

**International Labour Office**  
**International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour**  
**(IPEC)**  
**Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour**  
**(SIMPOC)**

**SIMPOC External Advisory**  
**Committee on Child Labour Statistics (SEAC)**

Geneva, 1-2 November 2004

Advice Record

The SIMPOC External Advisory Committee on Child Labour Statistics (SEAC) held its fourth meeting in Geneva on 1-2 November 2004. Twelve of the fourteenth SEAC members were in attendance.<sup>1</sup> Some 25 persons participated in the meeting including observers, representatives of donor countries and staff members of IPEC (see attached list of participants). The Committee was chaired by Kaushik Basu. Farhad Mehran continued to serve as facilitator to the Committee. The provisional agenda was adopted with two modifications regarding the order of presentation in technical session III and provision for an introductory statement on that session in day one (see attached agenda of the meeting).

In his opening address, Frans Röselaers, Director of IPEC, thanked the Committee members for their continued commitment to provide valuable expert advice on child labour statistics. He stressed the crucial role of SEAC in helping IPEC/SIMPOC to fulfil its mandate to formulate draft international standards on child labour statistics for submission to the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference Labour Statisticians (ICLS), planned for 2008. He also briefed the Committee on the staffing implication of the ILO decentralization policy, and the effort of SIMPOC in intensifying inter-agency cooperation, in particular with UNESCO and UNICEF in Africa and with the UN Statistical Institute for Asia & Pacific in that region. He appealed to donors for new resources to meet the continued demand for national household surveys on child labour, especially in countries that have not conducted any SIMPOC survey, or have no regular labour force survey programmes to which child labour modules can be attached. Finally, he mentioned the need for the continuation of SEAC beyond November 2005 when its funding expires.

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<sup>1</sup> Vijay Verma was unable to attend, and Gareth Jones resigned from SEAC membership for personal reasons.

## **SIMPOC activities**

In the follow-up presentation, Frank Hagemann provided further details on the activities carried out and the outputs achieved since the last meeting of SEAC six months ago. He particularly mentioned the approval of the project funded by the US Department of Labor for developing international standards on child labour statistics for consideration by the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS, and laid out the steps planned toward that Conference. He briefed the Committee on the recent major publications of SIMPOC, including a textbook and a series of manuals on child labour statistics published in fall 2004. He also reported on the 263 SIMPOC surveys carried out so far around the world, 56 of which were national household surveys, the core instrument of SIMPOC. He described the methods that some countries have adopted to ensure sustainability of child labour statistics (lowering age limits for data collection on economic characteristics in surveys and censuses, incorporation of child labour modules in national labour force surveys, and, in rare cases, self-financing of independent national child labour surveys), but warned about their limits. He further informed the Committee on some of the current and future activities of SIMPOC, in particular, the development of a typology of bonded labour through medical studies for measuring pain, and research on the economics of the demand side of child labour, namely, on wages and productivity. He also reported on the intensified training efforts of SIMPOC, new instruments of data collection (e.g., school survey) and the research on non-economic activities.

In the discussion that followed, questions were raised about the effect of the Committee's advice, in particular, in relation to the set of SIMPOC manuals, for which considerable efforts have been made by Committee members to provide written comments and suggestions for modification and improvement. In response, Frank Hageman reiterated the importance that IPEC attaches to the Committee's advice and proposed to submit to SEAC at its next session a note describing how SIMPOC has addressed the advice received from the Committee.

## **ICLS**

The meeting proceeded in line with the agreed agenda and Farhad Mehran briefly described the history and structure of the International Conference of Labour Statistics as the body that sets international standards in the field of labour statistics. It meets on average every five years, the first in 1923 and the next, the 18<sup>th</sup>, tentatively scheduled for 2008. The conference is convened by the ILO Governing Body and organized by the ILO Bureau of Statistics. It includes statisticians from all member states and representatives from workers' and employers' organizations. It is generally preceded by a meeting of experts, also convened by the ILO Governing Body, to review the ILO preparatory work on the subject and provide guidelines on the finalisation of the report before submission to the Conference for adoption of standards.

Following this introduction, Bijoy Raychaudhuri presented the elements of the new SIMPOC project on preparation for the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS. He described the development and project objectives and the desirable properties of the technical report and its accompanying draft resolution, in particular, its core element, the

definition of child labour for measurement purposes and the need for providing sufficient flexibility for its application in various national circumstances. He also stressed the need for active collaboration with the ILO Bureau of Statistics, and other advisory and consultative partners including SEAC and regional dialogues and the setting up of a Web-based forum and an ILO Internal Task Force. He listed a number of outputs expected from the project and proposed a strategy for the implementation of the project.

In the discussion that followed, comments were made on the nature and contents of the draft resolution. Based on the various suggestions, the following preliminary outline could be drawn:

- Objectives of child labour statistics
- Scope of a national programme on child labour statistics
- Concept of child labour
- Definition of child labour for measurement purposes
- Elements of the data collection programmes
- Particular measurement issues concerning children
- Statistical classifications and disaggregations
- Analytical issues for understanding child labour, its causes and its life-cycle effect

It was mentioned that the scope of child labour statistics need not be limited to non-school activities as there are exploitative schooling situations in some countries where time spent at school and sometime tutoring after school are so excessive that they have harmful effects on children. Another aspect is violence at school, clearly detrimental to children's physical and mental health. The separate issue of the relationship between child labour and teachers' truancy was also mentioned. The need to draw on the expertise of the ILO Bureau of Statistics was reiterated, and in this regard, it was emphasized that a collaborative project with the ILO Bureau of Statistics should be formalized.

### **Non-economic activities of children**

General agreement had been reached at earlier SEAC meetings that the boundary of child labour can go beyond economic activity in the sense of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and may include certain non-economic activities variously labelled as household chores or domestic work. Diane Steele made a presentation on what is the current way of measuring non-economic activities and made suggestions for a methodology to be used to determine a broader range of activities in which children actually participate. She suggested that the development of an appropriate definition of non-economic activities to be included as child labour requires further detailed information on the activities in which children are engaged. She demonstrated additional dimensions for a typology, including gender and location, by showing results from some Time Use Surveys showing the significance of unpaid domestic work and unpaid care services in relation to economic activities and time spent in learning activities among children particularly girls. This can be based on the International Classification for Time Use Statistics (ICATUS), elaborated by the United Nations Statistics Division, in which two major codes are particularly relevant, namely, Major Code 06 – Providing unpaid domestic services

for own final use within household, and Major Code 07 – Providing unpaid care giving services to household members.

Edilberto Loaiza presented numerical results on the relationship between hours of household chores and school attendance for different categories of children, in particular, those not in child labour and those in child labour engaged in household chores. The results of most country studies based on the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) data show a declining rate of school attendance with higher hours of household chores for virtually all categories of children. Some instructive results were presented on the percentage difference in school attendance between those not in child labour and those in child labour engaged in household chores, in some cases the differential being almost zero or in the opposite direction. These last results were specifically observed among children attending school at grades below their corresponding age. No precise threshold on the number of hours of household chores could be concluded from the analysis, but it was suggested by Mr. Loaiza that 28 hours of household chores per week could be considered as a strict conservative value for inclusion as child labour (UNICEF for example is already using this cut-off point for their own monitoring of child labour around the world). An alternative lower value of 20 hours per week was also suggested by him based on the substantial changes observed in school attendance after this duration. The compound threshold of combined economic and non-economic activity was recognized as an issue in need of further research and analysis.

The discussion that followed the two presentations could be summarized into three broad conclusions:

- Recognizing that the SNA production boundary already includes a number of unpaid activities in which many children are engaged such as gathering firewood and carrying water over long distances, a lot can be done by properly measuring these activities in surveys and correctly classifying them as economic activities.
- With regard to the definition of household chores, it was agreed that Time Use Surveys targeted at children's activities would provide valuable information for developing such a definition applicable to children. The surveys would be methodological in nature, and need not be large and fully representative of the nation.
- With regard to the specification of thresholds, it was mentioned that various options should be considered including combinations of hours worked and hours of household chores, and other criteria that may not be based on hours. Several exploratory tools were suggested in particular (a) qualitative cognitive inquiries; (b) experimental designs which compare children engaged in different activities with control groups; and (c) studies that re-measure with more precision the effect of certain activities of children on their school performance, and on their physical and mental health.

### **Light work**

ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum age for admission to employment stipulates (Article 7.1) that national laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons as of 12 or 13 years of age on light work which is (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training

programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received. For the purpose of calculating ILO global estimates of child labour, light work by children 12 to 14 years old was defined as “work which is not hazardous in nature and which does not exceed 14 hours per week.”<sup>2</sup> The choice of the cut-off point was based on ILO Convention No. 33 concerning the age for admission of children to non-industrial employment that sets two hours per day, on either school days or holidays, as the maximum for light work for children over 12 years of age (Art 3 (1) c).

Based on data from SIMPOC surveys conducted in Brazil (2001), Cambodia (2001) and Bangladesh (2002-2003), Furio Rosati examined the relationship between the length of the working day and children’s health with the view of identifying thresholds or a methodology that would help to define light work. He found that the effects of working hours and risks of injury or illness are well defined and stable. In particular, he reported that “one additional hour a day of work raises the probability of injury by 0.5 percentage points in Brazil and by 2 percentage points in the other countries.” Using the estimated relationship between weekly hours of work and probability of injury, and setting as acceptable risk one standard deviation below the observed mean rate of occurrence of injuries or illnesses, he finds the corresponding hours of work threshold to be about 14, in line with the value set for the ILO global estimates.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, questions were raised regarding the use of the occurrence rate as the basis of analysis. It was argued that the nature of the phenomenon implies that the longer the hours of work, the higher the exposure to injury, and therefore the higher the occurrence rate of injury. The search for a threshold should thus be concerned with detecting any non-linearity of the relationship, if it exists. For this purpose, it was proposed to graph injury rate per hour of work against weekly hours of work using the existing data. Regarding the calculation of the injury rate, a question was raised on how to incorporate “severity”, such as cumulative injuries.

Conclusions were reached on a number of particular issues:

- Initially, one must aim at agreeing on a methodology that leads to the identification of a threshold on light work, rather than directly searching for a threshold value. It is important that the resulting threshold value(s) not be sensitive to small variations in the elements of the methodology.
- The threshold on permissible light work may vary not only with the age of the child, but also with the branch of economic activity, and perhaps on the time of the year, namely, school period or vacation period. The importance of setting thresholds so as to give equal recognition to the work of girls was also emphasized.
- The threshold criterion may involve not only hours of work covering both economic and non-economic work, but also the combined hours of work and schooling.
- The threshold methodology should take into account the difficulties in survey reporting on hours of work, well known for adults and probably compounded for children.

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<sup>2</sup> International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), *Every Child Counts. New Global Estimates on Child Labour*, ILO, Geneva, April 2002, p. 32.

## Hazardous work

Hazardous work is identified as one of the worst forms of child labour. Both ILO Conventions No. 138 (Article 3(1)) and No. 182 (Article 3(d)) prohibit “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 [less than 18 years]”.

ILO Recommendation No. 190 further specifies that in this context consideration should be given, inter alia, to: (a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; (b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; (c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; (d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health; (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

For the purpose of calculating ILO global estimates of child labour, hazardous work by children 5 to 17 years old was defined as (1) any work in hazardous industries and occupations and (2) work of long duration (43 hours or more per week) in non-hazardous industries or occupations. Hazardous industries and occupations were defined to include mining and construction, as well as activities in certain occupations and processes that expose children to hazards, or involving certain hazardous agents and products, or prohibited on the basis of hazards relating to the physical environment.<sup>3</sup>

An intervention made by Susan Gunn (ILO/IPEC), in a session organized by Deborah Levison, it was mentioned that data on hazardous work among children are needed not only for statistical purposes but also for advocacy and, more importantly, for setting priorities in the type of employment or work among children that should be first prohibited and abolished. Another issue discussed was the need to balance between a quantitative approach in identifying hazardous work of children and a qualitative approach that would help to understand the elements that make the child work hazardous. Attention was also drawn on serious gender bias that may occur if focus is only made on hazardous occupations disregarding hazardous non-economic activities many of which involve girls.

In line with these considerations, the following suggestions were made:

- Review the available SIMPOC survey results on hazardous work among children and, where it exists, the country lists of hazardous occupations and activities drawn for national legislation purposes.
- Based on this review, examine the feasibility of defining hazardous work (for the purpose of setting international standards in the field of child labour statistics) as a set of hazardous occupations and activities satisfying the broad criteria stipulated in ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 and ILO Recommendation No. 190. The hazardous occupations may be determined among the three-digit occupations listed in the International

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<sup>3</sup> IPEC, op. cit. Appendix 3, Hazardous occupations and processes in national legislation, pp. 57-58.

Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88). The hazardous activities may be determined in part among the activities listed in the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC Rev. 3). In addition strong priority was also given to the consideration of hazardous non-economic activities, and for these activities other systems of classification may have to be used.

- If the proposal is considered feasible, establish an ILO committee of experts in statistics and in occupational health and safety to draw the international list of hazardous occupations and activities as indicated above. The Committee would also identify against each occupation or activity, where relevant, the condition under which the occupation or activity would be hazardous for children. The resulting set of conditions could then be analysed to formulate a general definition of hazardous work of children and perhaps also to identify a battery of questions that would supplement the standard questions on occupation and branch of economic activity and help the identification of hazardous occupations and activities of children in national household surveys.

### **Next Committee meeting**

The next Committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for 9-10 May 2005. Committee members who were absent or unable to confirm these dates at the meeting are requested to communicate their availability as soon as possible.

Following the end of the one-year mandate of Kaushik Basu as Chair of SEAC, and his desire for not extending it, Leith L. Dunn was elected as new Chair for the next two meetings of the Committee. Committee members expressed their gratitude to Kaushik Basu for his serious and effective conduct of the deliberations of the Committee, and for his valuable contributions during and in-between Committee sessions.

In his closing remarks, Frans Röselaers thanked the Committee members for their valuable participation and expressed his satisfaction on the changed format of the SEAC meeting in which provisions were made for more reflective and interactive participation of members, a format that will continue for future meetings. He reiterated his earlier remark about the need for SEAC's advice beyond 2005, and hoped the donors would consider additional opportunities for contributing funds not only for SEAC future activities, but also for emerging demands from numerous countries on conducting child labour surveys and studies on the worst forms of child labour.

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**ON CHILD LABOUR STATISTICS (SEAC)**

**4th MEETING**

**1-2 November 2004**

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**ILO Headquarters**  
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**1-2 November 2004**

**Preliminary Agenda**

<b>MONDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2004</b>
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0900 – 0930

**Registration of Participants**  
**Coffee & refreshments**

0930 – 0945

**Official Welcome**  
*Frans Röselaers, ILO, Geneva*

0945 – 1000

**Introduction of SEAC members and observers**

1000 – 1015

**Adoption of Agenda**  
*Farhad Mehran, ILO, Geneva*

1015 – 1200

<b>Technical Session I: SIMPOC today and the roadmap towards the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS</b>
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- Presentation Ia: Update on activities & developments of the past half year plus an outlook on future perspectives  
*Frank Hagemann, ILO, Geneva*
- Presentation Ib: The new SIMPOC project on ICLS preparations  
*Bijoy Raychaudhuri, ILO, Bangkok*
- Committee discussion

1200 – 1330

**Lunch Break**

1330 – 1600

<b>Technical session II: Child labour and non-economic activities of children</b>
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- Presentation IIa: Measuring children's non-economic activities  
*Diane Steele, World Bank, Washington DC*

- Presentation IIb: Measurement of household chores as child labour via household surveys  
*Edilberto Loaiza, UNICEF, New York*
- Committee discussion

1600 – 1615

**Coffee Break**

1615 – 1730

**Advice of the Committee***Facilitator: Farhad Mehran, ILO, Geneva*

- Advice on sessions I and II

**TUESDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2004**

0900 – 0930

**Coffee & Refreshments**

0930 – 1200

**Technical session III: Child labour and light work and hazardous work of children**

- Presentation IIIa: Impact of working time on children's health  
*Furio Rosati, UCW, Rome*
- Committee discussion on the distinction between light, hazardous and non-hazardous work of children. Introduction and facilitation by  
*Deborah Levison, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis*

1200 – 1330

**Lunch Break**

1330 – 1500

**Technical session III (cont)**

1500 – 1515

**Coffee break**

1515 – 1645

**Advice of the Committee***Facilitator: Farhad Mehran, ILO, Geneva*

- Review of Advice of SEAC's first three meetings
- Review of draft advice of 1 Nov sessions
- Advice on technical session III
- Next SEAC meeting.

1645 – 1700

**Closing Remarks***Frans Röselaers, ILO, Geneva*