

LOOKING FORWARD: AREAS OF FUTURE UCW RESEARCH COOPERATION

The following constitutes a non-exhaustive list of some of the future research priorities of the UCW Program, identified through discussions with the three UCW partner agencies and with national counterparts. They follow closely on research efforts pursued to date, and are designed to fill knowledge gaps impeding policy development in the child labour field.

1. Migration. UCW research will address the impact of large and growing migration flows (internal and international) on child labour. The research will address three groups of children affected by migration – those left behind by their migrant parents, those migrating with their families and those migrating alone, independently of their parents. For the first group, there are various channels through which migration can impact living standards, education investment and child labour. On the one hand, remittances from migrants should lead to increased consumption and education investment, implying a positive effect on poverty reduction and human capital. On the other hand, parental absence, disruption of family life and the “drain” of entrepreneurial skill from source communities can have adverse effects on poverty and human capital investment. Children migrating with their families or migrating alone also face unique sets of challenges of relevance to their involvement in schooling and work. The research will look into these issues making use of available studies and household survey data.

2. Early childhood development (ECD). UCW research will explore links between children's involvement in early childhood development programmes and the division of their time between school and work later in childhood. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in ECD programmes in developing countries. Initial evidence from evaluations of ECD programmes in developing countries suggests that they can be effective in improving children's success in school and later life, especially for vulnerable, at-risk children who live in poverty or in low-income families. But the potential of ECD programmes as specific strategy against child labour in developing country contexts has received relatively little research attention. UCW research will help inform policy in this area by looking specifically at how and why ECD programmes can help delay entry to work for vulnerable children. Research will also address which ECD approaches, e.g., centre-based ECD programmes, communication outreach to parents, or ECD services as

part of a broader package of health and nutritional interventions, hold most potential in combating child labour.

3. Statistics and monitoring. UCW research cooperation will be directed towards improving the systems and data needed to monitor child labour. Through data collection efforts (mainly from SIMPOC) an increasing number of countries is benefiting from reliable benchmarking on child labour. But as the concerns about the impact of the global economic crisis on child labour have shown, there are still no systems in place for short run monitoring of the evolution of child labour. Effective monitoring systems will be critical to ensuring prompt responses to fluctuations in child labour stemming from economic downturns or other shocks. Such monitoring systems could be built at the national level by integrating available information sources (including administrative ones) and by training counterparts in the ministries of labour and/or in the statistical offices. UCW will support the development of a replicable methodology for child labour monitoring along these lines, and piloting the methodology in selected countries.

4. Country-level research cooperation. UCW country-level research cooperation with national counterparts will centre on detailed situational analyses of child labour. The analyses will consider the economic as well as the socio-cultural causes of child labour and follow a cross-sectoral approach, especially in the identification of determinants and in assessing their policy implications. Building on the findings of the situational analyses, research cooperation will also involve the development of country-specific policy appraisals for responding to child labour within a fixed timeframe. The appraisals respond to calls from several governments for reports that go beyond outlining general strategies to include a more detailed discussion of specific actions against child labour and the resources required to implement them. The policy appraisals will identify areas of primary and strategic intervention against child labour in the short and medium term, and assess their associated costs. They will be developed through a process of expanded dialogue with government and national stakeholders, and will be closely integrated with broader national development plans.

5. Capacity-building. UCW cooperation will be directed towards improving national responses to child labour by building the national capacity to collect, analyse and use child labour data in policy design. This is in response to field experience indicating that policy development is frequently hampered by inadequate or under-exploited

statistical information on child labour and the complex set of causal factors underlying it. Building on past UCW capacity-building experience in a number of countries, training efforts will aim at providing participants with the conceptual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings required for regular collection and analysis of child labour data. Specific training contents will include (a) defining child labour (definitions, concepts, international legal norms); (b) measuring child labour (indicators and measurement challenges); (c) data collection instruments (survey methodologies, questionnaire design, etc.); (d) descriptive analysis (from raw data to indicators and tabulations); (e) understanding child labour (regression analysis, causality, etc.); (f) addressing child labour (identifying policy options); and (g) monitoring child labour (integrating child labour indicators into regular data collection activities). Training will be targeted to representatives from relevant government ministries and agencies, including national statistical offices, NGOs, local research institutes and others working on issues related to child labour.

6. Education For All. UCW research will address the interplay between education and child labour, and what this means for achieving Education for All (EFA) and child labour elimination goals. Statistics from a range of countries suggest that some work locations and work types are more of a barrier to schooling than others, but more research is needed to improve understanding of why this is the case. A better understanding of the relative importance of work-related factors (e.g., sector, intensity, setting, work schedule, etc.) and school-related factors (e.g., duration of the school day, flexibility of the school calendar, school distance, etc.) is particularly significant in policy terms. A better understanding is also needed of the relative importance of school quality and access in household decisions concerning schooling and work. This will be critical to identifying the best mix between policy measures addressing school quality and those addressing school access. The UCW research will aim at helping to fill these other knowledge gaps. The research will serve to emphasise that achieving Education for All and eliminating child labour are inter-related objectives, i.e., attempts to achieve one without addressing the other are unlikely to be successful.

7. Youth employment. UCW research will address the close two-way link between child labour and youth employment outcomes, and its implications for policy. Both child labour and youth labour market disadvantage can lead to social vulnerability and social marginalization,

and can permanently impair the attainment of personal and productive potential, in turn influencing lifetime patterns of employment and earnings. Both issues therefore generate important constraints to national development goals. Yet, the interplay between child labour and youth labour market disadvantage has received relatively little attention. The research will help fill this research gap. It will explore how child labour (and concomitantly low human capital accumulation) can hinder the successful transition of adolescents and young adults to working life. It will also explore linkages between child labour and youth employment in the opposite direction, i.e., how poor employment prospects, low returns to human capital investments and difficult labour market transitions may serve as a disincentive for parents to invest in their children's schooling, and lead them instead to send their children to work prematurely. The research will help underscore the importance of policy responses that address youth employment and child labour side by side.

8. Impact evaluation. UCW research will help improve understanding of the relative effectiveness of different policy approaches to child labour elimination. International Labour Organization global child labour estimates point to significant recent changes in child labour incidence within and across countries and regions. What are the factors behind these changes? Have they been primarily driven by policy? And, if so, what policies and programme interventions have been most influential? Or, alternatively, have recent child labour trends been more a product of broader changes in the macro-economy and labour market? Unfortunately, robust empirical evidence relating to the impact of policies and programmes on child labour remains limited, making these questions difficult to answer. UCW research cooperation will help address this information gap relating to policy and programme impact. Through a combination of methodological development, targeted field research, capacity building and research dissemination, it will contribute to building and spreading knowledge on the impact of specific programme interventions on child labour. It will address the impact of programme interventions directly targeting child labour, as well the impact of interventions in policy areas with a bearing on child labour (e.g., school expansion, social safety nets, micro-credit, etc.). Beyond new empirical evidence on programme impact, UCW cooperation will produce tested evaluation methodologies and processes that can be applied to other child labour impact evaluations.