

Child Labour Statistics in ILO/IPEC The SIMPOC Programme

Introduction to SIMPOC

The ILO's **International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)** was established in 1992 with the overall goal of the progressive elimination of child labour.

Numbers on the extent, characteristics and determinants of child labour are provided by the **Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)**, which is the statistical arm of IPEC and was established in 1998. The programme built on the work undertaken by the ILO Bureau of Statistics from 1992-97 on the development of statistical methodologies for collecting data on child labour (CL).

SIMPOC assists countries in the collection, documentation, processing and analysis of child labour relevant data. Since its inception, SIMPOC has provided technical assistance to over 60 countries. More than 250 CL surveys have been supported to date, 56 of which were national in scope. An additional 80 baseline surveys and 100 rapid assessments were supported targeting specific groups of child labourers in particular geographical locations. SIMPOC data has enabled ILO to publish global and regional CL estimates for the 2000 and 2004 reference years, and a first-ever analysis of CL trends.

SIMPOC has encouraged and included in its mandate the need for accurate quantitative and qualitative data on CL that is gender-sensitive. The implementing partners of SIMPOC are generally national statistics offices (NSOs); ministries of labour or other government agencies responsible for children's welfare; research and academic institutions; employers' and workers' organizations; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). SIMPOC collaborates closely with other international organizations, notably UNICEF and the World Bank, to create synergies among data-collecting initiatives

The legal and policy framework for all ILO work on CL is provided in two fundamental ILO Conventions: The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). With the rapid rise in the number of ratifications of Convention No. 182, the demand for SIMPOC technical support has increased strongly. For countries that have ratified this Convention, data collection is one of the necessary first steps in fulfilling the Convention's provisions to withdraw and rehabilitate victims of CL and prevent other children from becoming victims.

The SIMPOC website <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Childlabourstatistics> makes available a wealth of statistical tools, data and reports, namely:

- Specific questionnaires for CL surveys
- Manuals and training kits on how to carry out CL data collection in households, schools and at the workplace
- Guidance on how to properly process and analyze the collected information on CL
- Micro datasets and survey reports on CL from around the world
- Research on critical statistical issues

It is important to note that child labour statistics will be on the agenda of the Eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (18th ICLS) to be held in Geneva from

24 November to 5 December 2008. The objective is to develop and adopt a set of global standards for child labour data collection and measurement, making it possible to reliably compare CL incidence across countries and over time.

Defining Child Labour

Children carry out a very wide range of tasks and activities when they work, and considerable differences exist between the many kinds of work children do. Some are difficult and demanding, others are more hazardous and morally reprehensible.

However, not all work done by children should be classified as CL that is to be targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in light work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling may be regarded as acceptable. The ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 provide essential guidance on these matters.

The term "child labour" is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling by:
 - depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In its most extreme forms, CL involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age. Whether or not particular forms of "work" can be called "child labour" depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries.

Child Labour Surveys

The data and qualitative information generated by the various SIMPOC instruments form essential inputs to CL policies and intervention programmes. Furthermore, their availability promotes research and raises awareness of the problem of CL. Data and studies are made accessible through various publications and a data repository on the SIMPOC website. Over the last few years SIMPOC has further refined the quantitative methods and survey questionnaires used in national child labour surveys (NCLSs) and vastly extended their coverage. Field manuals for CL data collection methodologies, and CL data analysis and reporting, developed by SIMPOC are available on the website. SIMPOC has also collaborated with UNICEF on the development of a manual for the Rapid Assessment (RA) Methodology with a view to gathering information on the less visible forms not easily captured by NCLSs.

Six basic methods have been applied to generate child labour statistics and information: (a) National Child Labour Survey (NCLS); (b) the Rapid Assessment (RA) methodology; (c) Baseline Study/Survey; (d) Establishment-based Survey; (e) Street Children Survey; and (f) School-based Survey. These CL survey methodologies,

however, are not mutually exclusive; instead they can be applied in a combined and complimentary way.

National child labour survey

With the exception of special categories of child labour (such as, children who live on the street, or those in the unconditional worst forms of child labour, UWFCL), household based surveys provide an efficient approach for estimating the incidence of particular forms of child labour, and for collecting a wide range of statistics on child labour, including its incidence. In fact, the general practice by national statistical offices (NSOs) that have collected child labour statistics at the national level has been through household based surveys. The household based NCLS may be applied by countries to collect CL data, either as a standalone survey or as a module attached to another household based survey. Its advantage is that the household is often the most appropriate unit for identifying children and their families, measuring their socio-economic and demographic characteristics and housing conditions, and obtaining information on the child's educational and work status including engagement in hazardous work, the circumstances that propel children to work and the child's work conditions.

Rapid assessment

Rapid assessment (RA) studies are a useful tool to collect information from children in hidden forms of CL. Its output is mainly qualitative/ descriptive and usually limited to a small geographic area: hence, it is generally not a useful tool if the aim is to estimate the number of child workers. Nonetheless, RA can provide the relevant data relatively quickly and inexpensively for many purposes, for example, awareness creation and project formulation. Its participatory approach of discussions and interviews with a variety of respondents is ideally suited for obtaining detailed knowledge of the working and living conditions of children who are involved in activities or occupations otherwise difficult to identify and characterize. Thus, the applicability of rapid assessments is more relevant to research institutes/organizations, and for supplementing the survey findings by national statistical offices.

Street children survey

Street children surveys target two main categories of children on the streets, namely: (a) those who live and work on the street and by definition do not have any other place of residence; and (b) those who work on the streets but normally reside with their parents/guardians. The two categories require different data collection techniques, and its approach relies on randomly interviewing children and, if possible, their employers and/or clients. The findings should, however, be carefully vetted as much of information by street children cannot be verified.

Establishment survey

Establishment surveys administered at the workplace (which may be a factory on an industrial site or even a home-based production unit that engages hired workers) seek to obtain data on the particulars of the production unit and the characteristics of its workforce, with a special focus on workers under 18 years of age. Items of information sought include children's wages, hours of work, other working conditions and benefits, and injuries and illnesses at work, both on their own and also as compared with those of adult workers. The perceptions of the employer regarding the advantages and drawbacks of using child workers, the reasons for hiring them, and the methods of recruitment may also be explored.

Baseline study/ survey

Another useful data collection vehicle for CL statistics is the baseline survey/study that is aimed at the identification, at points of time, of population attributes and the consequences of child labour in specific sectors and/or areas. It is usually closely linked to action programmes for identification of project beneficiaries and monitoring their withdrawal from work over time. The baseline survey/study generates both quantitative and qualitative data, applying a mix of sample survey and participatory approaches. If the sample frame can be developed (which is not always possible), the findings may be extrapolated to the sector and/or area surveyed.

Statistics on worst forms of child labour

As regards the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), only statistics on child labour in hazardous work may be collected through household based and establishment based surveys.

Concerning Unconditional WFCL, and other special groups such as child workers living independently or on streets, for which a sampling frame does not exist or cannot be easily prepared, suitable methodologies for deriving reliable estimates of their numbers for a particular form and in a specified geographical area are being developed and are currently at an experimental stage.

SIMPOC Training Manuals

SIMPOC has developed a series of manuals and training materials covering different areas critical to efficient data collection, processing and analysis of CL data.

Manual on methodologies for data collection through surveys. It presents a detailed introduction to different data collection methods in the area of child labour. These include household-based national child labour surveys; establishment surveys; rapid assessments; school surveys; street children surveys; and baseline surveys. The manual is addressed to data producers/ users, and comprehensively covers survey planning; questionnaire design; sampling issues; data collection; processing questions; and data analysis.

Manual for child labour data analysis and statistical reports. It provides guidance on how to analyse child labour survey data and prepare structured national reports. The manual contains illustrative examples from surveys around the world and a large number of dummy tables.

Child labour survey data processing and storage of electronic files: A practical guide. It addresses survey planners, data processors and computer system administrators. The manual provides detailed guidelines with respect to data processing planning; data processing activities and the storage of files.

Manual on child labour rapid assessment methodology. The manual is published jointly with UNICEF. It addresses researchers wishing to explore mechanisms, causes and consequences of child labour, especially in its worst forms, through qualitative methods.

SIMPOC training modules on child labour data collection, processing, analysis and reporting. It complements the above manuals, and contains a complete self-contained and MS PowerPoint-based training kit for practitioners in the areas of child labour data collection, processing, analysis and reporting.

SIMPOC Model Questionnaires

SIMPOC's experience in providing technical assistance on CL statistics across the globe has resulted in a wide range of survey instruments. This includes questionnaires for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, and by a variety of data collection methods.

For countries with relatively advanced data collection and processing capabilities, and committed to conducting a NCLS, a comprehensive standard questionnaire has been elaborated. For other countries, a shorter questionnaire is recommended that facilitates the collection of essential CL data. For researching WFCL, rapid assessment and baseline survey questionnaires are available. The *SIMPOC Manual on Methodologies for Data Collection through Surveys* contains sample questionnaires for the various types of CL surveys.

As regards household-based national child labour surveys, the model questionnaires (provided in the *Manual*) have recently been revised and improved. Two distinct instruments are available on the SIMPOC website:

- *Questionnaires for standalone NCLSs* (Part 1 and Part 2 are addressed to the most knowledgeable adult member of the household; Part 3 is addressed to children)
- *Module of essential questions on CL for inclusion in household-based surveys* (e.g. a labour force survey)

ICLS and Child Labour

The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) is the authoritative body to set global standards in labour statistics. The Conference is usually convened every five years. Its 18th session is to be held in Geneva from 24 November to 5 December 2008. One agenda item at the 2008 ICLS will be statistics of child labour. The objective is to consider and adopt a resolution setting statistical measurement standards in this important area. For the purpose, SIMPOC is presently engaged in preparing the technical report and draft resolution on Statistics of Child Labour be submitted for discussion at the Conference.

Training Activities

SIMPOC regularly conducts regional and national training workshops on CL data collection and CL data analysis. The national training workshops are usually implemented during the course of SIMPOC assisted national child labour surveys, or other CL survey types.
