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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 child labour in Zambia. A draft inter-agency report (UCW, 2008) looks at the child labour phenomenon and factors underlying it in the specific context of Zambia. Empirical results, based primarily on a national household survey conducted in 2005, indicate that the level of child labour in Zambia is high relative to other Sub-Saharan Africa countries, particularly when income levels are taken into account. In all, almost half of 7-14 year-olds is at work in economic activity, some 1.2 million children in absolute terms. Most are found in rural areas (92 percent) and work as unpaid workers in family agriculture (96 percent). Data on work conditions indicate that an alarmingly high number of working children – over 1.1 million in absolute terms – are exposed to hazards including loud noise, dust/fumes/gas, dangerous tools, heavy loads or extreme temperatures in the workplace. Econometric evidence points to a number of factors influencing child labour of relevance for policy: holding other factors constant, the probability of involvement in child labour is lower in households where the head is more educated, in higher income households, and in households spared from common socio-economic shocks (e.g., crop failure, death or illness of household member, flood, drought or loss of property). Orphaned children are at much greater risk of being denied education, but the link between orphanhood and involvement in economic activity is not significant. The draft inter-agency report will be finalised in conjunction with the partner agencies and national counterparts in the coming months.

2. Impact of policies relating to child labour. A draft review paper on policy evaluations (Paruzzolo, 2007) underscores that relatively little is known about the impact of specific policy interventions on child labour outcomes. The review covered evaluations of policies in three broad areas: (a) policies addressing the relative price of children's time (e.g., school quality, access and costs; early childhood development; infrastructure and basic services); (b) policies addressing resource constraints and social risk management (e.g., poverty alleviation; scholarships); and (c) policies relating to "second chance" learning (e.g. remedial education; community schools). A total of 27 formal evaluations of policies falling into

these categories were identified in the World Bank, UNICEF, and ILO impact evaluation databases and external sources, of which only three contained child labour as an explicit outcome variable. Most (21 of the evaluations), however, contained a variety of schooling indicators as outcome variables, providing at least indirect evidence of child labour impact. The draft review underscores the need to include child labour as an outcome variable in future evaluations of policies in areas that theory suggests are relevant to child labour.

3. Child labour in Angola. A study based on household survey data from Angola provides an overview of the child labour situation in the country in 2001, immediately prior to the cessation of armed hostilities (Blanco, 2007). Some 1,054,000 children aged 5-14 years – 26 percent of this age group – were engaged in some form of economic activity in the secure urban and rural areas covered by the survey. Levels of child labour were higher in the provinces covered by the 2001 survey where armed hostilities had been most intense. A further 27 percent of children were reportedly neither in school nor at work in economic activity. This group of “inactive” children requires further investigation, but it stands to reason that many were in fact at work in non-economic production activities or in unreported forms of child labour. Econometric evidence indicated that the absence of one or both parents, uneducated mothers, low levels of household wealth, and lack of direct access to water added significantly to the risk of a child’s involvement in child labour. The study results offer useful baseline information on the child labour situation in Angola as it emerged from the war. More recent countrywide data are now needed in order to assess the progress made by the country in reducing child labour in the post-war period.

4. Child labour, education and youth employment. A two-day seminar (Paris, December 2007) 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 second of a series UCW seminars aimed at disseminating research findings and promoting policy dialogue around child labour and related issues. Development practitioners attending the seminar underscored the importance of *policy-oriented* research of direct relevance to the design and targeting of field-level operational activities. The importance of better coordination and information exchange between researchers and implementing organisations was also underscored during the seminar proceedings. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach was suggested to contribute to a more exhaustive description of child labour phenomenon: not only econometrics, but also psychology or sociology could contribute to better understand and address child labour. The list of papers presented at the seminar is provided below. Each will be made available for download at the Project website. The third seminar in the series is tentatively scheduled for Madrid, in September 2008.

- a. *Scolarisation et travail des enfants: Un modèle économétrique à régimes endogènes appliqué à Madagascar 2001-2005.* Author: Jean Pierre Lachaud, Centre d’Economie du Développement - Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV
- b. *Travail et scolarisation des enfants en milieu rural à Madagascar: le rôle respectif du revenu parental et de la vulnérabilité au risque.* Authors: Nelly Marie Célie Rakoto-Tiana, Université Catholique de Madagascar, Université Paris, XIII, DIAL
- c. *L’impact des dépenses sociales sur le travail des enfants entre aversion absolue au risque et aversion relative.* Authors: Grégoire Rota Graziosi, CERDI Christopher Grigoriou, CERDI
- d. *Birth order, child labour and schooling: Theory and Evidence from Cameroon.* Author: Michel Tenikue, University of Namur

- e. *Child labour migration and schooling in Benin; Incentive, constraint or agency?* Author: Anne Kielland, Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies
- f. *Educational achievement and socioeconomic background: causality and mechanisms in Senegal.* Author: Christelle Dumas, Université de Cergy-Pontoise Sylvie Lambert , Laboratoire d'Economie Appliquée - INRA
- g. *Does school quality matter for working children?* Author: Furio Camillo Rosati, Understanding Children's Work Project, University of Rome II, Tor Vergata
- h. *Selection into Worst Forms of Child Labour: Child domestics, porters and Ragpickers in Nepal.* Author: Eric V. Edmonds, Dartmouth College, IZA, and NBER
- i. *The Consequences of Child Labour in Rural Tanzania: Evidence from Longitudinal Data.* Author: Sofya Krutikova, University of Oxford
- j. *Gender differences on child labour.* Authors: Juan Miguel Gallego, GREMAQ and Université de Toulouse 1-Sciences Sociales Carlos E. Sepulveda, Boston University
- k. *Out-of-school children in Sub-Saharan Africa: How many are they? Who are they? And what to do for their inclusion?* Author: Alain Mingat, IREDU (CNRS & University of Burgundy) and AFTHD-World Bank
- l. *Les activités des enfants en Afrique subsaharienne: les enseignements des enquêtes sur le travail des enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest.* Author: Diallo Yacouba, ILO
- m. *In school, out-of-school and child labour in Africa. A survey in four countries.* Author: Lieten Kristoffel, IREWOC, IISGASSR, University of Amsterdam
- n. *The work-schooling trade off in Indian children.* Author: Krisztina Kis-Katos, Institute for Economic Research, Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany
- o. *The twin challenges of child labour and youth employment in Ethiopia.* Author: Lorenzo Guarcello, Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Project
- p. *Local labor demand and child labour.* Author: Marco Manacorda, QMUL and LSE
- q. *Towards a better understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of youth labour market disadvantages: Evidence for South-East Europe.* Author: Alexandre Kolev, Agence Française de Développement, and ILO Interantional Training Centre
- r. *Core Labour Standards and Development: Impact on long-term income.* Author: Rémi Bazillier, Paris School of Economics –Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne – CNRS

Project news and events

1. Discussions on country research cooperation in Mongolia (*October 2007*) and **Vietnam** (*December 2007*). UCW field missions were undertaken to the two countries to follow-up on the parameters for research activities and to set implementation modalities. In each country, steering committees or working groups comprised of representatives from Government, civil society and the partner agencies will guide research efforts. As in other countries, UCW research cooperation is aimed at (1) helping to establish a solid information base for policy formulation and (2) building capacity in child labour analysis.

2. National consultation on the statistical definition of child labour in Senegal (November 2007). In view of the preparation of the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), UCW has organized a day-long meeting on the measurement of child labour, as part of a broader process of country level dialogue. Details on the meeting will soon be posted on UCW website.

3. Technical consultations with Zambia Central Statistical Office (Rome, December 2007). A mission from the Zambia Central Statistical Office was in Rome in December 2007 for discussions on the analysis of data from the national child labour survey. The mission constituted part of on-going research cooperation with national counterparts in Zambia.

4. Counterpart training in Zambia. Plans were finalised for a five-day training programme for counterparts from the Central Statistical Office in Zambia. The training, scheduled for April 2008, will focus on the analysis and application of child labour data.

5. Statistical profile of child labour in the world. Work was completed on a statistical profile of child labour in 151 countries. The profile focused on two main child labour indicators: the proportion of children at work in economic activity and the main sector of economic activity, both disaggregated by sex. The statistical profile will be published as part of the World Bank World Development Indicators publication.

6. Mongolia national employment forum (November 2007). UCW presented research findings on linkages between child labour and youth employment outcomes as part of a broader discussion on youth employment strategies. This theme will be developed further as part of UCW research cooperation in the country (see above).

7. Understanding the joint challenges of child labour and youth joblessness in Senegal. Building on previous UCW research concerning youth labour market outcomes in Senegal (see Newsletter Issue No. 02), work began on an inter-agency report looking in more detail at the specific factors affecting child labour and youth employment in Senegal. The study will look specifically at the characteristics and determinants of child labour, and at how child labour and low human capital accumulation influence the labour market outcomes of young people.

References

Blanco Allais F., *Child labour in Angola*. UCW Working Paper, Rome, 2007.

Paruzzolo S., *Mapping evaluated policies relating to child labour prevention and protection*. Draft UCW Working Paper, Rome, 2007.

UCW, *Understanding children's work in Zambia*. Draft inter-agency report, 2008.