty percent, which is added to the base salary (Roberts-Holmes 37, 2003). It is a large school with an enrolment of 2,226. Although in some schools children attend a particular shift throughout the year, or for half the year, children at Brikama Primary school attend the morning shift for a few weeks, and then switch to the afternoon shift. The following case study

provides a sense of the daily routine for two girls attending school in the afternoon shift.

> Awa and Adama, two twelve year old twins, live in a crowded compound with twenty-one residents in Suma Kunda. They are the youngest of ten children. Their mother who works as a farmer in Kembujeh, cultivates three vegetable plots during the dry season and several rice fields in the rainy season.
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> For the past few weeks Awa and Adama have been attending primary school in the afternoon shift. They begin the day by sweeping the compound and fetching water from the local tap. It is November in the dry season, so at 7:30 to 8:00 o'clock in the morning they walk with their mother three or four times a week to her fields in Kembujeh, where they spend the rest of the morning weeding and watering her vegetable plots. They then retire to the edge of the field where they have a lunch of rice and stew which has been previously prepared in the compound, after which they return to Brikama for their afternoon session of school. When called upon to do so they work with their *kafo* clearing or harvesting female farmers' plots. When they aren't helping their mother in the fields or working for their *kafo* one buys food for lunch in the local market and the other washes clothes, cleans the compound, cooks, sells goods (ice, wanja fruit drink, or cloth) from the compound, and helps Fatima with childcare.
>
> Both claimed that it is preferable to be on morning shifts for school because they are fresher and better able to work because they haven't had to work before hand. They are very tired during their afternoon school shift and frequently fall asleep in class. However, the only exception to this was when their *kafo* work groups would call them to perform unpaid labour on women's fields in the morning. Then they felt it was better to attend school in the afternoons (Interview, Suma Kunda, Brikama, November 2005).

A similar story emerged from the six additional girls (Mariamma, Binta, Fatou, Bintu Amie and Genoba) interviewed in Kembujeh who reside in Suma Kunda and attend Brikama primary school. In the morning they would weed and water their mother's vegetable gardens, (either with their mothers or independently) or perform particular agrarian tasks in their *kafo* work groups for female farmers in Kembujeh. After a full morning of hard physical labour they would then have lunch and go to school for their afternoon shift. Alternatively, they would attend school in the morning, buy lunch with fish money (pocket money) given to them by their mothers, and either perform domestic tasks in the afternoon or go to the fields from mid to late afternoon. All either carried out poorly remunerated work for their *kafolu* in the morning when

they were not attending school, or provided unremunerated domestic and farm labour contributions to the household during the morning or afternoon shifts when they were not attending school.

The girls gave priority to working in their *kafo* work groups, as opposed to working on their mothers' fields, when called upon by older female farmers to do so. In this sense the afternoon school shift accommodated their need to work for *kafo* groups in the morning. *Kafo* labour groups do not merely afford children the opportunity to earn an income, thereby making it an attractive option for girls and their mothers, they also, as previously discussed, affirm particular sets of social relations and support networks. "…investing in social capital through providing reciprocal labour provides a means of commanding labour for the household and a safety net" (White and Leavy n.d., 9). The relations are prioritised to the extent that if a girl attends school in the mornings and is unable to contribute her labour during this period her mother will pay two to three dalasis per day to cover her daughter's absence, thereby ensuring her daughter's access to the communal pot for *asabi*, and both her and her daughter's continuing commitment to the *kafo*. However, these relations are not, to my knowledge, prioritized to the extent that a girl will miss school in order to fulfill *kafo* labour obligations.

THE INTENSIFICATION OF GIRLS' LABOUR

Marxist feminist analysis maintains that household's are forced to rely on women's unremunerated labour in order to reproduce themselves at a cheaper cost. Women's and by extension "unpaid workers and helpers" labour is central to the reproduction of the household and to the 'peasant' households ability to "satisfy the demands of the market and survive expanding capitalism" (Nieuwenhuys 2000, 281**;**

Beneria 1979; Rubin 1975; Sacks 1975; Jackson 1998). In this sense the social relations of production give rise to structural inequalities based on class, gender (Jackson 20, 1998), and significantly, generational differences. Girls' role in the (re)production of the labour force and the creation of surplus value is analogous to that of women's, in that their labour is unremunerated, undervalued, frequently invisible and underpaid. However, hierarchies of age allow us to differentiate girls from women. For instance, a few of the girls I interviewed voiced a preference for domestic work and schooling over farm labour. Yet they were frequently compelled, by their elders, to work on the farms because of the need for their unremunerated and, in the case of *kafo* work, cheap labour input.

Many adults highlight the irresponsible and morally bankrupt behaviour of those children who fail to appropriately fulfill their duties, whilst maintaining that farm labour is the only way in which to instill their children and grandchildren with a sense of responsibility. Yet this notion of responsibility is not simply about the need to discipline and socialise children into particular gendered patterns of behaviour, but too about the exigencies of agrarian production and the need to make use of their daughters' labour to ensure the reproduction of the household. Mamu Drammeh, is a grandmother in her sixties who sent her children to school.

Nowadays there is a greater importance attached to educating the grandchild. All see that importance. Children should go to school. Children should also know how their school fees are paid. It is important to take children to the farm, so they know about the work parents do to sponsor their education. In the past it was during the rainy season holiday that children would help their parents on the farm. Now, with double shift, they can help during the week when they are not at school. If a child knows how his / her parent struggles to pay for his or her education this is how a child becomes responsible. She / he must do and see to feel for the parents. (Interview Kembujeh, November 2005).

With the introduction of double-shift schooling girls are more readily able to "do and see in order to feel for their parents," as they are now able to contribute more of their labour throughout the working day.

Double shift schooling resolves some of the tensions experienced by children and parents between attending school, and the need to perform domestic and farm labour. Yet, such a policy ultimately serves to leave girls vulnerable to the further intensification of their unremunerated household and agrarian labour, and paid *kafo* labour.[xii] Firstly, double shift schooling allows girls attending the afternoon shift to work for their *kafo* labour groups in the morning. Prior to the introduction of double-shift schooling girls' *kafo* labour groups did not generally operate during the week because most girls in Brikama were at school in the morning when *kafo* labour is carried out. Consequently, female farmers had to rely more heavily on adult female *kafo* labour groups. Since the introduction of double shift schooling in Brikama girls' *kafolu* are now able to work in the morning during the week. Further, their labour is in demand because it is cheaper than female adult *kafo* labour. Secondly, double shift schooling provides girls with slightly less time in school and more opportunity for others, notably mothers and adult female farmers, to make additional use of their labour, as and when it is needed. Those who attend the afternoon shift are now able to spend four or five hours before school fulfilling *kafo* labour obligations or completing agrarian and domestic tasks for their mothers. Prior to the introduction of double-shift schooling girls would have worked on the gardens for a *shorter* period of time *after* school, but certainly not before school because of the journey time involved. Those who attend school in the morning shift can spend more time fulfilling labour obligations for their mothers in the afternoon after school. Prior to the introduction of double shift schooling their work would, in turn, have been more

readily supplemented by elderly members of the household, co-wives, those who did not attend school, paid labourers and / or recent migrant workers. Indeed, among the female farmers with daughters attending school there was a clear expectation that since their daughters were only at school in the morning or the afternoon they were in a position to contribute more of their labour and support an older generation of female farmers; this would then reduce their mother's labour input and the costs associated with hiring in additional labour. Indeed, Mama Bojang (whose older children attended primary school prior to the introduction of double shift schooling) is well aware of the way in which this policy has provided her daughters, Awa and Adama, with more time in the day to help her with domestic and agrarian tasks. She maintained that, "the load on her was lighter."

The intensification and further appropriation of surplus value from girls' work takes place either through an increase in the "goods produced directly" with girls' labour, in this instance vegetables or rice; or in "saving in the cost of adult labour" (Nieuwenhuys 2000, 318), by having girls take on increased domestic duties, paid *kafo* labour work and unremunerated agrarian tasks for the household. Their domestic labour input may be intensified so that other members of the household can increase their income earning potential, thereby decreasing the costs of the reproduction of the household (Schlemmer 2000, 14). Alternatively, they may be "more systematically and consistently drawn into a money-making activity where they increase the labour power of their mothers or female relatives, usually in petty retailing or street vending" (Verlet 2000, 76). The appropriation of surplus value from girls' work also takes place in terms of "the savings that society at large makes on the social costs of bringing up new generations of workers" (Nieuwenhuys 2000, 318). The latter refers to the increased burden shouldered by children who have to undertake tasks, which

are central to the reproduction of new generations, and which a market economy does not pay for. In the case of most of the girls I interviewed, this would include increased childcare within the compound, and the increased labour inputs associated with covering the costs of health care and education (school uniform, book rental fees, school fund contributions and lunch money). For instance, Awa and Adama make reference to their work at the gardens and being rewarded through fish money. "If you don't go to the garden you don't get fish money when you go to school. You use this fish money for lunch or a*sabi*." They maintained that they were happy to help their mother because she was then able to earn more money, which in turn was spent on their schooling or clothes for Tobaski and Koriteh. By working at the gardens for their mother Awa and Adama offset the additional cost incurred by having to provide lunch money. They take on the cost of the state's refusal and inability to provide free school meals through their increased productivity. (The state is virtually incapable of providing them because of decreasing public and private investment in Africa (Lipton 2004, 2)). Fish money is a financial incentive to help in the garden or on the farm. Withholding fish money can also be interpreted as a sanction or punishment to those who withhold their labour or do not contribute enough. Children's subordinate status and "submissiveness" in the household is reproduced through sanctions, which vary from one cultural context to another (Elson 1982, 491-492).

The intensification of girls' farm and domestic labour must be placed within the context of the intensification of women's labour, which has come about as a result of the increasing commoditization and diversification of horticultural production. The latter entails "new forms of surplus appropriation", and an increasing reliance on unremunerated labour, frequently that of children's, to either adopt these new forms of surplus appropriation and / or to intensify existing forms of surplus or subsistence

appropriation (Beneria 1979, 218). The larger context is one of a neo-mercantilist state in crisis where households are becoming poorer, food and agrarian inputs such as labour and fertiliser increasingly costly, farming conditions are deteriorating (quality of soil, persistent drought etc.), and the risks and costs of production are high. These factors can be further contextualised within a neo-liberal global order that promotes increased diversification and production, whilst cutting the costs of production (Meillassoux 2000). Indeed, "…the exploitation of domestic labour and child labour would seem to be inherent to a system whose international policy-making bodies (the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) aim, notably through their structural adjustment plans, to 'rationalize' economic policy, in particular via the cutting of production costs" (Schlemmer 2000, 14).

The Costs of Double-shift

Double-shift schooling is often presented as a short-term measure to increase school provision (Linden 2001, 1). Yet, what is frequently seen as short term can all too readily be institutionalised and become the standard by which educational policy is measured, thereby neglecting issues of cost and quality. Indeed, parents and teachers have expressed concerns about "the ability of students and teachers to cope."

> "Teachers opined that double shift teaching requires a lot of sacrifice and that it is hectic. Others consider the students coming permanently in the afternoon as the group losing out given the fact that by the end of the morning session, the teachers would have been already exhausted" (Community Mobillisation in School Mapping, n.d.).[xiii]

Students' and teachers' levels of performance and motivation decrease in the afternoon. Their exhaustion in the afternoon and evening clearly has detrimental effects on their work (Admassie 178, 2003).

The beneficial aspects of double shift schooling are couched in terms of the increases in the numbers who can attend school and in terms of its impact on the increased labour contributions of both children and teachers, all of which can be achieved at minimal cost. Yet, nothing is said of the "physical costs for children who do both" (Subrahmanian 2002, 403). In short, the state and development institutions indirectly appropriate surplus value from children's (and teachers') work thereby offsetting the costs of properly investing in their education. Not only are poorer children forced to work harder and bear the brunt of the state's inability and lack of willingness to properly fund and subsidize their education but too they are offered an inferior education. "The main difficulty with these reforms is that they have resulted in a highly differentiated quality of schooling which … is strongly related to the household incomes and general prosperity of the communities served by particular schools" (Colclough 1994, 11). Double shift schooling is associated with a poorer intake of students. Within double-shift policy initiatives there appears to be little regard for the wider cultural economy within which these poorer households are situated, and for the way in which the "demands of ecology, economy, and production" can lead to the intensification of girls' labour.

Conclusion

This article has examined the intensification of girls' domestic and farm labour contributions in Brikama as a result of the introduction of double-shift schooling. Preliminary research indicates that although double shift resolves some of the tensions experienced by children and parents between attending school, and the need to perform domestic and farm labour, such a policy ultimately leaves girls vulnerable to the further intensification of their work; this process of intensification involves the

increased appropriation of surplus value from their unremunerated household and agrarian labour, and paid *kafo* labour. Just as women "constitute a very flexible reserve of labour" (Beneria 1979, 215) so too do children, young girls all the more so because of the hierarchies of gender and age at play within a Gambian cultural and political economy. The intensification of their work needs to be placed within a wider context where children's, particularly girls' labour, is not attributed with the same value as adult labour and where their cheap or unremunerated labour is central to the functioning of local and global processes of accumulation (Boyd 1994). Indeed, children can be characterised as "the final links in a chain of exploitation" (Schlemmer 2000, 14) in which parents, extended family and other social actors are dependent on the use of cheap and unpaid child agrarian and domestic labour. Within this context parents, extended family and other social actors are not so much rights abusers as victims because in the struggle for survival, they have few alternatives.

Policies such as double-shift schooling reveal the paradoxical nature of international development intervention: on the one hand, legislation and policy call for a reduction in child labour by increasing access to school. In this sense, The Gambia has been largely successful, particularly in increasing girls' access to primary school. On the other hand, double-shift schooling, designed to increase access in as efficient and cost effective a manner as possible (and to accommodate increased numbers), serves to intensify the cheap and unremunerated labour of poor girls.[xiv] Ironically, the latter serves to feed into and support the negative images with which westerners are confronted, and that children's rights advocates campaign so tirelessly against, of overworked children labouring in fields. However, the issue is not the fact that children combine work and schooling; they do and will continue to do so.

Rather, the issue is the way in which the state and development institutions, by insufficiently investing in Gambian children's education and implementing a neo-liberal education policy, are facilitating the intensification of girls' work.

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[i] The term children's work is increasingly used in the literature because of its supposedly more neutral tone. Child labour, on the contrary, is seen as carrying particular assumptions about the exploitative, damaging and harmful conditions within which children work. However, I use the terms interchangeably because it is not so much a question of the specific term used as of the nature of the work and the particular sets of social relations within which it takes place (Schlemmer 2000, 10). I follow Schildkrout's (1981, 95) definition of work: "…any activity done by children which either

contributes to production, gives adults free time, facilitates the work of others, or substitutes for the employment of others."

[ii] The notion of exploitation can be highly subjective, particularly when defined simply as the abuse of labour. I follow a Marxist definition: "…exploitation involves the social processes and relationships, which facilitate the extraction of surplus produce by a direct producer" (Schlemmer 2000, 13).

[iii] See also ILO convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, which by its omission of particular types of labour accepts them as less harmful than other types.

[iv] Such a belief finds its roots in the neo-classical model of the conflict-free, altruistic household where resources are pooled and decisions are taken by a "benevolent dictator" in the interests of all household members. Following this logic "the benevolent dictator" does not exploit or abuse children's labour because he / she acts in the interests of *all* household members. Bargaining models, which explore cooperation and conflict in intra-household relations, have been used to critique the neo-classical model of the conflict free household (Sen 1991; Hart 1997; Whitehead 1984). According to Standing (1982, 623), "What is clear is that intra-family and kin based forms of exploitation of children are the most prevalent of all, and are often the worst."

[v] There are three different types of schooling available to children: *madrassa*, *karanta* , and missionary inspired western education. Parents who seek formal Islamic education for their children send them to *madrassa* (originally *madaris*). *Karanta* (lit. to teach) is an informal form of Islamic education, where children learn Arabic and memorise passages from the Koran by writing verses on wooden boards which they then recite and memorise.

[vi] In 1995, as part of a UNICEF initiative, I trained government staff in the Curriculum and Research Development Unit in gender awareness training, focusing on girls' access and achievement in primary and secondary schools; staff then trained hundreds of teachers throughout the country.

[vii] For further examination of the intensification of girls' and women's farm labour as a result of the introduction of mechanised irrigation for rice production and / or the introduction of horticultural production see Barrett and Browne 1989; Carney 1992, 1993; Carney and Watts 1991, 1992; Schroeder 1993, 1996, 1999. Haswell (1963, 1975) provides an historical ethnographic examination of the ways in which female agrarian labour has been intensified as a result of the introduction of colonial rice development schemes from the 1950s to the 1970s.

[viii] Schroeder (1999, 76) highlights the various strategies that female horticultural producers in Kerewan adopt as they juggle both domestic duties and horticultural production. In many cases daughters, aged six to twelve, help their mothers with work. Younger children, aged three to six, may go with their mothers to the gardens and help to look after infants.

[ix] Age is a social and physical category and reflects the various significant stages through which people pass in their lives (e.g. circumcision, marriage). Within age grade associations (*kafolu*) distinction is made, in theory, between male seniors (*keba kafo,* age forty plus), senior juniors (*kambane kafo,* age twenty-one to forty) and junior youth (*kambaanending,* age nine to twenty-one). For women the categories are as follows: *muso kafo* (age thirty-five to fifty), *sunkutu kafo* (age eighteen to thirty-four), and *sunkutunding kafo* (age nine to seventeen). The oldest member of an age group is the *kafo-tiyo* (leader).

[x] In 1997 / 98, 'the total enrolment in the primary schools reached 141, 569 of which thirty-two percent (45,302 pupils) were in double shift classes (Community Mobilisation in School Mapping n.d.,13.). However, it is difficult to ascertain what portion of this thirty-two percent would have been excluded from school on the basis of lack of places prior to the introduction of double shift schooling. Historically the practice has been to increase class sizes so as to accommodate those children who want to attend school. Class size has not been taken into consideration in the calculation of thirty-two percent increased intake as a result of double shift schooling.

[xi] Children attended school from 8:15 to 2:00 prior to the introduction of double-shift schooling.

[xii] This is of particular concern for those girls who would have attended school whether double-shift schooling had been implemented or not. In the Gambia this constitutes a significant portion of children attending primary school in the urban and peri-urban areas, where double-shift schooling has been introduced.

[xiii] The head teacher of Lamin Primary School, another primary school in Brikama, stated that:
" … double shift had nothing to do with education and everything to do with economics." The General Secretary of the Gambia Teacher's Union similarly stated "quality is being sacrificed to increase access" (Roberts-Holmes 37, 2003). Despite these isolated comments, there has been little collective public opposition to double shift schooling; no doubt because the public fears the draconian effects of a critique of government policy.

[xiv] There are two critiques of the role of the state that one can make: cuts in education and health have compromised the state's ability to meet the objectives outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and it is counter to the state's interests to enforce such legislation as one of the main function's of the state is to "…assist in the process of accumulation" (Standing 1982, 612).