



Measuring child labour:

Discussion note for country consultation  
in Brazil

Rome  
Revised draft, September 2007

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### CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. TOWARDS A STATISTICAL MEASURE OF CHILD LABOUR: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	2
3. CHILDREN'S PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY .....	5
3.1 Level of child involvement in productive activity .....	5
3.2 Family and non-family work .....	6
3.3 Economic and non-economic productive activity .....	10
4. MEASURING CHILD LABOUR .....	14
4.1 Measuring child labour among children aged less than 16 years .....	14
4.2 Identifying hazardous work (measuring child labour among 16-17 year-olds) .....	17
5. CONCLUSION AND FEEDBACK FROM GOVERNMENT .....	19

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the international labour standards contain several elements of flexibility left to the countries that ratify them as regards the detailed definition of what is child labour to be eliminated, it is not an easy task to decide what should be measured statistically as child labour. This complicates the development of comparable and unambiguous estimates of child labour in countries where it is commonly known that children are at work, and also detracts from the credibility of numbers published. Accordingly, at the recently concluded 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), there was unanimous demand by participants for an agenda item on child labour statistics at the 18th ICLS, which is likely to meet in the last quarter of 2008.

2. In this context, a draft resolution on child labour statistics is currently under development for submission to the 18th ICLS. The resolution would bring out the 'conceptual' issues in specifying what constitutes child labour and what should be excluded. In the light of what is feasible in practice, the draft resolution would also suggest an 'operational' statistical definition of child labour that may be applied for measurement purposes in the field. In addition, the draft resolution would provide guidelines in terms of statistical tools on how child labour may be verified and measured, and also indicate the parameters within which countries may have flexibility to adapt and apply the contents of the resolution to suit their national requirements. In turn, all such information would facilitate the monitoring of ILO member states' compliance with international labour standards in a transparent manner.

3. In specific terms, the draft resolution for consideration by the 18th ICLS is designed to: (a) encompass all forms of child labour, including hazardous work and children in other WFCL activities; (b) provide methodological guidelines to ensure comparability of child labour statistics across countries and over time; (c) assist in improving the monitoring by countries of their compliance to international child labour standards; and (d) facilitate the measurement of selected aspects of progress in achievement of the MDGs, and in implementation of the Decent Work agenda of ILO.

4. This note discusses some of the issues arising when attempting to define a statistical standard for child labour in the specific context of Brazil. It provides an overview of the measurement challenges encountered, of the empirical and other evidence that can be used to address such challenges, and of the implications in terms of child labour estimates. The note provided a technical background for the consultations undertaken by ILO-IPEC and UCW with national counterparts in February 2007.

5. The consultations were aimed at promoting discussion of child labour measurement and at obtaining feedback from national governments on the open questions. This feedback will constitute a relevant part of the process leading to the resolution that ILO will submit to ICLS in 2008. The consultations were broad-based and included representatives from the main national social actors in the area of child labour; the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (Ministry of Foreign Affairs); other key government authorities (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Development, National Institute of Educational Studies and Researches (INEP), Ministry of Agrarian Development); IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics); and Abrinq Foundation for the Rights of Children and Adolescents in charge of the Protecting Network Friend of a Child.

6. This revised version of the note reflects some of the main feedback received during the consultations. The note should not, nonetheless, be construed as reflecting the official views of the Government of Brazil.

7. The note is structured as follows. The next section sets out general challenges and possible ways forward in developing a statistical measure of child labour. Section 3 then looks in detail at children’s productive activity, and specifically at how the broad distinctions between family/non-family and economic/non-economic work reflect underlying differences in the nature, intensity and impact of work performed by children. Section 4, building on this discussion, then returns to the question of child labour measurement, looking specifically at how the three main international legal standards for child labour (C138, C182 and CRC) might translate into statistical terms for children aged less than 16 years and children aged 16-17 years. Simulated child labour estimates are presented for each of these groups based under different underlying statistical definitions. Section 5 concludes and provides some feedback from Government.

## 2. TOWARDS A STATISTICAL MEASURE OF CHILD LABOUR: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

8. How many Brazilian children are involved in child labour? This question, while vital for the purposes of policy design and monitoring, is by no means straightforward. A number of underlying questions need to be addressed first: what types of children’s productive activity should be considered, in what settings and performed beyond what level of intensity. While international child labour norms provide a broad legal definition of child labour (see Box 1), there is at present no internationally agreed statistical measurement standard of child labour to provide guidance on these issues.

9. ILO Convention No. 138 (C138) on minimum age covers “employment or work”, and the common practice in published child labour statistics has been to use “economically active” as proxy for this concept of “employment or work.” Two main questions, however, have been raised concerning this approach, the first relating to work

### *Box 1. International legal standards relating to child labour*

Three main international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) and ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) – define child labour in legal terms and provide a framework for efforts against it.

*ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age)* targets as child labour 1) all forms of “employment or work” carried out by children below a minimum cut-off age (at least 12 years in less developed countries); 2) all forms except “light” employment or work carried out by children below a second higher cut-off age (at least 14 years in less developed countries); and 3) any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons below the age of 18 years..

*ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms)* targets as worst forms of child labour (a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* recognises the child’s right to be protected from forms of work that are likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. In order to achieve this goal, the CRC calls on States Parties to set minimum ages for admission to employment, having regard to other international instruments.

in family settings and second relating to work outside the System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary (see Box 2 for explanation of terminology).

10. While children’s family-based economic activity is included in most published estimates of child labour, family-based work (work by unpaid family members) is often excluded from labour legislation at the country level and therefore not covered by minimum age rules.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that many countries perceive work performed by

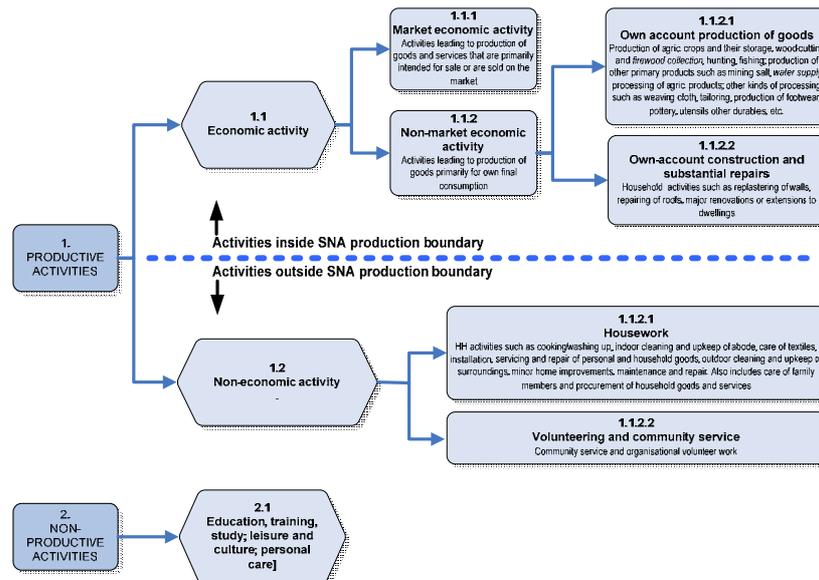
<sup>1</sup> Unlike some earlier ILO Conventions on minimum age, C138 does not explicitly exclude family undertakings from its scope, but allows a State to exclude specific categories (such as family undertakings) from its scope of application as long as the work done is

children within the family unit as different from children’s productive activities performed outside the family, and raises the question of whether this perceived difference should also be reflected in any statistical measure of child labour.

**Box 2. A note on terminology**

In this study, productive activities are defined as all activities falling within the general production boundary, i.e., all activities whose performance can be delegated to another person with the same desired results. This includes production of all goods and the provision of services to others within or outside the individual’s household.

The study distinguishes between two broad categories of productive activity– economic activity and non-economic activity. The definition of **economic activity** used in the study derives from the System of National Accounts (SNA) (rev. 1993), the conceptual framework that sets the international statistical standards for the measurement of the market economy. It covers all market production and certain types of non-market production, including production of goods for own use. **Non-economic activity** is defined as any productive activity falling outside the SNA production boundary. It consists mainly of work activities performed by household members in service to the household and its members.



A distinction is also drawn between **family** and **non-family** productive activity. The former refers to all forms of productive activity that takes place within a family setting, independent of whether it is economic or non-economic in nature. The latter refers to productive activity located outside the family, and is economic in nature.

11. Separately, there has been concern expressed among some actors against child labour, including UNICEF, that non-economic activities (principally household chores within the child’s own family) – currently excluded from most statistical measures of child labour – might in some cases involve safety and health hazards or hinder schooling in a similar way to economic activity. And as the burden for chores are shouldered disproportionately by girls in many cultures, excluding them may understate girls’ involvement in child labour. Hence, there is also question as to whether non-economic activity should be considered in child labour measurement and, if so, under what conditions or beyond what time threshold.

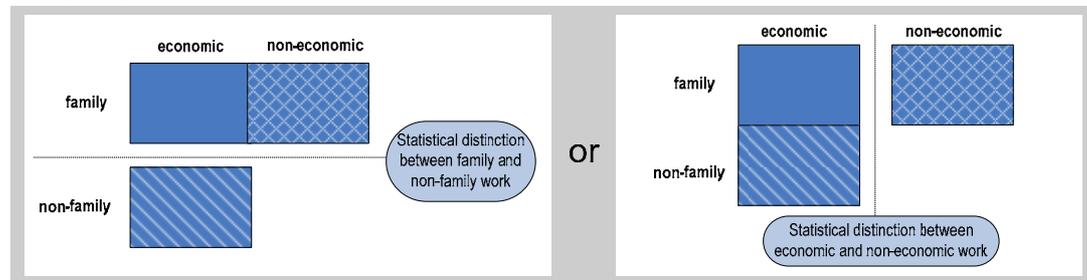
12. Underlying these questions are two alternative ways forward in terms of developing a child labour measure – one based on a statistical distinction between productive activity located inside and outside the family (as is common in national legislation relating to child labour), and the other based on a statistical distinction between economic and non-economic productive activity (as is common in published statistics on child labour) (Figure 1a). Whichever approach is selected, child labour measurement requires drawing a second statistical distinction between acceptable forms of work and child labour *within* each category of children’s productive activity (Figure 1b). As explained in further detail

not hazardous (Article 4 of C138). However, “home work” as such is covered by national legislation in some countries (not necessarily the general labour law) and is subject of a special ILO Convention (No.177).

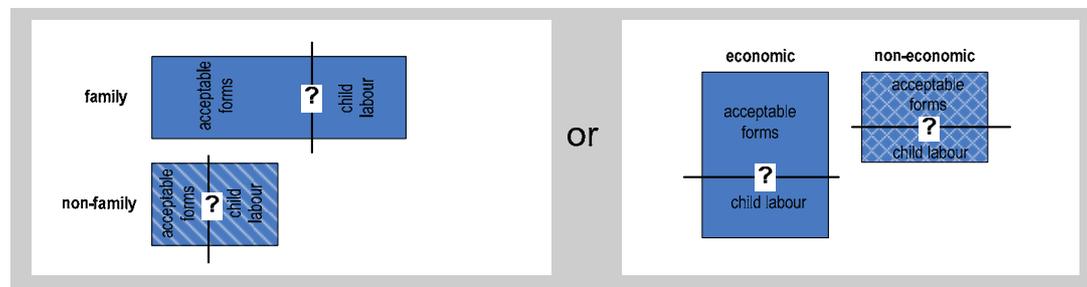
in Section 4 of this report, the first approach would entail applying different criteria to family and non-family productive activities in distinguishing acceptable work by children from child labour, while the second approach would entail applying different criteria to economic and non-economic productive activities in distinguishing acceptable child work from child labour.

Figure 1. Children's productive activities and child labour measurement

(a) Categorising children's productive activities for the purposes of child labour measurement



(b) Drawing statistical distinctions between acceptable forms of work and child labour within categories of children's productive activities



13. Which of the two approaches are most relevant for child labour measurement? The answer depends in large part on the extent to which the broad distinctions between family/non-family or economic/non-economic work reflect underlying differences in the nature, intensity and impact of work performed by children. If, for example, it could be shown that non-family work is significantly more harmful to health and/or education than family work, a case could be made for treating the two work settings differently for the purposes of child labour measurement. Likewise for economic and non-economic activity. The next section looks in detail at children's productive activity in an attempt to address these issues.

### 3. CHILDREN'S PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

#### 3.1 Level of child involvement in productive activity

14. Table 1 illustrates the wide variety of possible estimates of child involvement in productive activity depending on the criteria applied. Looking only at child involvement in economic activity for at least one hour per week – the most commonly-used proxy for children's work – yields an estimate of 12 percent. But if children performing non-economic activity are also considered, the estimate rises to 62 percent. Restricting our focus only to productive activity performed outside the household (and staying with the one-hour threshold) would yield an estimate of only six percent. Applying a slightly higher hours threshold, e.g., of one hour per day rather than one hour per week, would yield sharply lower estimates of children's work in some categories (non-economic and family activity) but have little effect on estimates in others (economic and non-family activity).

Table 1. Measuring child involvement in productive activity (% children aged 10-15),<sup>(a)</sup> by hours thresholds

Hours threshold	Distinction by technical nature			Distinction by work setting		
	Economic	Non-economic	Total <sup>(b)</sup>	Family	Non-family	Total <sup>(c)</sup>
>1	12.3	57.9	62.4	56.4	6.0	62.4
>7	11.3	41.7	48	42.4	5.4	47.8
>14	9.2	2.4	27.9	23.5	4.5	28
>21	5	7.3	12	10.4	3.0	13.4
>28	3.7	4.2	7.8	6.4	2.4	8.8

Notes: (a) Children below the age of 10 years are not included because of data limitations. Specifically, no data are available on involvement in non-economic activity for children below 10 years of age. (b) "Total" refers to the % of children performing economic and/or non-economic activity for each hours threshold; (c) "Total" refers to the % of children performing family and/or non-family activity for each hours threshold.

Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

15. But the divisions between economic/non-economic productive activity or alternatively between family/non-family productive activity are not clear cut, as children can be involved in different categories of productive activity at the same time. Of all children performing economic activity, for example, 62 percent are also spending at least some time each week performing non-economic activities. Similarly, of all children performing non-family work, 59 percent are also involved in some work activities each week within their families. This introduces another question in terms of measurement – the combinations of work intensity that should be selected when measuring the work involvement of children whose work crosses the economic/non-economic or family/non-family boundaries. Children's involvement in productive activity by different hours combinations is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Measuring child involvement in productive activity (% children aged 10-15), by combinations of hours in economic/non-economic activity and in family/non-family activity

Non-eco Eco.	Distinction by technical nature of work						Family Non-family	Distinction by work setting					
	0	≥1	≥7	≥14	≥21	≥28		0	≥1	≥7	≥14	≥21	≥28
0	40.0	50.0	35.3	16.6	5.6	3.0	0	40.0	55.7	40.9	21.5	8.9	5.2
≥1	3.7	6.4	4.4	1.8	0.5	0.3	≥1	1.6	2.7	1.8	0.8	0.3	0.2
≥7	3.4	5.6	4.0	1.6	0.4	0.3	≥7	1.5	2.2	1.5	0.6	0.2	0.1
≥14	2.8	4.3	3.1	1.2	0.3	0.2	≥14	1.2	1.7	1.2	0.5	0.1	0.1
≥21	1.4	2.0	1.4	0.6	0.2	0.1	≥21	0.8	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.1
≥28	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.1	0.1	≥28	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1

Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

16. This brief discussion illustrates that the measurement of children's involvement in productive activity also depends on decisions relating to which categories (or

combinations of categories) of productive activity and which hours thresholds are considered. On what basis should such decisions be made? The answer of course depends on what specifically one is attempting to measure. If the objective, for example, is to measure children’s contribution to national output, then the estimate could be limited to children’s involvement in activities falling within the SNA production boundary, regardless of the setting of these activities. Similarly, if the objective is to measure children’s participation in the formal labour force, the estimate could centre on children’s involvement in economic activities falling within the formal sector.

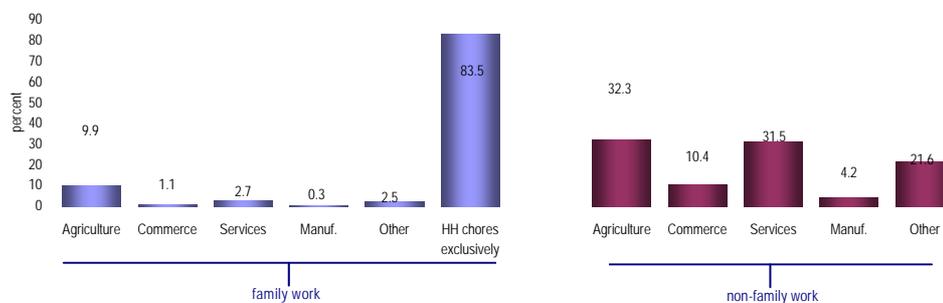
17. But the purpose here is quite different – to measure children’s involvement in the subset of productive activities that is injurious, negative or undesirable, i.e., children’s involvement in productive activities constituting child labour according to the international conventions and to national legislation. For this purpose, additional information is needed on the nature, intensity and above all the impact of children’s work.

### 3.2 Family and non-family work

18. The distinction between family and non-family productive activity comes up frequently in national child labour legislation and in discussions surrounding the concept of child labour. While children’s family-based economic activity is included in most published estimates of child labour, family-based work is not always included in child labour legislation at the country level. This section examines differences between family and non-family work in terms of nature, intensity and impact in attempt to address whether the family/non-family distinction is relevant for the purposes of child labour measurement.

19. Figure 2 breaks down family and non-family work by specific work sector/type. At first glance, it suggests important differences in the composition of children’s work in the two settings. Work within the family setting is concentrated overwhelmingly in household chores while work outside the family is distributed among the four main industries, with agriculture and services predominating. But when looking at family work, an additional sub-distinction between economic work and non-economic work (i.e., household chores) is also important.<sup>2</sup> When household chores are excluded from consideration, the composition of family and non-family work is less dissimilar, with agriculture important in both settings but services playing a much more important role in non-family work (Figure 3). This suggests that in terms of the composition of children’s work, the most relevant distinction is not between family and non-family work, but rather between economic (regardless of its setting) and non-economic work.

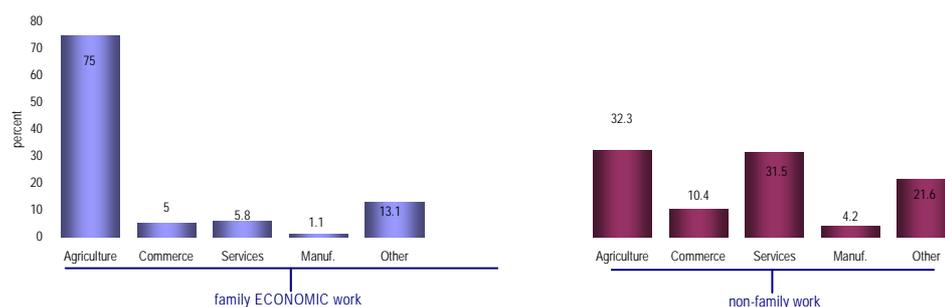
Figure 2. Main types of family and non-family work performed by children



Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*.

<sup>2</sup> As explained in Box 2, family work cuts across the SNA production boundary, consisting of both productive activity that is economic in nature and productive activity that is non-economic in nature. Non-family work, on the other hand, falls only within the SNA production boundary, i.e., is only economic in nature.

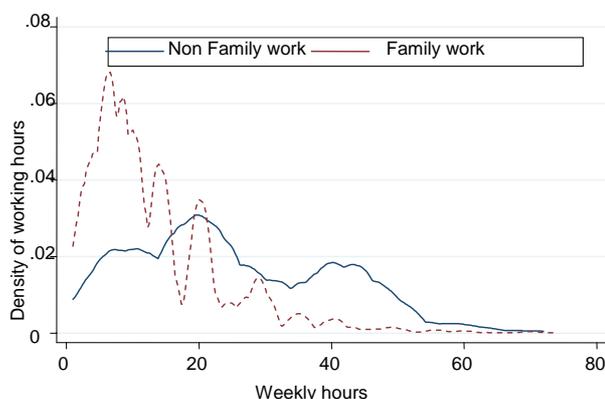
Figure 3. Main types of family and non-family ECONOMIC activities performed by children



Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*.

20. Work intensity is important as an indirect measure of work impact, as longer hours mean less time for school and greater total exposure to any hazards or health threats in the workplace. How does family and non-family work differ in terms of work intensity? Children performing economic family-based work activities put in an average of 20 hours per week on these activities, while children involved in economic non-family work activities spend an average of 27 hours performing them. The distribution of family and non-family work by working hours is shown in Figure 4. But it should be kept in mind that these time estimates reflect differences in hours spent in the two work settings, not differences in the working hours of individual children, some of whom work in both settings. Another way of looking at work intensity is to divide children into those performing only family work, those performing only non-family work and those performing both. Looked at this way, differences in the intensity of family work and non-family work are sharper: children performing only non-family work put in twice as many weekly working hours compared to their counterparts performing only family work (Table 3).

Figure 4. Distribution of working hours by working setting



Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

Table 3. Average weekly working hours by work setting, age and sex

Child age in years	Children working only in family work			Children only in non-family work			Children working in family <u>and</u> non- family work		
	male	female	Total	male	female	Total	male	female	Total
10	9.0	10.6	10.0	17.5	15.0	17.4	24.1	25.5	24.7
11	10.3	11.8	11.2	18.7	28.2	20.3	25.4	27.9	26.4
12	11.1	13.3	12.5	19.1	22.8	19.8	27.3	29.5	28.2
13	12.0	14.3	13.4	23.9	23.2	23.8	28.8	32.9	30.7
14	13.2	16.4	15.2	29.1	38.5	30.0	31.5	35.5	33.4
15	15.0	18.4	17.1	34.4	36.2	34.7	36.3	40.4	38.2
Total	11.9	14.3	13.4	28.9	32.8	29.5	30.9	34.7	32.6

Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

21. But the total time spent in family work masks large differences in work intensity between family economic activity and household chores. The former is performed for an average of 19 hours per week and latter for only 10 hours. The difference in work intensity between family and non-family work falls to about three hours per week, when household chores are eliminated from consideration (Table 4). In terms of work intensity, therefore, the most relevant difference appears to again be between economic activity (regardless of its setting) and household chores. The work load of a child performing economic activities seems to be very similar whether it is performed within or outside the family. This is not surprising, if we think that children performing economic activities in a family setting are involved in activities similar to those of the children working outside of the family (see above).

Table 4. Average weekly working hours in *economic* activity, by work setting

Child age in years	Children in family economic activity			Children in non family economic activity		
	Male	female	Total	male	female	Total
10	15.5	14.2	15.1	18.9	19.1	18.9
11	17.8	16.3	17.4	17.6	19.3	18.1
12	18.8	16.8	18.2	18.9	20.4	19.4
13	20.8	18.0	19.9	22.3	21.7	22.0
14	21.6	18.3	20.7	27.8	26.5	27.3
15	24.7	20.1	23.4	32.6	29.9	31.7
Total	20.8	17.8	19.9	27.3	26.3	27.0

Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

22. Of greatest significance for child labour measurement purposes is the question of whether there are differences between family and non-family work in terms of *impact* on health and education outcomes. Rather than looking at indirect measures (like type of work and intensity), it would in principle be better to directly assess the impact of child labour on education outcomes and health. Unfortunately, it is difficult to definitively address the issue of impact in the absence of additional data. In what follows, we present the evidence of the impact on education, given that the information on ill-health/injury was not available.

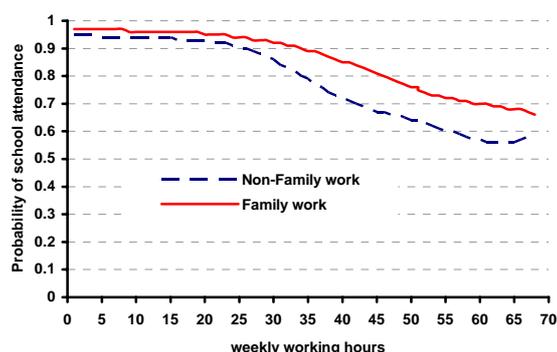
23. Establishing a strict *causal* relationship between work and school attendance is not possible because of the absence of panel or retrospective data.<sup>3</sup> Simple kernel regression analysis can be used as a synthetic tool to examine the probabilistic link between children involvement in economic activity and school attendance.<sup>4</sup> Empirical evidence based on kernel regressions indicates that non-family work is associated with a lower likelihood of school attendance than family work at any given level of work intensity, and that the difference increases with working hours (Figure 5a). They also show that additional hours of family work appear to have no impact on school attendance up to about the 25 hours threshold, while additional time in non-family work affects school attendance even at very low hours levels.

<sup>3</sup> Establishing causality is complicated by the fact that child labour and school attendance are usually the result of a joint decision on the part of the household, and by the fact that this decision may be influenced by possibly unobserved factors such as innate talent, family behaviour and or family preferences. This means that on the basis of cross-sectional data alone it is difficult to know, for example, if it is low talent that induces a child not to go to school and hence start to work, or if it is the preference or need to work that then induces a child to drop out of school. The use of panel data can help to address at least some of these issues and to get firmer results in terms of causality. For further details, refer to UCW Project, *Child Labour and Education For All: An issues paper*, draft discussion paper, Rome, October 2006.

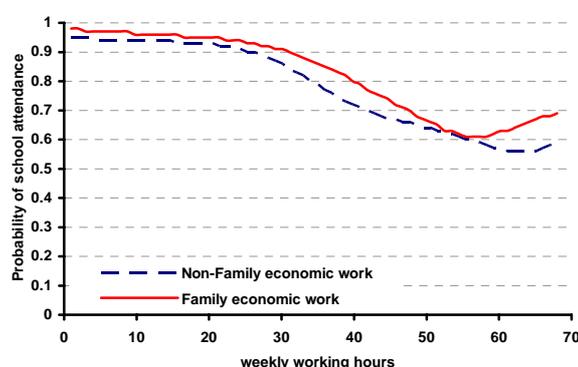
<sup>4</sup> However, it should be kept in mind that kernel regressions are suitable for describing the probabilistic link between variables, but cannot be used to derive strict causal relationships and must therefore be interpreted with care.

Figure 5. Probability of school attendance by working hours, kernel regression results

a. Family and non-family work



b. Family and non-family economic work



Source: UCW calculations based on Brazil PNAD, 2004

24. However, if we look at the economic activities only (Fig. 5b), the difference between family and non family based work becomes smaller, suggesting that the nature of the work might be more relevant than the setting. Unfortunately, the available data do not allow us to draw any more precise conclusion. But again, it suggests that the most interesting distinction is between economic and non-economic activities rather than work setting.

25. What then can be concluded concerning the relevance of a measurement approach based on the family/non-family distinction? Such an approach would stress that it is the setting of work, rather than its nature that is relevant for identifying activities harmful to children. It is intuitively appealing to assume that working with parents or relatives is less “damaging” than working outside the family. This possible effect, however, even if it were present, seems to be outweighed by the effects of the nature of the work. In fact, the empirical evidence presented above concerning work composition, intensity and impact does not, on balance, indicate the family/non-family distinction is relevant for the purposes of child labour measurement.

26. The differences in the composition and the intensity of family and non-family work primarily reflect underlying differences between economic activity and household chores performed *within* the family. And, while there is some evidence suggesting that family poses a lesser obstacle to school attendance, there is no evidence that work within the family is less hazardous than work outside it. Indeed, if anything, the evidence points in the opposite direction. It is also worth noting that the technical distinction between family and non-family work is not as clear-cut as it at first seems. Many forms of work common among children fall in a grey area between the family and non-family

categories. Consider, for example, production of goods outsourced to the family or work in small business, even if carried out under the supervision of parents or relatives, it is difficult to imagine that they are carried out with modalities substantially different than if the child were working under the supervision of non family members.

### 3.3 Economic and non-economic productive activity

27. A statistical distinction between work that is economic and non-economic in nature offers an alternative way forward in terms of child labour measurement. This distinction has been used in most estimates of child labour produced by international agencies, governments and individual researchers. For example, ILO includes only economically active children in its global estimates, while UNICEF distinguishes in its published estimates between economically active children and children performing non-economic activities (beyond a set hours threshold). Again, the relevance of such a distinction for measuring child labour rests on the degree to which it reflects underlying differences between economic and non-economic work in terms of their specific nature, intensity and impact. The distinction also rests on the implicit, but consolidated, interpretation of the international and national legislation concerning child labour. The current section looks at how economic and non-economic activity differ in the areas indicated above, in order to provide evidence on the nature and relevance of the distinction between economic and non economic activities for child labour measurement.

28. Household chores are part of the normal activities of family members and hence also of children. Participation to household chores is in fact often seen as beneficial for children's upbringing. However, evidence for various countries indicates that if performed for long hours such activities are detrimental to children education,<sup>5</sup> and especially to the education of girls. This offers a strong rationale (based also on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, see next section) to also include statistical standard of child labour the group of children performing household chores to an extent that is damaging for their education. Of course, household chores that are harmful to children's health should also be included, but unfortunately we have at present too little information to go beyond this general statement.

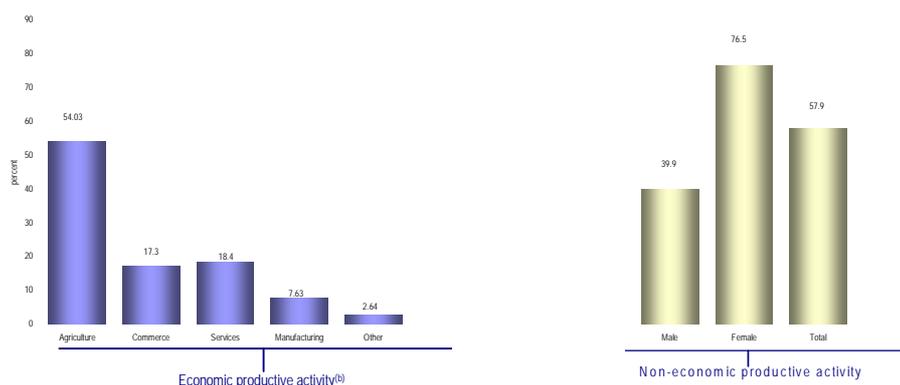
29. The technical distinction between economic and non-economic activities was described in detail in Box 2. Economic activities involve the production of goods and services for sale on the market and the production of goods for own consumption, and can be located either inside or outside the family. Non-economic activities refer to the production of *services* for own consumption, and comprise primarily household chores performed one's own household.<sup>6</sup> Figure 6 illustrates the composition of children's economic activity in Brazil. Agriculture constitutes by far the most important form of economic activity, followed by commerce. Unfortunately, the data do not allow us to break down non-economic activities by activity type. Data do indicate that the performance on non-economic activity is very common, especially among girls.

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<sup>5</sup> - For a detailed discussion refer to UCW (2005) <http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/noneconomicactivities2.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The terms "household chores" and "non-economic activity" are used interchangeably in the remainder of this study.

Figure 6. Main types of economic and non-economic productive activities performed by children



Notes: (a) Estimates refer to the age group 10-15 years; data for the performance of non-economic activity were not available for children aged less than 10 years; (b) Categories are distinct.

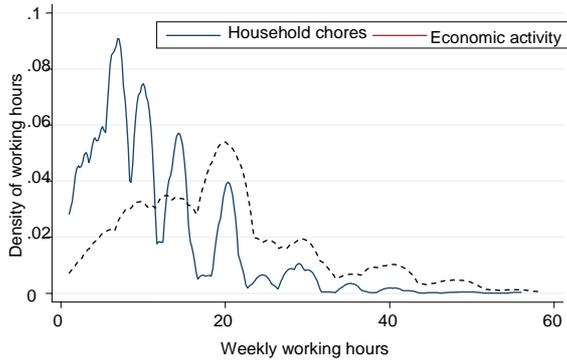
Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

30. One grey area in terms of the distinction of between economic and non-economic activity lies in the categorisation of water fetching, fuelwood collection and other similar activities. These activities constitute production for own household consumption and technically fall within the SNA production boundary (see Box 2), meaning that they are technically economic rather non-economic in nature. But the dividing line between economic and non-economic in cases such as this is thin. Water supply and fuel wood collection are rarely reflected in published estimates of child economic activity and are typically excluded from mention in national child labour legislation. Unfortunately, data on own-account production are not available for Brazil.

31. The level of work intensity, again an important indirect measure of work impact, is very different for economic and non-economic activities in Brazil. Children performing economic activities put in an average of 22.5 hours per week on these activities, while children involved in non-economic activities put in an average of only twelve hours. As shown in Figure 7, the largest cluster of non-economic work is around eight weekly hours, while the largest cluster of economic activity is around 20 weekly hours. The differences in work intensity are even starker when comparing children performing only economic activity, those performing only non-economic activity and those performing both.<sup>7</sup> The first group works an average of 22 hours per week and the second only an average of eleven weekly hours (Table 5). The third group, i.e., those combining both work activities, logs an average of almost 29 weekly hours, of which economic activity accounts for 19 of the total hours and non-economic activity the remaining 10 hours.

<sup>7</sup> It should again be kept in mind that there are two ways of expressing work intensity. The first reflects differences in hours spent in the two work categories, not differences in the working hours of individual children, many of whom work in both economic and non-economic activity. Second looks at the working hours of children in the three mutually-exclusive categories – those performing economic activity only, those performing household chores only and those performing both.

Figure 7. Distribution of weekly hours of economic and non-economic activity



Source : UCW calculation based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

Table 5. Average weekly working hours by work category, age and sex

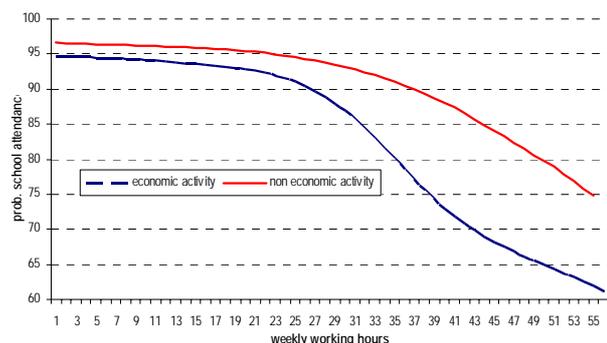
Child age in years	Children working only in economic activity			Children only in non-economic activity			Children working in both economic and non-economic activity		
	Male	female	Total	male	female	Total	male	female	Total
10	16	21.2	16.4	7.4	10.1	9.2	24.1	25.5	24.7
11	18.1	23.6	18.6	7.7	11.2	10	25.4	27.9	26.4
12	18.8	20.8	19	8.2	12.6	11.2	27.3	29.5	28.2
13	21.8	20.4	21.7	8.2	13.3	11.7	28.8	32.9	30.7
14	25.2	30.9	25.7	9.1	15.4	13.4	31.5	35.5	33.4
15	31	33.6	31.3	9.3	17.2	14.7	36.3	40.4	38.2
Total	24.5	27.9	24.9	8.4	13.4	11.8	30.9	34.7	32.6

Source: UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

32. Of most relevance for the purpose of child labour measurement is again the question of whether there are differences between economic and non-economic work in terms of their impact on children’s education outcome. Establishing a strict *causal* relationship between work and school attendance is not possible because of the absence of panel or retrospective data for Brazil, as discussed above. Empirical evidence based on kernel regressions is shown in Figure 8.<sup>8</sup> Regression results indicate that in the case of children performing only non-economic activity, there is apparently no link with school attendance below about 25 hours per week. Above this threshold, longer working time is associated with reduced school attendance, even if children have to work around 40 hours per week to observe a reduction of five percentage points. Different results are obtained for children working only in economic activities. Again, no association with school attendance at low levels of working time is observed, but a negative association appears above 20 working hours per week.

<sup>8</sup> It should be recalled that kernel regressions can be used as a synthetic tool to examine the probabilistic link between work and school attendance, but cannot be used to derive strict causal relationships. Kernel regression results must therefore be interpreted with care.

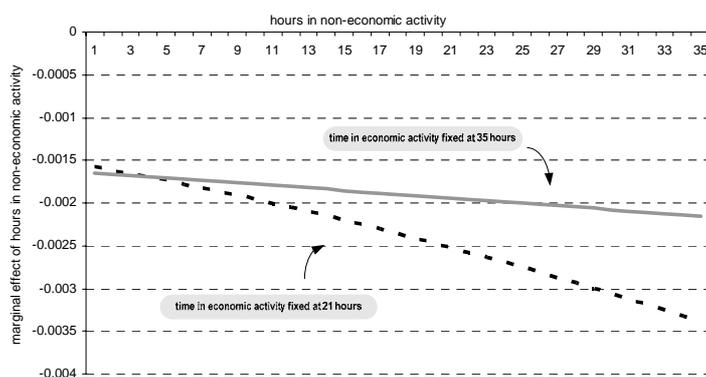
Figure 8. Probability of school attendance by hours in non-economic activity and economic activity only, kernel regression results



Source : UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

33. But isolating the impact of economic activity on school attendance is complicated by the fact that most economically-active children also perform household chores (although the latter activities account for only a small part of their total work time). This means that for the group of children in economic activity, it is important to look at the *composition* as well as the intensity of work. This issue is addressed in Figure 9, which shows the impact of additional time in household chores at any given level of economic activity, making use of a logistic regression. It appears that hours spent in non-economic activity add little to the probability of not attending school with respect to hours spent in economic activities, regardless of the intensity with which economic activity is performed. For economically-active children, therefore, it is their time in economic activity rather than their time in household chores that is relevant in terms of school attendance.

Figure 9. Impact of additional time in non-economic activity at any given level of time in economic activity,<sup>(a)</sup> marginal effects after logistic regression



Notes: (a) Weekly time levels in economic activity depicted here are 21 and 35 hours; however, estimations at other weekly time levels (i.e., 1 hour, 7 hours, 14 hours and 28 hours) yielded similar results.

Source : UCW calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

34. What can be concluded from the preceding discussion concerning the relevance of a measurement approach based on the distinction between economic and non-economic activity? The limited available empirical evidence relating to work composition, intensity and impact offer a number of grounds for proceeding on the basis of this distinction. Non economic activities (household chores), if performed beyond a certain limit, are detrimental to children education. Economic and non-economic activities, however, vary considerably in terms of the actual work tasks they entail for children. They also differ

dramatically in terms of the time burden they place on children – children spend on average over twice as much time in economic activity than in household chores each week. Empirical evidence on impact, though limited, also points to important differences between the two types of work. Time in household chores appears to have little additional impact on school attendance vis-à-vis time in economic activity among (the majority of) working children performing both work types. There should be also an important non-empirical motive for drawing this distinction, is household chores perceived as a normal and even beneficial part of childhood in Brazilian cultural context?

#### 4. MEASURING CHILD LABOUR

35. Three international conventions are of particular relevance as a guide to the statistical measurement of child labour: ILO Convention No. 138, ILO Convention No. 182 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (see Box 1). In what follows, we try to clarify how these international conventions can help defining statistical criteria for the measurement of child labour for two separate age groups: children aged less than 16 years and children aged 16-17 years.

##### 4.1 Measuring child labour among children aged less than 16 years<sup>9</sup>

36. ILO Convention No. 138 (C138) is a good starting point for a discussion on the quantification of child labour in the Brazilian context. C138 calls on State Parties to set a minimum age for admission to “work or employment”; it does not rule out *a priori* any specific form of productive activity from consideration. The general minimum working age in Brazil is set at 16 years, with the exception of apprenticeship, which may be started from 14 years of age.

37. How could child labour be measured in accordance with C138 for children under the general minimum working age of 16 years? The most obvious answer would be to simply include all children spending non-negligible amounts of time each week in any form of productive activity.<sup>10</sup> But such a broad definition would lead to the inclusion of forms of work that are not damaging to children and that could even be beneficial to them. This would in turn translate into an estimate of child labour that would not constitute a relevant policy target (see Table 6). In measuring child labour, decisions are therefore first needed concerning the work categories that should fall within the minimum age rules contained in C138. (It should be again recalled that *legal* decisions in this regard rest largely with Member States within the parameters set out in C138 and are beyond the scope of this paper.)

38. But C138 is not of course the only international labour standard relating to child labour. Two others – ILO Convention No. 182 (C182) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – are of particular relevance. These standards contain two important additional elements pertinent to measurement. First, in C182, the definition of “worst forms of child labour,” includes activities such as child trafficking, child soldiering, commercial sexual exploitation or use in illicit activities that extend beyond the realm of traditional productivity activity captured in C138. But forms of activities such as these present special measurement challenges, and are beyond the

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<sup>9</sup>. The upper age limit reflects that general minimum working age in Brazil. The lower age limit for the estimates presented in this section is 10 years; this reflects the fact that data are not available for child involvement in non-economic activity for children less than this age.

<sup>10</sup> Set here at one hour per week, in line with the international definition of adult employment.

scope of the current paper.<sup>11</sup> Second, and of particular significance for measurement, the notion is introduced in CRC of educational harm as a criterion for child labour. Specifically, CRC requires a child to be protected from performing any work that, *inter alia*, is “likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education.”<sup>12</sup> These stipulations mean that even if a particular category of children’s productive activity were excluded from the minimum age rules of C138, it could still constitute child labour if it were impermissible in accordance with C182 and CRC.

39. In order *not* to be considered child labour for measurement purposes, in other words, children’s work must pass a double screening: first it must be excluded from minimum age rules (C138) and second it must not be harmful to education or constitute an unconditional worst form (CRC and C182). Referring to Figure 10, the first screen involves identifying which categories of children’s work fall within area A, while the second screen involves identifying other impermissible work from among the work categories activities excluded from area A, i.e. distinguishing area B from area C.

Figure 10. Distinguishing child labour from other categories of children’s work, children aged less than 16 years



40. The first screen relates directly back to the discussion in the previous sections in terms of which broad categorisations of children’s productive activity make most sense for the purposes of child labour measurement. Specifically, the question of whether a statistical distinction should be made between economic/non-economic work, or alternatively between family/non-family work, is essentially a question of which work categories should be measured using the C138 minimum age rules, and which work (or activity) categories should be measured only in the light of the additional elements contained in CRC and C182 (again, the scope of application of *legal* provisions in this regard is a separate discussion).

41. The discussion presented in the previous sections suggest that an approach based on a statistical distinction between economic and non-economic activity is easiest to justify, as underlying this distinction are important differences in terms of the composition, intensity and impact of work. Children’s involvement in economic activity is less common than non-economic activity, but this work is performed more intensely and with greater apparent consequences for children’s health and safety, arguing for its inclusion under C138 minimum age rules for measurement purposes. Child involvement in non-

<sup>11</sup> The term “unconditional worst forms of child labour” is sometimes used to refer to those listed in Convention No. 182, Article 3(a) to (c), which do not require any further national determination of whether or not to include them in worst forms of child labour. As such, they do not pose a problem of definition but rather one of measurement. This measurement issue is not addressed in the paper.

<sup>12</sup> C182 targets as a worst forms of child labour, *inter alia*, productive activity “which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children” (C182, Art. 3 (d)) It is for each country to determine nationally the exact list of what to be prohibited for under-18 as this so-called “hazardous work”. This is also a question of fixing the minimum age of 18 years for hazardous work under C138. The CRC recognizes the right of the child to be protected from performing any work that is “likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development” (CRC, Art. 32.1).

economic activity, on the other hand, is much more common (indeed, almost universal), but generally performed much less intensely and with fewer apparent adverse effects on health and safety, arguing for its exclusion from C138 minimum age rules for measurement purposes. Applying the stipulations of CRC, however, would mean that children in this latter group would still be in child labour if this non-economic activity interfered with education (i.e., area C in Figure 10).<sup>13</sup>

42. Another issue that must be considered in measuring child labour is the categorisation of water fetching, fuelwood collection and other own-account production activities. As noted in Section 3 (see Box 2), while these activities are technically economic in nature, they are categorised as non-economic activities in most household surveys and in most published estimates of child involvement in economic activity. The implications of the categorisation of own-account production for child labour measurement are clear: following from the above discussion, including them as an economic activity for measurement purposes means also including them within C138 minimum age rules (i.e., under area A in Figure 10), which in turn means a higher overall number of children in child labour. Unfortunately, data on water fetching and other own-account production are not available in Brazil, meaning that their impact on child labour measurement cannot be explored further. This data gap requires addressing in the design of future child labour surveys.

43. Following the approach set out above, identifying the main components of the child labour population among children aged less than 16 years is a relatively straightforward exercise. For the purposes of measurement, child labourers would comprise *all* children in economic activity (area A in Figure 10) in addition to children performing non-economic activity that interferes with their education (area C in Figure 10).<sup>14</sup> The main measurement challenge arising from this approach lies in identifying non-economic activity harmful to education (i.e., distinguishing areas B and C in Figure 10). Empirical evidence suggests that it is the intensity rather than the nature of household chores that is the main determinant of their impact, though this is an area requiring further investigation. Hours thresholds rather than specific work type can therefore be employed to distinguish harmful from benign non-economic activity for measurement purposes.

Table 6. Estimates of child labour among children aged 10-15 years,<sup>(a)</sup> by measurement approach

Gender	(A) Child involvement in economic activity		(B) Child involvement in non-economic activity only, by hours thresholds <sup>(b)</sup>								(A)+(B) Child labour (by hours threshold considered for non-economic activity)							
	No.	%	≥ 7 hrs		≥ 14 hrs		≥ 21 hrs		≥ 28 hrs		≥ 7 hrs		≥ 14 hrs		≥ 21 hrs		≥ 28 hrs	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	1,714,309	16.4	1,885,620	18.0	627,653	6.0	149,824	1.4	59,910	0.6	3,599,929	34.4	2,341,962	22.4	1,864,133	17.8	1,774,219	16.9
Female	811,774	8.0	5,582,516	55.2	3,080,534	30.5	1,198,233	11.9	706,542	7.0	6,394,290	63.3	3,892,308	38.5	2,010,007	19.9	1,518,316	15.0
Total	2,526,083	12.3	7,468,136	36.3	3,708,187	18.0	1,348,057	6.6	766,452	3.7	9,994,219	48.6	6,234,270	30.3	3,874,140	18.8	3,292,535	16.0

Notes: (a) Children below the age of 10 are not included because data on their involvement in non-economic activity are not available, (b) Only children performing non-economic activity exclusive of economic activity are considered, as those also performing economic activity are already captured under column (A)

Source: UCV calculations based on *Brazil PNAD, 2004*

44. Estimates of child labour for the 10-15 years age group following this approach are presented in Table 6. The first column reports the percentage of children involved in economic activity, while column B reports the percentage of children involved in non-economic activity exclusively by different hours thresholds. The results highlight the importance of the hours threshold selected for non-economic activity. Estimated

<sup>13</sup> Or in the unlikely event it constituted an unconditional worst form, as set out in C182.

<sup>14</sup> Area H, unconditional worst forms, will be discussed separately below.

involvement in non-economic activity decreases from 36 percent at the seven hours threshold to about four percent at the 28 hours threshold. The third column presents estimates of child labour considering different hours threshold only for non-economic activity. The child labour estimates vary greatly by time thresholds for non-economic activity, from 48 percent (7-hour threshold) to 16 percent (28-hour threshold).

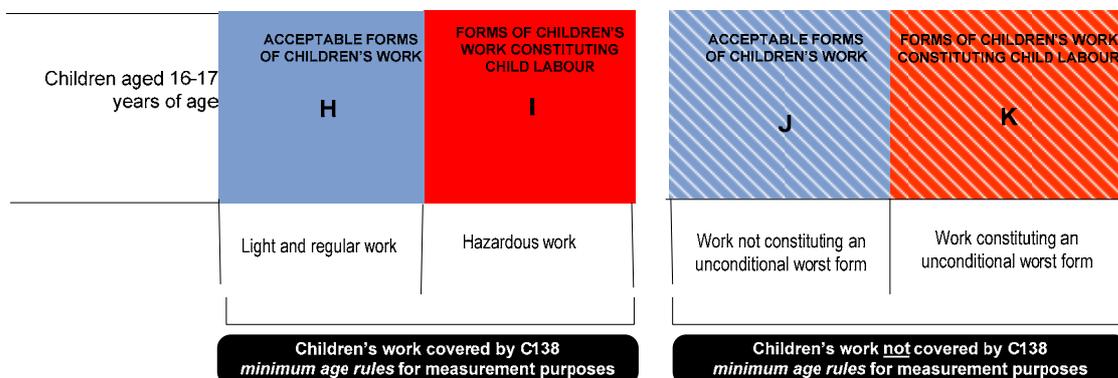
45. The identification of the more appropriate statistical definition of child labour (within the legal framework set by the international conventions) must balance two needs. On the one hand, to use too a broad definition might define too wide a target group for intervention, from both a political and a social point of view. On the other hand, too narrow a definition might contradict the Government objectives in terms of development strategy. Accumulation of human capital, a healthy and productive work force, promoting gender balance, etc. are all objectives whose achievements could be hampered by too narrow a definition. Sound statistical advice linked to country development strategy will help guiding the selection of the most relevant statistical definition of child labour.

#### 4.2 Identifying hazardous work (measuring child labour among 16-17 year-olds)

46. Children aged 16-17 years are above the general minimum age for regular work or employment set out in C138. The Convention nonetheless proscribes the involvement of this group in “any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons.” The stipulations contained in C182 and CRC relating to hazardous work, excessively long work hours and unconditional worst forms, also extend to children aged 16-17 years.

47. Identifying child labour for measurement purposes among this group therefore requires drawing a distinction between “regular” and “hazardous” economic activity, i.e. between areas H and I in Figure 11. Non-economic activity is less pertinent for child labour measurement purposes because 16-17 year-olds are above the minimum schooling leaving age. This means that interference with schooling, the primary criterion for categorising non-economic activity as child labour for measurement purposes (see previous sections), is not relevant. But unconditional worst forms that are non-economic in nature are relevant (i.e., area K in Figure 11); measuring these forms, however, is beyond the scope of the current paper, as discussed earlier.

Figure 11. Distinguishing child labour from other categories of children's work, children aged 16-17 years



48. C182, following from C138, states that the types of work likely to harm the “health, safety or morals of children” shall be “determined by national laws or regulations or by the competent authority, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, taking into consideration relevant international standards...”.

Problems in matching the Brazilian national list of hazardous forms with the industrial classifications used for PNAD 2004 and other surveys mean that it is not possible to reliably estimate children's involvement in nationally-identified hazardous forms. The estimates presented in Table 9 below are based on the ILO/IPEC draft list of hazardous forms used in global child labour estimates, and therefore are indicative only. The table nonetheless suggests that hazardous work among older Brazilian children is cause for concern. Over 372,000 children aged 16-17 years work in occupations or industries included in ILO/IPEC draft list, while an additional 605,000 children in this age group work excessive hours (i.e. 43 or more hours per week).

**Table 7.** Involvement in hazardous work as defined by ILO/IPEC draft list, as percentage of all economically active children aged 16-17 years<sup>(1)</sup>

	Male		Female		Total	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Children in hazardous industries <sup>(2)</sup>	7,7	123.911	0,4	3.307	5,0	127.218
Children in hazardous occupations <sup>(3)</sup>	13,8	221.775	2,6	23.739	9,7	245.514
Children working excessive hours <sup>(4)</sup>	21,7	349.084	28,0	255.755	24,0	604.839
Total children in hazardous work	43,2	694.770	30,9	282.801	38,7	977.571

Notes: (1) Due to difficulties in matching the ILO/IPEC draft list (drawn from the ISCO list) with the occupational codes employed PNAD 2004, the estimates should be considered as indicative only. (2) Hazardous industries in ILO/IPEC draft list are: mining, quarrying and construction. (3) Exclusive of children also in hazardous industries. Hazardous occupations in ILO/IPEC draft list are: optical and elect equip operators; health associated professional; nursing midwife; protective services; forestry and related workers; fishery, hunters and trappers; miners, shot fires, stone cutters and carvers; building frame and related workers; building finishers; metal moulders, welders, and related workers; blacksmith, tool makers and related workers; machinery mechanics and fitters; electrical and electronic equip mechanics and fitters; precision workers in metal; potters, glass makers and related workers; mining and mineral processing plant operators; metal processing plant op.; glass, ceramics and related plant op.; wood processing & papermaking plant op.; chemical processing plant op.; power production and related plan operators; metal and mineral machine operators; chemical machine operators; rubber mach. op; wood products mach. op.; textile, fur, leather mach. op.; food mach. op.; assemblers; other mach. op.; motor vehicle driver; agric and other mobile plant op.; ships' deck crew and related workers; street vendors and related workers; shoe cleaning other street services; messengers, porters, doorkeepers, and related workers; garbage collectors and related workers; agric. fishery and related workers; mining and construction labourers; and transport and freight handlers. (4) Exclusive of children in hazardous industries and/or in hazardous occupations. Excessive hours defined as  $\geq 43$  hours per week.

Source: UCW calculations based on Brazil PNAD, 2004

49. The issue of hazardous work is not of course only relevant for older children. Indeed, hazardous work represents an even greater threat to younger children and therefore its measurement among children below the general minimum working age is also important.<sup>15</sup> Estimates based on the draft ILO/IPEC list, shown in Table 10, suggest that incidence of hazardous work is commonplace among younger children. Almost 14,000 children aged 5-9 years, 47,000 children aged 10-12 years and 193,000 children aged 13-15 years work in either industries or occupations included in the ILO/IPEC draft list. Working excessive hours is also very common, particularly among 13-15 year-olds.

**Table 8.** Involvement in hazardous work as defined by ILO/IPEC draft list, as percentage of all economically active children aged 5-15 years<sup>(1)</sup>

	5-9 years		10-12 years		13-15 years	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Children in hazardous industries <sup>(2)</sup>	0,3	795	0,9	6.845	2,9	51.710
Children in hazardous occupations <sup>(3)</sup>	5,2	13.198	5,4	39.663	7,9	141.267
Children working excessive hours <sup>(4)</sup>	0,0	0	1,6	11.941	9,4	168.981
Total children in hazardous work	5,5	13.993	8,0	58.449	20,2	361.958

Notes: (1) Due to difficulties in matching the ILO/IPEC draft list (drawn from the ISCO list) with the occupational codes employed PNAD 2004, the estimates should be considered as indicative only. (2) Hazardous industries in ILO/IPEC draft list are: mining, quarrying and construction. (3) Exclusive of children also in hazardous industries. Hazardous occupations in ILO/IPEC draft list are: optical and elect equip operators; health associated professional; nursing midwife; protective services; forestry and related workers; fishery, hunters and trappers; miners, shot fires, stone cutters and carvers; building frame and related workers; building finishers; metal moulders, welders, and related workers; blacksmith, tool makers and related workers; machinery mechanics and fitters; electrical and electronic equip mechanics and fitters; precision workers in metal; potters, glass makers and related workers; mining and mineral processing plant operators; metal processing plant op.; glass, ceramics and related plant op.; wood processing & papermaking plant op.; chemical processing plant op.; power production and related plan operators; metal and mineral machine operators; chemical machine operators; rubber mach. op; wood products mach. op.; textile, fur, leather mach. op.; food mach. op.; assemblers; other mach. op.; motor vehicle driver; agric and other mobile plant op.; ships' deck crew and related workers; street vendors and related workers; shoe cleaning other street services; messengers, porters, doorkeepers, and related workers; garbage collectors and related workers; agric. fishery and related workers; mining and construction labourers; and transport and freight handlers. (4) Exclusive of children in hazardous industries and/or in hazardous occupations. Excessive hours defined as  $\geq 43$  hours per week.

Source: UCW calculations based on Brazil PNAD, 2004

<sup>15</sup>

ILO Convention No. 182 calls on each Member state to take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM GOVERNMENT

50. The preceding sections have examined a number of key questions surrounding development of a statistical standard for child labour, drawing on empirical evidence from Brazil. Four questions were of particular importance in this context; these questions and major conclusions relating to each summarised briefly below.

- (i) *Should family and non-family work be treated differently 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 concerning work composition, intensity and impact did not, on balance, indicate the family/non-family distinction is relevant for the purposes of child labour measurement in the Brazilian context. The differences in the composition and the intensity of family and non-family work primarily reflected underlying differences between economic activity and household chores performed *within* the family. And, while there was some evidence suggesting that family work posed a lesser obstacle to school attendance, there was no evidence that work within the family was less hazardous than work outside it. Indeed, if anything, the evidence pointed in the opposite direction.
- (ii) *How should non-economic activity (i.e., household chores) be treated in child labour measurement?* The empirical evidence suggested that a distinction between economic and non-economic activity for the purposes child labour measurement is relevant, as underlying this distinction are important differences in terms of the composition, intensity and impact of work. Children’s involvement in economic activity is less common than non-economic activity in Brazil, but this work is performed more intensely and with greater apparent consequences for children’s health and safety. Child involvement in non-economic activity, on the other hand, is much more common (indeed, almost universal) in the country, but is performed much less intensely and with fewer apparent adverse effects on health, safety and education. The empirical evidence did, however, indicate the household chores interfere with schooling when performed intensively, which, applying the stipulations of CRC, would argue for their inclusion in child labour measurement beyond a relatively high weekly hours threshold.

Feedback from national counterparts underscored the importance of the gender dimension of child labour, and of the need for statistical measures reflecting sex-based differences in both the involvement and nature of work performed by children. Consideration of household chores is particularly important in this context, as girls typically shoulder a larger part of the burden for this type of work. Its exclusion, therefore, serves to understate girls’ involvement in child labour relative to that of boys.
- (iii) *How should water collection (and other own-account production of goods) be classified for the purpose of child labour measurement?* Data on water and fuelwood fetching and other own-account production are not available in Brazil, meaning that their impact on child labour measurement could not be looked in detail. This is a data gap that requires addressing in the design of future child labour surveys. There is a need for consensus on how water collection and other own-account production of goods should be categorised for child labour measurement within and across countries, particularly in light of the fact that these activities are also performed disproportionately by girls in many societies .
- (iv) *How should hazardous work be measured?* Data limitations mean that the number of 16-17 year-olds in hazardous work cannot be adequately measured in Brazil, even

with the national listing of hazardous forms. This is largely the product of difficulties in matching the country's national listing with the standardised three-digit International Standard of Occupations (ISCO-88) classifications used in the PNAD 2004 and other child labour survey.

Feedback from national counterparts stressed the need to tailor survey instruments more closely to the specific forms of child labour identified as local priorities, in order to quantify involvement in hazardous forms, and to design and target policy interventions accordingly. Indeed, in the context of Brazil where overall levels of child involvement in economic activity are now low, obtaining solid quantitative data on hazardous forms was seen as a particular priority.

51. A fifth question, not raised in the technical paper but in the consultations with national counterparts, concerned the possibility of identifying different standards for measuring child labour based on the country's level of socio-economic development.

