

Child Domestic Work

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Question

1. *What different approaches exist to defining child labour in domestic work?*
2. *What data is available regarding the numbers of children and households that are involved in domestic child labour?*
3. *How does the prevalence of domestic child labour differ across countries?*
4. *What approaches of data collection methods have been used and what are the data limitations?*

Contents

1. Overview
2. Defining child labour within domestic work
3. Global estimates of child domestic work
4. Regional prevalence of child domestic workers
5. Data collection approaches and limitations
6. References

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1. Overview

The definition of Child Domestic Work (CDW) is contested. Whilst international law defines children as any person under the age of 18 years old, in some countries, the national minimum age to work can be as low as 14 years old. Furthermore, socio-cultural patterns and national level policies add an additional dimension to how CDW is viewed, measured and reported. Despite these variations, as an overview, child domestic work is a general reference to children's work in the domestic work sector in the home of a third-party or employer. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) and UNICEF conventions provide the main framework for definitions. In terms of child labour in domestic work, according to UNICEF, a child is involved in child labour activities under the following classifications:

- a) children 5 to 11 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work, and;
- b) children 12 to 14 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work combined¹.

The ILO dominates the evidence base for research on child domestic workers with some research undertaken by interagency cooperation efforts such as UCW (which comprises of the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank). For example, the definitions and approaches found in various papers and studies not undertaken by the ILO largely use the ILO's definitions and its related conventions as a framework for their respective studies, and the most recent literature and statistics around child domestic labour are all ILO reports. Only the most recent reports and data will be referred to in this helpdesk report unless a significant trend was noted between data sets. Below are some key highlights in terms of data from the ILO's 2012 study:

- 17.2 million children between the ages of 5 and 17, are in paid or unpaid domestic work in the home of a third party or employer;
- Of these, 11.5 million are in child labour, of which 3.7 million are in hazardous work (21.4% of all child domestic workers)²; and
- 5.7 million children, mostly adolescents, are in permissible work but need to be protected from abuse and provided with decent work.

The phenomenon of Child Labour in Domestic Work is often hidden and difficult to tackle because of its links to social and cultural patterns within its respective contexts. For this reason, there is a dearth of data with accurate measures of the extent of CDW regionally. This is particularly the case in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, who both have high concentrations of child domestic workers but figures presented are only estimates which some authors contest are

¹ Source: https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/stats_popup9.html

² The most common hazards are: long working hours, which create fatigue; lack of public scrutiny, which can provide opportunities for sexual exploitation; and isolation, inhibiting normal social and intellectual development. In addition, domestic service often involves carrying heavy loads (laundry, water, children), being exposed to fires and hot stoves, handling household chemicals and using sharp knives, as well as deprivation of education. Since a proportion of these children, mostly girls, are very young, tasks that seem trivial in wealthier nations, such as collecting water or lighting a stove, in a poor country can be both laborious and dangerous.

inaccurate. In many countries, child domestic work is not only socially and culturally acceptable, but at times viewed in a positive light as a protected and non-stigmatised type of work and preferred to others forms of employment – particularly for girls.

Statistics presented in this report are disaggregated by gender where applicable and highlight significant gender imbalances in terms of child domestic workers who are girls. Though in child labour overall, gender balances are somewhat equal, in CDW specifically, approximately, 67.1% of all child domestic workers are girls (ILO, 2013c). In absolute terms, at least 5.6 million boys are involved in domestic work compared to 11.5 million girls aged 5-17 years. The gender gap widens as children cross the minimum age for work threshold, and as children grow beyond the ages of 14/15 the more likely girls are to be involved in CDW.

According to the ILO's 2012 Global Estimates, approximately one third (3.7 million) of all children between 5 and 17 years old in child labour in domestic work are undertaking hazardous work (this accounts for more than 20% of all children in domestic work globally).

In terms of data collection approaches, there are numerous limitations to data collection as highlighted by the report. These include, but are not limited to:

- The absence of a universal operational definition of child labour. Definitions are largely based on context, national level interpretations of international conventions and local legalities.
- The variance in data collection methods and tools e.g. household surveys, task approaches and industry approaches.
- The inclusion (or lack of) of unpaid household services (UHS).
- The socio-cultural patterns associated with child domestic work and its acceptance in many developing contexts.

2. Defining child labour within domestic work

What do we mean by domestic work?

According to Convention 189, adopted in 2011 by the 187 ILO member states, the ILO defines domestic work as work carried out in or for a household(s). The term “domestic worker” refers to any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship but does not include workers who perform domestic work sporadically or on a casual basis (ILO, 2013b).

The term “domestic work” covers a wide range of activities and services that vary from country to country and can also vary depending on the age, gender, ethnicity, and migration status of the workers concerned, in addition to the cultural and economic context in which they work. As a result, when defining domestic work and the workers involved based on the tasks they perform, its measurement continues to be partial and difficult to measure from context to context. Convention No. 189 therefore draws on the common and distinctive characteristic that domestic workers are employed by, and provide services for, third party private households (Pflug, 2002; Thorsen, 2012; ILO, 2013b).

A key concern relating to domestic work in the general sense is that domestic work is often considered to be something other than employment (ILO, 2013b). Socio-cultural ideologies have the tendency to obscure the existence of an employer/employee relationship. For this reason, domestic workers are one of the least protected groups of the global workforce. Evidence

collected from ILO member states in 2010 highlighted that legislation in a significant number of countries continues to wholly or partially exclude domestic workers from coverage or provides comparatively lower levels of protection than other groups of workers. These socio-cultural factors, and the consequential legislative deficits, are amplified in the case of child labour and specifically child domestic workers, with further ambiguity created as many child domestic workers often work for relatives (sometimes distant) or carers (as many are orphans), and the relationship is often regarded or described as familial rather than of that of employment (ILO, 2013b). This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Defining child labour

Under international law a child refers to persons being below the age of eighteen years³. However, in many countries the minimum age to work is 15 years old (with some exceptions legalising work at 14 years old and even as young as 12 years old for some sectors of work e.g. in Pakistan – Pflug, 2002) (EU Commission, 2013). Using this as a basis, UNICEF defines child labour as the percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years of age involved in child labour activities at the time of the survey. A child is considered to be involved in child labour activities under the following classifications:

- a) children 5 to 11 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work, and;
- b) children 12 to 14 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work combined⁴.

As per this definition, child labourers constitute a group of working children who are either too young to work⁵ or are engaged in hazardous activities; that is, work that is potentially harmful to their physical, social, psychological or educational development. Where the age of the child and the conditions of work meet the requirements of international labour standards, their work is referred to as “youth employment/young workers in domestic work” (ILO, 2013b). The guiding international conventions generally on this issue are the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work, ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These international conventions conceptualise child labour and form the basis for child labour legislation enacted by signatory countries (Dayıoğlu, 2013; UNICEF, 2016).

³ See the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989.

⁴ Source: https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/stats_popup9.html

⁵ In many countries, the legal age to work is 15 years (and in some contexts 14 years of age) (ILO, (date); EU Commission, 2013).

Figure 1

Box 2 – Child domestic work and the worst forms of child labour

The ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and its accompanying Recommendation No. 190 define a range of **child labour situations requiring immediate action** – and which aptly describe the situation of some child domestic workers.

Article 3 of Convention No. 182 defines the worst forms of child labour as:

- (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 performance;
- (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.

* * *

What constitutes “**hazardous work**” under category (d) is open to tripartite determination at national level. In doing so, national bodies should be guided by Paragraph 3 of Recommendation No. 190 and 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.

Source: ILO (2013b, p. 4)

Child domestic work in the context of child labour

Child domestic work is a general reference to children’s work in the domestic work sector in the home of a third-party or employer. This general framework encompasses both permissible as well as non-permissible circumstances. For example, some household chores and tasks undertaken by children in their own homes, in reasonable conditions, and under the supervision of those close to them are considered an integral part of family life and thus permissible. In some cases however, there may be concerns over situations where these workloads may be excessive or interfere with the child’s education, in which case they may be tantamount to child labour. Children doing household chores in their own home, and children in domestic work (in a third-party household) might perform similar tasks. However, in the first case, the employment element is missing; therefore, the ILO advises to avoid referring to those situations as domestic work. Child labour in domestic work refers to situations where domestic work is carried out by children below the relevant minimum age (for light work, full-time non-hazardous work), in hazardous conditions or in a slavery-like situation⁶ (ILO, 2013b).

⁶ Slavery like situations refer to: forced labour, trafficking, debt bondage and servitude.

Child domestic work warrants particular attention due to the conditions under which the children – many of whom “live in” with their employers – are working. Child domestic workers report that their daily experience of discrimination and isolation in the household is the most difficult part of their circumstances. Their situation, the manner in which they got there, also makes them highly dependent on their employers for their basic needs. This seclusion and dependency makes child domestic workers particularly vulnerable to child labour, and at times can result in physical, psychological and sexual violence (ILO, 2013b). The ILO argues that these hazards must be seen in association with the denial of fundamental rights of the child, such as, for example, access to education and health care, the right to rest, leisure, play and recreation, and the right to be cared for and to have regular contact with their parents and peers. These factors above can have an irreversible physical, psychological and moral impact on the development, health and wellbeing of a child.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of Child Labour in Domestic Work is often hidden and difficult to tackle because of its links to social and cultural patterns within its respective contexts. In many countries, child domestic work is not only socially and culturally acceptable, but at times viewed in a positive light as a protected and non-stigmatised type of work and preferred to others forms of employment – particularly for girls. The preservation of traditional female roles and responsibilities, within and outside the household, as well as the perception of domestic service as part of a woman’s “apprenticeship” for adulthood and marriage, also contribute to the persistence of child domestic work as a form of child labour and its highest incidence among girls.⁷ (Guarcello, Lyon & Valdivia, 2016).

3. Global estimates of child domestic work

Overview

Statistics on child domestic work are limited due to the hidden nature of the work. Furthermore, differences in country by country definitions, data collection tools and socio-cultural notions of employment and child domestic work pose further challenges to data collection, analysis and comparisons globally even for established agencies (Dayıoğlu, 2013). Despite these challenges, the ILO (through IPEC)⁸ and the UCW Project (an interagency cooperation between ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank) continue to be the authority on global, regional and country studies on child labour statistics, including child domestic work. According to ILO (2012), domestic child labour is prevalent in all regions of the world where data is readily available. Despite limitations to fully capturing all hidden work situations, many household surveys among those used in the 2012 ILO’s global estimates on child labour provide important quantitative information on child domestic work, allowing for global estimates on child domestic workers to be made. Their 2012 study *Global Estimates for Child Domestic Work* (ILO, 2013c), the most recent credible data on child domestic work, states the following:

- 17.2 million children between the ages of 5 and 17, are in paid or unpaid domestic work in the home of a third party or employer;

⁷ Source: ILO - <http://ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Childdomesticlabour/lang--en/index.htm>

⁸ IPEC: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

- Of these, 11.5 million are in child labour, of which 3.7 million are in hazardous work (21.4% of all child domestic workers)⁹;
- 5.7 million children, mostly adolescents, are in permissible work but need to be protected from abuse and provided with decent work;
- Undetermined numbers of children are in domestic work as result of forced labour and trafficking. In 2012, the ILO produced Global Estimates on Forced Labour. Of the total number of 20.9 million forced labourers, children aged 17 years and below represent 26% of all forced labour victims (or 5.5 million children). It should be noted that estimates are extremely conservative, and while the specific number of children in forced labour and trafficking for domestic work remains unknown, evidence points to the existence of significant numbers of children in debt bondage, victims of trafficking and in servitude situations; and
- 65.1% of all child domestic workers are below 14 years: 7.4 million aged 5 to 11 and 3.8 million aged 12 to 14.

In keeping with the ILO's global estimate classifications, child labour in domestic work statistically includes: (i) all children aged 5-11 years engaged in domestic work; (ii) all children aged 12-14 years engaged in domestic work for more than 14 hours per week; and (iii) all children aged 15-17 years engaged in hazardous domestic work which includes "for long hours" (defined for the purposes of the ILO's 2012 study as "43 and more hours per week").

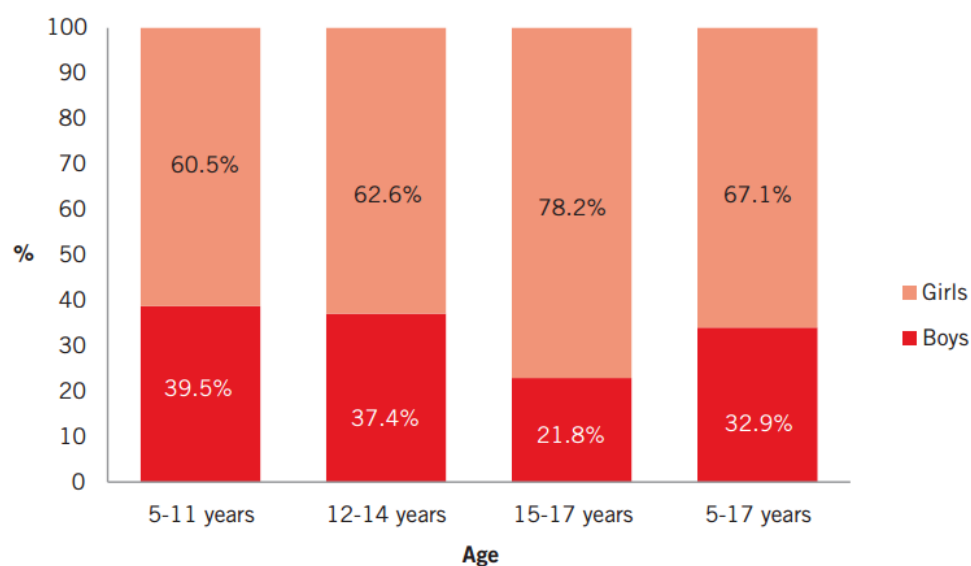
Estimates by age group

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that in 2012 there were an estimated 17.2 million children aged 5-17 years were engaged in domestic work in the world in 2012, representing 6.5% of all children in economic activity in this age group. Of this figure, the number of child domestic workers between 5-14 years old is estimated to be 11.2 million, representing approximately 7.8% of all children in employment in that age group. ILO (2013c) notes a marked difference in the incidence of child domestic work as one crosses the international benchmark minimum age to work of 15 years. The estimated number of child domestic workers in the 15-17 year old age bracket was 6 million in 2012, approximately 5 per cent of all children in economic activity in that age category.

⁹ The most common hazards are: long working hours, which create fatigue; lack of public scrutiny, which can provide opportunities for sexual exploitation; and isolation, inhibiting normal social and intellectual development. In addition, domestic service often involves carrying heavy loads (laundry, water, children), being exposed to fires and hot stoves, handling household chemicals and using sharp knives, as well as deprivation of education. Since a proportion of these children, mostly girls, are very young, tasks that seem trivial in wealthier nations, such as collecting water or lighting a stove, in a poor country can be both laborious and dangerous.

Table 1: Estimates of children in domestic work by age and sex, 2012

Age group and sex	Children in employment (CE)	Children in domestic work (CDW)	CDW as % of CE
5-11 years old	73,072,000	7,424,000	10.2
Boys	36,317,000	2,934,000	8.1
Girls	36,755,000	4,490,000	12.2
12-14 years old	70,994,000	3,784,000	5.3
Boys	39,621,000	1,417,000	3.6
Girls	31,373,000	2,367,000	7.5
Total 5-14 years old	144,066,000	11,208,000	7.8
Boys	75,959,000	4,350,000	5.7
Girls	68,107,000	6,858,000	10.1
Total 15-17 years old	120,362,000	5,991,000	5.0
Boys	72,368,000	1,306,000	1.8
Girls	47,994,000	4,685,000	9.8
Total 5-17 years old	264,427,000	17,199,000	6.5
Boys	148,306,000	5,657,000	3.8
Girls	116,120,000	11,542,000	9.9

Figure 1: Distribution of children in domestic work by age and sex, 2012

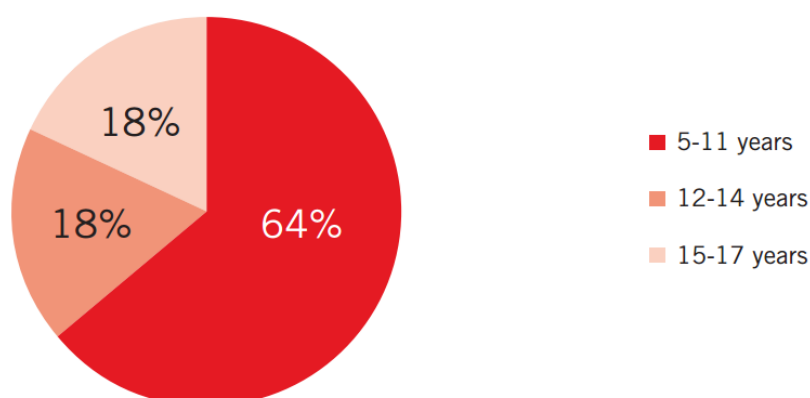
Source (Table 1 & Figure 1): ILO (2013c, p. 3)

Table 2 below shows that there is an estimated 11.5 million children in child labour in domestic work in the world, of whom 82.6 per cent (9.5 million) were in the age group 5-14 years old. Almost two-thirds of all children in child labour in domestic work were younger than 12 (7.4 million). In the ILO's previous 2008 study there was an estimated 10.6 million children in child labour in domestic work in the world, of whom 61 per cent (6.5 million) were in the age group 5-14 years old. 33% of all children in child labour in domestic work were younger than 12 (3.5 million) (ILO, 2013a).

Table 2: Estimates of children in child labour in domestic work by age and sex, 2012

Age group and sex	Children in employment (CE)	Child labour in domestic work (CL in DW)	CL in DW as % of CE
5-11 years old	73,072,000	7,424,000	10.2
Boys	36,317,000	2,934,000	8.1
Girls	36,755,000	4,490,000	12.2
12-14 years old	70,994,000	2,097,000	3.0
Boys	39,621,000	677,000	1.7
Girls	31,373,000	1,420,000	4.5
Total 5-14 years old	144,066,000	9,521,000	6.6
Boys	75,959,000	3,611,000	4.8
Girls	68,107,000	5,910,000	8.7
Total 15-17 years old	120,362,000	2,007,000	1.7
Boys	72,368,000	422,000	0.6
Girls	47,994,000	1,585,000	3.3
Total 5-17 years old	264,427,000	11,528,000	4.4
Boys	148,306,000	4,033,000	2.7
Girls	116,120,000	7,495,000	6.5

Figure 2: Distribution of children in child labour in domestic work by age, 2012



Source (Table 2 & Figure 2): ILO (2013c, p. 4)

Estimates by gender

According to UNICEF, in almost all regions globally, boys and girls are equally likely to be involved in child labour. An exception is Latin America and the Caribbean, where boys are slightly more likely than girls to be engaged in child labour¹⁰. Gender disparities are observed, however, in the types of activities carried out, with girls far more likely to be involved in domestic work with 67.1% of all child domestic workers being girls (ILO, 2013c).

Statistically speaking, differentials observed with regards to child domestic workers disaggregated by sex increase with age (as shown by Figure 1 on page 8). As per the ILO's 2012 global estimates, 3.8 per cent of all boys aged 5-17 years in economic activity are in domestic work, compared to 9.9 per cent of all 5-17 years old working girls. In absolute terms, at least 5.6 million boys are involved in domestic work compared to 11.5 million girls aged 5-17 years. The gap widens as children cross the minimum age for work threshold, with 1.8% of working boys aged 15-17 years old in domestic work, against 9.8% of girls (Table 1). Of the total number of children aged 5-17 years old engaged in domestic work, some 67.1% are girls and 32.9% are boys (Figure 1) (Dayioğlu, 2013; ILO, 2013c). Earlier estimates by the ILO (In 2008) show a similar trend in terms of differentials by sex though the proportion of girls in domestic work has decreased slightly. The results indicate that in 2008, of the total number of children aged 5-17 years found in child labour in domestic work, around 71.3 per cent (7.5 million) were girls and 28.7 per cent (3.0 million) were boys.

Hazardous Domestic Work (HDW)

Hazardous domestic work by children is work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children by nature or by the circumstances under which it is carried out. It is deemed one of the worst forms of child labour under ILO Convention No. 182 and is a subcategory of child labour in domestic work.

According to the ILO's 2012 Global Estimates, approximately one third (3.7 million) of all children between 5 and 17 years old in child labour in domestic work are undertaking hazardous work (this accounts for more than 20% of all children in domestic work globally). Table 3 (page 11 below) shows that approximately 25% of children performing hazardous domestic work are under 12 years old. This includes children working for long hours¹¹ but also includes other conditions or circumstances, for example, night work, or exposure to physical or sexual abuse, for which there are currently no reliable and comparable data (ILO, 2013c).

Whilst boys normally outnumber girls in hazardous work, this is not the case with child domestic work. Data suggests that 2.6 million girls are involved in hazardous domestic work globally, compared to 1.1 million boys. Data emerging from previous global estimates on child labour have shown that gender differentials with regard to the work children do increase with age and with the dangers children face. Table 3 appears to confirm these earlier estimates. In the age group 5-14 years, 0.9% of all boys in economic activity were in hazardous domestic work, as against 1.4% of

¹⁰ Source: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/#>

¹¹ Defined for the purposes of these estimates as at least 43 hours per week.

all girls. Amongst 15-17 year olds, this dropped to 0.6% of boys compared to 3.3% of girls (ILO, 2013c).

Table 3: Estimates of children in hazardous domestic work by age and sex, 2012

Age group and sex	Children in employment (CE)	Hazardous domestic work (HDW)	HDW as % of CE
5-11 years old	73,072,000	930,000	1.3
Boys	36,317,000	417,000	1.1
Girls	36,755,000	513,000	1.4
12-14 years old	70,994,000	740,000	1.0
Boys	39,621,000	279,000	0.7
Girls	31,373,000	461,000	1.5
Total 5-14 years old	144,066,000	1,670,000	1.2
Boys	75,959,000	696,000	0.9
Girls	68,107,000	974,000	1.4
Total 15-17 years old	120,362,000	2,007,000	1.7
Boys	72,368,000	422,000	0.6
Girls	47,994,000	1,585,000	3.3
Total 5-17 years old	264,427,000	3,677,000	1.4
Boys	148,306,000	1,118,000	0.8
Girls	116,120,000	2,559,000	2.2

Source: ILO (2013c, p.4)

Domestic work and children in slavery like conditions

In 2012, the ILO produced its Global Estimate of Forced Labour in an attempt to quantify this phenomenon. Of the total number of 20.9 million forced labourers, women and girls represent the greater share of total forced labour – 11.4 million victims (55%), compared to 9.5 million (45%) men and boys. The number of children aged 17 years and below who are forced labour victims was estimated at 5.5 million (or 26% of all forced labour victims). While the specific number of children in forced labour and trafficking for domestic work remains unknown, evidence points to the existence of significant numbers of children in debt bondage, victims of trafficking and in servitude situations (ILO, 2013c).

A case study of Cambodian child domestic workers in Malaysia illustrates the challenges of acquiring robust data regarding this sub-group of child domestic workers (Licadho, 2010). According to reports by several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local media, Cambodian children as young as 13 are frequently recruited to become domestic migrant workers in Malaysia. In the majority of cases investigated, women were under the age of 21, and many were under 18. A report by Human Rights Watch estimates that between 40,000-50,000 Cambodian women and girls migrated to Malaysia as domestic workers between 2008-2011 alone. Recruitment agents for domestic workers have been found to forge fraudulent identity documents to recruit children, mislead families about job responsibilities in Malaysia and charge

excessive fees. Recruitment approaches also tend to include offering children/families cash/loans and food incentives that leave children and their families heavily indebted.

The study further details that once child domestic workers arrive in Malaysia, children are often forced to surrender their passports to their agents or employers, making it extremely difficult for them to leave if they are mistreated or abused. Children tend to work for 14 to 21 hours a day without rest breaks or days off, confined to their places of work without adequate food. Many are physically and verbally abused and some experience sexual abuse. The first successful prosecution of a recruitment agency, occurred in 2011 in a Cambodian court where the manager of the VC Manpower recruitment agency was sentenced to 13 months in prison for illegally detaining child workers. Despite this crucial arrest, the Cambodian government has failed to arrest and prosecute other recruitment agents since involved in similar abuses, and it has not revoked the license of a single recruitment agency (ibid, 2010). Previous studies also corroborate such examples across other Asia-Pacific nations (for example see Pflug, 2002).

Other key findings

Determinants of child labour in domestic work

There are many root causes of child labour, including poverty as the predominant explanation. While poverty is commonly accepted as being one of the determinants of child labour, there are empirical studies which critique the poverty-based explanations of child labour. Namely, these studies have failed to find a positive correlation between poverty and child labour. A few studies have shown that:

- a. households which own (or operate) relatively large amounts of land tend to make their children work more; and
- b. households that start their own businesses are more likely to send their children to work.

Since land or business ownership is typically an indicator of greater wealth, the expected relationship between wealth and child labour does not necessarily hold according to ILO-IPEC/SIMPOC (2007). A possible rationale explaining why greater land or business ownership may contribute to higher child labour is that, in the absence of properly functioning labour markets and/or lack of access to credit markets, owning or controlling assets such as land or business amounts to having the opportunity for more productive use of available inputs such as the household's labour including child labour. The argument above assumes that child and adult labour are substitutes as is the case in many developing contexts (ILO-IPEC/SIMPOC, 2007).

Concerning child domestic work as a sub-group of child labour, there are a range of "push and pull" factors. At a fundamental level, poverty and its feminization, social exclusion, lack of education, gender and ethnic discrimination, violence suffered by children in their own homes, displacement, rural-urban migration and the loss of parents due to conflict and/or disease e.g. HIV/AIDS are key determinants of this form of child labour.¹² Other rationale include increasing social and economic disparities, debt bondage, the perception that the employer is simply extended family and therefore offers a safe and protected environment for the child, the

¹² <http://ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/lang--en/index.htm>

increasing need for the women of the household to have a domestic counterpart or “replacement” which enables more and more women to enter the labour market, and the illusion that domestic service gives child workers an opportunity for an education.

Orphaned children

Another key determinant of child labour is a child’s status as an orphan. Rapid assessments carried out by the ILO found that orphaned children are far more likely than non-orphans to be working in child labour generally, particularly in the sub-sectors of commercial agriculture, domestic service (including domestic work), commercial sex and as street vendors. In a rapid assessment in Zambia, HIV/AIDS alone was estimated to have increased the child labour force by between 23-33% (Mushingeh et al, 2002 cited in Guardello, Lyon & Rosati, 2004). An analysis of data from the 1999 Zambia Child Labour Survey confirms statistically the linkages between HIV/AIDS and child labour; orphaned children are found, in general, twice as likely to be working as non-orphaned children. Children are often affected by HIV/AIDS before they are orphaned thus compounding the issue. For the children affected, their workload begins when parents become sick and increases when they become orphaned. When a parent falls sick, children often assume new responsibilities; these include domestic chores, nursing for ailing parents, agricultural or income generating activities and childcare duties. The workload of orphans may even be greater than non-orphans living in the same household (Foster, Makufa, Drew and colleagues, 1997 cited in Guardello, Lyon & Rosati, 2004). Increased domestic workload is often disproportionately greater on girls than boys as per other general trends regarding gender and child domestic work. Also, in order to generate an income, adolescents may leave orphan households to seek work in towns/urban locales, searching for employment as agricultural labourers for more prosperous farmers or as domestic labourers. Adolescent girls may also become involved in commercial sex or marry in order to provide for the needs of younger children in their household/care (Guardello, Lyon & Rosati, 2004).

4. Regional prevalence of child domestic workers

Data surrounding regional statistics of child domestic workers is limited, with many studies only referring to domestic workers as a whole (i.e. not disaggregating for adults and children) or focusing on single country/area studies (beyond the scope of this report). However, some general trends can be identified from data from UNICEF and ILO regarding child labour.

In absolute terms, the Asia-Pacific region has the largest number of child labourers ages 5-17 (77.7 million) as compared with 59 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 12.5 million in Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO, 2013a). However, the Sub-Saharan Africa region has the highest percentage of child labour, with approximately 20% of children (aged 5-17 years) involved. In the Middle East and North Africa, approximately 9 million (one in twelve of the total child population) were involved in child labour in 2012. In the age group 5-14 years old, most of the observed decline in the overall number of child labourers is in the number of child labourers in Asia and the Pacific. The number of child labourers also decreased marginally in Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO, 2013a).

According to the ILO (2013a), there has been a slight decrease in child labour in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, not only in absolute numbers but also in relative terms (from 52.2 million to 47.7 million and a 3.7 percentage point decrease in incidence) though the exact reasons for this are unknown. Regarding children engaged in hazardous work (aged between 5-17 years),

the largest number of children in the worst form of child labour is found in the Asia-Pacific (33.9 million) and Sub-Saharan Africa (28.8 million) regions. There are an estimated 9.6 million children in hazardous work in Latin America and the Caribbean and 5.2 million in the Middle East and North Africa regions. In comparative terms, the Sub-Saharan Africa region has the highest incidence of children in hazardous work, with 10% of children involved (ILO, 2013a, p. viii).

There are some plausible reasons offered for the lack of robust regional data on child domestic workers which have been reported to be as low as 1% in countries such as Ghana and Liberia (Thorsen, 2012). In some instances, in Sub-Saharan African and Asia-Pacific nations, child domestic workers may not be recognised as workers in labour force surveys thus undermining survey results (Pflug, 2002; EU Commission, 2013). For instance, many children in developing contexts carry out housework and other duties for households that are not their own, whether for cash, a meal and shelter, or virtually nothing. In circumstances where domestic work carries a social stigma, domestic workers often refuse to identify themselves as such. In addition, as mentioned earlier in the report, it is not uncommon for domestic workers to be related to their employer by kinship, unpaid and thus not identified as “paid employees”. In some countries, a high proportion of children, 20% or more, may not be living with their parents (ILO, 2013a).

Over the last 2 decades, rapid assessments (normally at the country level or multi-country level) carried out by the ILO have attempted to fill the knowledge gap in this area but some estimates have been restricted to districts and urban locales with no concrete country level composite picture created (Pflug, 2002).

5. Data collection approaches and limitations

According to UNICEF (2014), efforts to collect data on child labour in general have ‘*long been undermined by the absence of an internationally accepted operational definition of child labour*’ (p.11). Although legal definitions exist, there has been disagreement over the translation of these definitions into operational definitions for measurement, resulting in the use of different indicators and measurement tools and incomparable estimates. UNICEF and the ILO, being the two major organisations collecting data on child labour, have collaborated to improve consistency, and in 2010 the standard Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) questionnaire (used by UNICEF) was revised to make it consistent with ILO standards (UNICEF, 2014 and Dayioğlu, 2013).

UNICEF and the ILO also work together through the joint project Understanding Children’s Work to further harmonise tools and methods. However, it is difficult to compare data trends over time due to the differing approaches taken by the ILO to collect data on child domestic work. For example, 2008 estimates were based upon a task approach, whereas 2012 data were based on the industry-approach with a better understanding of child domestic labour (ILO, 2012).

MICS surveys are designed to collect data on a range of topics and use questionnaires as modular tools which can be adapted by countries¹³. Four types of questionnaires are available: a household questionnaire, a questionnaire for girls and women aged 15-49, a questionnaire for boys and men aged 15-49, and a questionnaire regarding children under age five. Statistical

¹³ For further detailed information on data collection methods see ILO (2008) *Report III: Child labour statistics. 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians.*

Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) questionnaires, used by the ILO, include household-based child labour surveys, with the model child labour questionnaire being based on ILO Conventions 138 and 182 and covering children between the ages of 5 to 17 (UNICEF, 2014).

However, there are limitations with these data collection methods. SIMPOC surveys calculate estimates using definitions according to the national definitions of individual countries, which of course may differ and therefore result in diverging estimates (UNICEF, 2014). A limitation of household survey data in general is that it can underestimate the number of children in domestic work because such surveys do not go into sufficient detail to capture all aspects of domestic work (ILO, 2013b).

A particular difficulty in measuring child domestic work has been the ambiguity surrounding which children to include. For example, while Child Labour Surveys cover children aged 5 to 17, information currently available through MICS only covers children aged 5 to 14 (Dayioğlu, 2013). Children under the age of 15 are often not included in household surveys, and those who are between 15-17 years of age may not wish to identify themselves as domestic workers due to the stigma attached to the occupation (EU Commission, 2013 p.33).

A further area of contention has been the inclusion of Unpaid Household Services (UHS). The *Resolution concerning statistics of child labour*, adopted in 2008, affirmed that UHS should be taken into account when measuring child labour, although it did not specify thresholds due to a lack of evidence. Disagreements over whether domestic work should count as a 'worst form' of child labour also risks the plight of child domestic workers being neglected by the international community. For example, Gamlin et al.,(2013), in the article *Is domestic work a worst form of child labour? The findings of a six-country study of the psychosocial effects of child domestic work*, conclude that child domestic work is 'highly heterogeneous' and therefore should not be classified as a 'worst form' of child labour. Some researchers view child domestic labour as a 'safer' occupation (e.g. Klocker, 2011 cited in Gamlin, 2013) and one which can positively contribute to childhood development (Aufseeser et al., 2017), whereas others have found evidence that such children are 'treated worse than dogs' (Blagbrough, 2008 in Gamlin et al., 2013). According to Gamlin, the effect of domestic work has mainly focused on the extremes and relied upon qualitative methods rather than attempting to understand how specific combinations of working conditions and arrangements affect child domestic workers.

An additional data limitation relates to who qualifies as a domestic worker rather than somebody who undertakes domestic work, the latter of which is not included in the ILO's methodology because it is distinct from the agreed definition as domestic labour being work in a third party household in an employment relationship (Donger, 2016, p.16; ILO, 2013a). 'Paternalistic notions' that view domestic work as something other than employment can conceal the existence of an employment relationship and have resulted in a number of ILO member states excluding or limiting domestic workers from labour legislation. Child domestic workers are at a particular risk of being overlooked as they are likely to be declared as 'one of the family' rather than being in employment, and girls in particular are likely to be perceived as 'helpers' (ILO, 2013a, pp.3-4; Donger, 2016 p.22).

Furthermore, in many cultural contexts, domestic work is often 'embedded in practices of support, reciprocity and interdependence between relatives, friends or people belonging to a same community' (Donger, 2016, p.22). One example is child fostering: referred to as "confiage"

in West Africa and “vidomegon” in Benin. In the United Republic of Tanzania, urban middle-class women have drawn on Undugu (a Swahili term symbolising an ideology of kinship, bonds of friendship, ethnicity and tribal bonds) as a cultural means of sourcing the labour of “house girls” from poorer relations (Kiaga, 2012). Similarly, in Zimbabwe children are often sent to stay with wealthier relatives, where they are expected to “earn” their upkeep. As in other regions, child domestic workers below the age of 15 years are often excluded from the estimates in child labour surveys (Guardello, Lyon & Rosati, 2004; Thorson, 2012; EU Commission, 2013, p.33). Further complications arise when the child is provided with lodging, schooling or clothes in return for work instead of remuneration.

In addition there are data collection limitations due to disagreements over what constitutes ‘hazardous household chores’ which has led to household chores as a dimension of child labour not being included in global estimates, even though Resolution II (Resolution concerning statistics of child labour) allows it (ILO, 2013c p.19).

The nature of domestic work, resulting in many children being confined to the private home sphere and therefore invisible and even purposefully hidden from the public domain raises further challenges in obtaining accurate data. For example, one study found ‘*huge differences between the quantity, visibility and accessibility of child domestic workers in each country*’ with it being particularly challenging to identify domestic workers under 14 years of age, male domestic child workers or live-in workers (Gamlin et al., 2013). Knowledge gaps can lead to misguided advocacy efforts and policies which do not respond to the issues experienced by the most vulnerable child labourers.

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Key websites

- International Labour Organization (ILO)-IPEC - Child Labour and Domestic Work: <http://ilo.org/ipec/areas/Childdomesticlabour/lang--en/index.htm>
- Understanding Children's Work – An Interagency Research Cooperation Programme: <http://www.ucw-project.org/>
- UNICEF – Child Protection and Child Labour: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/#>

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