

**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, 9-10 May 2005

Advice Record

The SIMPOC External Advisory Committee on Child Labour Statistics (SEAC) held its fifth meeting in Geneva on 9-10 May 2005. Nine of the thirteenth SEAC members were in attendance.<sup>1</sup> In total, 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 Leith Dunn, elected as new Chair at the previous session of the Committee for the next two meetings, following the one-year mandate of Kaushik Basu. Farhad Mehran continued to serve as facilitator to the Committee. The provisional agenda was adopted with two modifications: interchange of the order of presentation of technical sessions II and IV; and provision for a special closed session of the core members of the Committee at the end of the first day (see attached agenda of the meeting).

In his welcoming statement, Guy Thijs, IPEC, thanked the Committee members on behalf of the ILO for their continued commitment to provide valuable expert advice on child labour statistics. He briefed the Committee members on the current reorganisation of IPEC within the ILO structure, and its new link with the ILO's Infocus Programme on Promoting the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. He reviewed some of the more important achievements of SIMPOC to date, including the vast survey experience accumulated, and the successful inter-agency cooperation in promoting child labour statistics in the world. He also announced that with the forthcoming completion of the rapid assessment manual and training kit for SIMPOC surveys, all SIMPOC methodological and training materials would be available. He then highlighted some of the challenges ahead, in particular, the production of new global trends on the evolution of child labour, due in 2006, and the preparation of draft international standards on child labour statistics for submission to the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), planned for 2008. He reiterated the importance of SEAC's advice in the work of SIMPOC and mentioned the plans for the extension of SEAC's mandate till 2008.

**SIMPOC activities and the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS**

In the follow-up presentation, Frank Hagemann provided details on SIMPOC's activities and developments since the last meeting of SEAC six months ago, and highlighted some of the future challenges. He mentioned that the key elements of the preparatory work for the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS were the definitional issues concerning: (a) the boundary of non-economic activities falling

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<sup>1</sup> Kaushik Basu, Edilberto Loaiza, Albert Motivans and Diane Steele were unable to attend.

within the scope of child labour; (b) the refinement of thresholds for separating light work from child labour; (c) the identification of appropriate indicators for hazardous work; and (d) the development of measurement tools for national-level estimation of the worst forms of child labour. He mentioned about the urgent need for supplementing funding to carry out the necessary technical studies, to hold a tripartite meeting of experts, to establish an international expert group on indicators of hazardous work, and to extend the mandate of SEAC, up to 2008, with meetings at least on an annual basis.

He detailed the survey work of SIMPOC to date: (a) 56 national child surveys; (b) more than 80 rapid assessments in collaboration with UNICEF; (c) 110 area and sector specific base-line surveys to identify target groups for technical cooperation projects; and (d) 80 other surveys including surveys of employers, school surveys and surveys of street children. He also reported that some 230 survey reports were now posted in the website, with 46 new ones since the last SEAC meeting six months ago. The website was being enriched with country profiles and new tools for on-line data access and analysis (Nesstar), networking (International Household Survey Network), and links with data repositories (UCW in Rome and IPEC-Info in Latin America).

He described the efforts made by SIMPOC in training activities to achieve sustainability of the survey programmes. He listed some of the countries that were conducting national child labour surveys without or with limited SIMPOC assistance. Future training activities would focus more on data analysis, the area identified as requiring more intensive national development.

Finally, he reported on the challenges ahead, in particular, the plans for producing new global trends, the synergy to be capitalized by the collaboration with ILO's InFocus Programme on the Declaration, and the difficulties to be faced with the current precarious staffing situation.

In the discussion that followed, SIMPOC was commended for its training activities and achievements in improving national survey capabilities. Questions were raised with regard to the geographical distribution of SIMPOC activities and the coverage of some of the most populated countries in the world. SIMPOC was requested to improve its on-line data dissemination mechanism, in particular, with regard to documentation and data quality assessment. On documentation, the earlier advice made by SEAC was re-iterated, in particular, on the need for making available to data users: a description of the survey coverage and the sampling and estimation procedures; the questionnaire in language(s) of country as well as the English translation; and the codebook of response categories of survey questions and of any derived variables. On evaluation, it was agreed that detailed assessment of data quality was not feasible, but alternative proposals could be considered, for example, providing a summary for all the surveys of the availability of data and of various forms of documentation, perhaps in the form of a grid on the SIMPOC website. Construction of quality indicators on the basis of interviewers' assessment at the end of each interview or respondent's self-reporting on the difficulty of randomly selected questionnaire items was encouraged. Finally, Committee members reiterated their earlier statement on the importance of close collaboration between STAT and SIMPOC in preparing the draft resolution on child labour statistics for submission to the 18th ICLS tentatively scheduled for 2008.

### **SIMPOC's Children questionnaire**

Marek Fuchs, ILO Consultant, presented his preliminary remarks on the child questionnaire of SIMPOC's national child labour survey. He reviewed some of the theoretical knowledge on the cognitive aspects of interviewing children and stressed the fact that the question-answer process that generates factual and behavioral information cannot be assessed independently from the cultural and social background of the sample under study. There are,

however, some basic results: (a) children below certain ages cannot hold satisfactory survey interviews due to lack of cognitive capacities; and (b) additional sources of errors in survey interviews of children emanate from satisficing behaviour and lack of working memory. In particular, children have difficulties dealing with long reference periods, negatively formulated questions, and ambiguous question wordings, for example, in connection with the use of the logical operator *or*.

He further analysed SIMPOC's children questionnaire in terms of sequence of questioning (column-wise versus case-wise), choice of words and question formulation (e.g., *payment in-kind*, alternation of questions formulated in past and present tenses), reference periods (e.g., *one week, one year, school-year*) or hidden reference periods (e.g., *often, ever, more recent*), and answer categories (list to be read or not) and multiple answer categories (their identification on the questionnaire and the indication of the number of possible categories to be marked).

In the discussion that followed, considerable attention was devoted to the interviewing environment and the degree of flexibility that should be allowed for the country to adapt the SIMPOC questionnaire to national conditions, and, within a country, the degree of flexibility that could be tolerated with respect to interviewers in the administration of the questionnaire on the sampled children. In this respect, different degrees of flexibility were identified. At one extreme was the full standardization of interviewer behaviour with verbatim question formulations. At the other extreme was a completely unstructured interview process in which a free dialogue took place between the interviewer and the respondent, at the end of which the interviewer checked the sequence of answer categories of the questionnaire on the basis of the information obtained during the interview. This flexible approach could only be successful in getting useable, quality data if especially trained interviewers were used.

In between these extremes, a number of intermediary interviewing protocols could be envisaged, for example, the provision of alternative question wordings to be used when the original wording was not performing, or the provision of standard definitions of the more difficult terms for use by the interviewer when needed.

It was agreed that SIMPOC should develop a new improved children questionnaire to better take into account the cognitive capacities of the target children. In this regard, it was suggested that initially the new questionnaire should address only children 10 years old and over. Subsequently, a separate and shorter questionnaire for children below 10 years of age should be developed.

### **Unconditional worst forms of child labour**

Michaëlle de Cock, ILO Consultant, presented her work on the development of methodologies for identifying and analysing bonded child labour, a form of forced labour and one of the specific categories of unconditional worst forms of child labour identified in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182. For the purpose of the study, a bonded child was defined as "any child worker in a situation in which neither he/she nor his/her parents (or guardians) have the power of decision or control over his/her work or his/her living conditions." Children might be in bondage alone or as part of the whole family. They might enter bondage by birth as in traditional slavery or by the debt incurred by their parents or relatives, or by other means such as being offered or sold from one master to another, or exchanged for food and shelter by their parents. Excluded from the scope of the study were situations like forced marriage (not a labour relation), forced begging (not an economic activity) and forced prison work (not resulting from bondage).

A methodology was presented for identifying children in bonded labour on the basis of a scoring scheme (from 0 to 3) on the different aspects of loss of freedom in terms of choice of work, choice of employer, freedom to leave the employer, and freedom to leave the workplace. A single "3" would qualify the child as in bondage. Information on these elements as well as other dimensions of bondage (working conditions, rights, violence, ignorance, and isolation) are collected through a questionnaire administered by an investigator on the basis of semi-structured interviews. Additional data were collected on the vulnerability of the child (economic situation of the family, relationships within the family, etc.) and the liberation mechanisms in the case of ex-victims.

Various methods of data analysis were also presented for examining, in particular, the correlation between the various dimensions of bondage and the factors of vulnerability, and for assessing their differential importance in terms of gender (boys vs girls), place of residence (urban vs rural), and type of activity (domestic work vs agriculture).

In the discussion that followed clarifications were sought on the distinction between forced child labour and bonded child labour, and proposals were made to consider for analytical purposes the measurement of the degree of bondedness as opposed to a simple dichotomy between bonded and not-bonded situations. Proposals were also made for considering non-equal weights or non-linear scores when analysing the different dimensions of bondage. Finally, it was stressed that a distinction should be drawn between a survey methodology that primarily aims at estimating the number of children in bonded labour and one in which the main objective is to study the phenomenon. The former demands higher degree of survey representativity, while the latter is more demanding in terms of data requirements. The committee encouraged SIMPOC to continue the development of survey methodologies to measure and analyse the unconditional worst forms of child labour at the country level.

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

This topic was discussed in two parts. The first part, presented by Scott Lyon, UCW Project, Rome, focused on the concepts and definitions of non-market economic activities and non-economic activities of children, and the measurement problems involved. The second part, presented by Furio Rosati, UCW Project, Rome, dealt with the analysis of the effect of children's non-economic activities, in particular, household chores, on school attendance and health, with the view to find a cut-off point on working hours above which household chores carried out by children should be considered as "child labour" for statistical purposes.

The proposed conceptual framework for measuring children's "work activity" related to the production boundary of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and went beyond it as shown in the diagram below:

#### Children's "work activity":

1. Economic activity (falling inside SNA production boundary)
  - 1.1 Market activity (production of goods and services primarily intended for sale on the market)
  - 1.2 Own account production of goods
2. Non-economic activity (falling outside SNA production boundary)
  - 2.1 Housework (personal and domestic services produced for own consumption within households)

Examples of own-account production of goods were: collection of firewood, transport of water, production of baskets or mats, or dairy products such as butter or cheeses for own

consumption. Examples of housework were: cleaning and maintenance of own dwelling, repair and servicing of household durables or other goods such as own vehicle, preparation and service of meals at home, raising and training of own children, caring of sick, infirm or old household members, transporting members of the household or their goods.

What was often currently referred to as “household chore” was essentially a combination of “own-account production” and “housework” in the sense described above. Adequate survey instruments should be developed to distinguish between the two components and measure them separately.

The review of survey questionnaires indicated that only one included SNA consistent questions on SNA own-account production (India, Social-Economic Survey). In the discussion that followed it was proposed to review additional datasets and data collection instruments including time-use surveys. A proposal was also made to develop a pilot survey module covering non-market work for field testing independently or as part of an existing national household survey programme.

The effects of children’s non-economic activities on school attendance and health outcome was analysed using cross-section data as neither retrospective data nor appropriate panel studies were available.

Two indicators were used for health outcome: the “occurrence rate” defined as the number of working children suffering from injury or illness as a given time as proportion of the total number of working children; and the “incidence density” defined as the number of working children injured during a specified period of time as proportion total working time of children during that period. The results showed little causal relationship between hours of non-economic activities and health status of children. This was partly due to the difficulty in formulating the relationship for statistical tests and partly due to the limited number of survey observations. It was proposed to carry further research using panel data or retrospective data, and examine the possibility of revising survey questionnaires to include explicit questions about ill health due to non-economic work.

The effect on education was analysed by calculating the probability of school attendance as a function of effective working time defined as a combination of the number of hours worked in economic activities and a varying fraction of the number of hours worked on non-economic activities. For China, where panel data existed, a significant negative link could be established between hours worked on non-economic activities and school attendance, though the relationship appeared to be weaker than that obtained for economic (market) activities. For other countries, logit regressions were used to analyse the relationship but no conclusive results could be obtained.

While it appeared that appropriate procedures could be developed to define and measure non-economic activities of children in surveys, agreement on the extent to which such activities should be considered as child labour might be difficult to reach with the present state of knowledge on this issue.

## **Other business**

The core members of the Committee held a closed meeting on 9 May 2005 (17:30-18:30). The report of this meeting is attached as annex to the present advice record.

The next Committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for 7-8 November 2005. Committee members who were absent or unable to confirm these dates at the meeting were requested to communicate their availability as soon as possible.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**  
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**ON CHILD LABOUR STATISTICS (SEAC)**

**5th MEETING**

**9-10 May 2005**

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**ILO-IPEC**  
**Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour**  
**(SIMPOC)**

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

ILO Headquarters  
Geneva, Switzerland

**9-10 May 2005**

*Agenda*

**MONDAY, 9 MAY 2005**

0930 – 1000

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

1000 – 1015

**Official Welcome**  
*Guy Thijs, ILO, Geneva*

1015 – 1030

**Introduction of SEAC members and observers**

1030 – 1045

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

1045 – 1200

**Session I: SIMPOC and the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS**

- Presentation: Update on activities & developments of the past half year plus an outlook on future perspectives  
*Frank Hagemann, ILO, Geneva*
- Committee discussion

1200 – 1330

**Lunch Break**

1330 – 1545

**Session II: Child labour and non-economic activities of children**

- Presentation: Measuring children's non-market activities and their impact  
*Furio Rosati & Scott Lyon, UCW Project, Rome*
- Discussant: *Joann Vanek, WIEGO, New York*
- Committee discussion

1545 – 1600

**Coffee Break**

1600 – 1700

**Advice of the Committee**  
*Facilitator: Farhad Mehran, ILO, Geneva*  
Advice on sessions I and II

**TUESDAY, 10 MAY 2005**

0930 – 1000

**Coffee & Refreshments**

1000 – 1200

**Session III: Surveying the unconditional worst forms of child labour**

- Presentation: New survey tools to identify forced child labour  
*Michaëlle de Cock, Consultant, Geneva*  
  
Discussant: *Farhad Mehran, ILO, Geneva*
- Committee discussion

1200 – 1330

**Lunch Break**

1330 – 1530

**Technical session IV: SIMPOC's Children's Questionnaire**

- Presentation : A critical review of the children's questionnaire :  
Preliminary findings  
*Marek Fuchs, University of Kassel*  
  
Discussant: Edith de Leeuw, SEAC Committee Member
- Committee Discussion

1530 – 1545

**Coffee break**

1545 – 1645

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

- Review of draft advice of 9 May sessions
- Advice on sessions III & IV
- Next SEAC meeting.

1645 – 1700

**Closing Remarks**  
*Frank Hagemann, ILO, Geneva*

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