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## About us

The Understanding Children's Work (UCW) project is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank.

The Project is guided by the Agenda for Action adopted at the 1997 Oslo International Conference on Child Labour. The Oslo Agenda identified the need to improve data and information on child labour, and called for stronger international co-operation in efforts towards child labour elimination.

UCW research activities are designed to inform policies that impact upon the lives of child labourers in countries where they are prominent. Research efforts help provide a common understanding of child labour in specific national contexts, and a common basis for action against it. For further information on UCW, see the Project website at [www.ucw-project.org](http://www.ucw-project.org).

## Featured research

**1. Inter-agency global report on child labour.** Work was recently completed on a first-ever inter-agency global report on child labour. Prepared for the Global Child Labour Conference set for May 2010 in The Hague, the report is intended as a technical, forward-looking document, aimed at helping define a common platform for international efforts against child labour in the coming years. The report restates the case for placing child labour at the forefront of national development agendas, presenting a range of evidence indicating that child labour is not only a serious child rights violation in itself, but is also an important impediment to achieving a range of desirable national development outcomes – the Millennium Development Goals, Universal Primary Enrolment, Education For All, poverty reduction and Decent Work foremost among these.

The global report also illustrates the wide array of factors contributing to child labour, and the resulting importance of a broad, integrated policy response to it. In this context, the report underscores the important support role that international development agencies have to play in both the development of integrated national strategies against child labour, and in the implementation of such strategies, in accordance with the relative strengths of each agency. The report concludes by laying out a common strategic approach to the fight against child labour, on which national action with support from the international community can be built.

The global report will be subject of a special edition of the newsletter following its formal release in May 2010.

**2. Impact of global economic crisis on child labour.** A recent UCW working paper reviews evidence the likely impact of global economic crisis on child labour (Koseleci and Rosati, November 2009). It identifies five main channels through which the crisis could threaten progress against child labour:

(a) *Reduced living standards:* A deterioration in living standards could have two opposing effects on child labour. On one hand, it might force households to send their children to work to supplement household income. But on the other hand, worse labour market conditions might lead to a decrease the returns to child labour, inducing households to keep their children in school. Existing evidence suggests that the former effect is likely to dominate in low-income countries, but that in middle-income countries the former effect might be offset by the latter one.

- (b) *Access to credit markets:* The economic crisis is characterized not only by the decline in economic growth rates but also by a substantial reduction in credit flows. This is relevant for child labour because households without access to credit are more likely to have to resort to child labour as a buffer against negative shocks (e.g., job loss of primary breadwinner).
- (c) *Migration and remittances flows:* The crisis is leading to reductions in remittances from international migrants, placing pressure on recipient households and increasing the likelihood of their having to resort to child labour to make ends meet. The crisis is also affecting migration flows which in turn also may influence child labour levels. Migrants returning from abroad or from urban areas to rural areas are more likely to be involved in family based enterprises, especially in agriculture, activities where child labour is often utilized.
- (d) *Public transfers and international aid flows:* The crisis and the accompanying decline in tax revenues and international aid flows are forcing governments to cut (or reduce the growth of) public spending. During periods of fiscal contraction, social and/or education expenditure typically suffer the most, again placing greater pressure on poor household and increasing the likelihood of their having to take their children out of school to work.
- (e) *Increase in the informal economic sector:* The analysis of labour markets indicates that the relative importance of informal sector activities is likely to increase as a result of economic turmoil. As is well documented, child labour is more prevalent in the informal sector of economies, where the technology level is such that children can be easily utilized as unskilled workers.

The working paper concludes by recommending a policy response to the crisis built around safeguarding public investment in education, strengthening social safety nets, and expanding access to credit for poor households. The paper is posted on the [UCW website](#).

**3. Impact evaluation of child labour interventions.** Implementation has begun on a new impact evaluation project funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The project, carried out in partnership with ILO/IPEC, is aimed at providing robust empirical evidence relating to what works in efforts against child labour. Through a combination of methodological development, targeted field research, capacity building and research dissemination, it contributes to building and spreading knowledge on the impact of specific project interventions on child labour and ways to measure such impact.

The “public good” value of the project is three-fold: first, it will yield initial statistically-robust findings concerning the impact of child labour-related projects; second, and even more importantly, it will produce tested evaluation methodologies and processes that can be applied to future child labor impact evaluations; and third, it will improve access to information on child labour impact evaluation methods and results for use in future evaluation and programming efforts.

A series of three technical papers have been produced to inform implementation of the impact evaluation project. The first paper (Manacorda, February 2009) lays out general criteria for impact evaluation of child labour interventions. It addresses how to devise an econometric evaluation strategy that will allow the identification of the causal effect of interest. The second paper (Manacorda, July 2009) focuses on the impact evaluation of actual projects targeting child labour and education. It discusses challenges associated with the econometric evaluation of holistically-designed child labour projects, and with extrapolating evaluation results to other contexts or projects. The third paper (Manacorda, July 2009) provides a practical roadmap for moving from project selection to evaluation and the various associated interim steps (i.e., identification of objectives, solicitation/selection of projects and implementing organizations, tripartite consultation, development of assignment criteria, sampling design, data collection strategy, project implementation and monitoring, follow-up surveys and analysis).

The three technical papers will feed into the development of an eventual “evaluability framework” tool to guide decisions concerning the type of evaluation needed for different program interventions in different programming contexts. They will also form the initial inputs to a web-based knowledge centre on the impact evaluation in the area of child labour, to be established on the UCW website.

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## Project news and events

**1. National Workshop: Lancement des rapports Comprendre le travail des enfants et l’emploi des jeunes au Sénégal** (Dakar, Senegal, 24 March 2010). The workshop was held with the participation of the Ministry of Youth and representatives of WB, ILO and UNICEF. The workshop aimed at presenting the results of the interagency report, and at discussing policy options to eradicate child labour and tackling youth employment issues. A special session discussed the impact of climate change induced migration on children and youth.

**2. Workshop on migration and economic development** (San Casciano Val Di Pesa - Florence, Italy, 5-7 February 2010). The workshop, organized by the Centro Studi Luca d’Agliano, aimed at presenting research insights on migration and economic development. UCW presented preliminary findings from a comparative study of results from ad hoc and regular labour force surveys on the characteristics of migrants in urban areas.

**3. Consultations with UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC)** (Florence, Italy, 5 February 2010). Consultations took place with IRC aimed at identifying possible areas of research collaboration. As an initial follow-up to the meeting, IRC and UCW will collaborate in developing an issue paper on links between child labour and migration.

**4. Consultations with the ILO International Training Centre (ITC-ILO)** (Turin, 2 February 2010). Consultations took place with representatives of the International Training Centre (ITC-ILO) aimed at finalizing the organization of a training course on data analysis in the areas of child labour and youth employment. The course is scheduled for Turin, July 2010. Following feedback from the previous training course (Turin, July 2009; see also UCW Newsletter, Issue 7), the upcoming training will place particular emphasis on child labour, and on drawing policy implications from data analyses.

**5. UCW website update and revision.** A major update of UCW country statistics and of the interactive map will go on-line in the first quarter of 2010. Additional changes to the UCW website aimed at increasing the accessibility of research outputs in the area of impact evaluation are also under discussion (see Knowledge base on statistical impact evaluation, below).

**6. Knowledge Centre on impact evaluation.** A concept frame for a web-based Knowledge Center on impact evaluation has been recently developed as part of the 57-month impact evaluation project discussed above. The Centre will consolidate and provide unrestricted access to state of the art information in the areas of statistical impact evaluation of child labour and child labour related programs. It will serve as a ‘hub’ for information both on statistical impact evaluation (IE) methods and on impact evaluation results. The Centre will be initially located within the broader UCW website portal.

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## Recently posted on [www.ucw-project.org](http://www.ucw-project.org)

**1. Comprendre le travail des enfants au Mali** (UCW, 2010). The inter-agency report looks at the child labour phenomenon and factors underlying it in Mali. The report also examines the link between child labour and youth employment. The two issues are closely related, pointing to the need for common policy approaches to addressing them.

**2. Comprendre le travail des enfants et l'emploi des jeunes au Sénégal** (UCW, 2010). The inter-agency report looks at the child labour phenomenon and factors underlying it in the specific context of Senegal. The report also examines the link between child labour and youth employment. The two issues are closely related, pointing to the need for common policy approaches to addressing them.

**3. Trabajo infantil en Venezuela: 1998-2007** (Blanco Allais, 2009). The working paper looks at child labour between 1998 and 2007 in Venezuela.

**4. Child labour and the global financial crisis: an issues paper** (UCW, 2009). The working paper identifies the main channels through which the global economic and financial crisis is likely to affect child labour and schooling decisions of households (see Featured Research above).

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