

Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy

Living in a material world

Children and youth in alluvial diamond mining
in Kono District, Sierra Leone



Fafo

Research Program on Trafficking and Child Labour

Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy

'Living in a material world'
Children and youth in alluvial diamond mining
in Kono District Sierra Leone

© Fafo 2006

ISBN 82-7422-523-6

ISSN 0801-6143

Cover photo: Anne Hatløy

Cover page: Fafo Information Office

Photos: All photos taken by the authors except from "The star of Sierra Leone" at page 28

Printed in Norway by: Allkopi AS

Contents

Tables and figures	5
Foreword	7
1 Introduction	9
2 Diamonds in Sierra Leone	13
A brief history of diamond mining in Sierra Leone.....	13
Diamond mining and the civil war	17
Diamond mining in Kono.....	20
3 Fieldwork organisation and research methodology	25
Research methodology.....	29
4 Who are the children and youth working with diamonds? 35	
Background of the children.....	35
Relation to parents	39
Education.....	45
Reasons for starting the job	47
5 The nature of their work	49
Length of work.....	52
Supervision.....	55
Work pressure.....	56
A work of buckets and shovels.....	60
Health	61
The nature of the work and its consequences.....	63
6 What do they obtain?	65
7 ‘One day I will do something else’	73
8 Concluding remarks	77
9 Bibliography	81
Appendix I Questionnaire	85

Tables and figures

Table 4.1 Age distribution by gender in percent	35
Table 4.2 Ethnic groups by district of origin.....	38
Table 4.3 Religious affiliation by district of origin.....	39
Table 4.4 Children originating from Kono or not, and children living with parents or not in percent by age groups.....	40
Table 4.5 Who the children are actually living with in percent by age group	42
Table 4.6 Orphans by age group, in percent.....	42
Table 4.7 School enrolment by gender and by work assignment in percent.....	45
Table 5.1 Work assignment by different background variables in percent.....	50
Table 5.2 Supervised work in percent by work task.....	50
Table 5.3 Hours, days worked by work assignment	57
Table 5.4 Work pressure by different background variables in percent	59
Table 5.5 Tools used, in percent of work assignment	60
Table 5.6 Medicines used by the children that have been ill last month.....	62
Table 5.7 Injuries last month by work assignment in percent.....	62
Table 6.1 Type of salary or benefits received by work assignment in percent	65
Table 7.1 Own assessment of current life compared to one year ago by work assignment in percent.....	73
Table 7.2 Dreams about the future by work assignment in percent.....	74
 Figure 2.1 Direct workers carrying gravel to the site for working.....	 23
Figure 3.1 Map of Kono district with chiefdoms. Circles indicates field sites	26
Figure 3.2 The Star of Sierra Leone, to the left, compared with diamonds usually found on the site close to Penduma I to the right, and in the middle, a stone illustrating the biggest diamond ever found on the same site.....	28
Figure 3.3 Number of interviews conducted in each wave by interview site, and by work assignment	29

Figure 3.4 Stability over waves for work assignment, age, sex, education and parent contact in percent	30
Figure 4.1 District of origin by gender in percent. In addition, four percent of the boys and five percent of the girls originate from abroad, mainly Guinea (n=615 children under 18 years of age working with diamond related activities)	37
Figure 4.2 Kaku	41
Figure 4.3 Relation to parents according to age. (Regular contact = at least once a month; rear contact = less than once a month; dead= both parents dead)	43
Figure 4.4 School enrolment by relation to parents & place of origin, and to contact with parents in percent	46
Figure 4.5 Initial reason for starting present job by gender in percent	47
Figure 5.1 Median months worked by tasks and age	54
Figure 5.2 Work days per week by age, gender and work assignment	57
Figure 5.3 Work hours per day by age, gender and work assignment	58
Figure 5.4 Illnesses that have prevented the children from their normal duties last month by work assignment in percent	61
Figure 6.1 Salary received the day before in Leone	66

Foreword

The Fafo Research Programme on Trafficking and Child Labour

Over the past seven years, Fafo has developed a research profile on child labour and policies to combat it. Studies of work life are a core research area for Fafo, and our surveys of living conditions have targeted children and youth as a particularly important group to be examined. Fafo's origins in the trade union movement have resulted in a particular interest in developing institutional frameworks for regulating work and labour rights issues in the best interests of national economic development and the work force.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs drew upon Fafo's expertise to assist in preparing and hosting the International Conference on Child Labour in Oslo in 1997. Since then, Fafo has been commissioned by the International Labour Organisation, the World Bank, and others to provide applied research of interest to those combating child labour. The studies have been multifaceted and have addressed such issues as child labour and international trade, child relocation and domestic work, how to identify and measure child labour in national statistics, and how to identify and study child soldiers and the trafficking of children.

In 2002, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs generously agreed to finance a Fafo programme on child labour, enabling us to collate and consolidate our research on the subject. International efforts to combat child labour must be knowledge-based; that is, they require a good empirical understanding of its causes, forms, and extent. One challenge is to develop methodologies that can strengthen the planning and efficiency of national programmes to counter child labour. It is Fafo's aim to contribute to this goal by providing knowledge and methods to map the challenges and measure results.

The specific objectives of the programme are to:

1. Help improve the empirical understanding of the variations of child labour, including their social and family contexts;
2. Improve and validate qualitative and quantitative methods to study and map child labour, with a particular focus on its worst forms;

3. Explore how an understanding of children as actors may help develop preventive measures aimed at improving living and working conditions for children and reducing the prevalence of child labour.

We are pleased to present the fifth in a series of working papers from this programme, which is coordinated by Anne Hatløy. This report documents the production process of diamonds in Kono District in Sierra Leone; specifies characteristics of the young miners and those involved in various support functions; and identifies the most vulnerable groups of children and adolescents involved in the process. Previous reports include *Achievements and Setbacks in the Fights Against Child Labour. Assessment of the Oslo Conference on Child Labour October 1997* by Lise Bjerkan and Christophe Gironde, *Travel to Uncertainty* by Kari Hauge Riisøen, Anne Hatløy and Lise Bjerkan, *Identification of Street Children: Characteristics of Street Children in Bamako and Accra* by Anne Hatløy and Anne Huser, and *Child Labour and Cocoa Production in West Africa: the Case of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana* by Morten Bøås and Anne Huser. Forthcoming is the last report in this series *After the 'Storm'* by Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy, which analyse the economic activities of returning children in Liberia.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork on which report is based was carried out in April 2005, and it was lead by Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy. I would like to thank the authors of this report Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy, and Jon Pedersen, Mats Utas and Osman Gbla who provided valuable input during the work, and Ingunn Bjørkhaug, a student at Fafo. Special thanks also to Alex Gandi and our team of Sierra Leonean fieldworkers, Dumbuya, Suma, Elizabeth, Abdul and Agnes, without whom the fieldwork would not have been possible. Special thanks also to all the children, youth, adults and organisations in Sierra Leone who were willing to share their experiences and histories with us.

Finally, we are grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway for its financial support, without which this report would not have been possible.

Mark Taylor
Managing Director
Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies

1 Introduction

Diamonds originating from West Africa are an issue of much debate. They have supposedly both started and prolonged wars, and are also allegedly used by international terrorists to finance their activities (Global Witness 2005a). Sierra Leone is a mineral-rich country containing some of the world's most valuable deposits of diamonds. Nevertheless, it is one of the world's poorest countries (UNDP 2005), and has just emerged from more than a decade of civil war. Rather than contribute to national wealth, the diamond deposits have in fact come to be seen by many as part of the problem in Sierra Leone. They have been labelled as 'conflict diamonds' and 'blood diamonds' (see Hirsch 2001; Global Witness 2003, 2005a), reflecting the international community's concern about stones smuggled out of the country by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to be either sold or traded for weapons and ammunition.

Much less studied, however, are the living conditions of those actually mining these diamonds. This report aims to fill at least part of that research gap by examining the living conditions of children and youth under 18 years of age involved in diamond-related activities.

In some of the existing literature, young diamond diggers are pigeonholed as unruly youths predisposed to criminal activities, whose perpetual search for quick wealth leads them also to join rebel movements (see Collier 2000; Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton 2000; Abdullah 1998, 2004). Our research suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Instead, like Archibald and Richards (2002), we see the diamond diggers primarily as ordinary people in search of an income.

Indeed, the ordinary miner in Sierra Leone is neither a bandit, warlord, nor rebel soldier, but a poor young man. Very few women or girls work as miners and, in general, smaller children do not mine either. The overall majority of those directly involved in mining are boys above the age of 14. They are involved in what we in this report call *direct work*. Smaller children of both sexes also work, but their involvement tends to be in the informal service sector surrounding the diamond sites, where they work as *petty traders* or errand boys and girls in various *support functions*.¹ Here girls participate at approximately the same level as boys. All of these children's livelihoods and living conditions are examined in this report.

¹ These categories are further elaborated in the proceeding chapters, especially in Chapter 5.

Most of the diamonds produced in Sierra Leone are of the alluvial type, which can be found either by digging with a shovel into riverbeds or panning and sifting near the riverbed. The work is mostly seasonal, primarily taking place during the dry season. Older boys and male youth taking part in such activities are either casual labourers, often hired on a day-to-day basis, or are organised based on relationships with a sponsor. The miners in the first category compete daily for employment and, if employed, are paid after a day's work. In the latter case, the work is arranged differently. Because the search for diamonds typically takes a long time, miners receive provisional support from their sponsors in order to survive until diamonds are found. Thus, when the miner (or team of miners) eventually has a find, he/they must first pay back what is owed to his/their sponsor. Thereafter, the miners and the sponsor share the profit from the sale of the diamonds.

Unfortunately, both types of labour arrangements easily lead to exploitation. Accordingly, a primary goal of this study is to explore how this *particular* system of production influences the working and living conditions of children and youth involved in this type of activity, whether through family members or by venturing into diamond-producing areas on their own. The fieldwork was carried out in Kono District, in and around Koidu Town. This site was chosen both because of the long history of diamond mining in Kono and because the area was particularly damaged during the war. Sierra Leone is currently in a post-conflict phase and much did indeed change during the war. However, as this report will show, there is little evidence that the living conditions of the young miners and the other children involved in the diamond economy in Kono, is much different from the ones that existed prior to the war. The conditions certainly deteriorated during the war in Kono, but today it seems like things have return to the state of affairs that existed prior to the war. This is mainly due to the logic of the production process of alluvial diamonds in Sierra Leone. This means that in order to understand the mining and the lives of the children and youth involved in it, we need to understand both the continuities as well as the changes that have taken place.

This report therefore documents the production process of diamonds in Kono District in Sierra Leone; specifies characteristics of the young miners and those involved in various support functions; and identifies the most vulnerable groups of children and adolescents involved in the process. The second chapter presents a brief background of diamond mining in Sierra Leone, and discusses the relationship between diamonds and the Sierra Leonean civil war. The subsequent chapter explains the research methods and our fieldwork organisation. Chapter four is concerned with the background – including family background and level of education – of children and youth involved in diamond mining, whether directly or indirectly. Chapter five documents their actual involvement – including work assignments, tools used, and how (and by whom) the work is organised – and describes the children's health

situation, illnesses, and injuries. In chapter six, we report on salaries and payment arrangements. Chapter seven discusses the hopes and aspirations that these children and youths have for their future. In the final chapter, we discuss the kind of steps that may be taken to improve the situation of these children and youths, and conclude the report with a discussion of possible policy recommendations.

The history of Sierra Leone is one of corruption, mismanagement, and neglect, which eventually led to complete state decay and civil war. The war ended in 2001, but Sierra Leone is still one of the poorest countries in the world – sitting second from bottom in UNDP's Human Development Report, with a life expectancy at birth of about 41 years, an adult literacy rate of 30 percent, and a GDP per capita of USD 548 (UNDP 2005). This was not inevitable. Had Sierra Leone been able to manage its own resources adequately, the country could have prospered. It is rich in diamonds and other minerals, with fertile soil and a fishery sector that was ripe for development; indeed, when the country gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1961, it was known as the 'Athens of West Africa'. The University of Sierra Leone and Fourah Bay College were institutions of higher learning envied by many neighbouring countries. Today, university institutions lie in ruins. Under-employment – especially among youth, who comprise the majority of the population – is rampant (UNOWA 2005).

Some analysts have argued that the reason for the war was diamonds – specifically, the desire of the RUF leadership to use control of them for personal enrichment (see Abdullah 2004). This is incorrect. The war started as an uprising against a political and economic elite that completely neglected its own population (Richards 1996, 2005a, 2005b; Musah 2000). The consequences, however, were disastrous for the population on whose behalf the rebels claimed to fight. The Sierra Leonean civil war was extremely brutal, and the physical and mental scars it left are still evident everywhere in Sierra Leone.

Yet while diamonds were not the direct cause of conflict, they were undeniably part of the underlying dynamic, as revenue from the diamond sector only benefited the rich and well-connected elites. Nor has this issue been resolved; rather, the question of how to govern the diamond sector in a credible and transparent manner will once more be high on the agenda now that Sierra Leone has bid farewell to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and is preparing for the 2007 presidential elections.² The Government of Sierra Leone has lately enhanced its control over diamond mining: from January to July 2004, official exports of diamonds totalled USD 81 million, compared with USD 41 million during the same period in 2003 (see UN 2004). However, much work remains to be done for this sector to be brought under credible and transparent public control. The new discoveries

² The last peacekeepers left Sierra Leone on 31 December 2005.

around Kamakwie in Bombali District, which prompted the influx of about 15,000 miners, many coming into the north from the eastern part of the country, have only added to the problem of state capacity to regulate and control diamond mining. At the same time, the notorious problem of state corruption in Sierra Leone illustrates that the challenge is as much an issue of willingness as capacity.

The question of how to regulate the diamond sector is therefore bound to continue to be one of the key political questions in Sierra Leone. We believe that our focus on the livelihood of those involved in diamond mining on-the-ground could contribute to a new, constructive dialogue among stakeholders that is less concerned with the certification procedures of the Kimberly Process, and more with how poor people try to make a living from this sector.³

We are not against national or international attempts to regulate this sector. However, we also realise that people are driven to diamond mining mainly by default. People mine because they have very few other income-generating opportunities. Crucially, this is also why so many children work in the informal service sector surrounding the mining sites: the little money that these children can earn is desperately needed by their families – assuming that they have one. This means that the international community must take care not to design policies that actually make the lives of these people even harder. Although it is true that some of the young men involved in diamond mining have a background as combatants, and that some observers find this problematic (see Global Witness 2005b), the key point is that this sector offers a group disadvantaged in the labour market the opportunity to at least pursue the dream of earning some money. This opportunity may in fact have benefited the cause of security and stability in Sierra Leone and neighbouring Liberia after their respective wars. Thus, we hope this report can contribute to a much-needed debate on the design of new policy interventions and programmes that can help make the country's diamond deposits a source of income for the nation as a whole, rather than just a privileged few.

³ The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is an agreement designed to eliminate the trade in 'conflict diamonds'. Currently 69 countries participating in the process have passed and supposedly implemented national laws establishing import and export control regimes designed to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds (see www.kimberleyprocess.com). However, it is clear that both governments and economic actors have failed to regulate aspects of the diamond sector (see Global Witness 2005a and 2005b). Unfortunately, given some of the countries involved, and especially the (lack of) administrative capacity and willingness of these governments to regulate their own countries and borders, the prospects for implementation of the Kimberley Process are questionable.

2 Diamonds in Sierra Leone

The war in Sierra Leone did not start as a competition over control of alluvial diamonds. In fact, the integration and marketing of natural resources to the conflict occurred only once the conflict was well underway. While there is no doubt that international networks of clandestine dealers in diamonds and weapons assisted the RUF, it nevertheless remains that it took the RUF until 1998 to get such activities organised (Richards 2005b) – a fact that fatally undermines the argument that diamond mining and control was the sole objective of RUF. Along similar lines, we believe that the ‘economic agendas’ literature (e.g. Berdal and Malone 2000; Collier 2000) may be useful in explaining how armed movements are sustained, but does not tell us much about why conflicts start in the first place. To understand this process, we must take into consideration political, cultural, and historical factors, in addition to the economic dimensions of conflict. In order to give a background for understanding children’s involvement with diamond mining we will briefly review the history of diamond mining and the war in this chapter. However, in the report our main focus is on the lives of the children and youth engaged in this work today.

A brief history of diamond mining in Sierra Leone

Diamond mining is not a new activity in Sierra Leone: it has been going on for several decades. Already in the 1930s, when diamonds were discovered in Kono District, the Sierra Leonean economy was transformed from dependency on forest products (e.g. palm oil, coffee, and cocoa) to a mineral economy.⁴ By the 1960s, the major export commodities were diamonds, iron ore, bauxite, and rutile. Much of the new mineral wealth was discovered in areas that had previously been marginalised both politically and economically (Bøås 2002).

From 1935 to 1956, a British company had exclusive rights to diamond mining, with Sierra Leoneans legally prohibited from mining their own diamonds (see Keen

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, ‘Kono’ will hereafter refer to Kono District and ‘Koidu’ to Koidu town in Kono District.

2005). This company, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), was a subsidiary of De Beers and operated its own security force. In order to avoid illicit mining, the SLST demanded that all those not considered autochthonous to the diamond regions be removed from those areas. The paramount chiefs were given the responsibility by the colonial administration to control settlement and migration, and thereby also the power to decide who belonged to the 'soil' of the diamond-producing regions and who did not. However, many people found ways to circumvent the SLST monopoly through bribery or other connections to local chiefs.

Control has always been an important – and elusive – factor in the Sierra Leonean diamond industry. The diamond deposits in Kono are scattered and, therefore, both difficult to control and expensive to police. Diamonds being small are also easy to hide; and the very nature of alluvial mining makes it almost impossible to control all miners working at a particular site, as the activity occurs not in an underground mine – to which access and departure easily can be policed – but outside in the open air. The diamond boom in the 1950s also produced significant migration and a floating population that was difficult to control. With an increasing number of people attracted to mining, the restrictions on diamond digging grew increasingly unpopular. The result was increased tension and social conflict. In 1955, a protest staged by miners in Kono forced the colonial administration to reduce the SLST territory of operations and grant local miners the right to engage in small-scale mining (Hirsch 2001). The decrease in SLST authority and control led to massive migration into the diamond regions of Sierra Leone, resulting in increased competition for land that could be mined. This conflict became increasingly politicised, spilling over into the emerging rivalry between the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All People's Congress (APC). This was particularly the case in Kono District, where politics were influenced by a large northern immigrant settlement.⁵

Diamond mining for Sierra Leoneans was thus legalised and, in the areas previously controlled by SLST, the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme (ADMS) was established to grant mining licences to Sierra Leoneans or Sierra Leonean companies, providing that local chiefs and landowners agreed. The primary beneficiaries of this reform were the rich and well connected, mainly because only the chiefs, politicians, civil servants, and traders could afford the licences and necessary equipment. The Lebanese community in Sierra Leone was also able to penetrate and dominate the new, supposedly 'native' mining sector by virtue of its access to the capital necessary to mine. In turn, the chiefs in diamond-rich areas such as Kono got rich from their

⁵ SLPP is dominated by the Mende of southern and eastern Sierra Leone, whereas the Temne from northern Sierra Leone tend to dominate the APC. The northern migrant settlement in Kono was drastically reduced during the war, and even if a recovery of the diamond activity in this area is under way, the population has not returned to its pre-war level. We return to this issue in Chapter 4.

power to grant licences and, consequently, decide who was allowed to dig where (see Fithen 1999). Meanwhile, licence holders established themselves and engaged and equipped others to dig for them.

Although the new system increased production and sales through legal and taxable channels to some extent, it has nevertheless been estimated that, by the late 1950s, up to 75 percent of the total value of diamond production was being smuggled. In order to bring a larger share of the production under public control, a Gold and Diamond Office (GDO) was established in 1959. Operated by Diamond Corporation Ltd, a part of the De Beers cartel, GDO's task was to buy and sell the ADMS diamonds. The theory was that GDO would pay higher prices for the diamonds than could be obtained through illegal channels (mostly running through Monrovia, and to a lesser degree Guinea). In addition to this manipulation of the incentive structure, policing was also reinforced: De Beers used mercenaries and former British intelligence officers to combat smuggling; and stories still circulate about how this regime turned Kono into a police state complete with checkpoints, spies, and a private security force. Although smuggling was reduced, state revenue from the diamond sector did not increase by much. The gap between the inflated price paid by the GDO and the prices GDO obtained for resale within the De Beers organisation was not very large, meaning that there was little profit left for the government to tax. In fact, this system was by and large to the advantage of De Beers and its Sierra Leonean associates rather than the country as a whole. The system did, however, manage to bring at least a temporary sort of control over the diamond producing areas.

After independence, the new state was not able to maintain a regime of such tight surveillance. Thus, in the 1960s, illicit mining increased once more. When Siaka Stevens and the APC came to power in 1968, attempts were made to re-impose government control by sending the army to support the police in their attempt to bring an end to illicit mining. This ultimately resulted not in a decrease in illicit mining, but the swift establishment of a culture of corruption, as both police and army personnel accepted bribes from miners without the necessary permits. Smuggling also increased anew upon the abolition of the previous incentive structure and the creation of a new body, the Government Diamond Office (GDO), by Stevens's regime. The GDO essentially inverted the previous policy to one of buying cheaply and selling dearly. Along with the increase in smuggling that this policy change occasioned, it also meant that the few diamonds that passed through GDO tended to be undervalued with regard to export tax value. The officials involved, however, earned good money on this arrangement (see Sesay 1993). As the salaries of government officials fell behind the inflation rate in the 1970s and 1980s, they increasingly accepted bribes to turn a blind eye to smuggling, even themselves taking part in such operations. Thus, the state structures charged with controlling the diamond sector for the benefit of the country essentially degraded into fleecing operations for personal enrichment. It has been estimated that,

by the late 1980s, up to 95 percent of the diamonds produced in Sierra Leone were smuggled out of the country (Sesay 1993; Keen 2005).

Thus, when Joseph Momoh assumed power in January 1986, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pressured him to control smuggling and corruption in the diamond sector as a means of increasing the nation's tax base. Under the State of Economic Emergency Declaration from 1987, private firms were forbidden from dealing in foreign currency, and the army was once more sent into the rural diamond mining areas to enforce these and other new regulations. Far from improving the situation, what resulted was a widening of the co-optation between mining interests and the army, similar to that which unfolded during Stevens's attempt to re-regulate the diamond sector in the late 1960s. The subsequent 'Operation Clean State' in April 1990 was therefore dead in the water. The army's expulsion of about 10,000 miners from Kono as part of this operation not only increased the involvement of the military establishment in the diamond sector, but also created a huge pool of discontented young ex-miners. This population later came to constitute the main recruitment pool for the RUF, the army, and the Civil Defence Force (CDF) (see Abdullah 1998; Reno 1995, 1998; Fithen 1999; Richards 1996).

The outcome of these combined political and economic struggles was that the loss of formal control over the diamond areas, already underway during the last stage of the colonial period, further continued under independence. Little by little, the state lost control over its assets, private entrepreneurs took over Kono and other diamond-rich areas, and diamonds became the cornerstone of a culture of corruption and mismanagement of national resources for personal enrichment and benefit. This created wealth for some, but for most of the population Sierra Leone's mineral resources have only brought more poverty and misery. This has not, however, diminished, but rather increased the discursive role that the diamonds play in the collective imagination in Sierra Leone.

Since the 1930s, diamond mining has shaped not only the economy, but also the 'imaginary' of wealth. Ferme (2001) describes how temporary alluvial diamond mining settlements are often short-lived and elusive sites for the reversals of fortune. Rumours about the discovery of new diamond deposits may lead young men to search for them under contract to supporters. Within a few days, hundreds of people can congregate in even the most remote rural areas, transforming them into bustling settlements.⁶ After a time, if the original rumour is not substantiated by

⁶ This is illustrated by how swiftly almost 15,000 miners moved into the Kamakwie area in Bombali District when the news broke about new diamond deposits being discovered in this area. Similar mass movements of people also took place in neighbouring Liberia, in Sinoe County during the autumn of 2005. People from all over West Africa travelled to this area when the news emerged about huge stones being found.

concrete evidence or new credible rumours, such sites are deserted as swiftly as they were established. People tend to move from site to site relatively often. What sustains them is the dream: the vision and imagery of the great diamond that will one day emerge in their hands. Many, in fact, believe that diamonds are making their way through the earth, working their way upward with the name of their finder on them. The belief is that there is a diamond for all those that dig for them, but the miner will only find 'his diamond' if he has the strength, endurance, and courage to continue the search. Immense hardship must be endured before you will be rewarded with your diamond; but one beautiful day your diamond will come to you, if you can only survive the hardship first. This dream – which is sustained by the lack of other income-generating opportunities or educational possibilities, the latter of which are thwarted by a lack of money for school fees – continues to attract youth to diamond mining, and also explains why parents condone or actively encourage their sons to start mining.⁷

Diamond mining and the civil war

By the time the RUF entered eastern Sierra Leone at Bomaru in Kailahun District (from Charles Taylor-controlled Liberian territory) on 23 March 1991, the Sierra Leonean state was in severe economic crisis and undermined by a near-total loss of legitimacy among the populace. RUF undoubtedly pushed this corrupted state over the edge, but the tactics it used, and the civil war that followed, sent the whole social fabric of Sierra Leone into the abyss as well (Bøås 2001).

Headed by Foday Sankoh, an aging former Sierra Leone army photographer, the RUF was initially a small force of about 100 fighters. By recruiting youth—both voluntarily, by tapping into sentiments of social exclusion, and through the use of force and coercion (for example by making young recruits participate in atrocities against local leaders and populations)—the RUF was able to build a viable fighting force. By the summer of 1991, it controlled around a fifth of southern and eastern Sierra Leone.

With the escalation of the war, the government lost most of what little remained of its control over the diamond trade, and thereby also its ability to pay its civil servants and the soldiers fighting RUF in the border area. In April 1992, some of these unpaid soldiers rebelled and took over power. Led by 27 year-old Captain Valentine Strasser, they formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC); initiated

⁷ Average school fees for primary education come to 200,000 Leones.

a major recruitment drive among youths in Freetown and other larger cities; and went on the offensive against the RUF. During 1993, the army recaptured important diamond mining towns including Koidu, Kailahun, and Pendembu. Most observers believed that the war would soon be over.

This was not to be. RUF was weakened, but the losses that the movement experienced led it to rethink its strategy and *modus operandi*.

Frankly, we were beaten and on the run, but (...) we dispersed into smaller units. We destroyed all our vehicles and heavy weapons. We now relied on light weapons, and our feet and brains and knowledge of the countryside. We moved deeper into the comforting bosom of our mother earth – the forest. The forest welcomed us and gave us succour.⁸

In isolated forest bases, the RUF regrouped and retrained its fighters, and also engaged in its first trades in diamonds—often with government soldiers. These first deals were small and haphazardly done, mainly comprising an exchange of diamonds for arms and ammunition with government soldiers who had been too long unpaid. Just before Christmas 1994, the RUF launched a new major offensive targeting strategic points all across the country. In January 1995, it reached Waterloo, just a few miles outside of Freetown. In an attempt to reverse the tide of the war, Strasser announced a return to multiparty democracy, making unconditional offers to the RUF to discuss a ceasefire and RUF participation in the forthcoming elections. At the same time, however, he also employed the services of Executive Outcomes, a South African private military company with strong links to various international mining and oil interests and other African regimes (notably in Angola). Supported by Executive Outcomes, the army managed to stop the RUF offensive.

In 1996, the situation seemed to be improving. The NPRC stepped down and elections were held, with Achmed Tejan Kabbah and the SLPP victorious. However, the nascent, fragile process of peace and reconciliation did not last long. The peace process soon encountered a dead end, and the international community—which should have helped the warring parties reach out to each other—by and large abandoned the scene. Additionally, the Sierra Leonean army felt threatened by the support the new government gave to the CDF, which was increasingly transforming from a collection of local defence forces to a government-controlled (i.e. SLPP) militia. This was the immediate precipitant of the coup in May 1997 and the establishment of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which included both army soldiers and the RUF. AFRC stayed in power for less than a year. In March 1998, Freetown

⁸ Statement by Foday Sankoh in *Footpaths to Democracy: Towards a New Sierra Leone*, RUF's main political manifesto, probably written in 1994-95 in the Gola Forest headquarter of RUF.

was 'liberated' by Nigerian soldiers acting under the banner of the Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).⁹

But still the war persisted. The RUF had spent its time in Freetown well, cultivating its connections with the international underworld of illicit arms trading; and they now used their continued control of diamond-rich areas such as Kono to restock their supplies of arms. Similar to the situation in 1993, the movement withdrew into the hinterland to reorganise and rearm—but this time on the basis of a resource base they had learnt to master. Only after the RUF was chased away from Freetown in March 1998 did control and trade of diamonds become the movement's *modus operandi* (Bøås 2000). One of its key sites was Koidu and the surrounding diamond areas. Diamonds extracted from these and other areas under RUF control were sold for cash and exchanged for arms and ammunition. A considerable amount of this trade was organised through Liberia, but international merchants of arms and diamonds also dealt directly with RUF commanders in Koidu and other such places. Some diamonds were also sold over the border to Guinea.

Just prior to Christmas 1998, the movement re-emerged again and, in a daring and violent offensive, broke through ECOMOG's defences around Freetown, managing to take control of substantial parts of the city for over a week in January 1999. Subsequent negotiations prepared the ground for a peace agreement and the deployment of UNAMSIL. The UN peacekeepers stumbled initially: after a series of errors, 500 peacekeepers were temporarily captured by the RUF in May 2000 (Bøås 2000), and more UN troops—assisted by a British intervention force and more ECOMOG soldiers—were eventually needed to control the situation. However, as the UN force increased to approximately 15,000 peacekeepers, RUF came under considerable pressure. The movement eventually fragmented.

When the last UN peacekeepers left on 31 December 2005, the country was calm. Yet the roots of the conflict, including crippling poverty and corruption, remain entrenched in Sierra Leone. The diamond fields now yield U.S. dollars to state coffers, but over half the mining is still estimated to be illegal. In a country with high un- and under-employment, where 57 percent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, and where prices for fuel, gas, and rice (the staple food) are rising, concern remains that poverty, perceptions of injustice, and sheer desperation will again induce people to take up weapons to obtain basic needs. Life in Sierra Leone is still a life of want, in which the majority of the population lacks even the most basic necessities.

⁹ ECOMOG was formed in 1990 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as an intervention force in Liberia. It included components from several West African states, but was led by Nigeria. The operation in Sierra Leone was until the deployment of UNAMSIL in 2000 a Nigerian-only operation (see Adeleke 1995; Huband 1998; Ellis 1999; Bøås 2001; Keen 2005).

Diamond mining in Kono

As noted above, mining began in Kono in the 1930s, which implies that almost all sites have been mined many times. What people currently search for are stones that were overlooked in the past, or new stones brought to the sites by rivers and streams (particularly during the rainy season). Although some virgin deposits still exist, these are both difficult to reach and require heavy equipment and machinery for mining to begin.

Of course, the fact that most sites in Kono have been repeatedly re-mined means that less stones are found, particularly big ones. The miners are thus digging longer without finding any stones and, when diamonds are found, they tend to be smaller and less valuable than previously the case. Keen (2005) contends that the alluvial deposits of Kono were almost depleted after the war. This does not seem to be the case. Everybody we talked to gave the impression that there have been less diamonds found after the war than prior to RUF control of the area. Nevertheless, people who live there are still mining, and new migrants continue coming to work as diamond diggers and in the various support functions connected to mining. This suggests that diamonds are still found in the area. We will return to this issue in chapter six, when we look at what children and youth actually obtain from mining and the economic activities in the informal service sector around mining. However, we would also like to make it clear from the beginning that our findings show that there is still money to be made from alluvial diamond mining in Kono. People still find it worthwhile searching for diamonds, and this is the case for both people living in the area and migrants coming into Kono from other parts of Sierra Leone. This would not have been the case if diamonds were not discovered anymore. The very nature of alluvial diamond-mining makes it impossible to search for diamonds in vain.

An important aspect of the situations of Koidu and Kono is the destruction that took place during the war. The diamond fields of Kono became one of RUF's main assets and, in order to control the area and the mining, RUF burnt down nearly 85 percent of the houses in Koidu and chased away a considerable amount of its population. Similar to earlier government strategies of expelling unwanted miners from Kono, RUF tried to control the extraction of diamonds by removing what they saw as a surplus work force.¹⁰ Some people were forced to dig diamonds for RUF

¹⁰ See also Keen (2005:51), who describes Kono as a persistent focus of rebel activity, and how the RUF expelled thousands of people from this district. In this regard, it is interesting to note that people claim that RUF commander Sam 'Maskita' Bockarie planned to blow up the bridge across the river Bagbe at Njaiama-Sewafe in order to improve RUF's ability to control the movement of people in and out of this territory. This plan also brings back memories of previous attempts at regulation and control, namely the checkpoint system of the De Beers subsidiary in the 1950s.

commanders but, as diamonds are small and the sites difficult to control – even for armed people who would kill without hesitation – this mode of production was not entirely satisfactory. Instead, RUF came to rely less on the singular power of the gun and more on installing themselves in various roles as supporter, licence holder, landowner, and machine owner. In other words, they took over the roles previously performed by local chiefs, politicians, civil servants, soldiers, and traders. For some of those who stayed behind, the period of RUF control was one of terror and brutality; for others, life remained more or less the same once they adapted to the change in composition of the roles of supporter, licence holder, landowner, and machine owner.

The mining of alluvial diamonds, the dominant type found in Kono, does not require much in the way of industrial equipment. The mining sites may differ both in size and location, but what is important is that all alluvial sites are located close to streams, riverbeds, or swamps, and that the work is seasonal. Miners dig gravel from swamps and streambeds during the dry season, then sieve the gravel before the rainy season floods overtake makeshift worksites. Often a shovel, sieve, and head pan are all that is needed, plus the equipment necessary to camp in the bush. In other, more developed sites, pumping and dredging gear are also used, and at times also an excavator. However, there will always be mud, sand, and dirt that must be removed before the gravel can be reached. The overall part of the work is therefore concerned with digging out mud or gravel with a shovel. The gravel is then washed and sieved. When and how this is conducted depends on the size and organisation of the site (see Chapter 5). However, what's important to keep in mind is that this is a rather simple production process that involves little technological input, but which at the same time is very labour intensive.

Both local people and migrants are involved in mining in Kono. Generally we can separate between two groups: 'settled miners', who live with their family in the area where they mine as an integral part of a local community; and 'migrating miners', who live on their own together with fellow miners. In the history of the war in Kono, members of the latter group were most likely to join RUF, whereas those in the settled miner group often joined local defence forces (if they took up arms at all). Gberie (1997:192) describes how the 40-50 RUF rebels that took part in the first attack on Koidu in 1991 were joined by migrating miners. As 'strangers' to Koidu, they apparently had little concern for the well being of the city.

The alluvial diamond area exists in an environment of uncertainty. When initially observing the mining sites, one may think that it would be tempting for the workers to hide a diamond and try to sell it themselves. Yet this rarely happens, at least among the younger miners. They generally lack the contacts and knowledge needed for such an operation and, even if they had such contacts and know-how, the manoeuvre would be extremely risky: a whistle-blower would be well paid for informing the crew

boss, licence holder, land owner, and supporter about such plans and activities, while the police – mindful that they would be well rewarded for the apprehension of such a person – would be vigorous in their pursuit. However, the main reason that most young miners are discouraged from selling a diamond on their own is that they are unable to assess its true value. Thus, in the end, most children and youth involved in mining prefer to develop stable long-term positions with people of authority in the diamond hierarchy, rather than risking everything on such an affair.

These people of authority include landowners, supporters, licence holders, machine owners, managers, and crew bosses. For young miners, the latter figure is of particular importance, as will be evident below. Most often young miners are recruited by the crew boss and depend on him for their income, accommodation, and general well-being. The crew boss also often makes the decision about where they will mine. This means that crew bosses often change locations for themselves and their crews. A respected crew boss may be able to negotiate relatively good deals for himself with landowners and licence holders – deals from which his crew of workers also will benefit, albeit to a lesser degree.

The number of people inhabiting the various authority positions changes from one place to another and also between different teams working at the same site, as one diamond site is often divided among many licencees. Regardless of how the roles are configured, in almost all cases somebody will be the landowner, someone else will hold the licence, and, if the diggers are not paid on a day-to-day basis, someone will provide them with the minimum they need to survive until diamonds are found. Sometimes there is one individual filling all six roles, but this is not usual. (Conversely, in some cases pumping equipment is not necessary or too expensive, and thus there no machine owner is involved.) A typical diamond site consists of several gravel pits, with each pit being dug up and washed by different teams. The gravel dug out of each pit is divided between the landowner, licence holder, manager, crew boss, machine owner (if a machine is used), and the supporter (if this is a separate individual). The biggest pile normally goes to the licence holder. The workers sometimes have their own pile, but more commonly their pile is the pile of their crew boss, meaning that he shares the sale of the diamonds from his pile with his crew. The set-up is best described as a game, one that is complex, mutable, and highly secretive. The basic rules of the game are that there must be landowner and there must be somebody with a mining licence. Otherwise, the whole operation is illegal. All the young miners we interviewed claimed to work at a licensed site. That said, the existence of an agreement with a landowner and a legal licence does not tell us anything about whether or not the diamonds are sold through legal channels. The alluvial diamond sector in Sierra Leone is still highly informal.

In cases where people dig for diamonds for a fixed daily salary, the arrangement differs. In such cases, miners receive the same sum every day regardless of whether or

not they find any diamonds. In fact, such workers will simply not know if diamonds have been found: they dig the gravel, and at times also take part in the initial washing (which will then be finished by a machine), but do not participate in the final search with the pan. This takes place after they have finished working. We did witness a few cases where paid workers were washing, but only under the close supervision of a trusted manager. We will return to all these aspects about diamond mining in Kono in more detail in the forthcoming chapters. The important point is that diamond mining is the basic logic of this production system that has by and large remained the same since diamonds first were discovered in this area: diamonds are extracted through a labour intensive process where mud and dirt is removed by hand, and the gravel dug out and washed. This is very hard work, and the young miners are either organised in teams under the supervision of a crew boss and are entitled to a share of the diamonds found, or they work for a fixed salary.

Figure 2.1 Direct workers carrying gravel to the site for washing



3 Fieldwork organisation and research methodology

The fieldwork was carried out in April 2005 by a team consisting of two senior Fafo researchers (the authors of this report), one research assistant, also from Fafo, and a team of Sierra Leonean fieldworkers. The Sierra Leonean team consisted of one local organiser, one supervisor, and four interviewers. Two drivers also assisted in the mission. The local team members also belonged to a larger field team established by the two lead researchers for previous implementation of a FORUT-sponsored survey on alcohol and drug consumption in post-war Sierra Leone (see Bøås and Hatløy 2005). The team members were trained for that assignment, but they also had previous experience in survey work for Statistics Sierra Leone. The training for this study was carried out in Freetown before departure to Koidu by the two senior Fafo researchers. Prior to the implementation of the study, a research permit was issued by the General-Secretary of Statistics Sierra Leone.

In Koidu, the Chief of the local police force and its Family Support Unit were informed about our mission, as was the Deputy Chief Administrator at Kono District Office. The Government Mining Engineer in Kono and the local office of the Ministry of Labour were also informed about the study. The subject of the study was also discussed with the main implementing agencies represented in Koidu, including International Rescue Committee, World Vision, and Diamond Peace Initiative. All officials and organisations visited were supportive of the study and commented generously on the subject matter, thereby improving our understanding of child and youth involvement in diamond and diamond-related economic activities in Kono.

Kono is situated in the eastern part of Sierra Leone,¹¹ bordering Guinea in the east, Koinadugu District to the north, Tonkolili District to the west, and Kenema District to the southwest. It occupies a total of 5,641 square miles, and has 14 chiefdoms and a population of 253,729 people.¹² The commercial capital and administrative centre for the district is Koidu. Although the original inhabitants of

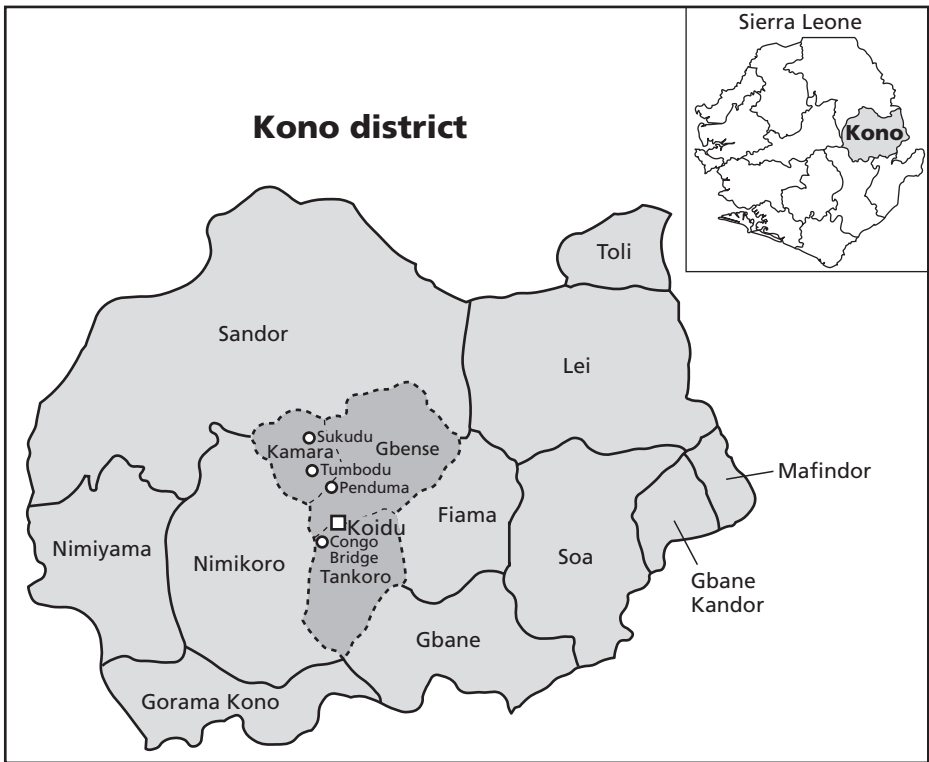
¹¹ For an overview of Sierra Leone's administrative boundaries, see also Figure 4.1.

¹² According to Statistics Sierra Leone (2004). This figure does not include the census data from 2004, and there are reasons to believe that the current population is higher than this figure.

the district are the Kono people, the many decades of economic migration into the area mean that today people from all Sierra Leonean ethnic groups are present in Kono. The main economic activity is diamond mining, followed by gold mining, but the cultivation of rice and coffee and cacao plantations have also played important roles in the livelihoods of the people of Kono. Even after considerable migration, the population is still predominantly Muslim.

While all areas in Sierra Leone suffered during the war, Kono perhaps suffered the most, as indicated in chapter 2 above. Kono experienced the second highest level of displacement in the country during the war (see Statistics Sierra Leone 2005). Destruction from the war is still evident in Koidu and the surrounding smaller towns and villages, and little rebuilding has yet replaced that which was burned and destroyed.

Figure 3.1 Map of Kono district with chiefdoms. Circles indicates field sites¹³



¹³ Where differences exist in the spellings of place names, we have used the spellings of The Road Map of Sierra Leone and Freetown, produced by Oxford Cartographers.

The fieldwork was carried out at four different sites (see Figure 3.1). The first site was the diamond field along Congo Creek at Congo Creek Bridge,¹⁴ which is on the highway to Freetown on the very border of Koidu. This field is, as most fields in Kono, an old and well established diamond field. It has been mined and re-mined repeatedly for several decades. The field itself is huge, stretching for some kilometres along Congo Creek on both sides of the bridge, but the actual pits vary in size, from quite large and deep to smaller, more surface-based pits. Many people work here. Due to the different size of the pits, some are worked by only one crew, whereas others can support several crews working simultaneously. In the latter case there would be one pile of gravel for each crew, and each of these piles would be divided between the main roles described in chapter 2, i.e. landowner, licence holder, supporter, manager etc. Because this field is so close to Koidu, it engenders a whole little industry of support activities around the diamond diggers. During our visit, women and girls were making food for the workers, others were bringing and selling water and soft drinks, and cigarettes and other smaller food and non-food items were also for sale. Both 'settled miners' and 'migrating miners' worked the site.

The second site for the fieldwork was situated at a smaller diamond field in Gebense Chiefdom, close to a village called Penduma I. This was also an established field, mined and re-mined several times. The place is about a 40-minute drive from Koidu, and the diamond mining was taking place at the Meya Stream of Bafi River. Our first impression was that this site was much calmer than the one we had visited before. Yet although the diamond field nearest the village was quite small, there were many of a similar size along the Meya stream and Bafi River, all in walking distance to the village. Thus, virtually all people living in Penduma I and the surrounding villages were involved in diamond mining in one way or the other. However, people living in the villages were also cultivating the land. This means that those living in the area tended to belong to the category of 'settled miners'.

By far the smallest of the sites where interviews were conducted was a field in the jungle at an area called Bandama, close to Tumbodu in Kamara Chiefdom, about 60 minutes drive from Koidu. This was a relatively new diamond field, and it consisted of just one large pit. The pit was so deep that a pumping machine was used to suck up water from the bottom so that the workers could take up the gravel. The young men digging up the gravel received a fixed salary. They worked from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. and were paid 6,000 Leones per day, from which was deducted 1,000 Leones for lunch, which they received at the site. Most of the young men working here were from Tumbodu, earning some income for their families or saving up for their school

¹⁴ The official name of this place is Congo Bridge, Dumbayloph, Tankoro Chiefdom, Koidu, Kono District.

fees. As elsewhere, this site and the surrounding villages featured a good number of smaller children and girls working in the informal support sector for the mining. Although the field where we started recruiting and conducted the interviews is small, Tumbodu itself is a fairly large town. Tumbodu is also a place of legend in the diamond imagery in Sierra Leone, as it was at a place just outside of Tumbodu, on the other side of the road, that the gigantic diamond ‘The Star of Sierra Leone’ was found in 1972 (see Figure 3.2). The third largest diamond ever discovered, ‘The Star of Sierra Leone’ weighed almost half a pound in the rough (i.e. 968.80 carats).¹⁵ The stories about ‘The Star of Sierra Leone’ also help explain why RUF showed so much interest in this particular place. Tumbodu was almost completely destroyed during the war, its population chased away as RUF commanders, fighters, their associates, and those working for them searched for another ‘Star of Sierra Leone’.

Figure 3.2 The Star of Sierra Leone, to the left, compared with diamonds usually found on the site close to Penduma I to the right, and in the middle, a stone illustrating the biggest diamond ever found on the same site



The fourth and final fieldwork site was another twenty minutes drive from Tumbodu, at a river bend called Masiaka, close to Sukudu village, in Kamara Chiefdom. This field was the largest and most industrially developed of our four fieldwork sites. Huge and deep pits were dug, all were equipped with pumps, and even three to four excavators were at work here. The teams at work were also bigger than at the other places we had visited. Still, the nature of work was alluvial diamond mining. Local chiefs and elders owned the land here and also controlled a good number of the licences; while managers, often their sons or siblings, supervised the many teams of various crew bosses that worked at the site. Almost all those working there received a fixed daily salary, averaging between 5,000-6,000 Leones.

¹⁵ The rough stone was eventually cut into 17 exquisite diamonds, six of which are currently set in the Star of Sierra Leone Brooch.

Research methodology

The main research method utilised in this study is Respondent-Driven Sampling (RDS). This is a type of chain-referral sampling that has been developed to identify hidden populations, but the method is also suitable for populations where no sampling frame exists (Heckathorn, Broadhead and Sergeyev 2001; Salganik and Heckathorn 2004). This is the case for children and youth working in alluvial diamond mining in Sierra Leone.

RDS is based on a dual incentive structure, in which respondents are rewarded both for being interviewed and for recruiting new respondents. The sampling begins with a set of initial participants from the target group who serve as ‘seeds’, and expands in waves (see Figure 3.3). The first wave consists of the participants referred to as ‘seeds’ above; the second wave of participants are recruited by the first wave; the third wave is those recruited by the participants in the second wave; and so on. Each of the recruitments is therefore a link in a recruitment chain. The waves expand exponentially as long as there are children that are willing to be recruited.

As the figures show, the maximum number of recruits were reached during the fourth wave. There are two possible reasons for this. One is that there were fewer children to recruit; that is, that we had reached all the available children in the target group in the area. The other reason is that the researchers stopped the recruitment.

Figure 3.3 Number of interviews conducted in each wave by interview site, and by work assignment

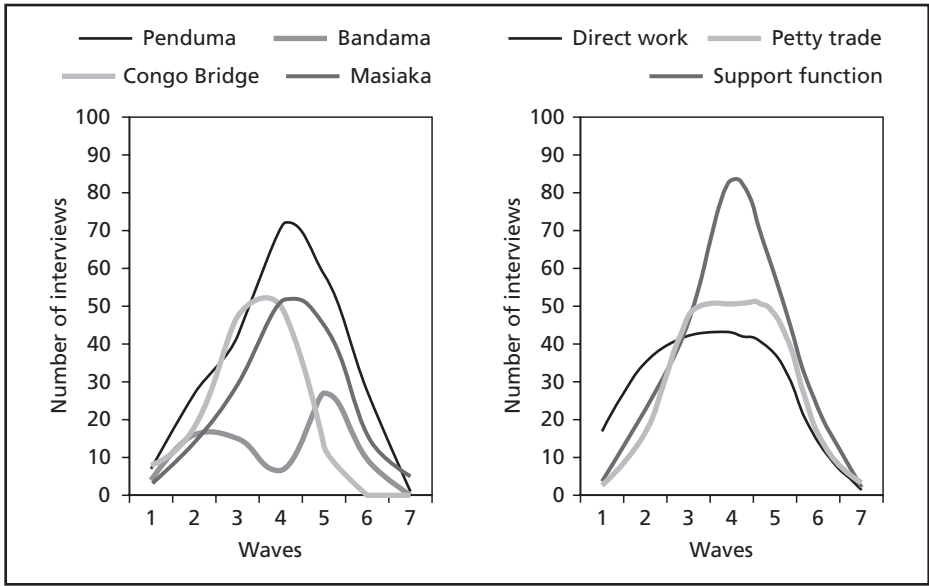
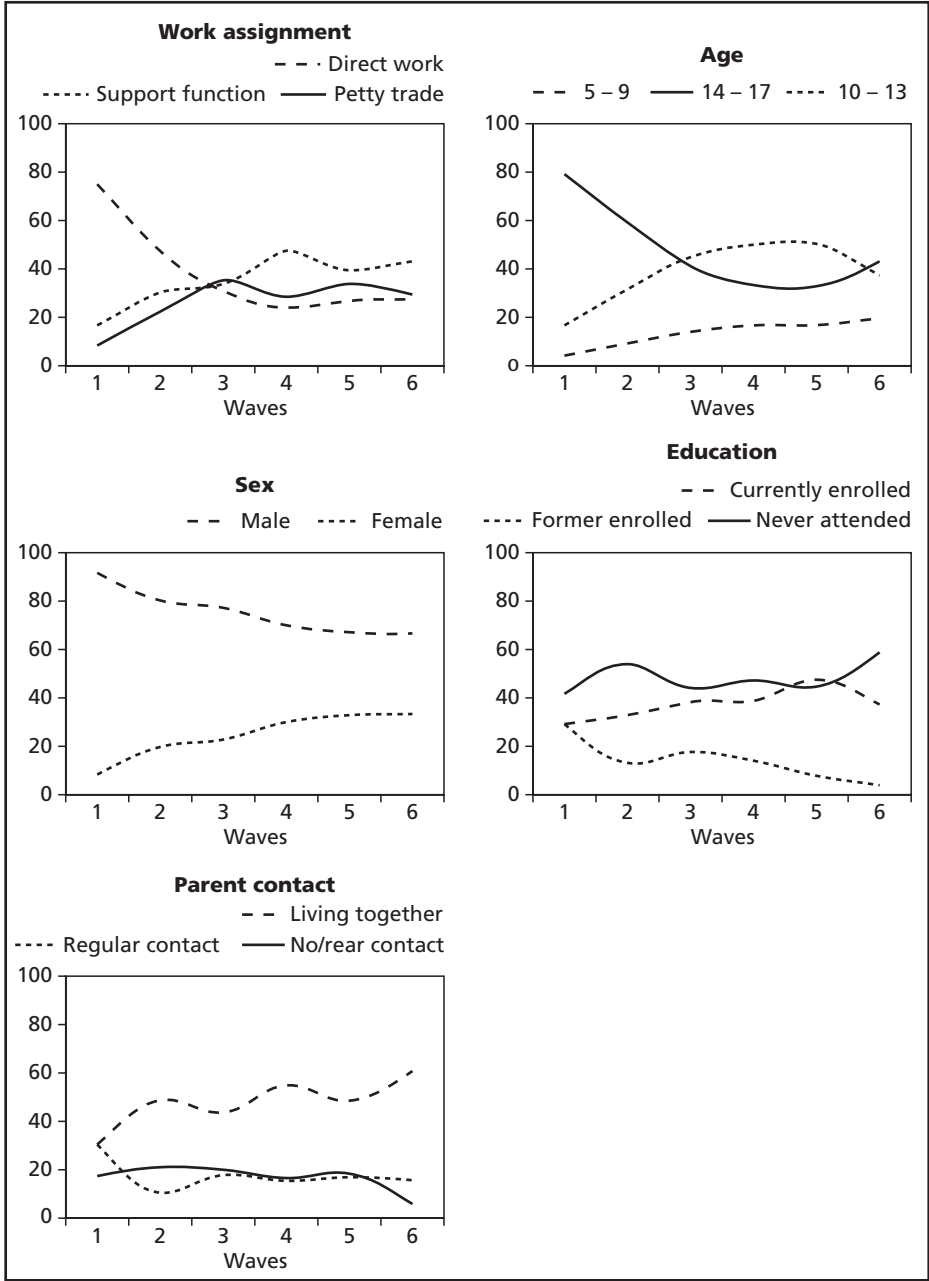


Figure 3.4 Stability over waves for work assignment, age, sex, education and parent contact in percent



This was done for two main reasons. The first is data quality: the longer such an exercise is conducted at the same place, the higher the chances that people who do not belong to the target group will try to cheat their way into the survey. The other reason is that the exercise creates considerable disturbance for the local population and those working at the diamond sites. These people depend on their work for their income, and it would not be ethical to disturb people longer than necessary.

The idea behind RDS is to reach equilibrium in the data over waves. Figure 3.4 shows that this was reached between the third and fourth wave. What this means is that no matter *who* within the target population are picked to be respondents within the first wave, they will use their network within the target population to recruit new respondents, and after some waves, the interviewed population will be representative for the total population.

As Figure 3.4 shows, stability over the waves was reached for work assignment and age after three waves, but for gender stability was reached after five waves. The figure also shows that, even though we started out with a relatively higher number of youth miners (or 'direct workers'), respondents recruited children doing all kinds of diamond-related work. For education and parent contact, it seems that stability is also reached after three waves, but it is not particularly clear.

Cumulatively, what this tells us is that the method works as described by Heckathorn. Even though the children recruited for the first wave were mainly boys working directly with diamond digging, after a few waves the interviewed population represented a wider range of age groups and different work assignments. The reason for starting with the diamonds diggers themselves was that they were the easiest identifiable group: boys that dig for diamonds are clearly diamond diggers, whereas it is not so easy for a person coming from outside to establish whether or not the other children hanging around the site are actually involved in economic activities linked to mining. The method works well for recruiting among an invisible target group for the outsider, so long as the concept is clear for the insider.

The incentives used for participation must be neither too high nor too low. In a recent study among street children in Accra and Bamako (see Hatløy and Huser 2005), the children were given packets of biscuits, sardines, and corned beef: biscuits for being interviewed and a combination of biscuits, sardines and corned beef for recruiting, depending on how many respondents they recruited. However, if the members of the target population consider the incentives to be too high, this can create bias in the study. Experience from elsewhere (see Heckathorn 1997) has shown that, in such cases, those first recruited may try to keep the incentives distributed solely within their own group of peers. However, if the incentives are considered too low, those recruited may feel that the compensation is insufficient and that it is therefore not worth spending any time taking part in the exercise. This will lead to poor recruitment. These challenges were discussed both within the core research

group, whose members have considerable research experience from Sierra Leone, and among contacts within Sierra Leone with good knowledge of the alluvial diamond-mining sector. Based on these discussions, the initial incentive structure was the same as that used by Hatløy and Huser in Bamako and Accra:

- One packet of biscuits and six recruitment slips for being interviewed,
- An additional packet of biscuits for recruiting one respondent,
- One tin of sardines for two respondents,
- One packet of biscuits and one tin of sardines for three respondents,
- One tin of corned beef for four respondents,
- One packet of biscuits and one tin of corned beef for five respondents,
- One tin of corned beef and one tin of sardines for six respondents.

The aim was to collect a sample size of about 500 children and youth miners, or children working in the informal support sector surrounding the alluvial diamond mining. The total sample size exceeded this figure, totalling 616 respondents.

As mentioned above, the research team had to regulate the recruitment process. Given a team of four interviewers, and a median time for each interview of 11 minutes, a maximum of 120 interviews could be completed per day. Therefore, when the crowd of children to be interviewed grew too large, the children were asked to come back the next day. On the last day at the sites, the children were asked not to recruit new participants, but were given a tin of sardines instead of the ordinary packet of biscuits (after interviewing) so as to compensate for the fact that they could not earn any incentives through recruiting.

All respondents were interviewed in accordance with the questionnaire presented in Appendix I. Some also took part in longer, in-depth qualitative interviews. These were carried out by one of the senior researchers and the research assistant. Qualitative individual interviews and focus groups were also conducted with a range of other people, including older miners, elders, and others with particular knowledge about diamond mining and the involvement of children and youth. This report is therefore based on both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

There is reason to believe that what takes place in the recruitment process is to a certain extent determined by the age and gender composition of the target group at the site in question. Thus, the older children – and the boys that mine in particular – are less mobile during the day because they have to work, whereas the younger boys and girls working in various support functions (especially petty trade) roam around a larger area in their daily activities. Some of these children seem to have a working area and a network of peers covering up to five to six kilometres. This means

that some also move from one field to another. This is especially the case where the individual fields are smaller and more scattered (as was the case around Penduma I and Tumbodu). This is also particularly illustrated by the case of Banduma, where the maximum was reached in both second and fifth waves (see Figure 3.3). The reason for this is that the site was so small that the entire target group was emptied out after two waves, but then a few of the children went to another diamond site to recruit children from there. These children reached the maximum in the fifth wave.

As previously mentioned, we were given a permit to conduct this study by the Secretary-General of Statistics Sierra Leone, and based on this permit we received additional permits from the local authorities in Kono. We nevertheless needed to ask local chiefs, village leaders, and landowners and licence holders for permission to carry out the study in their respective areas of authority. In each place we started by introducing ourselves and the purpose of our study to the local chief and elders in his community, and only after we received their approval did we go into the diamond field. There we first talked to managers, licence holders, and crew bosses present, explaining our mission and its acceptance by both local and national authorities. Only after these people had also been consulted did we start to recruit for the first wave.

Although we were generally well received, it is important to note that the issue of children and youth involvement in diamond mining is a sensitive one. Allegedly some NGOs concerned with child labour had, in co-operation with the police (who tend to consider children and youth living on their own as potential thugs), employed quite heavy-handed approaches, taking children and youth under the age of 18 out of the mining areas and threatening their parents, relatives, or employers with fines – and even jail sentences – if they continued to allow children in their care to work. However, after we carefully explained that our purpose was solely to document and understand the degree to which children are involved in mining and mining-related activities and how this affects their lives, people seemed happy with the survey being implemented in their area of work and living.

The degree to which people are concerned about their children's welfare in this work is illustrated by an incident experienced in Penduma I. As the diamond field was on the other side of the road from the village, we were allowed to use a nice shaded area in front of the village as our spot for conducting the interviews. This particular day we stopped the recruiting process around lunchtime, as the place was already full of long lines of children and youths waiting to be interviewed. Around 1 p.m. we heard a lot of noise, as a group of women came rushing down the dirt road screaming and shouting, some even crying loudly. It was clear that something was wrong. They were angry and afraid. As they approached us they started grabbing some of the children, and we realised that this group of women were coming from a village called Newtown on the other side of Meya stream. Here a rumour

had started that white people had come to the diamond field at Penduma I to steal their children, and we had brought the biscuits, sardines and corned beef along to lure them. Some screamed that we were white devils who had come to steal their children to cook and eat them. This concern makes sense against the backdrop of the particular situation. First, the spirit world is very much alive in Sierra Leone, and people believe that spirits in the form of 'white devils' live at the bottom of the diamond pits.¹⁶ Secondly, many children were lured away from their homes during the war, often by promises of food and other items not easily available. Third, the heavy-handed approach of NGOs seemingly concerned with preventing child labour may have led to a new reading of the old story about the white devils in the diamond pits. After some initial confusion, the matter of our project was explained and received by the women, who allowed their children to stay to be interviewed. However, the incident illustrates how sensitive this subject matter can be when approached by actors with no understanding of the local situation.

Children work because their families are poor. Threats will not improve the situation; they only make people cautious and afraid. As people in Penduma I told us, they had now started to call the children back from the fields if they saw or knew that strangers were arriving, white people in particular. Although this did not happen very often, when it did it was clearly unpleasant and a disruption to their daily activities. Poverty and high school fees keep children at work, and threatening the parents does not solve this problem at all.

¹⁶ Please note that 'devil' here does not necessarily equals evil, but rather a spirit being that can be both beneficial, if treated with respect, or harmful if offended in any way. The 'white devils' in the mining pits can both show the miners the diamonds, but also cause accidents and prevent them from finding diamonds. It is common that miners make sacrifices to these spirits.

4 Who are the children and youth working with diamonds?

Background of the children

Miners, and those involved in economic activity around the mining sector, are typically described as a rotating and migrating population (see Barrows 1976; Richards 1996; Gberie 1997; Ferme 2001; Keen 2005). Consistent with this perception, we described in chapter two how there have been several waves of both migration to and expulsions from Kono. It is therefore interesting that our findings to some degree contradict the traditional picture of children and youth involved in diamond mining as ‘loose molecules’ without any attachment to the society in which they live (see Kaplan 1996; Gberie 1997; Global Witness 2005a, 2005b). This may be in part because economic migration to Kono has not yet returned to its pre-war level, but as a snapshot finding it is nevertheless noteworthy.

Of the children and youth working with diamonds or diamond-related activities in our sample, 73 percent are boys and 27 percent are girls. As Table 4.1 shows, 15 percent of the children are younger than 10 years of age. The girls are generally younger than the boys: only a quarter of the girls are 14 years or older, while nearly half of the boys are in the oldest age group. This is not particularly surprising, as mining requires physical strength and therefore attracts older boys. Because a small boy or girl is simply unable to perform mining work in an efficient and satisfactory manner, knowledgeable crew bosses will not employ smaller children.

Table 4.1 Age distribution by gender in percent

Age	Male	Female	All
5-9	13	18	15
10-13	40	55	44
14-17	46	26	41
N	450	168	618

As figure 4.1 shows, 55 percent of the children and youth interviewed in this survey originate from Kono. This indicates that they should belong to the category of 'settled miners'. As noted above, this finding is surprising because it contradicts perceptions of the miners as a solely rotating and migrating population with little degree of belonging to the area in which they mine. At least in Kono, the children surveyed seem to be more rooted than others have contended or believed them to be. To a certain degree, a migrating population of young miners – although elusive to quantitative research methodology – may be observed much easier than a population of settled miners who look and live like 'ordinary' peasants in the countryside, with the primary difference that they engage in mining as well as in agriculture. This finding therefore suggests that previous research may have underestimated the degree to which the mining population is similar to other rural populations in Sierra Leone.

This finding may have important ramifications for policy interventions. The little attention that has been given by the international community to those involved in mining has been devoted to migrating rather than settled miners, despite the latter comprising an integral part of a rural population that combines mining with agricultural activities. Yet it is important to focus also on designing policy interventions for settled miners, whether those interventions target smuggling or aim to improve the living conditions of children and youth. Often a determinative factor for child and youth labour in and around diamond mining is the fact that parents endorse and encourage the economic activity of their children simply because the household needs the money, even if the youths work only part-time to pay their school fees or save money to go back to school.

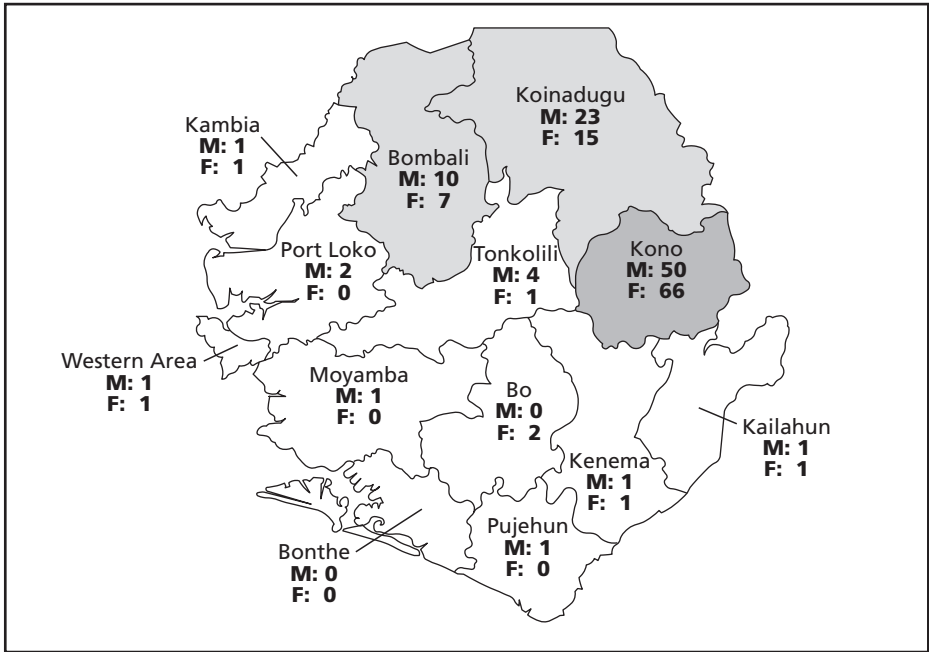
As Figure 4.1 also shows, the children and youth that do not originate from Kono come primarily from the northern districts of Koinadugu and Bombali. This is not surprising, save that we expected beforehand that the number of such children would be higher. There are probably two main reasons for the lower than anticipated number: first, that both economic activity in and migration to Kono have not yet returned to the pre-war level (if ever it will); secondly, that the recent discovery of large diamond deposits around Kamakwie in Bombali District may have diverted migration from Kono.

The general pattern of movement is not, however, unexpected, as there is a tradition of labour migration from these two northern districts into the diamond mining areas of southern and eastern Sierra Leone. This migration pattern became evident when diamond mining started in Kono in the 1930s. Koinadugu District, an isolated and under-developed district in the northeast of Sierra Leone, has been a place of particular neglect. Apart from subsistence agriculture, there are few if any other economic opportunities in the area, which has undoubtedly helped fuel economic migration from the district. A similar, although perhaps less severe, situ-

ation prevails in the rural areas of Bombali, which account for most of the district apart from Makeni and its immediate surroundings. The relative neglect of northern districts has roots in the colonial period, when the British administration paid more attention to the Mende dominated areas of the southeast than the Temne dominated areas of the north (see also Dorjahn 1959; Little 1967). However, some northern districts, especially Koinadugu, have also been overlooked by subsequent post-colonial governments.

Notwithstanding the relative economic deprivation of the north, it may seem peculiar that the majority of migrants in Kono originate in Koinadugu and Bombali rather than neighbouring Tonkolili. Yet this situation in fact reflects the composition and condition of the road network in Sierra Leone. The diamond fields in Kono have traditionally been the easiest fields to reach from Koinadugu and Bombali: those originating from the eastern side of the Loma Mountains in Koinadugu could use the road passing through Kayima, entering the highway from Freetown at Yengema, while those on the western side of these mountains could make the journey through Makeni or Magburaka, then enter the same highway. These were the logical routes to travel when the Sierra Leonean ‘diamond adventure’ began; and, as in other cases

Figure 4.1 District of origin by gender in percent. In addition, four percent of the boys and five percent of the girls originate from abroad, mainly Guinea (n=615 children under 18 years of age working with diamond related activities)



of economic migration, once a pattern is established it continues until changing circumstances either prevent the route from being used (e.g. war), the economic opportunity is no longer present (e.g. the diamond fields are depleted), or another economic opportunity emerges elsewhere that looks more promising or is easier to reach (e.g. the newly discovered deposits at Kamakwie). However, comparably attractive migration routes have not existed from Tonkolili to Kono. The main transit centre of this district is Mile 91, situated on the highway between Freetown and Bo. Although there is a road from Mile 91 to Kono – going from Mile 91 and entering the Freetown-Koidu highway just after Magburaka – this road is in much worse condition than the Bo road, which has traditionally been one of the better roads in Sierra Leone. It is thus much easier for people from this district to make the journey to Bo than to Kono.

Nor does migration to Kono from other southern districts, such as Bonthe, Bo, Pujehun, Kenema, and Kailahun, make very much sense. These districts have their own diamond deposits, and there is little reason to travel to Kono to search for diamonds because profit would be more or less the same while access may be even more difficult. The economic migration from these districts tends to be substantively different, mainly in the form of people seeking their fortune in Freetown.

The findings and arguments presented above are supported by the ethnic composition of the population. Half of the children and youths we surveyed that mine or work in diamond-related activities belong to the Kono people, the group autochthonous to Kono and the ones that have given name to the district. This is shown in Table 4.2. This table also shows that almost all of the Kono in our sample originate from Kono District. Conversely, the main ethnic group of working children from Koinadugu is Koranko, while the main ethnic group of working children originating from Bombali is Temne. This again is as expected, as the Koranko are the main ethnic group in Koinadugu, whereas the Temne are the main ethnic group in Bombali. Finally, as Kono borders Guinea, it is natural that some of the boys and

Table 4.2 Ethnic groups by district of origin in percent.

Ethnic group	Kono	Koinadugu	Bombali	Elsewhere	All
Kono	86	-	-	8	48
Temne	4	1	68	36	14
Koranko	2	60	-	1	14
Malinké/Mandingo	2	22	14	13	9
Limba	1	10	10	1	4
Mende	2	-	2	14	3
Other	3	6	7	26	8
N	336	129	59	91	615

girls in our sample originate from that country. A good number of these belong to ethnic groups that have long traditions of economic migration, such as Mandingoes and Fulas. Some of the Guineans are older boys seeking fortune on their own as diamond diggers, whereas the smaller boys and girls came to Kono with their families or other relatives.

The religious composition of the children, shown in Table 4.3, is also in line with what could be expected in an ordinary district in Sierra Leone. One-third of the children in our sample are Christians, and two-thirds are Muslims. The population in Kono is generally seen as a mixed population of Christian and Muslim, while the populations in the areas of origin for the majority of migrants to Kono are predominantly Muslim.

Roughly 60 percent of the Sierra Leonean population is Muslim, 30 percent are Christians, and the remaining 10 percent adhere to various traditional beliefs. Although ethnicity and autochthony can be an issue in Sierra Leone, religion typically is not. Muslims and Christians freely mix, and inter-religious marriages are common (Bøås and Hatløy 2005). Nothing in our findings indicate that religion has any effect on children and youth involvement with alluvial diamond mining.

Table 4.3 Religious affiliation by district of origin

	Kono	Koinadugu	Bombali	Elsewhere	All
Christian	52	8	12	14	33
Muslim	48	92	88	86	67
N	335	130	59	90	614

Relation to parents

The relationship between children and their parents must always be contextualised. It is common for children in Sierra Leone to live with relatives other than their father and mother. Children have traditionally been sent to either relatives or other people with whom the family have close kinship ties. This practice is based on economic incentives and the prevailing hierarchies between ruling and dependent lineages (see Ferme 2001). A child may still be either given as ‘ransom’ by a dependent lineage to the members of a ruling lineage, or taken ‘ransom’ by members of a ruling lineage. The ‘nuclear’ family unit extolled in the western world does not necessarily prevail in Sierra Leone, as evidenced by some of the patterns seen in Table 4.5. One must also remember that the war separated many children from their families. Family unification has been a concern of UNAMSIL and other international agencies in

post-war Sierra Leone, but in many cases it is not possible to track down various family members. Many people died or were scattered throughout the country; and among survivors, some do not have the possibility of gaining any knowledge about the fate of their family, while others may not be interested in such information, as they have started new families and/or cannot afford to care for the old family. This reflects not cold-heartedness but reality. For example, over the course of the long war, many women and girls established new relationships with men after their families disappeared, actions oftentimes driven more by economic and security exigencies than romantic feeling.

As we can see from Table 4.4, the majority (71 percent) of the children in the youngest age group (5-9 years) live together with their parents. Of all 5-9 year-olds living with their parents, 33 percent originates from Kono and 38 percent moved in to Kono together with their parents. Fifteen percent of the youngest children from Kono do not live with their parents; a similar situation is found in 15 percent of the youngest children not originating from Kono. This latter group of young children are the most vulnerable group, because the children originating from Kono – even those not living with their parents – will most likely have access to some kin networks.¹⁷

The case of a young boy named Kaku illustrates this point. We met Kaku at our fourth site, the diamond mining area at Masiaka. Kaku was born in Kono but does not live with his parents. Kaku is a strong boy of nine years. The whereabouts of his father and mother are unknown. Kaku told us that they had disappeared during the war, and he had not seen or heard from them for as long as he could remember. This account was seemingly confirmed by some of the older children at the site who knew Kaku, and who themselves knew of no information on his parents' location.

Table 4.4 Children originating from Kono or not, and children living with parents or not in percent by age groups

	5-9	10-13	14-17	All
Living with parents, born in Kono	33	36	22	30
Living with parents, not from Kono	38	20	12	19
Not living with parents, born in Kono	15	25	27	25
Not living with parents, not from Kono	15	19	39	26
N	88	268	248	604

¹⁷ In general, the most vulnerable groups of children are the ones living without their parents and not originating from Kono. However, it is also reasonable to suggest that, even within this group, we can establish a hierarchy of vulnerability, with the youngest group as the most vulnerable. We will return to this issue in chapter eight.

Figure 4.2 Kaku



Kaku was formally living in Sukudu village with his uncle, but he slept there only occasionally – and then not in the house, but outside the door to his uncle's house. He claimed that he was not allowed in the house because he refused to carry out most of the domestic work they demanded of him. Most of the time Kaku slept wherever it suited him, and fended for himself. His life was difficult, but, because he was from the area, and several of the people who worked in the diamond site at Masiaka used to know his parents, he received some support and

help. People gave him some food, and, more importantly for Kaku, every now and then he was allowed to work as a miner.

This did not happen very often, as he was clearly too young to be of much use. Although strong for his age, Kaku was still far from having the required strength of a miner. Yet he was allowed to work occasionally and given a salary for a days work – considerably lower than the usual 5,000 to 6,000 Leones, but still enough to keep Kaku from starving. He was in fact quite an independent young boy. One of our fieldworkers was moved by Kaku's story and, in order to be kind to him, gave him her empty water bottle, some bread, and 1,000 Leones (around 40 US cents). A little concerned that some of the older boys would steal this small gift, we urged him to eat his bread while he could and take good care of his money. Kaku replied that the boys who were mining were his 'brothers', and therefore nobody dared to steal from him. As sad as Kaku's life is in many ways, he does not belong to the most vulnerable group of children. He is young and lives on his own, but can draw upon the support of various networks arising from his status as 'indigenous' to the area in which he lives. The networks that sustain Kaku's livelihood are not something that can be taken for granted by the youngest children not originating from Kono. If there is one group of children that can be completely at the mercy of others, it is this group.

Taking a closer look at who the children actually live with (see Table 4.5), we see that, in addition to their parents – 21 percent live with both parents, 15 percent only with their mother, and 12 percent only with their father – a significant number of children live with their uncle and/or aunt (22 percent). The rest of the children live with grandparents (nine percent), siblings (ten percent), employer and/or supporter (six percent), and others (four percent). Nearly all youths living with their employer or supporter are between 14 to 17 years-old; however, overall this group is quite small, accounting for six percent of all children and 14 percent of children in the oldest age bracket.

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an average life expectancy of birth at 41 years (UNDP 2005). Thus, in addition to the many orphans left by the war, children may be orphaned by the early deaths of their parents (due to illness or natural causes). Orphans are estimated to account for 14 percent of the total population of children in Sierra Leone (see UNICEF 2006), nearly the same as in our sample (see Table 4.6). It is striking that as many as one out of four children in the age group 14-17 has lost both their parents.

Table 4.5 Who the children are actually living with in percent by age group

	5-9	10-13	14-17	All
Both parents	37	24	13	21
Mother	20	19	9	15
Father	12	12	12	12
Uncle/aunt	10	22	25	22
Grandparents	12	10	7	9
Siblings	4	9	13	10
Employer/Supporter	1	1	14	6
Other	3	2	6	4
N	90	274	252	616

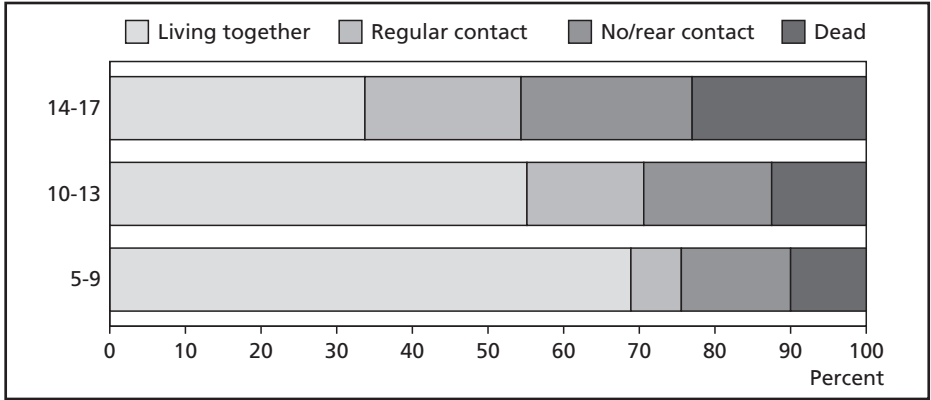
Table 4.6 Orphans by age group, in percent

	5-9	10-13	14-17	All
Orphan	10	13	23	17
At least one parent alive	90	88	77	83
N	90	272	250	612

There are many orphans among the working children and youth in Kono. However, there is an even larger group of children that are not orphans, but live on their own (see Table 4.5). This suggests that there is a significant group that either chooses to live on their own or cannot live with their parents or relatives. Perhaps particularly for the orphaned children and others living on their own, diamond mining in Kono offers economic opportunities that may not exist elsewhere and/or in other sectors. Paying school fees that run around 200,000 Leones a year is difficult even for children living with their parents, and next to impossible for most orphans. Yet apart from school there are few opportunities – economic or otherwise – for this group, thus turning diamond mining into a magnet. A considerable amount of the children in our sample say that they hope that, in working as they do, they can earn enough money to one day return to school (see Chapter 7).

We have already established that the children in lowest age group are the most vulnerable. The vulnerability that comes with a low age is closely connected to the extent of parental contact. As illustrated by Figure 4.3, a higher number of the older children living away from their parents remain in contact with them, compared to the level of contact among the youngest children not living with their parents. This is quite natural. The older ones tend to earn more money, and by sending remittances to their parents and home communities, they maintain contacts. Both the maintenance and re-establishment of contact requires certain skills that one would expect to be more common in the higher than in the lower age groups. For example, if their home is further away than what can be defined as an easily manageable walking distance, it will demand certain skills that often come with age to negotiate the space that must be crossed for the network to be kept intact.

Figure 4.3 Relation to parents according to age. (Regular contact = at least once a month; rear contact = less than once a month; dead= both parents dead)



Many of the children expressed a desire to increase contact with their parents; and in particular many hoped to return with sufficient money both to return to school, as noted above, and to have something to give to their parents. Indeed, for some it will be difficult not only to return, but also to maintain contact at the desired level if they cannot make an economic contribution to their parents. Inability to do so could create and sustain a suspicion that the children are unwilling to share with their parents and relatives.

Once they reach a certain (varying) age, children are expected to contribute to the household economy whether they live there or not. In fact, doing so helps children maintain the web of sociality in which they are enmeshed. Kin and communal networks exist across wide distances in Sierra Leone, and the ability to draw on these for assistance often depends on the ability to maintain contact with the home community, as this may be the point of origin for the kin and communal networks of the family that the child belongs to.

Cumulatively, children living with their parents are less vulnerable than those living without them. In general terms, furthermore, younger children are more vulnerable than older children. Finally, of children living away from their parents, those maintaining contact are less vulnerable than those without contact. It is therefore encouraging that almost 70 percent of the youngest children live together with their parents, and additional seven percent have regular contact. However, this still leaves nearly one out of four children in the youngest age group without contact with their parents. This is an alarmingly high number in such a young age group.

Education

At one time, the institutions of higher learning in Freetown helped make the capital the 'Athens of Africa', while the high school in Bo (i.e. Bo School) was well known even in neighbouring countries. The Krio community that, in many ways, established Sierra Leone paid considerable attention to education (see Peterson 1969); and when the British government declared Sierra Leone a protectorate in 1896, the chiefs – particularly in the Mende-dominated areas of southeastern Sierra Leone – demanded education for their sons. The British agreed – seeing the advantage of creating a new educated elite in the hinterland through which they could secure their rule – and Bo School and similar institutions are part of this legacy. The issue of education has also been an important feature in the debates about the war and the composition of the RUF (see Richards 1996; Abdullah 1998).¹⁸ Since the war ended, education has arguably increased in importance, as it has become synonymous with modernity: indicative of success in life and connections within the wider world.

Although most people know that, even with an education, their chances of getting meaningful employment are not very high, there is a sense among many that, without some formal papers – without being able to define yourself as a ‘bookman’ – you do not really count in Sierra Leone. This sense is reflected in our findings. Almost all of our respondents expressed concern about their lack of education, and/or had aspirations to continue their education one day.

As seen in Table 4.7, among the children and youth doing work related to diamond mining, 47 percent have never attended school, 40 percent are currently enrolled in school, and 13 percent had previously been enrolled but had ended their education, mainly due to lack of money. More girls than boys are currently enrolled. If one believes the argument that youth working with diamond mining and related economic activities are criminality-prone ‘loose molecules’ without much attachment to society (see Collier 2000; Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton 2000, *Global Witness* 2005a, 2005b), the relatively high level of currently enrolled children may be surprising.

We believe that this finding supports our contention that the ordinary miner in Sierra Leone is just another poor person, living in a society not that different from other rural societies in Sierra Leone. In the diamond mining community in Kono, many cannot afford to send their children to school. Children who can afford it (or whose parents can) remain in school and are less likely to be taken out to work full-time. In many cases, it seems possible for the children to combine work and education. As Table 4.7 shows, direct workers have more difficulty combining work and school, simply because the majority of them work all day in the mining fields. However, some boys only work as part-time miners; for example, most of the boys in the Banduma pit worked only on the weekends. In general, however, it is much easier for a petty trader or a support worker to combine work and school.

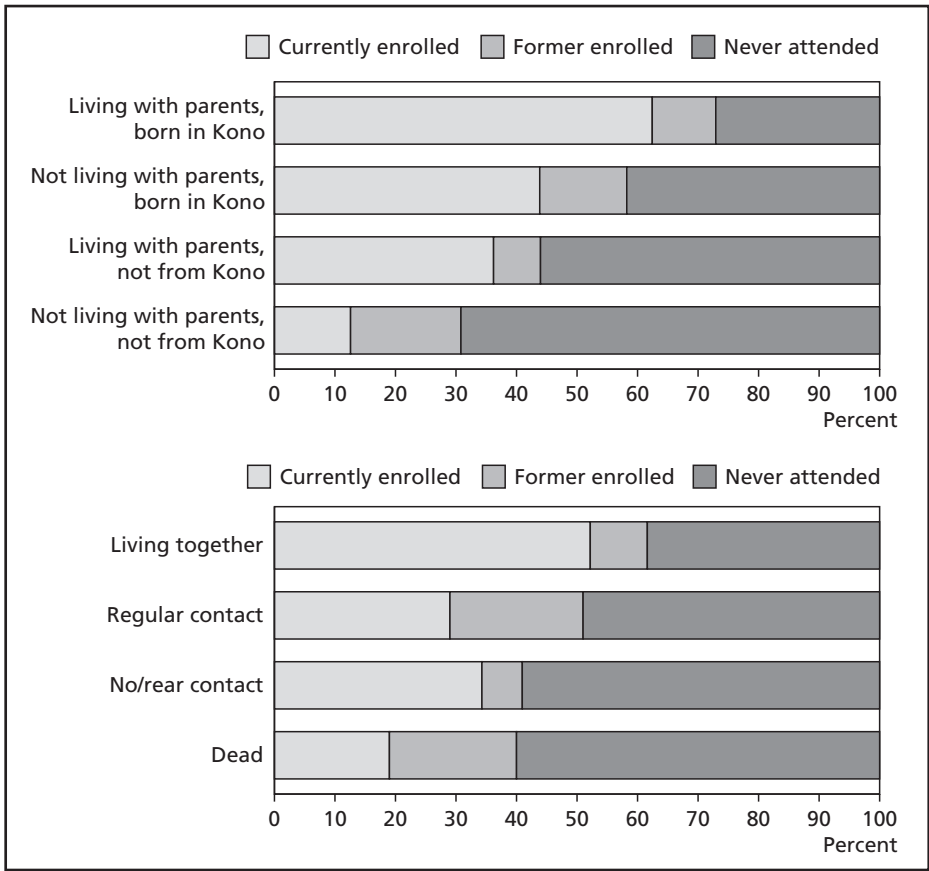
Table 4.7 School enrolment by gender and by work assignment in percent

	Male	Female	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Currently enrolled	37	46	23	40	56	40
Former enrolled	15	7	24	10	6	13
Never attended	48	47	53	50	38	47
N	449	165	193	236	185	614

¹⁸ We cannot go into this debate in detail here, but at least part of the controversy is about the composition of the RUF, and in particular whether it was a project of ‘deeply embittered intellectuals’ (Richards 1996) or a ‘lumpen revolt’ (Abduallah 1998).

The gender bias with regard to current involvement is mainly due to the difference in potential income between boys and girls. Boys can work as miners and earn relatively good money, but this economic activity is not open to girls at all. This could mean that, in households with money in short supply, boys will first be taken out of school because they can earn more money than the girls. This argument is most relevant for the part of the population that originates from Kono and still lives with parents or close relatives. However, a similar logic is also at work for those that come from other areas. More boys than girls are allowed to leave their homes for the diamond areas: even girls unable to be kept at school are more likely to be given domestic tasks than encouraged or allowed to seek her fortune in the diamond fields. If she leaves home, she will often go to live with relatives or kin relations.

Figure 4.4 School enrolment by relation to parents and place of origin, and to contact with parents in percent

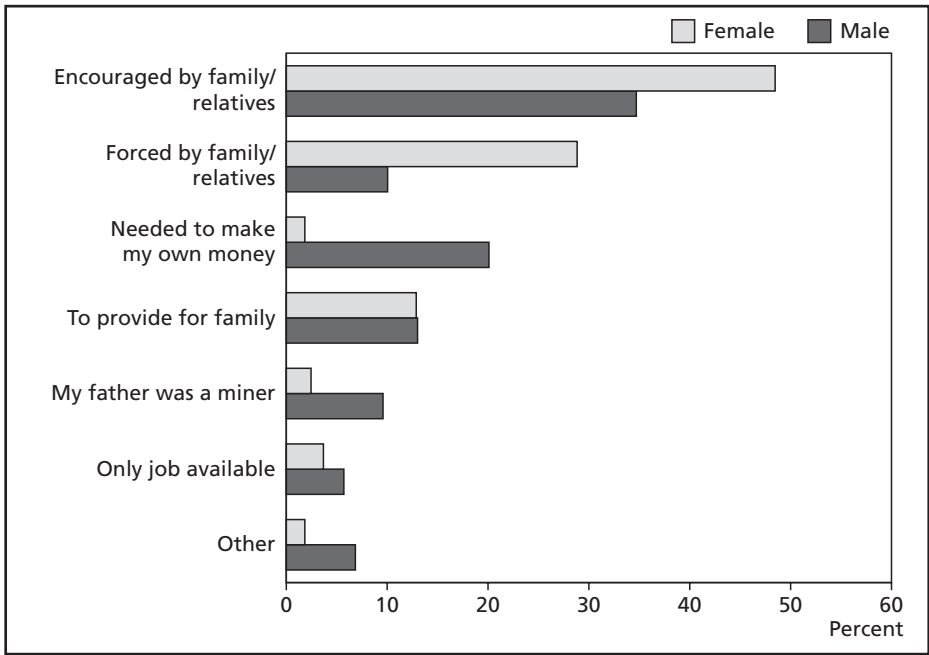


School enrolment is connected not just to gender and work assignment, but to the children's relations to their parents and their place of origin. As Figure 4.4 shows, children born in Kono and living together with their parents have the highest likelihood of ever being enrolled in school. The mirror image is also true: children born in a district other than Kono and not living together with their parents have the lowest likelihood of ever being enrolled. Lack of contact with parents is thus a factor in reducing the probability of school enrolment. Taken together, these findings have implications for policy interventions targeted to working children, particularly efforts to improve the educational possibilities for those children least likely to go to school.

Reasons for starting the job

Most of the children started their current job because they were encouraged or forced by their family and friends, as shown in Figure 4.5. This was the case for 77 percent of the girls and 45 percent of the boys. One out of five boys said that they started their current job because they wanted to make their own money; only 2 percent of

Figure 4.5 Initial reason for starting present job by gender in percent



the girls claimed that motivation. The gender variation here may be at least partly explained by the kind of work boys and girls do in this sector. Boys can become miners, girls cannot; and because direct work can result in considerably higher income than petty trade, boys may be more likely to work voluntarily than girls.

We are aware that the difference between ‘encourage’ and ‘forced’ is subjective, and thus difficult to ascertain and (in some cases) differentiate. These findings capture only the children’s perception of their situation. Thus, some treatment that outside observers may consider ‘encouragement’ could be perceived as force by the child involved, and vice versa. This issue notwithstanding, there is clearly a gender bias here: girls overwhelmingly start working for family-related reasons, while boys to a much greater degree do so out of individual motives. The division between boys and girls reflects general gender biases in the Sierra Leonean society – boys are simply freer to do what they want than girls. Nevertheless, family reasons are still the strongest motivators for the boys, even among the boys involved in direct work and not originating from Kono. Finally, almost all of those in contact with their parents reported that the parents had at least endorsed their decision to go to Kono.

Poverty, in combination with high school fees and lack of other opportunities with the same earning potential, is the main reason so many families ‘force’ or ‘encourage’ their children to start working. As nearly half of the children are currently enrolled in school (see Table 4.7), it may in fact be the case that their work helps keep them there.

5 The nature of their work

The children and youth involved in various economic activities in the diamond mining areas can be divided into separate groups according to their tasks. In this report, as noted above, we separate between 'direct work', 'petty trade', and 'support functions'. Those doing 'direct work' are involved in the actual search for diamonds. As Table 5.1 shows, this direct work is done by 31 percent of the children surveyed, mainly boys between 14-17 years of age. Only 29 percent of these youths live together with both their parents. Direct workers dig the gravel, carry it to the place where it is washed and sieved, and sometimes take part in the washing and sieving. This is hard physical work that cannot be conducted effectively by smaller boys.

Here we will focus primarily on describing the processes involved in direct work, as petty trade and other support activities have been described at length elsewhere.¹⁹ As we have already explained, different diamond mining sites may vary significantly both in size and location, and the work may slightly differ accordingly, but all alluvial sites are located close to streams, riverbeds, or swamps, and at these sites the work is highly seasonal. There will always be mud, sand, and dirt that have to be removed and gravel to be collected. When a new diamond pit is established, the first task of the workers is to remove the mud and dirt so that one can get to the gravel.²⁰ Much of the work for a boy doing alluvial diamond mining therefore involves digging out mud or gravel with a shovel. In big and semi-industrial sites, such as the one at Masiaka, excavators may be used for the removal of mud, but the gravel is still dug out by hand. After the gravel is dug out, it will sooner or later be carried away to be washed. When and how this happens depends on the organisation of the site.

If the work is salary-based, i.e. based on a regular salary received after a day's work, the gravel is most often carried away to be washed immediately. This means that some boys dig the gravel while others transport it to the washing point. Both

¹⁹ For further information about children involved in petty trade and support functions, such as errand boys or girls, see Bass (2004); Grier (2004); Hatløy and Huser (2005); or Killand and Tovo (2006).

²⁰ In the case of a site that has been mined many times, there is no topsoil to be removed, but still plenty of sand.

Table 5.1 Work assignment by different background variables in percent

	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Sex				
Male	99	79	38	73
Female	1	21	62	27
Age				
5-9	2	21	20	15
10-13	14	57	60	44
14-17	84	22	20	41
Schooling				
Currently enrolled	23	40	56	40
Former enrolled	24	10	6	13
Never attended	53	50	38	47
Relation to parents				
Living together	29	67	48	49
Regular contact	24	9	18	17
No/rear contact	24	12	18	18
Dead	23	12	16	17
Live with in this area				
Both parents	10	32	19	21
One parent	18	33	28	27
Close relatives (grand-parents, siblings)	18	14	28	19
Other relatives or friends	30	19	23	24
Employer/supporter	20	0	0	6
Other	4	1	2	2
Living with parents and place of origin				
Living with parents, born in Kono	19	38	31	30
Living with parents, not from Kono	10	29	17	19
Not living with parents, born in Kono	24	17	34	25
Not living with parents, not from Kono	47	16	18	26
N	189	230	185	604
Percent	31	38	31	100

Table 5.2 Supervised work in percent by work task

	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Crew boss/manager	65	16	1	27
Parent/relatives	33	84	77	66
Nobody	2	0	22	7
N	192	232	179	603

these activities require considerable physical strength, and many of the miners complained of muscle cramps and constant pain in their back and chest. Many are given pain-killers by their employer or crew boss or buy these tablets themselves, which they take almost everyday so as to endure the work. After the gravel has been carried to the washing place, it is either passed through a sieve directly or sent through a mechanical 'washing machine' for pre-cleaning before the gravel is sieved for diamonds. Such a machine is expensive, and it is only wealthy license holders and landowners operating in co-operation with supporters and diamond buyers (often Lebanese) who can afford them. Boys employed for a day's work are rarely allowed to take part in the last washing for the diamonds, and if they are allowed to sieve, they will be under strict supervision from trusted crew bosses or managers. Often this part of the operation only takes place after the boys have been paid and sent away from the diamond site. This was the case at the Bandama site close to Tumbodu. Here the official working hours ended at 4 pm, and it was only after this time that the license holder, manager, crew boss, and landowner started the final washing. The boys working there had little, if any, idea about what kinds of diamonds were found in the gravel they had dug out or the profit these men made.

When the working children are part of a team searching for diamonds, the organisational framework is different. In such cases, they do not work for an employer for a fixed salary, but for themselves and their team. Boys are typically recruited into teams by crew bosses. This recruitment can take place in a number of ways, but most commonly people either come to Koidu searching for a team to work for or are recruited from elsewhere by crew bosses travelling through that area. In both cases, joining a team and a crew boss is voluntary. The case of Sahr Comba illustrates the first option. Sahr is 14 years-old, and six months prior to our interview at Congo Creek Bridge he was selling firewood in Makeni and saving money to travel to Koidu. When he arrived in the town he knew nobody, so he started to move around, telling those he met that he was searching for a job in diamond mining. Through some of the connections he subsequently made, he was introduced to his current 'boss-man' (i.e. crew boss). At the time that we conducted the interview with Sahr, he was living together with a team of five other miners, sharing a room with them in his boss-man's house. The case of Sulley Sesay (15 years) and Muhammad Gbla (16 years), both originally from Mile 91 in Tonkolili District, illustrates the second path to recruitment to a team. These boys moved from Mile 91 in 2004 after their current boss-man had travelled through the area in search for members for his team. As in Sahr's case, their crew boss provided their accommodation, and they lived together with the four other members of his team.

The crew boss's arrangement with the licence holder is typically that he and his crew will work for the licence holder in return for a pile of gravel and financial

support for accommodation and food while they search for the diamonds.²¹ There are also often other persons featuring in this arrangement, such as a landowner, supporter, and occasionally an owner of heavy equipment needed to mine (e.g. a mechanical pump, mechanical 'washing machine' for gravel, or an excavator). The licence holder may represent some or all of these functions, or other individuals may be involved; the composition of roles tends to differ from site to site, and even from pit to pit within the same site. However, there will be a licence holder, there will be a landowner, and there will be a supporter and a crew boss. For the working children, the crew boss is clearly the most important figure: he negotiates the benefits they receive from their supporter and, even more importantly, how the diamonds – and profit from them – are shared.

Although the tasks these children perform are basically the same as those carried out by children working for a fixed salary, the payment structure is significantly different. In the operations we observed, the gravel is divided into different piles: a pile for the licence holder, piles for the landowner and supporter (if different than the licence holder), a pile for the machine owner (if machines are used and owned by a person other than the licence holder), and finally a pile for the crew boss and his crew. Sometimes these piles of gravel are sieved by the individuals that 'own' them, sometimes they are sieved by the workers; in the latter case, the workers are under close supervision and control,²² out of a shared fear that the one sieving will successfully 'pop' a diamond. This means that the person who use the sieve spots a diamond, quickly lifts the sieve upwards so that the diamond flies into the air, and catches the diamond in their mouth. Although we did not see this, we heard several stories about it happening. Indeed, 'popping' and other methods of cheating are issues of great concern for everybody working the diamond sites, including the children. However, the children, like the adults we spoke to, discussed 'popping' with a certain ambiguity. As several miners, both young and old, told us, mining is a game – one in which it is sanctioned to cheat so long as you are not discovered in the act. This implies that the 'trickster' who skilfully pops a diamond and gets away

²¹ We return in Chapter 6 to the question of distribution of profit within the team, and between the team and the crew boss, as well as the various items and financial support that team members receive.

²² The number of gravel piles emerging from the same pit can vary quite a lot, but the basic structure will remain the same as explained here. Thus, we have here only described the most usual way of dividing the gravel to be sieved between the main figures involved in such an arrangement. In one of the larger pits at Congo Creek Bridge, the gravel from one pit was divided in to 43 piles. The size of the piles may also differ. It is not uncommon that the pile of the license holder is bigger than the other piles, while some share some of the gravel from their pile with others etc. To the degree that these different frameworks influence the living conditions of the children working under such arrangements, we return to this issue in Chapter 6.

with it is seen as something of a hero, while the one caught in the act is severely punished by both colleagues and figures of authority in the diamond field (i.e. licence holder, landowner, supporter, etc.).

Children involved in petty trade, meanwhile, work the mining sites selling basic commodities – biscuits, cigarettes, soft drinks etc. – often for an older family member (sister, mother, etc.) or on commission for a more established trader. This activity is dominated by girls aged between 10 and 13. Whereas the children involved in direct work tend to work for considerable time at one particular pit in the diamond fields, these girls tend to move in-between several fields.

The last group of working children are those involved in various support functions for the miners. Thirty-eight percent of the children in our sample belong to this group. They prepare food, provide water, run errands, and carry out other smaller tasks that are available. These children are mainly boys younger than those in the direct work group: the majority of the children in the support functions group are aged between 10 to 13, and two-thirds of them live together with at least one of their parents. This group of children is by and large confined to one particular mining site during their work. They do not roam around several fields like the petty traders, but carry out particular support functions for specific teams of miners – sometimes just one team, sometimes more, but always at the same site. This means that they tend to cultivate long-term relationships with the various crew bosses and their teams. Our observations suggest that this is to the advantage of these children. The case of Kaku, described in the previous chapter, highlights such a situation. However, as the case of Kaku also shows, this is more likely to be the case for a child ‘indigenous’ to the area in question.

Length of work

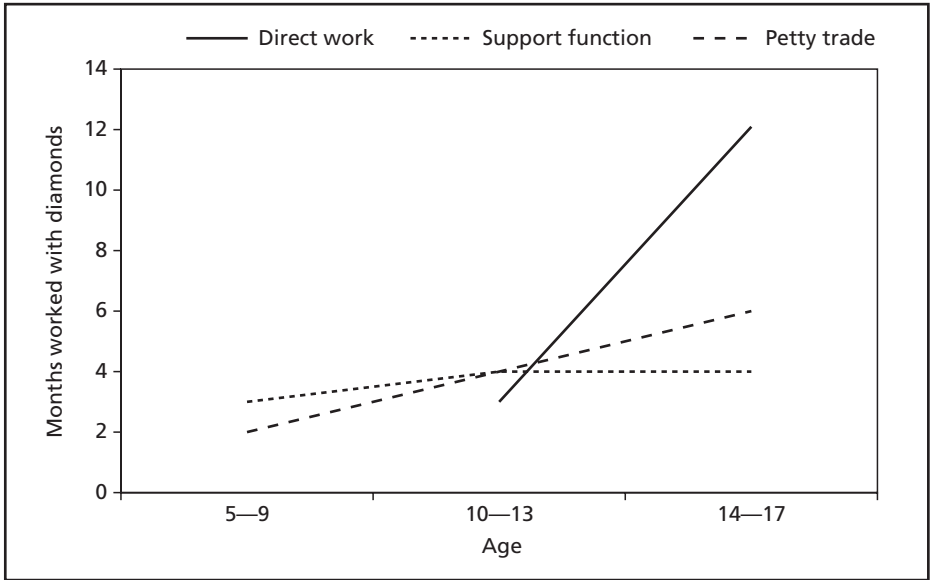
Most of the children report that they have not worked with diamond mining or diamond-related economic activities for a long period of time. As Figure 5.1 shows, petty traders and children working in support functions have worked a median time of five months, while children directly involved in diamond mining have worked a median time of nine months. For all groups, the median time increases by age. The oldest direct workers have a median time of 12 months.

There may be several reasons for the relatively short length of work time reported. One obvious explanation is the seasonal character of this work. We carried out our fieldwork in April (i.e. at the end of the dry season), and it may be that many only report on the length of time they have worked for this particular season. However, it is also likely that our data reflect the substantial amount of time it has taken to

re-establish the diamond sector in Koidu after the end of the civil war. Koidu Town and Kono District were particularly badly hit during the war: the destruction of infrastructure and housing was immense, both due to battle and because such destruction was used tactically by RUF, as a way to ‘regulate’ the area and thereby access to the diamond fields. Thus, even if people were willing to go mine after the war, they were hindered by the lack of infrastructure that could accommodate them. Accordingly, the market needed to attract petty traders and those working in various support functions was insufficient: the fewer miners present, the less work for these children, as their prospects of earning money depend on a critical mass of miners requesting their services (support functions) or willing to buy their commodities (petty traders). If this line of reasoning is correct, we would expect that the median length of work will rise as the situation in Koidu and Kono improves.

Potentially mitigating this assumption, however, is anecdotal evidence from our field material suggesting that diamond digging (and the other types of work connected to it) is rather temporary in character. The work is hard, the hours are long, and, because this is the kind of work people take up to earn a swift profit, they can also quickly decide to leave if they feel that the work is much less prosperous than expected. Many of those interviewed in greater detail about their lives (using qualitative individual interviews and focus group interviews) said that they saw their situation as miners as temporary: a means to an end, a way to earn and save money that could then be used to return to school or get them into other types of

Figure 5.1 Median number of months worked by tasks and age



economic activities (mainly trade). This was especially, but not exclusively, the case for those involved in direct work for a salary.

This finding is consistent with what seems to be generally the case in Sierra Leone. Most men in Sierra Leone have seemingly tried their luck with diamond mining at some point or another, or at least have a friend or relative with experience from the sector. Parallel to the stories of the hardships that must be overcome to find a valuable diamond is evidence that most individual experiences with diamond mining are limited in nature. Sierra Leone may have lived with a permanent 'gold rush' since the 1930s but, as with most gold rushes, the initial enthusiasm – fuelled by the prospect of otherwise unattainable riches – is difficult for many to sustain when the hard reality of mining life sets in.

This is of course most likely to be the case for those not originating from Kono. Those living permanently in villages close to mining sites were almost all involved in mining in one way or the other. The only exception we came across was Abraham, the village carpenter in Penduma I. Abraham told us that he was completely obsessed with diamonds prior to the war. His story accorded to the dream about the big diamond with his name on it, which would make its way through the ground into his hands if only he could endure the hardship of this kind of life and work long enough. During the war, as a person 'autochthonous' to Kono, Abraham fought against the RUF. His wife also died in Guinea, where she had been a refugee. When he arrived home after the war, Abraham concluded that it was time to give up his search for diamonds and instead settle down as a carpenter with a new wife. Abraham seemed to be a well respected man in Penduma I, but he was also notable in the sense that he was one of the few, if not only, people in the village not involved in diamond mining.

Supervision

The children's work is supervised, with the levels of control and intrusion differing depending on the child's task. A child sieving for diamonds will be under strict control of the crew boss or another responsible person, while a petty trader will probably work quite independently during the day. As Table 5.2 shows, the children working with support functions and as petty traders are primarily supervised by family members, probably because their work is integral to the economic activities in the household. However, family members also supervise a good number of the direct workers.

There are reasons for this kind of family supervision of direct workers, some related to trust, others to profit. Crew bosses with younger male relatives are known to recruit them into their team, on the grounds that younger relatives can informally help with the supervision of the other workers, being likely to tell the older relative if somebody is trying to cheat. In addition, relatives can be paid less than the other team members, and more money is kept in the family. The story of Abdullah Yateh illustrates this. Abdullah is 16 years-old and lost both his parents when they were killed by the RUF in the Port Loko area in 1996-97. After having lived on his own for several years, Abdullah was invited to Koidu by his brother, a crew boss at the field at Congo Creek Bridge. Abdullah has now worked for his brother for over two years, and lives together with his brother and his brother's wife. He is a member of a team of eight workers under his brother's direct control, but he receives less money in support than the other team members (500 Leones versus 1,500 Leones for the other team members). Like the other team members, Abdullah has a share in the gravel pile, but his share is to a considerable degree controlled by his brother. The brother takes some of what would be Abdullah's share in order to cover support and food expenses; some of Abdullah's profit also goes into remittances that both brothers send to other relatives. Although Abdullah seemed quite content with this arrangement, as it gave him a sense of family security that he did not have while living on his own, it is also clear that having Abdullah on the team enabled his brother to increase his profits while giving him a trusted ally in the pit.

Work pressure

The children working directly with diamonds usually work more days per week and more hours per day than the other children. As Table 5.3 shows, 57 percent of the children work six or seven days per week, a figure that rises to 70 percent when focusing only on those engaged in direct work. These boys, most of them between 14-17 years of age, also work long days: 44 percent work 8-10 hours per day, compared to 18 percent of the children in support functions and 28 percent of the petty traders.

The number of hours worked per day, and the number of days worked per week, is related to age and sex. As figure 5.2 shows, girls work fewer hours per day and less hours per week than boys. Younger children also tend to work fewer hours per day than older ones. Among the boys, there were no differences of the number of days worked between the different age groups. Conversely, the youngest girls worked a median 4.5 days per week, versus a median of six days per week among the oldest girls.

Table 5.3 Hours, days worked by work assignment

		Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Days/ week	1-3	17	19	34	23
	4-5	12	27	20	20
	6-7	70	54	47	57
	All	100	100	100	100
Hours/ day	0-4	10	51	51	38
	5-7	46	32	22	33
	8-10	44	18	28	29
	All	100	100	100	100
N		193	236	184	613

Figure 5.2 Work days per week by age, gender and work assignment

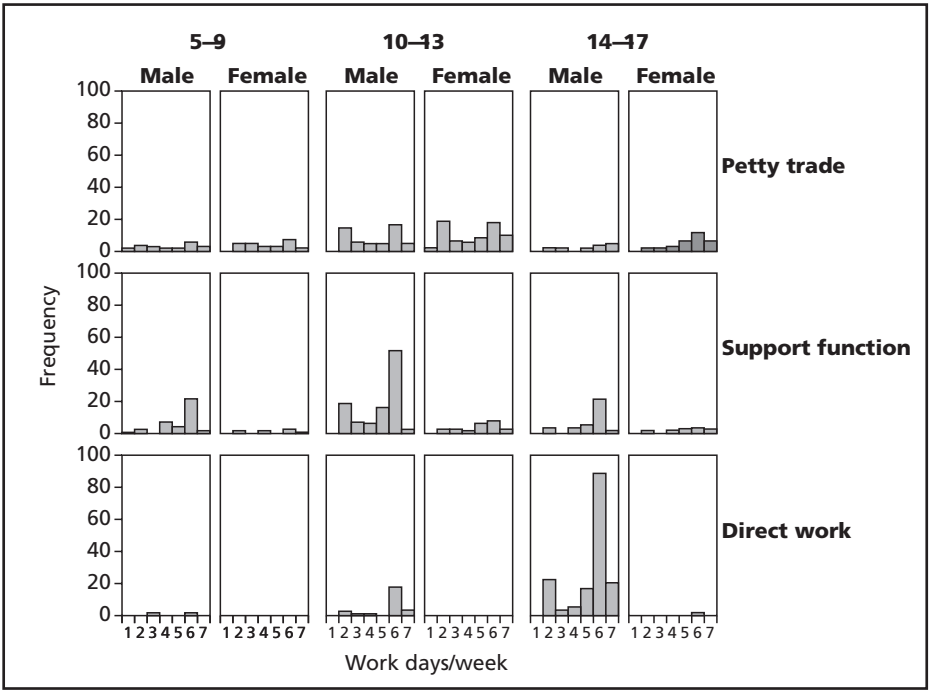
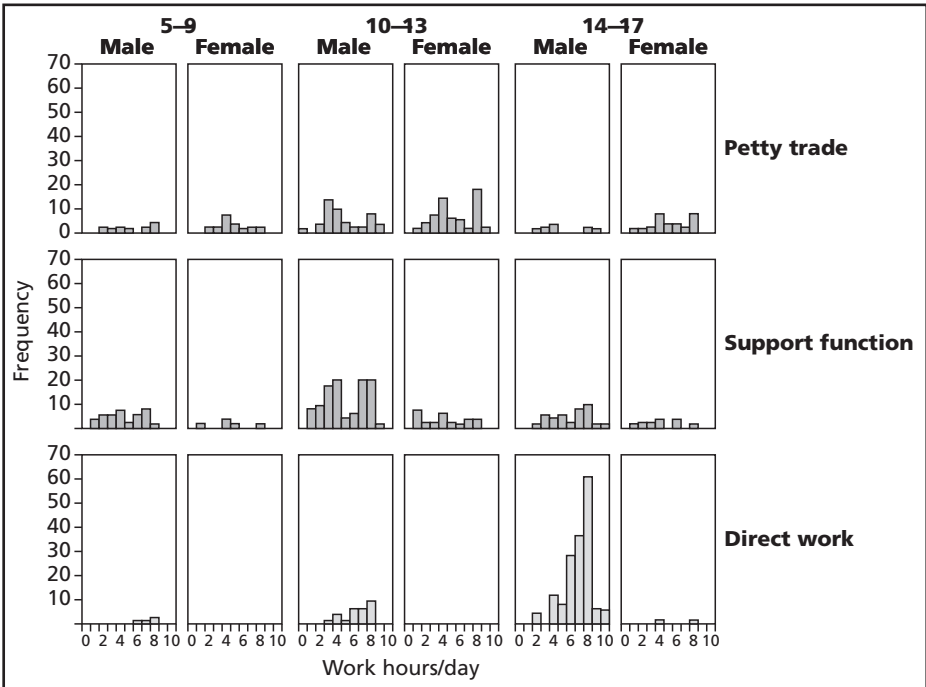


Figure 5.3 Work hours per day by age, gender and work assignment



As Table 5.4 shows, work pressure is not evenly distributed. Seventeen percent of the children have high work pressure, here defined as working eight hours or more per day *and* six or seven days per week. Few of the children living with their parents have such high work pressure, while 36 percent of the children living with their employer fall in this category. As many as 29 percent of the direct workers also fall into this category. At the other end of the scale, we find that 10 percent of the children have low work pressure, defined as working four hours or less per day and one to three days per week. Among those with low work pressure, we find more young children than old and more girls than boys. Eighteen percent of the children living with both parents have low work pressure.

Table 5.4 Work pressure by different background variables in percent

		High*	Medium*	Low*	
Age	5-9	6	79	15	100
	10-13	12	72	16	100
	14-17	27	72	2	100
Sex	Male	19	73	8	100
	Female	11	72	17	100
Live with in this area	Both parents	7	75	18	100
	One parent	11	75	15	100
	Close relatives (grand-parents, siblings)	20	76	4	100
	Other relatives or friends	23	71	6	100
	Employer/supporter	36	62	3	100
	Other	50	50		100
Schooling	Currently enrolled	4	75	20	100
	Former enrolled	38	59	3	100
	Never attended	22	74	3	100
Relation to parents	Living together	9	75	16	100
	Regular contact	26	73	1	100
	No/rear contact	20	71	9	100
	Dead	31	66	3	100
Work assignment	Direct work	29	71	1	100
	Support function	10	78	12	100
	Petty trade	13	69	19	100
Living with parents and place of origin	Living with parents, born in Kono	9	71	20	100
	Living with parents, not from Kono	8	82	10	100
	Not living with parents, born in Kono	18	77	5	100
	Not living with parents, not from Kono	32	64	4	100
Total	Percent	17	72	10	100
N		94	393	56	543

*High: 8-10 hours; 6-7 days; *Medium < 8-10 hours or < 6-7 days *Low: 0-4 hours; 1-3 days

A work of buckets and shovels

Alluvial diamond mining is almost entirely non-industrial. The nature of the work – manual labour performed always under the open sky – and the tools used are similar in many ways to manual agricultural work (see Table 5.5). In other words, it is not the tools themselves that are dangerous, but the very nature of the work. If carried out every single day, month after month, year after year, this kind of work quickly breaks the body down. One does not get ‘old’ in this kind of work; indeed, it is extremely rare to see ‘old’ people mining, as people above 30 years of age generally cannot cope for long with the bucket and shovel work of alluvial diamond mining. We have already described in the beginning of this chapter how many of the miners complain about back and chest pains. In the next section, we further explore the health issues generated by this work.

The children working with petty trade do not use any tools. As Table 5.5 shows, the children in direct work use more tools than the children working in support functions. However, many of the children in support functions are clearly preparing to go into the direct work, and thus learning to use the tools needed and learning the trade of diamond mining through observation.

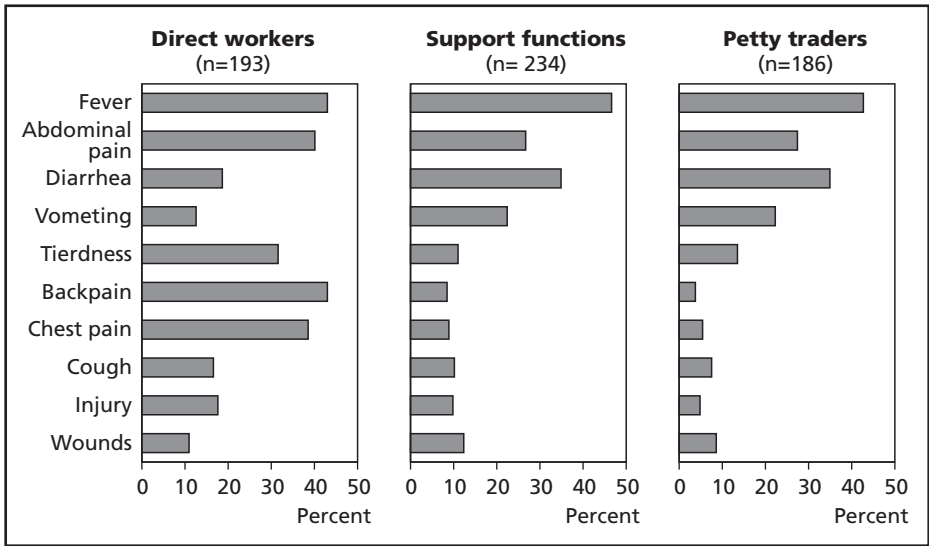
Table 5.5 Tools used, in percent of work assignment

	Direct work	Support function
Bucket	66	69
Shovel	85	42
Sieve	72	40
Machete	39	25
Head pan	21	6
‘Washing’ machine	18	6
Axe	6	1
Plough	2	0
Hoe	1	0
Total	193	237

Health

As many as 71 percent of the children claimed that, in the month preceding the time of interview, they had been so ill that it affected their work.²³ The most common health complaint for all the children was fever, which is as expected in an area where malaria is rampant.²⁴ However, as Figure 5.4 shows, the miners are much more exposed to physical afflictions such as fatigue, back pain, and chest pain than the other children. This is a clear indication of the difficulty of their work. The other interesting result here is that the miners are less likely to suffer from diarrhoea and vomiting. This might indicate that their general affluence *vis-à-vis* the two other groups helps to protect them from some contagious diseases. These differences apart, the three groups are relatively equal with regards to the incidence of diseases and injuries.

Figure 5.4 Illnesses that have prevented the children from their normal duties last month by work assignment in percent



²³ The health situation of the working children is elaborated further in a separate study, see Bjørkhaug (2006).

²⁴ In such areas it is not unusual for people to self-diagnose with malaria when a fever occurs.

Among the children that have suffered from illness or injury, most have taken tablets for relief: as Table 5.6 shows, nearly 90 percent of the sick children have taken tablets, and in addition 33 percent have used herbs and one in four have received injections as well. Direct workers tend to use more medicines than the other two groups. This is probably related to their higher income.

Table 5.6 Medicines used by the children that have been ill last month

	Petty trade	Support function	Direct work	All
Tablets	88	86	89	87
Herbs	34	27	38	33
Injections	18	21	32	24
N	112	169	158	439

The use of both tablets and injections among the children seems extremely high. This may be owing to an excess of caution as well as available means. Most of the children (or those responsible for them) know from bitter experience that illness can be fatal. Tablets and other remedies are available, and, as our results show, the workers have the means to buy them, so it is probably not surprising that reported use is high.

Table 5.7 Injuries last month by work assignment in percent

	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Yes, related to work	21	8	4	11
Yes, not related to work	1	4	4	3
No	78	88	92	86
N	193	234	185	612

Direct workers were significantly more likely than the two other groups to report having been injured during the month prior to interview. As many as one out of five of the miners was injured, and nearly all the injuries were related to work. This again indicates that mining is hard work with frequent accidents and injuries. Although most accidents do not seem to be life threatening, the nature of the work – constant exposure to dirty water, mud, sand, and gravel – means that even small cuts might end up as seriously infected wounds.

The nature of the work and its consequences

In this chapter, we have elaborated on the distinctions between direct work, support functions, and petty trade. We have seen that the direct workers – the miners – are typically boys that have reached at least 14 years of age. They carry out heavy manual labour that is highly specialised and extremely repetitive. This explains the high frequency of back and chest pain in this group, as well as the high frequency of reported injuries. The support workers are younger than the miners, and often are involved in helping their mothers (or other female relatives) to supply the miners with food and beverage. In addition, this group carries out errands and minor tasks related to mining. Because they are by and large confined to the same area every day, there is a sense that the boys are ‘miners in the making’, learning to become miners through constant proximity and observation. The petty traders, mainly girls, work over a larger geographical area to sell the small goods that people need. Most of them work on commission for a more an established trader, or for their close relatives. Finally, as expected, fewer injuries and illnesses are reported among the support workers and petty traders than the miners.

6 What do they obtain?

The benefits or salaries that working children receive depends on their work assignment. As Table 6.1 shows, one-third of the direct workers receive regular cash income, and more than 50 percent get paid if and when the team find a diamond. Most of the children receiving a regular salary are paid daily: 92 percent report that they are paid daily, 6 percent weekly, and 2 percent monthly. More than a quarter of the children doing support functions report that they do not get any benefits at all. Two-thirds of the children doing petty trade report that they get an irregular salary, while 14 percent report that they do not receive anything. Children doing support functions more commonly receive their benefits in the forms of food and lodging than children doing direct work or petty trade.

As Table 6.1 shows, 15 percent of the children in total reported that they do not receive any salaries or benefits. Yet when we asked the children how much they had earned the previous day or the previous month, nearly half of them, 48 percent, claimed not to have earned any money at all. Here we found substantial differences between

Table 6.1 Type of salary or benefits received by work assignment in percent²⁵

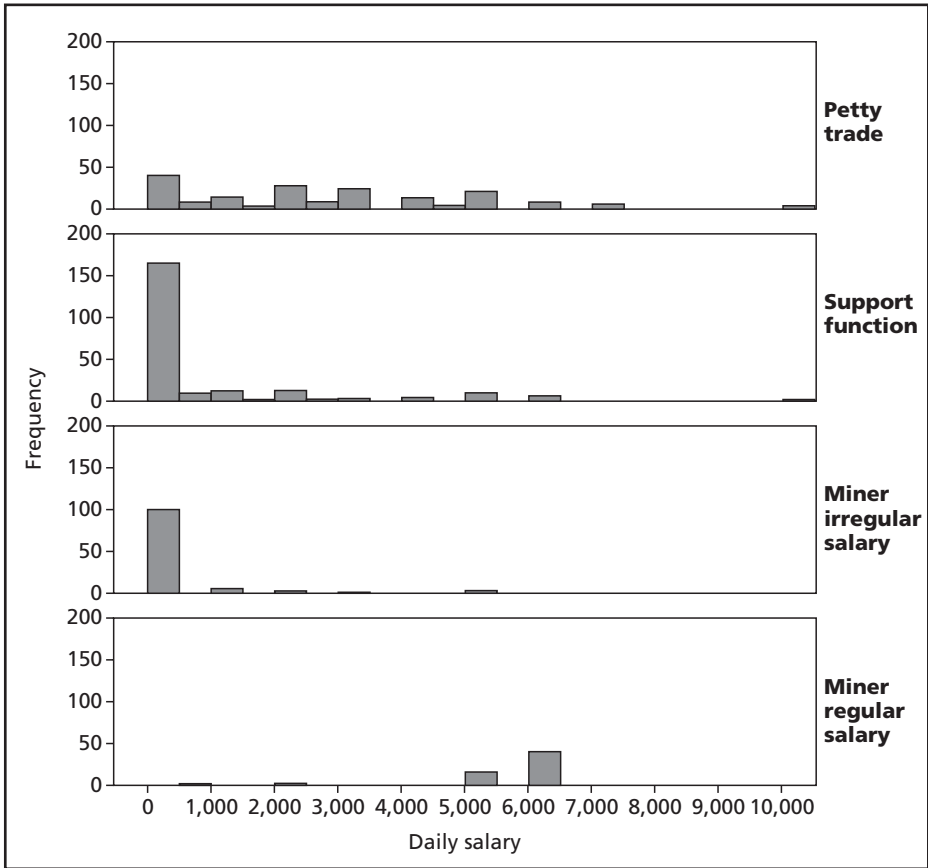
How to receive salaries	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Irregular salary	7	19	67	29
Salary when I find diamond	55	29	0	29
Regular salary in Leones	31	8	8	15
Food	7	23	3	12
Provided lodging	6	20	3	10
Parents receive salary for my work	2	6	0	3
Other	1	3	1	1
Do not get any salary or benefits	4	26	14	15
N	193	237	186	616

Each child may receive more than one form of benefit

²⁵ The category 'irregular salary' and direct work may seem rather strange, as diamond = mining for profit instead of a salary by definition means irregular payment. However, as we will explain later in this chapter, there is a small category of children blurring the distinctions already made between those working for a salary and those working as part of a team searching for diamonds.

the three different categories of work. As Figure 6.1 shows, 67 percent of the children doing support functions were not paid at all the previous day, against 20 percent of the petty traders and 52 percent of the direct workers. All the miners working for a regular salary reported that they had earned money, but as many as 75 percent working for an irregular salary had received nothing. Among the petty traders, 56 percent reported earning less than 5,000 Leones the day before, while only 15 percent earned more than 5,000 Leones. Among the miners with regular salary, 97 percent received 5-6,000 Leones, indicating a rather fixed salary level for some of the children. Only one percent of the children reported to be paid more frequently than daily.

Figure 6.1 Salary received the day before in Leone²⁶



²⁶ 5,000 Leone is approximately 2.10 USD. If salary was reported for 'last month', the figure is divided by 20 to estimate daily income; if the salary was reported for the previous week, the income is divided by five.

Working children obtain payment and benefits in different ways. For those engaged in direct work, the most important distinction is between those working for a fixed salary versus those working as part of a team of miners. In the first group, which represents about one-third of the miners, the children and youth tend to receive between 5,000 and 6,000 Leones for one day of work (see Figure 6.1). As casual labour, they will show up at the diamond site in the morning looking for a job. Although there are often more people seeking employment than available assignments, this does not seem to affect the salary and benefit structure on a daily basis: during our observation period the wages did not seem to drop any lower than 5,000 Leones nor increase much above 6,000 Leones. If a boy is picked for a day's work, he will receive breakfast and lunch. One thousand Leones will be deducted from his salary to cover the lunch meal, while breakfast is provided free of charge. Lunch is in theory optional, but as workers need to eat and prices are fairly stable across the diamond sites, most miners take the lunch offered to them. This lunch is prepared and served by those we have defined as working in support functions: boys and girls working for their mother or another female relative.

Most of the miners we interviewed in greater detail about this arrangement seemed quite satisfied with it. The income is relatively good compared to other jobs; the main problem the group faces is a lack of work security. Although some children have established connections with one employer and can be pretty certain that they will get employment when they show up, this is not the case for everybody. Because the relationships between an employer and the workers are conducted bilaterally, there is no established support structure or system between the workers. This differs from the situation of workers in a fixed team: the salary workers are without the kind of 'social security' that being a member of a team can offer. For example, if they are ill and unable to work, they lose their income and must cover their medical treatment themselves.

There are also a number of part-time workers in the salaried group. Part-time workers are boys that only work certain days or for a limited number of days per year. These boys are often trying to combine diamond mining with education: as the pay is relatively good, it gives boys and their families means to cover school fees. Two such boys were Kai Momoh (14 years) and Aiah Danyima (13 years), both of whom live in Tumbodu town. We interviewed them at the Bandama site, where they were working that particular Sunday. Both boys lost their parents during the civil war and currently live with relatives. They told us that they go to school during the week and try to get work as miners during the weekend. They use the money to pay for school fees, but also give money to the relatives they live with. The next morning (Monday), we came across Kai Momoh as we drove into Tumbodu, and asked him why he was not in school. He replied that he had gone to school that morning, but had been asked to pay school fees that he could not afford, and therefore was asked

to leave school and not come back until he could pay the fees for at least another month. According to Kai, the headmaster had gathered all the pupils together and read out a list of children who had not sufficiently paid their school fees. Those that could not pay (Kai included) had to go home until they could submit the money needed. This seemed to have been a humiliating, but not unprecedented, experience for Kai. He told us that it was not the first time this had happened to him, and he put it down to the poverty of the relatives he lived with, claiming that they sometimes had to use the money he had earned for purposes other than his school fees. Now his only option was to go and seek employment each day until he had saved enough money to go back to school. He had already been to the diamond field that morning looking for employment, but as he was rather late (because he had first gone to school), no jobs were available. He said that he would try to return the next day and subsequent days.

The situation for those belonging to a team is different. The most obvious difference is that these workers do not receive a regular salary. Instead, the boys earn money based on their share of the profit from the sale of the diamonds that they find. As also emphasised in Chapter 5, the payment structure in such an arrangement is complex, as the number and size of gravel piles can vary significantly. For these children, what is important is not just the number of gravel piles they have a stake in, but also their position within the team. Generally, the younger the child the more junior he will be, and the less he will know about how to evaluate the true value of a diamond. Most of these children simply have to trust what the 'boss-man' tells them. Fourteen year-old Sahr Comba is one such child. Sahr likes his 'boss-man' because he treats his workers with respect. However, Sahr also told us that the crew boss is always present when they sieve the gravel, and when diamonds are found in the gravel pile belonging to him and his team, the 'boss-man' buys those diamonds. When we asked Sahr whether he and the other team members thought they received a good price, he could only tell us that he believed the transaction to be fair because his 'boss-man' was good man. Slightly older boys (aged 15 and 16) also told us similar stories about selling their diamonds not to the buyers in Koidu town, but directly to their crew boss. As two of our informants, Sulley Sesay and Muhammed Gbla, pointed out, they had to trust the crew boss because they didn't know how the scale he used to weight the diamonds actually worked – the technology of the scale was unknown to them. This asymmetrical knowledge and power relationship suggests that young and inexperienced boys, in particular, may earn less money than they are entitled to. This possibility, together with the uncertainty around whether diamonds are actually discovered in the gravel pile, illustrates the disadvantages of working as team member for a share in the profit.

At the same time, there are certain benefits from the team arrangement that may improve the social security of these children compared to other groups of children

working in the diamond sector. The children in this group live in a more multilateral working environment than the children working only for a salary. They are part of a team with a crew boss that has negotiated an agreement with a supporter, which gives them some food and most often also access to accommodation. Furthermore, all the children we interviewed in this group reported some 'social service benefits', either in the form of painkillers given to them – often preventively to enable them to endure the hard work – or in other types of medical treatment: receipt of antibiotics, malaria treatment, and even a stay in the hospital were reported.²⁷ However, some of the stories we heard conflicted as to the general manner of treatment of these youths; for example, we heard some stories about supporters who had paid hospital bills, but other stories about young workers abandoned by their supporters after falling seriously ill. In the material world of diamond mining, it may make sense for a supporter to cover the bill for a relatively short stay at hospital but is not necessarily wise to continue support to somebody who has fallen seriously ill. It simply does not make economic sense to do so.

Even when younger children are junior members of the team – and therefore usually receiving a lesser share of the profit than more senior team members – they seem to be included in the solidarity that exists between team members and are eligible for the same social benefits as more senior members. Expenses for medical and other such treatment are most likely deducted from their profit share, but this arrangement means at least that covering medical expenses is not something the child must arrange entirely on his own.

It is difficult to say definitively that one of these work arrangements is significantly better than the other: there are pros and cons with both. The children working for a salary basically know how much they will earn each day (assuming they are able to secure employment), and it also seems that some of these children – namely those originating from the area – may at least attempt to combine school and work. For some of these children, their ability to secure part-time work in diamond mining is what keeps them in school, as they would otherwise be unable to pay their school fees. However, in comparison to the other group of direct workers, these children lack both the possibility of being part of a team that finds valuable diamonds (i.e. the possibility to increase their income), and the 'social service' benefits available to those working as part of a mining team under a crew boss with a good arrangement with licence holders and supporters.

As we saw in Table 6.1, some children engaged in direct work also report receiving an irregular salary. This group comprises a small number of children working for a team of diamond miners, but not as part of their profit-sharing arrangement.

²⁷ This was a stay of about two weeks, and the boy in question was working for his uncle.

Instead, these children receive a 'salary' when the team finds and sells diamonds. Most of these children work for a relative, who, in addition to certain benefits (e.g. food, accommodation, and medicine), also provides them with a little bit of extra money every now and then. Osman Kamara's story illustrates this. Osman works at Congo Creek Bridge together with his uncle. He is a full-time miner, but he does not receive a salary or a fixed part of a gravel pile. Instead, he works and lives with his uncle, and the uncle provides him with food everyday and money on an irregular basis (based on the income the uncle receives from the diamonds that the team finds).

Among the two other groups of children – those involved in support functions and petty traders – few receive a fixed salary. The salary of the petty traders is irregular because these children earn money based on what they sell. Generally the children sell goods on commission for somebody else, usually a close relative or another individual doing trade in the area. For the boys and girls involved in various support functions, the issue of salaries and benefits is blurrier. A significant number of these children report that they do not receive any salary or benefits at all. This probably means that their work involves assisting a close relative and, more importantly, that their work assignment is not defined as 'work' by those they assist, but rather as a part of the tasks that the child must fulfil as a household member.

Diamond mining is hard, repetitive, and tiresome work. It is not generally work that people stay in for long, but for those doing it, it is a way to make a living. Miners on a fixed salary tend to receive between 5,000 and 6,000 Leones per day – not a high salary but, in the Sierra Leonean context, not necessarily low either. The money they earn helps them and their families to survive, and even makes it possible for some boys to continue their education. When they are employed, these boys know what they will receive; but when they are not employed, they do not receive anything. The situation for the team workers is different. Their income can vary significantly, but so long as they belong to a team their benefits will stay the same. They will receive some minimum support for accommodation and food, and some expenses for medical treatment will also be covered. Overall, the picture is mixed. Whereas the first group can (at least in theory) combine work and education, this is not possible for the latter group. However, the latter group has access to the 'social security' benefits of the team they belong to, while the first group must individually cope with their illness and injuries.

The situation for the petty traders is by and large the same as for child and youth petty traders elsewhere (see Bass 2004; Hatløy and Huser 2005; Kielland and Tova 2006), except that they are conducting their work in a diamond mining area. This is also the case for those involved in various support functions. Most of the work is quite similar to ordinary household activities carried out by children in rural areas across Africa. The distinction once more is that the work is conducted

in a diamond mining area, which makes it both possible and necessary to conduct such tasks beyond the immediate surroundings of the household. This in turn brings younger boys into contact with diamond mining, thereby establishing them as ‘miners in the making’. Their work helps their families, but also locks families living in a diamond area like Kono into mining as a ‘way of life’. This may to some extent pre-determine the choices these children make later in life; on the other hand, it would be economically unproductive for a household not to try to take advantage of the fact that they live in an area where diamonds are discovered. After all, this is a material world.

7 'One day I will do something else'

Far from being the 'proto-criminals' referred to by Collier (2000) or Smilie, Gberie and Hazleton (2000), the children and youth involved in diamond mining in Sierra Leone are ordinary Sierra Leonean boys and girls with ordinary dreams about the future.

In their own assessment of their current lives (see Table 7.1), some see an improvement over their life as it was a year before, a few feel that their conditions have deteriorated, while a majority claimed that their current lives are of much the same quality as prior to beginning their current job. This is not particularly surprising. Life is generally hard in Sierra Leone, and – although nearly everybody is happy that the war is over – most people also realise that peace does not equal prosperity but rather continued poverty. Few of the children claimed that their lives at the time of the survey were worse than a year before. However, it is noteworthy that one in five of the direct workers find their current lives worse than before. This may simply be due to their higher age compared to the other two groups, but may also be an effect of the hard labour that they have to perform everyday. Unfulfilled expectations about sudden riches may also be part of the explanation. Nevertheless, one should note that this sentiment is only expressed by a minority of direct workers. The overall majority think that their lives are improving or, at the very least, are at the same level as the year before.

Table 7.1 Own assessment of current life compared to one year ago by work assignment in percent

	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
...better than before your present job	35	27	36	33
...different, but of same quality	43	66	60	55
...or worse than before you worked in your present job?	22	7	4	12
N	166	140	118	424*

*31 percent did not answer this question

The children in our sample say they dream about going to school, getting a better job, and/or going abroad. In one way or another, they dream about choosing the ‘winning’ number in the giant raffle of the Sierra Leonean alluvial diamond mining enterprise. Earning some extra money in the diamond trade, whether as a miner, petty trader, or in one of the many support functions, can constitute the little extra income that their families need to send them back to school, or, in the case of older boys and girls, enable them to pay their school fees themselves. This illustrates how important education remains in Sierra Leone. The legacy of the ‘Athens of Africa’, of being a ‘bookman’, is still an integral part of culture and society. Education entitles you to respect and the possibility of a better job, and can advance your upward social mobility.

Table 7.2 Dreams about the future by work assignment in percent

	Direct work	Support function	Petty trade	All
Go to school	31	48	50	43
Get a better job	27	15	9	17
Go abroad	20	17	12	16
Other	9	12	17	12
Get married	2	3	11	5
Go home	9	1	1	4
Continue the current activities	3	3	0	2
Don't care	0	1	0	0
N	191	233	180	604

The most striking result is that very few children, in fact almost none, would like to continue with their current activities. This indicates that these children and youth see their current lives as very difficult. However, we need also to keep in mind that the work conducted by these three groups is temporal. The young petty traders will grow up to become something else: the girls will get married and the boys will probably become miners, farmers, or, as evident among the rural population in Kono, some combination of the two. The same scenario may be expected by a boy or girl in the support category. And as seen above, the overall majority of direct workers see their status as miners as short-term, in line with the general trend that mining is an activity done for a limited number of months or years in order to earn enough money to do something else: go to school, find a better job (using money made in the mines to surmount barriers to entry), or return to their home community to start a new life.

The most important dream revolves around returning to or continuing their education. Forty-three percent report that they dream of going to school, whereas only 17 percent dream about finding a better job and 16 percent about going abroad. More direct workers dream about finding a better job than in the two other categories, probably due to their higher age: it is probably more natural for a boy aged 17 to dream about a better job than a boy aged 10, and vice versa.

Many of those picked for qualitative interviews told us that they had been going to school before joining a team in search for diamonds. Some had been at school for several years before financial hardship forced them to quit their education. Many claimed that it was only when the opportunity of going to school was taken away that they got 'this feeling' for diamonds. As Abdullah Yateh told us when we interviewed him close to his work place at Congo Creek Bridge: 'the money I could make from diamonds could give me a new life'. Sitting there in the afternoon as the field site slowly emptied of the children and youth waiting to be interviewed for the survey, we started discussing how diamonds could improve his life. His friend and colleague Aruna Kamara was also part of this discussion.²⁸ These two Temne boys describe their lives as hard, repetitive labour. It is boring and tiresome, but what keeps them going is the dream of their share of the 'big diamond' – a diamond so huge that it would forever change their life and lead them to luxury and leisure in Freetown.

To illustrate, they told us a story they had heard about a fellow Temne man living a very difficult life, with neither friends nor money to support himself. One day, however, he found a really big diamond, which enabled him to travel to Freetown and resettle as a rich man. According to what they said they have heard, this Temne man continues enjoying the good life of Freetown, no longer involved in the diamond industry or having to perform hard physical labour. Although both boys talked about education, the type of education or job they actually desire is unclear. Abdullah and his friend Aruna Kamara dream about a new life, of which returning to school would probably be a part; yet this is seemingly more due to the respectability that education will give them than anything else. Basically, they would like to stop what they are currently doing in order to do something else, but exactly what this might be is unclear. Both boys had been working for nearly two years now, so far without finding any really valuable diamonds. Nevertheless, the boys seemed, or at least claimed to be, convinced that one day their luck will change, just as it did for the fellow Temne man. Every miner has his own special moment when his diamond will emerge, and so long as they continue their search, their day will also almost certainly arrive.

²⁸ Abdullah Yateh is 16 years old, originating from Mile 91. Both his parents were killed by the RUF in the Port Loko area in 1996-97. In Koidu he lives with his brother and his wife, his brother being a boss-man for a crew of eight miners, including Abdullah. Kamara's parents are still alive, but as they were too poor to support him he came to Koidu to work for his uncle.

The actual likelihood that this will happen is of course extremely low, and even if these boys do one day find a valuable stone, the chance that they will be the ones actually benefiting from it is also slim. Like most other boys working as miners, they seem to have little knowledge about how to evaluate the true worth of a diamond. That they continue to dream this dream may be because, without it, they have little other hope of a better life to cling to. They are still young and strong, and will therefore probably continue their search for a few more years. Sooner or later, however, it is likely that the material world they live in will catch up to them, either in the form of despair after years of unfulfilled search for diamonds, or in the fact that their bodies no longer can endure the hard, repetitive labour of the diamond pits.

The youth miners and the children in petty trade and support functions clearly dream about a life other than they currently live. Many see education as the alternative they would most like to pursue. For the time being, however, they are caught in a trap of poverty, which makes it very difficult for them to fulfil their educational aspirations. Only the direct workers working for a fixed salary seem likely to improve their chances of getting an education by taking part in the mining sector. Some of these children work only part-time, whereas others only turn to mining when in need of money to pay their school fees. This suggests that policy interventions should focus on more flexible educational programmes that can make it possible for young people to combine income-generating activities while pursuing their education.

8 Concluding remarks

Diamonds originating from Sierra Leone have been an issue of much debate, yet the living conditions of those who actually mine the diamonds have been much less studied. They are often perceived according to the prototype of unruly youths predisposed to criminal behaviour and in search of swift profit (see Collier 2000; Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton 2000; Abdullah 1998, 2004). This is not what we found in Kono. Fifty-five percent of the children interviewed in this survey originate from Kono, indicating that they belong to the category we termed as 'settled miners'. Many of these work part-time in the diamond fields to pay for their school fees or in order to save money to go back to school. Similar to Archibald and Richards (2002), the miners that we identify are ordinary people in search of an income. Despite the tendency to see diamonds as a 'special' commodity, we think it is best approached locally, as any other commodity produced by local rural populations. For the local population in a diamond area, mining is an activity that supplements agriculture.

Sierra Leone is currently trying to recover from a devastating civil war. Much must be rebuilt, and not only houses and infrastructure, but also formal and informal institutions. There is, however, little that suggest that the production process of alluvial diamonds have changed very much. Rather it seems like the basic logic remains the same, and the only way to come to terms with the living conditions for the children and youth in the diamond areas of Sierra Leone is by understanding this particular system and its production process

It has always been the case that the miners are boys, almost exclusively above the age of 14. They conduct what we in this report have termed 'direct work'. Girls and smaller boys also carry out economic activity related to diamond mining, but tend to be involved either in petty trade or in various support functions. In these two latter types of work, girls participate at about the same rate as boys.

With regard to vulnerability, we believe that the most vulnerable are those in the youngest age group (5-9 years), not originating from Kono, and living without their parents, as it is reasonable to suggest that the vulnerability that comes with low age is closely related to contact with parents. The number of orphans is, as we have seen, very high: one in four of those between 14 to 17 years are orphans. The school fees, often amounting to as much as 200,000 Leones, are difficult to manage even for a family; it is next to impossible for most orphans to raise such a sum of money, and

apart from diamond mining, there are few other economic opportunities available for such youths, making the diamond mining area a magnet for these children.

Most of the children claim that they started in their current job because they were encouraged or forced by their family or friends. This illustrates how few options people have. Parents do not send their children to mine or to work in various support functions because they do not care for them or are trying to exploit their labour capacity. Child labour in Kono is a consequence of a labour intensive production process in combination with the fact that people are poor and school fees are high. The income the family needs can be crucially supplemented by what children can earn in the mining sector, and the finding that about half of the children are currently enrolled in school suggests that their income also contributes to their own education. This observation is, as we have seen, strengthened by information from qualitative interviews.

All the children in this report live under difficult circumstances, but those involved in direct work are particularly prone to physical stress. This type of labour is, as we have seen, extremely hard and repetitive, exposing the young miners much more to chest pains and back problems than those working with petty trade or in the various support functions. On the other hand, the fact that the direct workers suffer less from diarrhea and vomiting might indicate that their general affluence *vis-à-vis* the two other groups protects them from some contagious diseases.

The general level of higher affluence is easiest to observe among those working as miners for a fixed salary. For this group, the standard payment is 5,000-6,000 Leones per day. It is more difficult to determine the actual payment structure for those involved with a team, as there is a complex game of 'who gets what' out of the gravel piles that they have a share in. However, the team workers get certain other benefits that salary workers do not. These include some health services (both preventive and curative), accommodation, and food support. It is in the interest of the supporter, crew boss, land owner, and licence holder to have a crew that is sufficiently healthy to work efficiently.

Very few of the children and youth involved in diamond mining would like to continue with their current activities. All of them dream about another life, and for most that life includes education as an integral component. The question is then how and in what ways different stakeholders can help these children to a life more in tune with their dreams about the future. We believe that stakeholders should take advantage of the fact that this is a group of children and youth that want to go to school. Their problem is not that schools are necessarily too few or far away, but that they are too expensive. This is an access problem that should be relatively easy to deal with, as what is required is not new buildings or infrastructure, but a programme subsidising school fees. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition for keeping these children at school, as their families will unfortunately still need

their income. This means that such a programme should be combined with a new approach to education, which makes it possible for some of the older children (14 years and above) to combine school and work. Such an approach can be targeted to both groups of direct workers, but also to older girls doing petty trade or working in support functions. Putting such a system in place will require active co-operation between representatives from the Ministry of Education and the crew bosses, licence holders, land owners, supporters, and local chiefs. This is particularly true given that such a programme cannot work so long as many of the children (17 percent) report a high work pressure (more than eight hours per day, six or seven days a week). Attempting to regulate this through policing will only lead to increased bribery, more covert child labour, or both. The only way forward is through dialogue with all parties concerned.

The health situation is another aspect of the children's lives that could be improved quite easily. As the direct workers are less prone to diarrhea and vomiting than the two other groups, one obvious target should be to bring down the level of these diseases in the two other groups to the same level. Moreover, the current pattern of self-treatment through taking tablets is alarmingly high. The only way that this can be arrested is through improved regulation of the distribution of medical drugs, in combination with more emphasis on medical counselling. This should be given at local health clinics and by village birth attendances.

The working children not only work long and hard days, they also run the risk of being cheated out of their full profit. This is especially the case for the direct workers who are part of a team. If the youth workers had more knowledge about how to estimate the true value of a diamond, this risk would be reduced. Similarly, if the boys working for a fixed salary had more knowledge about what was actually in the gravel they dug, they would be in a better position to bargain with their employers. A local initiative organised by *Diamond Peace Initiative* has started such a programme, but so far it is only targeting adult miners.²⁹ We believe that information about diamonds should be included in the local school curriculum. Whether one likes it or not, these people live in a diamond mining area, and almost all of them will sooner or later be involved in diamond-related activities. Since this will be the case for the foreseeable future, the only way to empower these people is to educate them about how diamonds are valued.

Diamonds are much sought after, and Kono could therefore have been a rich area. This is currently not the case. The population is poor, and the scars from the war are still much too evident. This means that, so long as the current situation

²⁹ *Diamond Peace Initiative* is an arrangement directed by Integrated Diamond Management Programme of Management Systems International, see www.peacediamonds.org and www.msiworldwide.com.

prevails, children will have to continue to work. There are no other options. The only long-term solution to the problem of child labour is therefore poverty eradication, which, in the case of Kono and Sierra Leone, should be based on a fair and transparent distribution of the revenue collected from the diamond trade. This means that stakeholders should combine a long-term perspective – improved governance of the diamond trade – with medium and short-term programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the children who, whether we like it or not, must search for work in order to survive.

Bibliography

- Abdullah, Ibrahim (1998) 'Bush path to destruction: the origins and character of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF/SL)', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 203-235.
- Abdullah, Ibrahim (ed.) (2004) *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War*, Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Adeleke, Ademola (1995) 'The politics and diplomacy of peacekeeping in West Africa: the ECOWAS operation in Liberia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 572-585.
- Archibald, Steven and Paul Richards (2002) 'Conversion to human rights? Popular debate about war and justice in rural central Sierra Leone', *Africa*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 339-367.
- Bass, Loretta (2004) *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Boulder Lynne Rienner.
- Barrows, Walter (1976) *Grassroots Politics in an African State: Integration and Development in Sierra Leone*, New York: Africana.
- Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone (eds) (2000) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Bjørkhaug, Ingunn (2006) *Health Services for Children and Youth Involved in Diamond-Mining in Kono District, Sierra Leone*, Oslo: Institute for Public Health, University of Oslo (MA-Thesis).
- Bøås, Morten (2000) 'Borgerkrigen i Sierra Leone', *Internasjonal Politikk*, vol. 58, no. 4, pp. 559-582.
- Bøås, Morten (2001) 'Liberia and Sierra Leone – dead ringers? The logic of neopatrimonial rule', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 697-723.
- Bøås, Morten (2002) 'Civil society in Sierra Leone: corruption, destruction (and reinvention?)', *Democracy & Development: Journal of West African Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

- Bøås, Morten and Anne Hatløy (2005) *Alcohol and Drug Consumption in Post War Sierra Leone – an Exploration*, Oslo: Fafo (Fafo-report 469).
- Collier, Paul (2000) 'Doing well out of war: an economic perspective', in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (eds) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 91-111.
- Dorjahn, Vernon J. (1959) 'The organisation and function of the Ragebñle society of the Temne', *Africa*, vol. 29, pp. 156-170.
- Ellis, Stephen (1999) *The Mask of Anarchy: the Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, London: Hurst and Company.
- Ferme, Mariane C. (2001) *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History and the Everyday in Sierra Leone*, Berkeley: The University of California Press.
- Fithen, Caspar (1999) *Diamonds and War in Sierra Leone: Cultural Strategies for Commercial Adaptation to Endemic Low-Intensity Conflict*, London: University College London (PhD-Thesis).
- Gberie, Lansana (1997) 'The May 25 coup d'état in Sierra Leone: a military revolt?', *Africa Development*, vol. XXII, no. 3-4, pp. 188-201.
- Global Witness (2003) *For a Few Dollars More*, London: Global Witness.
- Global Witness (2005a) *Making it Work: Why the Kimberley Process Must Do More to Stop Conflict Diamonds*, London: Global Witness.
- Global Witness (2005b) *An Architecture of Instability: How the Critical Link Between Natural Resources and Conflict Remains Unbroken*, London: Global Witness.
- Grier, Beverly (2004) *Child Labour and Agency in Colonial Zimbabwe: the Social Construction of Childhood*, Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Hatløy, Anne and Anne Huser (2005) *Identification of Street Children: Characteristics of Street Children in Bamako and Accra*, Oslo: Fafo (Fafo-report 474).
- Heckathorn, Douglas D. (1997) 'Respondent driven sampling: a new approach to the study of hidden populations', *Social Problems*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 174-199.
- Heckathorn, Douglas D., Robert S. Broadhead and Boris Sergeyev (2001) 'A methodology for reducing respondent duplication and impersonation in samples of hidden populations', *Journal of Drug Use*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 543-564.
- Hirsch, John L. (2001) *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

- Huband, Mark (1998) *The Liberian Civil War*, London: Frank Cass.
- Little, Kenneth (1967) *The Mende of Sierra Leone*, London: Routledge.
- Kaplan, Robert D. (1996) *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, New York: Random House.
- Keen, David (2005) *Conflict & Collusion in Sierra Leone*, Oxford: James Currey.
- Kielland, Anne and Maruizia Tovo (2006) *Children at Work: Child Labour Practices in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Musah, Abdel-Fatau (2000) 'A country under siege: state decay and corporate military intervention in Sierra Leone', in Abdel-Fatau Musah and J. 'Kayode Fayemi (eds) *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, London: Pluto Press, pp. 76-116.
- Peterson, John (1969) *Province of Freedom: a History of Sierra Leone 1787-1870*, London: Faber and Faber.
- Reno, William (1995) *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reno, William (1998) *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Richards, Paul (1996) *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*, Oxford: James Currey.
- Richards, Paul (2005a) 'New war: an ethnographic approach', in Paul Richards (ed.) *No Peace, No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Oxford: James Currey, pp. 1-21.
- Richards, Paul (2005b) 'Green Book millenarians? The Sierra Leone war within the perspective of an anthropology of religion', in Niels Kastfelt (ed.) *Religion and African Civil Wars*, London: Hurst and Company, pp. 119-146.
- Salganik, Matthew J. and Douglas D Heckathorn (2004) 'Sampling and estimation in hidden populations using respondent-driven sampling', *Sociological Methodology*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 193-240.
- Sesay, Max (1993) *Interdependence and Dependency in the Political Economy of Sierra Leone*, Southampton: University of Southampton (PhD.Thesis).
- Smillie, Ian, Lansana Gberie and Ronald Hazleton (2000) *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security*, Ottawa: Partnership Africa.

Statistics Sierra Leone (2005) *Sierra Leone Encyclopedia 2005*, Freetown: Statistics Sierra Leone.

UN (2004) *Twenty-Third Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, New York: UN.

UNDP (2005) *Human Development Report*, New York: UNDP.

UNICEF (2006) *State of the World's Children*, New York: UNICEF.

UNOWA (2005) *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa*, Geneva: UNOWA.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Living conditions for children in the Kono district					
SL01	Serial number of questionnaire				
SL02	Identification number of recruiting child				
SL03	Wave				
SL04	Interview date				
SL05	Interviewer name		Agnes Suma Elizabeth Abdul Dumbuya	1 2 3 4 5	
SL06	Place of interview (precise description)				
SL07	Start interview				
SL08	End interview				
SL09	Sex		M F	1 2	
SL10	What is your name?				
SL11	How old are you?		In entire years		If ≥18 END
SL12	How long have you worked with people connected to diamonds or with diamonds?		Weeks Months Years	 	If never END
SL13	What kind of diamond work are you connected to?		Alluvial Kimberlite Both DK NA	1 2 3 8 9	If not 1 → END
SL14	What district do you come from?		Kailahun Kenema Kono Bombali Kambia Koinadugu Port Loko Tonkolili Bo Bonthe Moyamba Pujehun Sherbro Freetown	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	
	If Abroad, specify country		Abroad _____	15 DK NA	98 99
SL15	Are you from an urban or a rural place?		Urban Rural NA	1 2 9	

SL16	What religious affiliation do you belong to?	Christian 1 Muslim 2 Traditional belives 3 Other 4 DK 8 NA 9	
SL17	Which ethnic group do you belong to?	Mende 1 Kono 2 Krio 3 Limba 4 Temne 5 Fula/Peul 6 Kissi 7 Koranko 8 Malinké/Madingo 9 Susu 10 Gola 11 Sherbro 12 Other _____ 13 DK 98 NA 99	
SL18	Where do you live?	In a house 1 In a hut 2 On the street 3 Other _____ 4 NA 9	
SL19	How long have you been living there?	_ _ days _ _ weeks _ _ months _ _ years	
SL20	Do you have any children?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	If 2,9 →SL22
SL21	Do you live with your child/children?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	
SL22	Who do you live with here in this area?	Both parents 1 Mother 2 Father 3 Spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend 4 With siblings 5 Grand parents 6 Uncel/aunt 7 Other relatives 8 Friends 9 Employer 10 Supporter 11 Colleagues 12 Other _____ 13 DK 98 NA 99	If 1, 2, 3 →SL29
SL23	Are your parents alive?	No, both are dead 1 Only mother alive 2 Only father alive 3 Yes, both alive 4 DK 8 NA 9	If 1 →SL28

SL24	In which district do your parents [does your mother/father] live? If Abroad, specify country	Kailahun 1 Kenema 2 Kono 3 Bombali 4 Kambia 5 Koinadugu 6 Port Loko 7 Tonkolili 8 Bo 9 Bonthe 10 Moyamba 11 Pujehun 12 Sherbro 13 Freetown 14 Abroad _____ 15 DK 98 NA 99	
SL25	Is it an urban or a rural area your parents are from?	Urban 1 Rural 2 DK 8 NA 9	
SL26	Do you have any contact with your parents?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	If 2 → SL28
SL27	How often do you have contact with your parents?	Weekly 1 Monthly, but not every week 2 One to three times every half year 3 One to three times every year 4 DN 8 NA 9	
SL28	When you first left your parents home, who did you move in to?	Lived by myself 1 Spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend 2 With siblings 3 Grand parents 4 Uncle/aunt 5 Other relatives 6 Friends 7 Employer 8 Supporter 9 Colleagues 10 Other _____ 11 DK 98 NA 99	
SL29	What are your work assignments? If other, specify	Dig for diamonds 1 Wash diamonds 2 Clean for the workers 3 Prepare food 4 Provide water 5 Hunting 6 Petty trade 7 Errand boy/girl 8 Other occational available tasks 9 Other _____ 10 DN 98 NA 99	
SL30	When did you first start this job?	____ Month ____ Year	

SL31	Who supervises your daily work?	Employer Supporter Team members Parent Relatives Myself Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
SL32	Which among these tools are you using in your work? Circle all that apply	Sieve Machete Shovel Hoe Plow Axe Other _____ NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9	
SL33	How do you receive salary/benefits for your work? Circle all that apply	Regular salary in leones Irregular salary Salary when I find diamond Rice Other food Provided lodging Parent receive salary for my work Team share the money at the end of season Do not get any salary or benefits Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	If not 1 → SL36
SL34	How often are you paid?	Daily Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 8 9	
SL35	How big was your last salary?	999 998 DK 999 999 NA	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ LE	All → SL38
SL36	How much did you earn yesterday?	999 998 DK 999 999 NA	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ LE	
SL37	How much did you earn last month?	999 998 DK 999 999 NA	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ LE	
SL38	How much of that income did you keep yourself?	999 998 DK 999 999 NA	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ LE	If all → SL40
SL39	What did you do with the rest?	Gave it to parents/relatives Gave it to elder brother / sister Gave it to employer Gave it to supporter Gave it to team members Gave it to friend/friends Saved it Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 98 99	
SL40	How many days per week do you work?		_ _ _ days	
SL41	How many hours per day do you work?		_ _ _ hours	
SL42	How many months each year do you work?		_ _ _ months	

SL43	What was the initial reason for starting your present job with diamonds?	Needed to make my own money 1 To provide for family 2 My father was a miner 3 Encouraged by family/relatives 4 Tired of school 5 Adventure 6 Only job available 7 Forced by strangers 8 Forced by family/relatives 9 Other _____ 11 DK 98 NA 99	
SL44	Who provided the job for you?	Father 1 Mother 2 Siblings 3 Relatives 4 Friends 5 Employer 6 Supporter 7 Other strangers 8 Myself 9 Other _____ 10 DK 98 NA 99	
SL45	Is your work with diamonds seasonal?	Yes, I work in the dry season 1 Yes, I work in rainy season 2 No, I work all year 3 NA 9	If 3 → SL47
SL46	What do you do in the other season of the year?	Work on the farm at my parents place 1 Work on the farm of relatives 2 Work at other farms 3 Other work in Kono 4 Other work outside Kono 5 Unemployed 6 Go to school 8 Other _____ 7 DK 98 NA 99	
SL47	What were you engaged in before you started your job with the diamonds?	Worked at home 1 Worked other places 2 Attended school 3 Begging 4 Nothing 5 Other _____ 6 NA 9	
SL48	Did you fight during the civil war? If yes, with whom?	Yes, with the army 1 Yes, with Civil Defence force 2 RUF 3 No 8 NA 9	
SL49	Have you ever attended school?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	If 2 → SL60
SL50	Are you currently enrolled in school?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	If 2 → SL56
SL51	At what age did you start at school?	In whole years 98 DK 99 NA	

SL52	Did you attend school during most of last month?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	If 1 → SL54
SL53	Why did you not attend school last month?	School holiday 1 Sickness /Disability 2 Family poverty 3 Family disintegration 4 Not interested in school 5 Repeated failure 6 Bad treatment at school 7 School not available nearby 8 Transportation not available 9 Could not pay school fees 10 Care for family members 11 No place at the school/ school overcrowded 12 Work in order to help family economically 13 Search money to survive 14 Concerns about safety 15 Poor teacher quality 16 Inappropriate shift system at school 17 Other 18 DK 98 NA 99	
SL54	In which grade are you currently enrolled? Mark <u>stage</u> of education and <u>grade</u> within that stage	Primary school (grade 1-6) 1 Junior secondary (grade 1-3) 2 Senior secondary (grade 1-3) 3 Technical education and vocational training 4 Others _____ 5 NA 9	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
SL55	How many years have you gone to school altogether? Include current year	Number of years	All → SL61
SL56	At what age did you start at school?	In whole years 98 DK 99 NA	
SL57	What is the highest grade you have completed? Mark <u>stage</u> of education and <u>grade</u> within that stage	Primary school (grade 1-6) 1 Junior secondary (grade 1-3) 2 Senior secondary (grade 1-3) 3 Technical education and vocational training 4 University/Institutions 5 Others 6 NA 9	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
SL58	For how many years did you go to school altogether? Ask if he/she has repeated	In whole years 98 DK 99 NA	

SL59	Where did you complete your highest education? If Abroad, specify country	Kailahun 1 Kenema 2 Kono 3 Bombali 4 Kambia 5 Koinadugu 6 Port Loko 7 Tonkolili 8 Bo 9 Bonthe 10 Moyamba 11 Pujehun 12 Sherbro 13 Freetown 14 Abroad _____ 15 DK 98 NA 99	
SL60	If not continued education: What is the principal reason for not continuing your education? If never attended school: What is the principal reason for never attending school?	Finished education 1 Sickness/Disability 2 Family poverty 3 Family disintegration 4 Not interested in school 5 Repeated failure 6 Bad treatment at school 7 School not available nearby 8 Transportation not available 9 Could not pay school fees 10 Care for family members 11 No place at the school/ school overcrowded 12 Work in order to help family economically 13 Search money to survive 14 Concerns about safety 15 Poor teacher quality 16 Inappropriate shift system at school 17 Other 18 DK 98 NA 99	
SL61	Can you read and understand everyday written material, such as a letter or a newspaper?	Yes, easily 1 Yes, with difficulty 2 No 3 NA 9	
SL62	Did you have any accidents or illnesses related to the work last 12 months?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	
SL63	Have you been absent from your job because of illness the last month?	Yes 1 No 2 NA 9	
SL64	What happens if you are not able to come to work because you are sick?	I loose my income 1 I do not get food supplies 2 I risk loosing my job 3 I will be penalized by supervisor 4 I will be penalized by family 5 Nothing happens. It is ok to be sick 6 Other _____ 7 DK 8 NA 9	

a	b	c	d	e	f
Have you had any of these symptoms of illness during the last month?	Was the ... serious enough to prevent you from carrying out normal duties (such as school, work etc) for a period of 3 days or more?	Where did you seek help for treatment of ...?	Did you take any medicines, if yes, which?	Who provided the money and/or the goods needed for treatment and drugs of the ...?	Why did you not seek help or advice for the ...?
1 Yes 2 No → Next 8 DK → Next 9 NA → Next	1 Yes 2 No 8 DK 9 NA	1 Self Treatment 2 Local Tifanoi 3 Traditional healer 4 Doctor 5 Nurse 6 Pharmacist 7 Family/Relatives 8 Colleagues 9 Friends 10 Clinic 11 Hospital 12 I did not seek any treatment 13 Other 98 DK 99 NA	1 No, I did not 2 Tablets 3 Injection 4 Herbs 5 Plants 6 Other 8 DK 9 NA Check c: If self treatment (1) OR No treatment (12) → f	1 It was free of charge 2 I paid it from my salary 3 I still have not been able to pay for it 4 Parents 5 Siblings 6 Friends 7 Employer 8 Supporter 9 Colleagues 10 Other 98 DK 99 NA All → next symptom	1 Was not ill enough to seek help 2 Can not afford treatment 3 No appropriate medical facilities nearby 4 Self treatment was enough 5 Was too busy 6 Other 8 DK 9 NA
SL65 Fever	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL66 Diarrhea	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL67 Abdominal pain	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL68 Severe Cough	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL69 Chest pain	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL70 Backpain	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL71 Tiredness	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL72 Wounds on skin	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL73 Vomiting	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
SL74 Injury	1 2 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 98 99	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
INTERVIEWER CHECK: If NO on SL74a (Injuries) → SL77					
SL75	Was the injury related to your work?		Yes No DK NA	If 2, 8, 9 → SL77	
SL76	Were you compensated for the injury by your employer or supporter ? If yes, how much?		Yes No DK NA	1 LE	

SL77	If you needed drugs for treatment of any illness- where would you get it?	At the local drugstore At the local shop From the care provider From a traveling pharmacy I would use herbal medicine I would use traditional medicine Medical plants Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 98 99	
SL78	Who would pay for the drugs?	It would be free of charge It would be paid from my salary It would be paid in kind Parents Siblings Friends Employer Supporter Colleagues I would not be able to raise the costs Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 98 99	
SL79	Have you been admitted to hospital at least one time during the last 12 months?	Yes No NA	1 2 9	If 2,9 → SL81
SL80	How did you travel to the hospital?	I walked I was carried to the hospital In a vehicle Other _____ NA	1 2 3 4 9	
SL81	Have you ever had any of the following diseases?	Malaria Tuberculosis Yellow fever Cholera Dengue DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 8 9	
SL82	How would you rate your own health status today?	Very good Good Average Bad Very bad DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 98 99	
SL83	Do you think your life now is ...	...better than before your present job, ...different, but of same quality, ...or worse than before you worked in your present job? NA	1 2 3 9	
SL84	What do you want for the future? Read all categories	Continue the current activities Get a better job Go to school Go home Get married Don't care Go abroad Other _____ DK NA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 98 99	

Living in a material world

This report presents the results of a study on the living conditions for the children and youth less than 18 years of age, involved in alluvial diamond mining in Kono district in Sierra Leone. The production process, and the work tasks for the children are also thoroughly described. There are mainly three groups of children involved in the alluvial diamond mining: the *direct workers*, who are mainly boys 14 years of age or above; the children with *support functions*, younger boys and girls bringing food and water, running errands and doing other small tasks to support the direct workers; and the *petty traders*, also boys and girls going around in the different diamond fields, selling goods to the workers. The report is the fourth report in a series of working papers from a Fafo research programme on child labour, generously financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



P.O.Box 2947 Tøyen
N-0608 Oslo
www.fafo.no/english/

Fafo-report 515
ISBN 82-7422-523-6
ISSN 0801-6143