

**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, 19-20 April 2004

Advice Record

The SIMPOC External Advisory Committee on Child Labour Statistics (SEAC) held its third meeting in Geneva on 19-20 April 2004. Nine of the fourteen SEAC members were in attendance.<sup>1</sup> Some 25 persons participated in the meeting including observers, and representatives of donor countries and staff members of IPEC (see attached list of participants). The Committee was chaired by Kaushik Basu, newly elected following the completion of the two-term mandate of Gareth Jones. Farhad Mehran continued to serve as facilitator to the Committee.

In his opening address, Frans Röselaers, Director of IPEC, welcomed the Committee members and expressed his appreciation for the valuable contributions of SEAC during its one-year of existence. He briefed the Committee on the current activities and future plans of SIMPOC and its role within IPEC. In particular, he mentioned that some 250 surveys have been launched to date: 55 National Child Labour Surveys, more than 80 Rapid Assessment Surveys, and 100 Baseline Surveys. The results will be used to produce new global estimates of child labour for publication in 2006. He also informed the Committee of the conclusions of the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, November-December 2003), and the request for the development of a draft resolution on child labour statistics for presentation and discussion during the next ICLS. Brief descriptions of the IPEC evaluation and the staffing arrangements following the reduction of resources for Headquarter activities were also given. The letter of support that the Committee sent to the Director-General of the ILO the end of 2003 was gratefully acknowledged. The Committee by way of its chairperson will receive a formal reply shortly after the SEAC meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Bediako, Leith L. Dunn, Gavin W. Jones, Edilberto Loaiza and Vijay Verma were unable to attend. Sylvester Young was represented by Ralf Hussmanns. The chair was requested to send on behalf of the committee a letter of congratulations to Grace Bediako who has just been appointed Government Statistician of Ghana.

In the follow-up presentation, Frank Hagemann provided further details on the staffing arrangement, the status of the three SIMPOC manuals, and the plan for the preparation of the submission of SIMPOC to the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians, tentatively scheduled to be held in 2008. He also described the work that the Office is conducting to improve the SIMPOC Website and to explore new survey instruments and sampling procedures, in particular, the piloting of school surveys and enterprise surveys.

The meeting proceeded in line with the agreed agenda (see annex of the present report). Below are the records of the advice of the Committee and highlights of its deliberations. The report of the internal meeting of SEAC members, prepared by the SEAC Chair, is also included. It does not form part of the formal record of SEAC advices.

#### Scope and definition of *children's non-economic work*

- The Committee welcomed this new area of work, the need for which was emphasised in both of the two previous sessions of SEAC. The Committee also thanked the Office for presenting the project at an early stage, thus providing an opportunity to comment on the outline and approach of the project before its completion. The Committee expressed the wish to be kept informed of the progress of the work in between sessions.
- The Committee advised the Office to carry out an extensive review of literature on the subject before formulating any specific approach for delineating the boundaries of children's non-economic work that should constitute part of child labour for measurement purposes. Committee members will send selected references to Bijoy Raychaudhuri with copy to Frank Hagemann.
- The Committee strongly advised against the explicit use of "equivalence scales" for converting non-economic work of children to equivalent economic activity. It was stated that there is no apparent compelling reason why the delineation of non-economic work of children in terms of child labour could not be carried out in a manner similar to the delineation of economic activities which uses thresholds in terms of either hours of work or degree of exposure to risk, depending on the nature of the activity. The Committee however recognized that not using an explicit scale corresponds in fact to assigning a uniform scale to all activities. In this sense, therefore, one cannot escape categorisation in terms of a threshold and the use of an equivalency scale.

#### Comparison of children's and parents' responses to child labour survey questionnaires

- The Committee noted the seemingly contradictory results of the qualitative and quantitative studies on the comparison of children's and parents' responses to

child labour survey questionnaires and stressed the importance of distinguishing the two aspects of the studies. The Committee thought that it did not have sufficient information on the underlying data and the methodologies used for data analysis for providing detailed comments on this project. It, however, supported the conclusions of the qualitative study, all of which form a set of good advice on improving data collection in child labour surveys.

- The Committee advised that the objective of the study should be clearly formulated so that the results can be assessed against the intended purpose.
- The Committee mentioned that in comparing children's and parents' responses to child labour survey questionnaires, it is important to distinguish between the different types of respondent: mother, father, head of household or elder sibling. The amount of information that each has on the activities of the child may greatly differ. The context in which the survey interview is conducted is also crucial in comparing the responses. In particular, it is important to record whether the response of the child to the survey questionnaire was obtained in the presence or absence of the parent or the elder sibling or another third person. If it is not possible to determine these features, the report should explicitly state that they could not be determined.
- The statistical treatment of age of the child was also considered important. A distinction was made between an analysis by age group and an analysis in which age is treated as a predictor variable.

#### Impact of children's work on school attendance and performance

- The Committee endorsed the use of school-based surveys as an additional tool for collecting data on children's work and schooling activities. This data source provides information on the quality of schooling, a particularly important element for understanding school attendance and performance. It also permits the use of teachers as informant and thus forms a basis for linking students' and teachers' data. School-based surveys are also generally low-cost and therefore provide a cost-effective means of data collection when other types of surveys are not possible.
- In examining the methodologies adopted in the five reported SIMPOC studies and their preliminary results, a number of issues were raised. A distinction was made between testing hypotheses on the basis of available data and testing hypotheses based on specifically designed surveys. It was not clear whether the underlying country surveys were general purpose surveys or specifically designed to test the impact of children's work on school attendance and performance. In this connection, it was stressed that the methodology should take into account the key effective parameters of child labour, including, hours of work, type of work, sex and age of the child, the socio-economic characteristics of the parents, in

particular, rural or urban residence, educational attainment of parents and household income.

- The direction of causality of the relationship between children's work and schooling was also discussed. Reference was made to studies indicating that the quality of schooling (large classes, poor facilities, or frequent absences of teachers) could lead to deliberate decisions of parents to withdraw their children from school. This should, in principle, increase the likelihood for the child to work, and would therefore have a bearing on the relationship between child labour and schooling.

### Education

- The Committee recognised the importance of education variables in analysing child labour data from SIMPOC surveys. It was mentioned that education variables were traditionally used as socio-economic variables for classification purposes, and the use of education variables to measure education itself is a recent development.
- The Committee noted the set of four specific questions formulated by UNESCO to measure the key aspects of educational performance through household surveys. It pointed out that in certain countries, particularly, in rural areas children may be attending school sporadically or withdrawn from school part of the year by their parents for work in the family farm or business. In these situations, a dichotomous question on school attendance during the past year may not provide a correct picture of the child's main activity during the year. It was suggested that an additional question on the regularity of school attendance during the year was perhaps necessary.
- The Committee welcomed the offer of UNESCO to work jointly with the ILO and contribute to the SIMPOC surveys planned to be launched in 2004 in some of the French-speaking African countries.

### Preparatory work for the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS

- The Committee noted with satisfaction the conclusion of the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS on the development of international standards on child labour statistics. This provided a unique opportunity to help mainstreaming of child labour statistics into national statistical programmes and to improve the international comparability of child labour statistics.
- A suggestion was made that the Office could formulate a project document for submission to donors' funding, to undertake the preparatory work required to develop draft international standards on child labour statistics to be presented at the next International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2008.

## Role of SEAC in contributing to work of SIMPOC

- While the Committee understands the constraints and tight time-schedule under which SIMPOC must operate in delivering its outputs, it expressed its dissatisfaction in receiving no feed-back to the extensive comments sent by members of the Committee on the Draft SIMPOC manuals on survey methodologies and data analysis.
- The Committee would like to play a more constructive role in the work of SIMPOC, in particular, in regard to those that fall within the agenda of SEAC. Some modalities for such cooperation were proposed. For example, the draft terms of reference of new relevant activities of SIMPOC could be sent before execution to selected SEAC members with a request for comments. Another possibility would be to send drafts of materials on relevant on-going projects to SEAC members with an indication of the deadline for receiving comments.
- The Committee requested SIMPOC to continue to place its preliminary reports on the agenda of SEAC meeting, as the advantages to SIMPOC of early review of on-going work far outweigh the inconvenience of examining unfinished documents.

## Addendum

A SEAC committee members' exclusive meeting was held from 9 am to 10:30 am and 3:30 pm to 4:00 pm on 21 April, that is, the second day of the Third SEAC meeting in Geneva. This was attended by all committee members who were at ILO for the Third meeting and Ralf Hussmanns, substituting for Sylvester Young.

Virtually all the discussion centered around the subject of the scientific quality of the products that were emerging from SIMPOC. Concern was expressed that this was not always at a level of excellence that we would like it to achieve. While appreciating the important work that IPEC and SIMPOC were doing, with momentous implications for crafting global and national policy and enabling researchers to do more effective research, and recognizing that IPEC had come a very long way from the rather rudimentary statistics on child labour that were assembled in the mid-nineties, the committee members nevertheless felt that there was considerable room for improvement in the surveys that are conducted. Several committee members expressed concern that, while their advice and expertise was sought for the work that SIMPOC was doing – ranging from the production of a manual to the actual surveys and the analyses of the data thus collected, there was not enough follow-up based on nor evidence of adequate use of the advice received. It is possible that this indicates nothing more than defects in the bureaucratic structure set up for handling information received. However, this is an important enough matter that deserves attention.

The committee members expressed appreciation that the 17th ICLS requested the ILO to develop a draft resolution on child labour statistics for consideration at its next

meeting in 2008. This was seen as an important opportunity for making a real difference to the collection and dissemination of global, policy-relevant statistics on child labour. However committee members also expressed concern that a great deal of work would be required to prepare the methodological work needed for this Conference. As the ICLS is a statistical body, they felt it essential that IPEC work with the ILO Bureau of Statistics on preparations. They also agreed that further methodological work is required. Given the interest of a donor in supporting such work, they agreed to submit a framework to serve as a basis for a proposal that IPEC would develop.

The committee members felt that, in this context, the new surveys that are to be conducted in Francophone Africa provide SIMPOC with the opportunity to improve the existing survey instruments and methodologies and experiment with some of the suggestions that are on the table from previous SEAC meetings. Hence these new surveys could serve as a precursor to improved methodology which would then provide SIMPOC with input for crafting the resolution for the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS.

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## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### SIMPOC EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHILD LABOUR STATISTICS (SEAC)

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> MEETING

**19-20 April 2004**

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**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)**

ILO Headquarters  
Geneva  
Salle I, R-3

19-20 April 2004

Preliminary Agenda

**Monday, 19 April 2004**

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|---------------|--|
| 09:00 – 09:30 | <b>Registration of Participants and Refreshments</b>   |
| 09:30 – 09:45 | <b>Official Welcome</b><br>Frans Röselaers, Director, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)  |
| 09:45 – 10:00 | <b>Introductions of Committee Members, Observers</b>   |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | <b>Adoption of Agenda</b><br>Farhad Mehran, Senior Statistician, ILO Policy Integration Department, and Facilitator to the Committee   |
| 10:15 – 11:15 | <b>Towards statistical standards on child labour and the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians - Highlights of SIMPOC activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update on current activities</li><li>• Recent structural developments</li><li>• SIMPOC evaluation</li><li>• Conclusions of the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS</li></ul> <i>Presenter:</i> Frank Hagemann, Senior Policy Analyst and SIMPOC Coordinator |
|               | Questions from Committee   |
| 11:15 – 11:30 | Coffee Break   |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | <b>Towards statistical standards for children’s non economic “work”: a methodological framework</b>  |

*Presenter:* Bijoy Raychaudhuri, Specialist on Decent Work Indicators and SIMPOC Senior Statistician  
*Discussant:* Edilberto Loaiza, SEAC Member

Questions from and Discussion by Committee

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch Break

14:30 – 16:00 **Comparison of children’s and parents’ responses to child labour survey questionnaires**

*Presenter:* Yacouba Diallo, SIMPOC Data Analyst

*Discussant:* Furio Rosati, SEAC Observer

Questions from and Discussion by Committee

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee Break

16:15 – 18:00 **Advice of the Committee**

Facilitator: Farhad Mehran

- Review of Advice of SEAC first and second meetings (14-15 April 2003 and 27-28 October 2003).
- Review of and recommendations on the methodological framework towards statistical standards for children’s non economic “work”.
- Review of and recommendations on the comparison of children’s and parents’ responses to child labour survey questionnaires.

18:00 – 19:30 **Reception** (R-2 coffee room next to Cafeteria)

## **Tuesday, 20 April 2004**

09:00 – 10:30 **Internal meeting of SEAC Members**

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:45 **International comparisons of education and child labour indicators**

*Presenter:* Albert Motivans, Committee Member

**Impact of child work on school attendance and school performance: preliminary evidence from SIMPOC surveys**

*Presenter:* Hakki Ozel, SIMPOC Senior Statistician

*Discussant:* Gareth Jones, SEAC Member

Questions from and Discussion by Committee

12:45 – 14:15

Lunch Break

14:15 – 16:00

**Advice of the Committee**

Facilitator: Farhad Mehran

- Review of Advice of SEAC first and second meetings (14-15 April and 27-28 October 2003).
- Review of draft Advice of 19 April 2004.
- Review of and recommendations on the international comparisons of education and child labour indicators.
- Review of and recommendations on the preliminary evidence from SIMPOC surveys on impact of child work on school attendance and school performance.
- Next SEAC meeting.

16:00 – 16:15

**Closing Remarks**

Frans Röselaers, Director, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)