

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S WORK PROGRAMME NEWSLETTER

Issue 14, June 2011

In this issue

About us

Featured research

Building on success in reducing child labour: Drawing lessons from the Brazilian experience

Project news

References

About us

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

UCW is guided by the Roadmap adopted at The Hague Global Child Labour Conference 2010. The Roadmap calls for effective partnership across the UN system to address child labour, and for mainstreaming child labour into policy and development frameworks. The Roadmap also calls for improved knowledge sharing and for developing further methodologies and capacity to conduct research on child labour.

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, and a common basis for action against it. For further information, see the Programme website at www.ucw-project.org.

Featured research

Building on success in reducing child labour: Drawing lessons from the Brazilian experience. This edition of the Newsletter presents the results of a recent UCW study of the Brazilian experience in reducing child labour over the period 1992-2008 (UCW, 2011).

Data from a multi-year survey programme in Brazil, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD), enable a detailed analysis of child labour and school enrolment trends in Brazil. These data point to rapid progress in both reducing child labour and raising school enrolment. A comparison of the results of the PNAD from 1992 to 2008 indicates an overall decline in children's employment among 7-15 year olds of over 10 percentage points over this period, from 18 percent to seven percent. During the same period and for the same age group, school attendance rose from 85 percent to 97 percent.

Figure (a).

Trends in children's employment rate, by age, 1992, 1997 and 2008

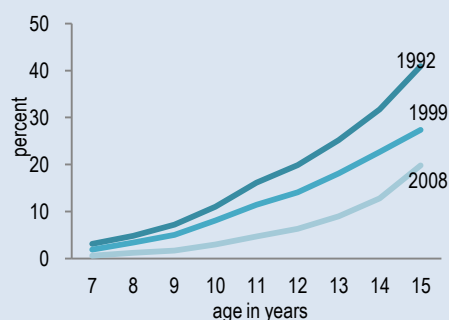
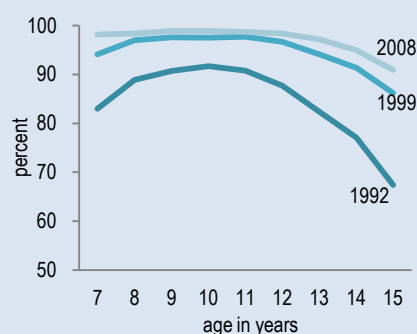


Figure (b).

Trends in children's school attendance, by age, 1992, 1997 and 2008



Figures (a) and (b) indicate that the decline in children’s employment and the increase in their schooling extend to the entire 7-15 age range, but that the fall in children’s employment and the rise in the school attendance of 12-15 year-olds have been particularly pronounced.

Not only has the level of involvement in employment declined substantially, but the average age of entry in the labour market has increased by almost two years. In 1992 participation rates were positive for children aged eight years or more, while in 2008, the involvement of children in employment remains essentially negligible until the age of 10 years, and starts to increase thereafter.

A similar pattern can be observed for school attendance rates – not only has the level of school attendance increased over the years, but children currently enter earlier and leave school substantially later than 16 years ago.

Figure (c). Trends in division of children’s time between employment and schooling, 7-15 years age group, 1992, 1997, 2003 and 2008

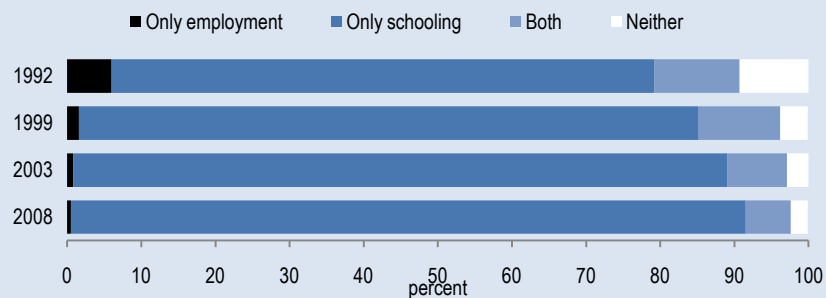


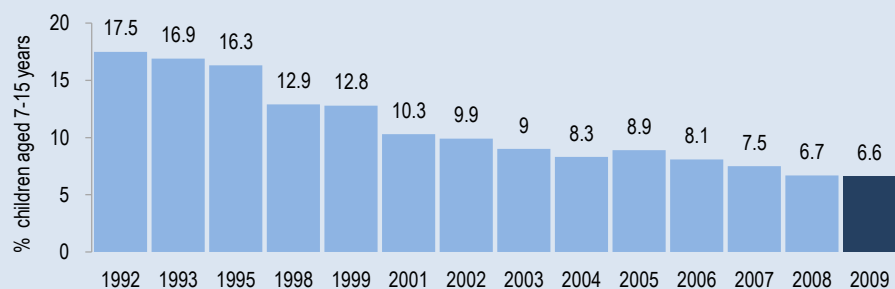
Figure (c) provides a more detailed look at changes over the 16-year period. It shows that the reduction in employment was very large for children only in employment. The share of children in employment without also attending school decreased over the 1992-2008 period, from 6 percent to only 0.5 percent. In 2008, as a result of this change, child labour was limited almost exclusively to children who also attended school.

This progress notwithstanding, the national development milestone of child labour elimination has not yet been reached in Brazil. PNAD data for 2008 indicate that some 2.1 million children aged 7-15 years, almost seven percent of this age group, were still at work in employment in this reference year, underscoring the scale of remaining challenge posed by child labour in the country.

Panel (a). An update to 2009

The 2009 data, that coincide with the peak of the global financial crisis, indicate a slowing but not a reversal of the progress in reducing children’s involvement in employment. At the same time, children’s school attendance actually increased slightly in 2009, to 97.3 percent. Taken together, these figures suggest that the Government has been largely successful in protection children from the worst effects of the financial crisis.

Figure (d). Changes in children’s involvement in employment, 7-15 year-olds, 1992-2009



Understanding the factors underlying Brazil's success in reducing child labour over the last decade and a half will be important to extending this success to the remaining child labour population.

What were the primary contributors to Brazil's success? The empirical analysis presented in the current study – based on the unique PNAD dataset covering the 1992 to 2008 period – corroborates other research pointing to the central role of policy in the decline in child labour.

In specific terms, the empirical analysis indicated that about 30 percent of the fall child labour was attributable to improvements in parental education, while only a small percentage was attributable to other changes in the population structure less susceptible to direct policy intervention, including smaller family sizes and greater urbanisation.

Improvements in living standards and an overall fall in poverty – spurred by social security reforms and broad-scale cash transfer schemes such as *Bolsa Escola* and PETI – also played a central role, accounting for around 17 percent of the decline in child labour. Successful efforts to increase piped water access and to improve school quality, accounted by eight and five percent, respectively, of the decline in child labour.

What lessons does Brazil offer for countries where efforts against child labour have been less successful? First and foremost, the Brazil experience highlights the importance of an active Government response.

The decline in child labour in Brazil did not happen by itself – only a small proportion can be explained by changes in the population structure unrelated to policy. Much of the decline, on the other hand, can be traced to active policy efforts to extend and improve schooling, which have led to more educated generations of parents, efforts to implement broad-scale cash transfer schemes, which have helped improve living standards and shift incentives structures in favour of schooling, and efforts to expand basic services, which have freed children from tasks such as water collection.

This leads to a second key lesson from Brazil – the *nature* of a policy response to child labour. The complexity of child labour means that there is no single answer to it. Brazil's success has underscored the value of a comprehensive policy response, addressing in an integrated fashion the wide range of factors contributing to child labour.

A brief outline of the report. Section 1 outlines the national response to child labour, on the levels of both legislation and policies. Section 2 briefly reviews the main national policies and programmes in place in Brazil. Section 3 aims at describing the literature on child labour in Brazil. Section 4 presents descriptive data on the extent of child involvement in work and child labour, broken down by age, sex, residence and region and examines key characteristics of children's work, including the sectors where child workers are concentrated, the intensity of work and its hazardousness. Section 5 analyses the trends in children's work and attendance over 1992-2008. Section 6 looks at major determinants of reduction in children's employment and increase in school attendance, based on an economic model of household behaviour. Section 7 concludes.

Programme news and events

1. Restructured UCW website. The UCW website interface has been substantially restructured, updated and reorganised in order to improve navigation and access to research outputs. Search tools have also been significantly improved to allow searching information in the whole website and in the specific sections. The restructured website went live in April 2011.

2. *Mission to Indonesia (Jakarta, February 2011)*. The mission aimed at initiating UCW research activities in the country. Discussions were held on the key policy priorities for addressing child labour and youth employment issues, and on key information gaps impeding policy development. Agreement was reached to develop an inter-agency report on child labour and youth employment jointly with concerned ministries and UCW partner agencies.

3. *Mission to Sri Lanka (Colombo, February 2011)*. The mission served to introduce the UCW programme to local counterparts and to initiate UCW activities in the country. Agreement was reached to develop an inter-agency report on child labour and youth employment jointly with concerned ministries and UCW partner agencies.

4. *Mission to Cameroon (Yaoundé, May 2011)*. The mission was aimed at presenting and discussing the initial results of joint research on child labour and youth employment in the country. The mission also afforded an opportunity to participate in discussions on the development of a national plan of action for the elimination of worst forms of child labour in Cameroon.

5. *Capacity building in Zambia (Lusaka, February 2011)*. The training workshop aimed at building national capacity in child labour and youth employment data collection and analysis. The training targeted counterparts from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and other relevant sector ministries involved in child monitoring, child labour data collection and analysis. The training was designed to ensure that counterparts have the requisite background knowledge of child labour and youth employment concepts, and the ability to effectively process, analyze and disseminate survey data relating to child labour and youth employment in the country.

6. *Nairobi Africa Strategy Workshop (Nairobi, April 2011)*. The UCW participated in a workshop on IPEC's strategy on Africa. The *Focus on Africa* workshop represents the IPEC's response to the need for a special emphasis on Africa, as stressed by the 2006 ILO Global Action Plan and the 2010 Reports on Child Labour.

References

UCW, *Building on success in reducing child labour: Drawing policy lessons from the Brazilian experience*. UCW, Rome, 2011