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**Contribution concerning the study of children working and/or living on the street by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

# Some examples of ILO/IPEC activities on child labour on the street

Concern over children “working on the street” should not be limited to children engaged in the narrow sense of “economic activities” such as selling small objects, shoe-shining, or portering. Children are often engaged in or used by adults for a wide range of activities on the street, from scavenging, begging – which may be classified as ***illicit*** if not illegal – to drug dealing, pick-pocketing and other ***criminal acts***. Such children may be victims of crime, such as child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation. All these are issues of child labour and its worst forms. Street children are thus ***extremely vulnerable to child labour, and especially its worst forms.***

The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has conducted several studies and surveys, and carried out projects covering children working on the street. [[1]](#footnote-2) The present contribution comprises brief summaries of some of them, [[2]](#footnote-3) with the aim of highlighting some good examples and lessons learned, without covering all the issues or all possible measures exhaustively. It is hoped to initiate discussions and help to develop new programmes and projects.

This document should be read together with the hand-out distributed at the HRC Panel discussion on this theme held on 9 March 2011 (Statement by Mr Kari Tapiola on behalf of the ILO) for overall children’s rights principles and conceptual framework.

I. Prohibition, prevention and elimination of child labour on the street

## Example 1) Legislative prohibition: Including “street-based occupations and tasks” in the determination of hazardous child labour lists

By ratifying ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182, Member States made a commitment to prohibit the engagement of children under 18 years of age in hazardous work (likely to harm/jeopardize health, safety and morals of the child) and to establish a relevant list in the form of enforceable legislation (e.g. ministerial ordinances or regulations etc.). This list, commonly called the **hazardous child labour list** (HCL list), must be made after a tripartite consultation involving government, workers’ and employers’ representatives. It is important to consider street-based activities when determining the HCL list, since they may not be seen as occupational safety and health issues. Some examples of specific prohibitions follow.

Sri Lanka has explicitly prohibited –

* “any type of work involving the collection or disposal of garbage or sewage or the scavenging of garbage” and “any type of work between 8pm and 6am” [[3]](#footnote-4)
* Similarly, Nepal prohibits the “collection and processing of garbage”. [[4]](#footnote-5)
* South Africa bans “Begging or scavenging, collecting waste from garbage or waste dumps”. [[5]](#footnote-6)
* Lebanon prohibits “street vending and begging”. [[6]](#footnote-7)

In addition to these lists, the use of a child in “begging” is prohibited in criminal laws, as in –

* Nigeria: “A child shall not be used for the purpose of begging for alms, or guiding beggars”.[[7]](#footnote-8)
* Turkey: the Criminal Code provides for imprisonment and a fine for whoever gathers children below 15 and makes them beg for alms, or allows their child of that age to beg. [[8]](#footnote-9)

## Example 2) Formal and non-formal education, and shelters (Moscow)

A study on working street children in Moscow concludes that education can be an important factor in countering child labour and the street children phenomenon. Nevertheless, some forms of education, such as home education or overcrowded public educational establishments, can also add to the likelihood of children ending up on the streets.

The study confirms that shelters can be an effective model for assisting street children. Shelters in Moscow are created by the authorities, churches and NGOs.

According to the IPEC survey, the working street children phenomenon cannot be resolved easily. Children develop ‘street-smart’ skills and not every child is prepared to leave street work for a different, more decent alternative. Thus, the study concludes that *preventive measures* would be needed in order to prevent children from becoming working street children in the first place.

## Example 3) Comprehensive rehabilitation model of working street girls (St. Petersburg)

The action programme was designed to develop a rehabilitation model and apply it to 100 girls on the street and/or at risk of sexual exploitation, aged 12-17, who are affected by lack of education, continuous family crisis, and isolation. The girls were withdrawn from the streets and provided with creativity development and training, with special emphasis given to family counselling and rehabilitation. Simultaneously, policy-makers, city authorities, the police and the public at large were sensitized to the issue of child labour, and more specifically to the special situation of the girl child. Risks related to this specific group were also covered.

## Example 4) Mobile schools: facilitating the transition from street to school (Romania) [[9]](#footnote-10)

In parallel with an IPEC action programme, the Mobile Schools Project was implemented from April 2005 to December 2006. The mobile school is an educational instrument designed for street children, who are at high risk of being economically exploited.

The methods and techniques used for activities to promote and encourage respect for children’s rights include interactive role playing, socializing games, brainstorming, lectures and debates, which all aimed at stimulating children’s active participation and ensure children’s right to education. The main advantages of the project were its ability to reach isolated communities where children are working instead of going to school, and its ability to help shape the skills and abilities that support the child’s school and social integration.

## Example 5) SCREAM[[10]](#footnote-11): Mobilizing public action (Paraguay) [[11]](#footnote-12)

The gradual implementation of the SCREAM methodology, as a preventative strategy that raises awareness among teachers and students, converts the Paraguayan experience into an interesting example of the progressive mainstreaming of the issue of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) into a country’s educational institutions.

In a phased process, in each academic year from 2005 to 2009, the sequence of actions for the implementation of the SCREAM methodology included interviews with supervisors, technicians and directors of education, who contributed to understanding of the focus issues and the visualization of the methodology as a system to address them.

Participating students contacted key community stakeholders (such as mayors, hospital managers, directors of educational facilities, entrepreneurs, social communicators and the media); conducted surveys of teachers, students and parents; organized meetings on child labour in educational institutions; developed awareness raising campaigns on the radio; published articles in local newspapers and created murals; and organized discussions on the issue in each district where the project was organized.

## Some lessons learned

* Legislation should provide a clear prohibition of unacceptable situations, whether in labour, criminal, or children’s rights or other laws. The difficulty of enforcement is an additional challenge concerning children involved in the worst forms (and other forms) of child labour on the street. The drafting or revising of related laws (e.g. HCL lists) should not lose sight of the situations on the street.
* Virtually the very first project in St-Petersburg to address the specific needs of the working girl child, the action programme above has made a major contribution to changing public attitudes towards this vulnerable group of children. In line with the overall ILO gender-mainstreaming policy, the action programme sought to raise awareness among stakeholders of the specific risks of working street girls. In a broader sense, the programme helped raise the issue higher on the political agenda.
* Measures that imply a forced “separation” of the child from the street environment are not effective in the long term. The Mobile School Project gradually prepares the children for integration into the family environment, and is a model that can be replicated subsequently in other countries where street children are involved in the worst forms of child labour.
* Involve government entities from the beginning of the pilot, giving them ownership and a supervisory role, with technical assistance support.
* Mobilize children and young people: SCREAM, a proven methodology that is replicable, and additional activities such as camps, are appropriate means of conveying the message to the public (families, community and institutions) and the business community that it is important to tackle the issue of child labour, including trafficking, and for raising awareness of the existence of international conventions and national legislation to this effect.
* Projects that trained youth workers and children were advantageous, since individuals could reuse the skills learned for future implementation of such activities, have undergone a process of personal development, and pass on their knowledge to others.
* Each country and each community has its own socio-economic and cultural characteristics that make it unique. By working at the grassroots level using a bottom-up participatory approach, all sectors of the community can be reached in a way that is culturally adapted and appropriate.

II. Child labour statistics and   
children working on the street

Comprehensive and reliable data on child labour is important to assess the nature and extent of child labour, so as to set targets and priorities in the fight against child labour. They can be used to increase public awareness and to inform policies, programmes and law-making. IPEC is responding to this need through its ‘Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour’ (SIMPOC) [[12]](#footnote-13) which supports efforts of child labour surveys and thematic research projects.

## Data collection methods – Child labour surveys in general

SIMPOC helps ILO Member States collect and generate comprehensive and comparable quantitative and qualitative data on children’s activities. SIMPOC uses the following four child labour survey types: **household-based surveys, establishment-based surveys, baseline surveys,** and **rapid assessments.** Household-based surveys can gather information on children living with their family and working on the street.

## Further developments

Attempts have been made to apply the **“capture-recapture method”** to street children surveys. For example, the method was used in a UCW [[13]](#footnote-14) study on street children in Cairo [[14]](#footnote-15) and a UCW survey on begging street children in Dakar. [[15]](#footnote-16) The capture-recapture methodology makes it possible to study populations for which a comprehensive census is unfeasible, thus allowing quantitative estimations on e.g. the size of a street children population. By means of double sampling of the target population, three lists are developed (one for the capture, one for the recapture and one for the individuals who are on both lists) and used to conduct analyses of the target population.

The study by UCW and the World Bank, in the greater Dakar metropolitan area revealed the capture-recapture method as a technique to measure the worst forms of child labour, especially children working on the street. The method also shows how it is possible to obtain sample-based estimates for this rare and elusive population; in this case, a reliable estimate of the number and characteristics of begging children in greater Dakar, Senegal.

## Key challenges in data collection on child labour on the street — Summary

* ***Accessibility and availability*** of children working and/or living on the street – they work at night or are not willing or available to answer the questionnaires or the interviews when first encountered.
* Where NGOs or social workers work with street children, it is important to involve them in survey planning and implementation as they can provide valuable insights into the activities of and accessibility of street children. [[16]](#footnote-17)
* Information obtained through a ***rapid assessment*** will apply with certainty only to the limited sample population and context.[[17]](#footnote-18)
* Constraints: willingness of children to report and the limited time-frames in which rapid assessments are conducted.

## Ethical considerations with regard to child labour data collection

* Collecting data from and interviewing children generally requires a great amount of caution and thoughtfulness.
* The risk to the child of participating in the survey must be estimated. The selection of the place of interview of the children (living place, work place or a neutral place) has to be guided by ***the best interests of the child*** and by the privacy of the discussions. Also, the notion of ***informed consent*** is very important for all interviews. Children have to be informed in a child-sensitive way.
* *Remuneration in cash is not recommended*. During the study of trafficking and sexual abuse among street children in Kathmandu, for instance, researchers found that children to whom they had given money to buy food and kerosene went to a shop and bought “black polish”, which is commonly used as a drug. [[18]](#footnote-19) Consequently, the researchers realized that they should not give the children cash. Instead they sometime offered food or kerosene, but emphasized that the money was not remuneration for the information provided. [[19]](#footnote-20)

III. Concluding remarks: What can we do against child labour on the street?

In developing a holistic, children’s rights and gender-based approach to protecting and promoting the rights of children working and/or living on the street, any intervention to prevent or rescue children from child labour on the street, in particular its worst forms, should take into account their special situation and their special needs, and be designed to specifically target street-based child labour.

Sustainable action against child labour comprises a wide range of initiatives on various levels. Responses and strategies must complement one another in order to be effective in the long term. With regard to children working on the street, an intervention programme would therefore include: preventive measures, direct support for withdrawal from child labour, rehabilitation of former child labourers, capacity-building and awareness-raising of key players with respect to the engagement of children in street-based activities, updating and enforcing legislation on the prohibition and effective elimination of street-based child labour, and the collection of qualitative and quantitative information about the subject.

Children are involved in or exposed to many of the worst forms of child labour on the street, even though working on the street as such is not defined as a worst form of child labour. To achieve the international goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016, it is imperative to accelerate action on children who work and live on the street. This is not only a question of prohibiting child labour by law or of law enforcement. Approaches must address the root causes of children living or working on the street, and must offer direct assistance, including rehabilitation and alternatives to rescued children. Children living and/or working on the street are at special risk, [[20]](#footnote-21) and we must identify these risks and the children concerned and reach out to them.

Geneva, 4 October 2011.

1. Projects through ILO/IPEC with regard to working street children have been implemented in Indonesia, Kenya, Niger, Russia (St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region), Turkey and Yemen (Sanaa), among others. A full list of IPEC projects covering street children is available upon request. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. A background document of about 50 pages with further information is available on request. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *Sri Lanka, Hazardous Occupations Regulations No. 1 of 2010.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *Nepal, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act No. 14 of 2000.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *South Africa, Regulations on Hazardous Work by Children of 2010.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *Lebanon, Decree No. 700 of 1999.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. *Nigeria, Child’s Rights Act, 2003 section 30(2)(a).* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. *Turkey, Criminal Code, 1926 as amended in June 1964: Section 545.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Extracts (adapted) taken from: *ILO/IPEC: Good Practices on Child Labour 2010 Europe*, Fact Sheet, 2010. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=13361> . [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. SCREAM – Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media – is an ILO-IPEC education and social mobilization initiative that helps educators worldwide, in formal and non-formal education settings, to cultivate young people’s understanding of the causes and consequences of child labour. For more information see <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Campaignandadvocacy/Scream/WhatisSCREAM/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Extracts (adapted) taken from ILO IPEC: *Good Practices on Child Labour 2010, Latin America*, Fact Sheet, 2010. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=13354> . [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. UCW or “Understanding Children’s Work”, is an Inter-Agency Research Cooperation Project by the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank initiated in December 2000. More information is available at <http://www.ucw-project.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. [UCW, *A profile of Cairo Street Children*](http://www.ucw-project.org/Pages/bib_details.aspx?id=12225&Pag=0&Year=-1&Country=65&Author=-1), L. Guarcello, N. Koseleci, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. UCW: *Enfants mendiants dans la région de Dakar*, 2007, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Chapter 6, Violence against children in the places of work, ibid, p. 266-267. Available at <http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/6.%20World%20Report%20on%20Violence%20against%20Children.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. ILO IPEC: [*Child Labour Statistics – Manual on methodologies for data collection through surveys*](http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=141), SIMPOC, 2004, p. 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. ILO IPEC: [*Trafficking and Sexual Abuse among Street Children in Kathmandu*](http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=773), Govind Subedi, 2002, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. The [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999](http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C182) (No. 182), Article 7(2)(d) calls for the identification and out-reach to “children at special risk” among the required “effective and time-bound measures” against the worst forms of child labour. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)