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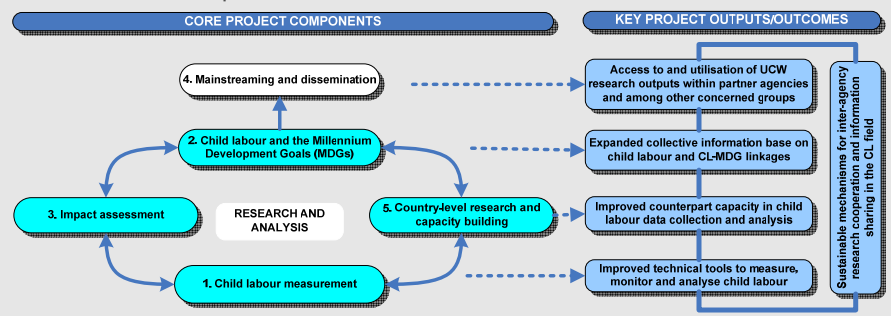
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About us

As part of broader efforts towards effective solutions to child labour, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank initiated the inter-agency research report project, Understanding Children's Work (UCW), in December 2000. Financed by contributions from Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, US Department of Labour and by core agency resources, the UCW Project Secretariat is based at Centre for International Studies on Economic Growth (CEIS), University of Rome (Tor Vergata).

The Project is guided by the Oslo Agenda for Action, unanimously adopted at the 1997 International Conference on Child Labour, which laid out the priorities for the international community in the fight against child labour. The Oslo Agenda specifically identified the need to improve data collection, research capacity and monitoring systems related to child labour, and called for stronger international co-operation in efforts towards child labour elimination.

UCW research activities are designed to inform policies that directly impact upon the lives of child labourers in countries where they are prominent. They help provide a common understanding of child labour in specific national contexts, and a common basis for action against it. The fact that the research is jointly owned by the three agencies lends it added value, helping to ensure that research outputs reflect the consensus of the three main international partners in the area of child labour.



The UCW project is comprised of five inter-related components: 1) Child Labour Measurement; 2) Child Labour and the Millennium Development Goals; 3) Impact Assessment; 4) Mainstreaming and Dissemination; and 5) Country Level Research and Capacity-Building. The core Project components and related outputs/outcomes are depicted in the figure above.

Featured Research

1. School quality and child labour. Two recent UCW working papers (Guarcello and Rosati, 2007; and Rosati and Rossi, 2007) explore possible links between school quality and child labour. The empirical evidence presented in the papers suggests that school quality does indeed matter for child labour: better quality education appears to deter families from involving their children in work and to encourage them to send their children to school instead. Both papers are current under final review and will be posted on the UCW website shortly.

Guarcello and Rosati (2007) reviewed pooled data from household- and school-based surveys in Cambodia and Yemen. Results from a multi-

variate analysis indicated that the impact of school quality was not only significant but also of non-negligible magnitude, even when compared to the impact of an increase in school availability. Rosati and Rossi (2007), reviewed evidence of a specific school quality improvement program (CONAFE) in Mexico. This evidence showed that quality enhancement can be an effective strategy for both encouraging schooling and discouraging children's work, especially for children of secondary school age, and even when enacted alongside a major demand-side program.

Much research work, however, remains to be done to transform the initial answer that school quality matters for child labour into a well-established conclusion. The available data, for example, did not permit disentangling the effects of *inputs* to school quality from those of school quality itself. If the results are taken at face value, there is also a need for further investigation into the effects of school quality in retaining children in school. (Preliminary fragmentary evidence seems in fact to indicate that school quality is more effective in keeping children in school than in getting them there in the first place). Finally, more effort also needs to be devoted to comparing the effects of improved access to education with respect to improved quality, to be able to formulate recommendations on the appropriate policy mix between the two.

2. Local labour markets and child labour: Another recently-completed UCW working paper examines links between local labour markets and child labour in the context of Brazil (Manacorda and Rosati, 2007). The empirical results showed that that children aged 13-15 years appear to respond to stronger local labour demand by increasing their labour supply and reducing their school enrolment, similarly to teenagers in developed countries. By contrast, for young children (ages 10-12 years), stronger labour demand leads to a fall (in urban areas) or no variation (in rural areas) in labour market participation. In both areas, school enrolment of young children increases in periods of stronger labour demand.

The empirical results indicated no statistically significant differences across age groups in the effect of stronger labour demand on wages and household income, and the authors speculate that such differential behaviour across age groups is largely ascribable to parental preferences. The authors also rule out that child labour laws are responsible for these differential responses across age groups. The authors conclude that younger children are indeed treated differently from older ones, who in turn behave similarly to adults. It appears that parents want to protect their young children from child labour and do so if offered the opportunity.

3. Worst forms of child labour in Senegal. Work is nearing completion on a combined quantitative/qualitative study of children involved in begging in the region of Dakar. The study report will be posted on the Project website shortly (see also below). Initial study results show that begging children are forced to spend large amounts of time on the street each day – over six hours on average – despite the fact that most are also ostensibly students in Koranic schools. The precarious living conditions of begging children – *talibés* and non-*talibés* alike - leave them exposed to the elements and vulnerable to disease. They are almost all under-nourished, reliant on a diet composed primarily of rice and bread. Their meagre proceeds from begging go entirely to the *marabouts*.

The policy implications of these findings are clear. Short-term "protection" measures are urgently needed to ameliorate the harsh conditions of this large population of begging children, and to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into society. But longer-term reductions in child begging cannot be attained without addressing the economic and socio-cultural factors causing children to enter begging in the first place. The results of the survey show that virtually all Dakar begging children originate from outside the city, and therefore prevention efforts must focus not on Dakar but on "source" communities, both inside and outside Senegal.

4. Child labour measurement. A working paper on child labour measurement (Guarcello, Lyon and Rosati, 2007) examines key questions surrounding development of a statistical standard for child labour, drawing on

empirical evidence from Cambodia. Two questions in particular are looked at in this context: (1) whether family and non-family work be treated differently in child labour measurement; and (2) how non-economic activity (i.e., household chores) should be treated vis-à-vis economic activity in child labour measurement. While it is intuitively appealing to assume that working with parents or relatives is less “damaging” than working outside the family, the empirical evidence did not, on balance, support this contention. The empirical evidence suggested that underlying the distinction between economic and non-economic activity are important differences in terms of the composition, intensity and impact of work.

Similar working papers are currently being developed for Bangladesh, Brazil and Senegal, as part of broader UCW support to the development of a statistical standard for child labour (see below).

5. Child labour and EFA. A review paper on child labour and Education For All (EFA) (Guarcello, Lyon and Rosati, 2006) forms part of broader UCW efforts towards improving this understanding of education-child labour links, providing a brief overview of relevant research and key knowledge gaps. Evidence reviewed of the impact of work on school attendance and performance underscored the constraint that child labour poses to achieving Education For All. This evidence largely confirmed the conventional wisdom that child labour harms children's ability to enter and survive in the school system, and makes it more difficult for children to derive educational benefit from schooling once in the system. The evidence also suggested that these negative effects are not limited to economic activity but also extend to household chores, and that the intensity of work (in economic activity or household chores) is a particularly important in determining the impact of work on schooling.

Project news

1. Upcoming seminar on child labour, schooling and youth employment (*Paris, 13-14 December 2007*). The 2-day seminar, to be organised jointly with the *Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonne* (Université de Paris 1), will present recent research on child labour and its linkages with educational and youth employment outcomes. Proposals for papers must be submitted electronically (in .pdf or .doc format) by 15 July 2007 to Ozge-Nihan.Koseleci@univ-paris1.fr or gbreglia@ucw-project.org.

2. Washington workshop on child labour and education (*Washington, April 2007*). The 1-day workshop organized jointly with World Bank brought together recent analytical work on child labour and education linkages in several low income countries. Experts from World Bank, UCW and partners presented research findings and results of relevance to policy dialogue with country national counterparts. The workshop also aimed at identifying areas where further research is particularly needed for policy design.

3. Discussion of study on begging children (*Dakar, April 2007*). A meeting was held with the study steering committee (Government, ILO-IPEC, NGOs, UCW and World Bank) to discuss draft report. The report is currently being finalised on the basis of the feedback and will be posted on the Project website shortly. The report will be presented officially in Dakar for discussion and follow-up in the last quarter of 2007. The begging children study is part of a broader programme of UCW research support in Senegal aimed at helping to inform policy in the area of social protection. Other areas of support include a national study of vulnerable children and youth initiated in April 2007.

4. NPA costing in Cambodia. Agreement was reached in May 2007 on a first of its kind study of the cost of child labour elimination in Cambodia. The study will aim at identifying and costing a core policy package for reaching national child labour targets in a timely and sustainable fashion.

This package will be drawn from the broader menu of policy proposals contained in the IPEC-supported national Time-Bound Programme (TBP), the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour, and other national planning documents. The study will take place in the second half of 2007 and is expected to be completed prior to year-end.

5. Country-level research in Mali, Mongolia and Zambia. Country-level research activities begin in three additional countries – Mali, Mongolia and Zambia – during the first half of 2007. In keeping with UCW country-level research implemented elsewhere, efforts involve direct research collaboration with national counterparts, and provide a framework for strengthening counterpart capacity in the analysis of child labour data and its use in policy design. The detailed national reports on child labour emerging from country-level co-operation provide a common, credible information base that can be used to inform national policies and programmes in child labour field.

6. Child labour measurement. UCW support to development for a new statistical standard for measuring child labour continued during the first half of 2007. The involvement of UCW is helping to ensure that the development of a new child labour statistical standard is an inter-agency process, and that the recommendation of the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians reflects a broad inter-agency consensus. The UCW Project is supporting the process in three specific ways: (1) providing a forum for inter-agency specialist discussion and consultations relating to child labour measurement; (2) serving as a technical resource in preparing background papers feeding into the draft resolution to the 18th ICLS; and (3) undertaking consultations on child labour measurement in four selected countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia and Senegal).

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