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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.

Featured research

1. Understanding children's work and youth employment outcomes in Mongolia.

A draft inter-agency report (UCW, 2009) looks at the child labour phenomenon and at the youth employment situation in the specific context of Mongolia. The report also analyses the link between migration, child labour and youth employment outcomes. Empirical results, based on the Mongolian Labour Force Survey conducted in 2006 (LFS 2006) indicate that children's involvement in economic activity is not uncommon in Mongolia. A comparison with previous survey data suggests an upward trend in children's work: an estimated seven percent of 7-14 year-olds worked in economic activity during the 2002-03 reference period against 10 percent in the 2006 reference year. Most of the 36,000 working children in 2006 were found in rural areas and work as unpaid workers in family agriculture.

A comparison of the results of labour force surveys covering the 2002-03 and 2005-06 reference periods suggests that more young people are staying in education longer. But it does not appear that young people are delaying employment in order to continue education. Rather, the gains in education are a result of more young people combining employment with further education and of more young persons opting to stay in education rather than facing the prospect of joblessness. Mongolian young people living in cities and towns are much more likely to be unemployed than rural young people, underscoring the different nature of the urban and rural economies, and in particular the important role that the agriculture sector plays in absorbing young rural workers.

Empirical results from LFS 2006 show that migrant children and young people in Mongolia do not belong to the most vulnerable households and that they are not strongly disadvantaged in terms of access to education and labour market. But the survey did not capture very recent migrants, illegal migrants or those not belonging to households, all particularly vulnerable segments of the migrant population, meaning that this finding should be interpreted with caution. Other sources, in fact, report that school drop-out and non-enrolment have become serious concerns among migrant children.

2. Violence against children: preliminary evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador. Another recent UCW study examines the issue of violence against children in developing countries. The study begins to address the current lack of empirical evidence needed for policy formulation in this area, using SIMPOC survey data from El Salvador, Colombia, Cambodia and Ecuador. It looks in particular (although not exclusively) at violence against children in the workplace, where the information gap is especially large.

The results of the analysis indicate that violence against children is common in schools, in the workplace and within the household. Physical abuse by employers is reported by child workers as frequent. Agriculture and manufacturing appear to be sectors where employers are especially prone to commit abuses. An interesting result emerging from the preliminary analysis is that even self-employed children are often exposed to violence. This indicates that abuses are perpetrated not only by employers and parents, but also by people the children come in contact with during work, such as authorities. It also emerges that children mistreated at work are made vulnerable by other aspects of their living conditions as well. They are less likely to attend school, they work longer hours, and the implications of work for their health seem to be more serious.

The preliminary study is intended as a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the issue of violence against children. It underscores the need for additional empirical evidence on this issue, and points to the need for specialized research tools for assessing violence against children, and its consequences on children's physical and psychological development.

3. Child labour, education and youth employment: a challenge to economic growth and social progress. A two-day seminar (Madrid, September 2008) brought together a variety of researchers and practitioners to present and discuss research findings in the areas of child labour, education and youth employment. The seminar was the third of a series of UCW seminars aimed at disseminating research findings and promoting policy dialogue around child labour and related issues. It was jointly organized by UCW Program and the Instituto Figurola of Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

Development practitioners attending the seminar underscored the importance of understanding the child labour phenomenon in its various dimensions to the design and targeting of field-level operational activities. The importance of a better understanding of the interplay between education and child labour was also underscored during the seminar proceedings. As enrolment rates increase, developing countries are facing the challenge of supplying children and society at large with 'quality' education. Therefore, the role of school quality in determining schooling outcomes and child labour and involvement needs to be examined.

The papers presented at the seminar are available for download at the Project website.

The fourth seminar in the series is scheduled for Istanbul, in October 2009 (see the section Projects Events of this newsletter for further details).

Project news and events

1. Building capacity in child labour data collection and analysis (Dhaka, 11-14 May 2009). The upcoming four-day training programme for national counterparts will form part of the broader programme of research cooperation in Bangladesh. The training will focus on the analysis and application of child labour data. The field mission for the training will also provide an occasion to present the preliminary draft of the Inter-agency report on child labour and youth employment in Bangladesh, and discuss it with the counterparts.

2. Fast Track Initiative (FTI) partnership meeting – Road to 2015 (*Copenhagen, 20 -21 April 2009*). The 2008 FTI report highlights the progress towards achieving the universal education to primary education during the last decades. The support of the FTI partnership appears to have accelerated progress for countries with FTI-endorsed education sector plans. Also in the light of the global financial crisis, the FTI meeting will constitute a room for discussion of progress and challenges, as well as policies, especially focusing on hardest to reach and vulnerable children. The UCW Project Coordinator will contribute to the discussion on policy intervention for getting child labourers into school.

3. Analysing data on child labour and youth employment (*Turin, July 2009*). The upcoming training programme is a joint initiative of UCW, ILO's International Training Centre (ITC) and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The training course will aim at: improving the understanding of the concepts of child labour and decent employment for young people; enhancing capacity to use modern statistical software for data analysis; supporting the capacity to construct indicators to measure and monitor child labour, school to work transition and youth employment conditions; and, strengthening the ability of counterparts to analyse and use child labour and youth employment data for policy and programme design. The course is intended for (i) officials from national, regional or local governments with responsibility for producing or analysing labour market data; (ii) social partners working with data on child labour and youth employment; (iii) staff of international organizations responsible for the monitoring of child labour and youth employment.

4. Workshop on the gender dimension of the worst forms of child labour: call for paper (*The Hague, June 25-26, 2009*). The two-day workshop is organized by IREWOC, in collaboration with IPEC-ILO, the International Institute for Social History and the UCW Program to present and discuss recent research on the impact of ILO Convention 182, particularly in relation to female children. We are calling for papers relevant to the following themes: (i) the extent of girls involvement in the WFCL; (ii) the determinants of girl child labour and the policy implications; (iii) best practices; (iv) an agenda for research, identifying key gaps for future research. Applicants should submit the provisional version of the paper by April 17, 2009.

5. Upcoming seminar on child labour, education and youth employment: call for paper (*Istanbul, October 15 -16 2009*). The two-day seminar, jointly organized by UCW Program and the University of Galatasaray, will present recent research on child labour and its linkages with educational and youth employment outcomes. We are calling for papers relevant to the following themes for presentation at the seminar: (i) determinants of child labour and education; (ii) link between child labour and education; (iii) impact of child labour involvement on youth employment outcomes; (iv) labour market entry processes and school to work transition. Papers with a geographical focus on Middle-East are particularly encouraged. Papers, even in provisional form, should be submitted by June 1, 2009.

6. Launch of the project Impact des migrations induites par les changement climatique sur les jeunes en Afrique de l'Ouest (*Dakar, February 5, 2009*). The workshop, organized by the World Bank, was held in Dakar to launch the study on the impact of climate change induced migration on youth in West Africa. The study will be jointly carried out by the UCW Program and the Africa Human Development Unit (WB), and it will

aim at identifying the statistical profile of the young migrant population and at assessing migration as a determinant of social marginalization among young persons in cities and towns. The study will contribute to the development of policies to respond to the social challenges posed by migration of young people.

Recently posted on www.ucw-project.org

1. Measuring the educational impact of child labour: Indicators available from common household survey instruments (2008, Kovrova et al). This note forms part of UCW broader efforts towards improving this understanding. It elaborates an expanded list of education indicators available from common household survey instruments that can be used for assessing the educational impact of child labour. These indicators cover not only school attendance but also school progression and survival, and therefore extend beyond the information on child labour and education typically provided in the research literature to date.

2. Violence against children: preliminary evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador (UCW, 2008). This preliminary study uses data from El Salvador (SIMPOC 2001), Colombia (SIMPOC 2001), Cambodia (SIMPOC, 2001) and Ecuador (SIMPOC, 2001) and constitutes a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the issue of violence against children in the workplace and other settings.

References

UCW, *Understanding children's work and youth employment outcomes in Mongolia*. Draft inter-agency report, 2009.

UCW, *Violence against children: preliminary evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador* (UCW, 2008)