



# Violence against children: preliminary evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador

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November 2008



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As part of broader efforts towards durable solutions to child labor, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank initiated the interagency Understanding Children's Work (UCW) project in December 2000. The project is guided by the Oslo Agenda for Action, which laid out the priorities for the international community in the fight against child labor. Through a variety of data collection, research, and assessment activities, the UCW project is broadly directed toward improving understanding of child labor, its causes and effects, how it can be measured, and effective policies for addressing it. For further information, see the project website at [www.ucw-project.org](http://www.ucw-project.org).

This paper is part of the research carried out within UCW (Understanding Children's Work), a joint ILO, World Bank and UNICEF project. The views expressed here are those of the authors' and should not be attributed to the ILO, the World Bank, UNICEF or any of these agencies' member countries.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The issue of child abuse in developing countries is of utmost importance for designing policies directed to vulnerable children and aimed at combating the worst forms of child labour. Unfortunately there is limited empirical basis for formulating policies and programmes addressing violence against children in developing countries. This preliminary study uses data from El Salvador (SIMPOC 2001), Colombia (SIMPOC 2001), Cambodia (SIMPOC, 2001) and Ecuador (SIMPOC, 2001) and constitutes a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the issue of children abuse.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Violence against children cuts across boundaries of geography, race, class, religion and culture. Violence against children is also a major threat to global development and to reaching the Millennium Development Goals: universal primary education can not be achieved unless children are safe in school. The World Report on Violence against Children<sup>2</sup> is the result of a genuine and lively participatory process, involving Governments, international entities, civil society and children. The collaboration of the office of the High Commission for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization in developing the Study was crucial in recognizing the multi-faceted nature of violence against children and the need for a cooperative, multidisciplinary approach to address it.

2. The issue of child abuse in developing countries is of utmost importance for designing policies directed to vulnerable children and aimed at combating the worst forms of child labour. Unfortunately there is limited empirical basis for formulating policies and programmes addressing violence against children in developing countries. Especially, the workplace is among the most difficult settings to be addressed: according to international instruments and most national laws, children under a certain age should not be in the workplace at all, therefore when employment is under-age and illegal, incidents and violence are even less likely to be reported; where children are exploited in the informal sector, the knowledge is more severely lacking. This preliminary study is based on the above mentioned report, and constitutes a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the issue of children abuse, with a focus on children experiencing violence in the workplace, at school and performing household chores.

## 2. DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

3. The World Report on Violence against Child Labour adopts the definition of the child as contained in article 1 of the Convention on the rights of the child (CRC): *“Every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”* The definition of violence is that of article 19 of the CRC: *“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”* The report also draws on the definition in the World Report on Violence and Health: *“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death,*

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, World Report on Violence against Children (2007), Geneva

*psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.*” This wide definition includes not only the more obvious violent acts of commission, but also those acts that result from a power relationship, including threats and intimidation, as well as neglect or acts of omission. A broad range of outcomes are covered: violence does not necessarily result in injury or death, but includes psychological harm, deprivation and maldevelopment. Many forms of violence against children, for instance, can result in physical, psychological and social problems that do not necessarily lead to injury, disability or death. These consequences can be immediate, as well as latent, and can last for years after the initial abuse.

4. The nature of violent acts can be<sup>3</sup>:

- Physical;
- Sexual;
- Psychological;
- Involving deprivation or neglect.

5. Violence against children includes physical and mental abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. Violence may take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential care facilities, on the streets, in the workplace, in prisons and in place of detention. It can affect children’s physical and mental health, impair their ability to learn and socialize, and undermine their development as functional adults and good parents later in life. In the most severe cases, violence against children leads to death.<sup>4</sup>

6. Violence against children therefore refers to any act or failure that violates the rights of the child that endangers his or her optimum health, survival or development.

- **Physical abuse** of a child is that which results in actual or potential harm from an interaction, or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or a person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.
- **Emotional abuse** includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include

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<sup>3</sup> World Report on violence and health, World Health Organization (2002), Geneva

<sup>4</sup> Child protection information sheets, UNICEF (2006)



restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical form of hostile or rejecting treatment.

- ***Neglect and negligent treatment.*** Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.
- ***Sexual abuse*** is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to: the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of a child in pornographic performances and material.
- ***Exploitation.*** Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.<sup>5</sup>

7. Awareness of cultural factors must remain high as they influence all aspects of the problem from the occurrence and definition of abuse through its treatment, and to its successful prevention. In other words, culture helps to define the generally accepted principles of child-rearing and rights of the children: different cultures have different rules about what are acceptable parenting practices. Nonetheless, differences in how cultures define what is abusive have more to do with emphasizing particular aspects of parental behavior: there is general agreement across many cultures that child abuse should not be allowed, and virtual unanimity in this respect where very harsh disciplinary practices and sexual abuse are concerned.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Report of the Consultation on child abuse prevention, WHO, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999

<sup>6</sup> World Report on violence and health, World Health Organization (2002), Geneva

### 3. ASSESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: ISSUES RELATED TO QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

8. The issue of child abuse in developing countries is of utmost importance for designing policies directed to vulnerable children and aimed at combating the worst forms of child labour.

9. Empirical studies on such issue are scarce, if not nonexistent. This study aims at contributing to fill in the information gap, by looking at violence suffered by children in two specific contexts: violence in the performance of work and in the classroom. The starting point was an analysis of the surveys conducted in El Salvador (SIMPOC 2001), Colombia (SIMPOC 2001), Ecuador (SIMPOC, 2001) and Cambodia.(SIMPOC, 2001). The surveys conducted in Colombia and Cambodia are specialized surveys on child labour administered as stand-alone surveys, while the ones conducted in El Salvador and Ecuador are examples of child labour modules as part of a household survey.

10. Information on violence in the workplace is provided by the surveys for Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador and Cambodia. Surveys for Colombia and El Salvador give information also on violence against children performing non economic activities, while information on violence against children attending school is available for Colombia only.

11. It is worth emphasizing that these findings should be treated with caution because of the difficulties inherent in measuring instances of violence experienced by children: even when official statistics report violence against children, they dramatically underestimate the true magnitude of the problem. The World Report on Violence Against Children underlines various reasons for this lack of reporting: very young children who suffer violence in their home lack the capacity to report; many children are afraid to report incidents of violence against them for fear of reprisals by perpetrators, or of interventions by authorities which may worsen their overall situation; in many cases, parents, who should protect their children, are silent if the violence is perpetrated by a spouse or other family member, or more powerful member of society such as an employer, a police officer, or community leader.

12. In Colombia, children are asked directly about the problems they face in the workplace. Among the choices are low remuneration, too long working days, work which makes them feel ashamed or sad, bad relationships with colleagues, repetitive tasks, abuses such as insults, sexual harassment and abuses and pressures by authorities. The analysis focuses on the latter two (abuses such as insults, sexual harassment, and abuses and pressures by authorities) representing violence against children; the others have been considered as problems pertaining to other aspects of working conditions. As for school attendance children are asked how they are treated when they misbehave; only children which reply they have been verbally or physically mistreated are object of the analysis. Children are also asked to indicate the

person mistreating them (teacher, school principal, school mates). As for household chores, children are asked how they are treated when they do not carry out housework tasks properly; also in this case only children replying to have been verbally or physically mistreated are object of the analysis. Children are asked who mistreats them when they don't carry out domestic tasks properly (mother, father, grandparents, other relatives, non-relatives).

13. In El Salvador, children are asked how they are treated by their parents or other person responsible for their work when they perform domestic duties or by the employer in the workplace. Among the possible answers are scolding with vulgar words, scolding without using vulgar words, being beaten, or being both beaten and scolded which for the purpose of this study are identified as violence. No child has reported having been sexually abused.

14. In Cambodia, children working as employees for someone else other than their own family/parents or guardians are directly asked about the relationship with their employer. Those replying that the relationship is bad are asked to give the main reasons; among the choices are too much work, low remuneration, delayed wage payment, mental and/or physical abuse verbal abuse. The analysis focuses on children reporting psychological, physical and verbal abuse.

15. In Ecuador, questions on violence are addressed to the household head and are only for children belonging to the following employment categories; employees in the public sector, employees in the private sector, daily workers, paid agricultural workers and domestic workers. The questions are similar to Cambodia's; that is, how is the relationship with the employer, and the reasons for a bad relationship with the employer. The choices are: verbal or psychological mistreatment, physical mistreatment and both types of mistreatment.

#### 4. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE FROM FOUR COUNTRIES

16. Violence is a neglected aspect of the impact of child labour on children, since little hard data is available. Potentially, many of the world's more than 200 million child labourers experience systematic violence; some 100 million legally employed adolescents may be also affected. The workplace is among the most difficult settings to be addressed: according to international instruments and most national laws, children under a certain age should not be in the workplace at all, therefore when employment is under-age and illegal, incidents and violence are even less likely to be reported; where children are employed in the informal sector, the knowledge is more severely lacking. Children are more vulnerable to workplace violence because of their smaller size, developmental immaturity

and dependence on adults. Of all child workers, girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence<sup>7</sup>.

17. Preliminary analysis in Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador shows that abuses are common in the workplace, in schools and in the household setting.

#### 4.1 Children's activity in Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador: background information

18. According to UCW calculations based on the survey for Colombia, 14.5 percent of children aged 5-17 are employed in economic activity, and 81 percent perform household chores. Boys are more likely to be involved in economic activities, and girls are more likely to attend school and to be involved in household chores.

19. An estimated 222,500 children aged 5-17 are engaged in economic activity in El Salvador, and 64.9 percent of children performs household chores. The overwhelming majority of children attends school. As in Colombia, girls are more likely to be involved in household chores, and boys are more likely to be involved in economic activity. Boys are also more likely to attend school.

20. In Cambodia a very large proportion of children is involved in economic activity (53 percent), with very small differences between boys and girls. School attendance rates are quite low for both boys and girls, with boys slightly more likely to attend school than girls. Although girls are slightly less likely to be engaged in economic activity, they are more likely to perform household chores; however, also for household chores differences by sex are small.

21. Results for Ecuador show that 20.7 percent of children are involved in economic activity. Boys are more likely to work in economic activity than girls, while girls are more likely to be in household chores. Boys and girls are characterised by the same school attendance rate.

Table 1. Child activity breakdown, by country and sex

	Children in economic activity						Children attending school						Children in household chores					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%	Nr. (000)	%
<b>Colombia</b>	1,096	19.7	472	8.9	1,568	14.5	4,682	85.2	4,706	88.2	9,388	86.7	4,206	76.5	4,573	85.7	8,779	81
<b>El Salvador</b>	155	16	67	7	222	11.5	751	77.2	741	76.9	1,492	77	554	57.3	694	72.6	1,248	64.9
<b>Cambodia</b>	1171	53.1	1108	52.8	2279	53	1504	68.2	1328	63.3	2832	65.8	1622	73.6	1593	75.9	3216	74.7
<b>Ecuador</b>	480	25.4	299	16.0	779	20.7	1593	84.3	1581	84.3	3174	84.3	618	49.4	591	56.4	1210	52.6

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001; El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001; Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001; Ecuador ENEMDUR, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is mainly drawn from the following document. Facts on violence against children at work, ILO (2006), <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/download/child/childday06.pdf>

## 4.2 Children mistreated at work

22. Information on violence in the workplace is very difficult to obtain. Individuals are reluctant to report abuses, for fear of losing their job and data collected on the issue is scarce. However, the number of surveys with information on violence in the workplace is increasing. The most serious problem encountered when analysing this type of data is represented by the heterogeneity of the information provided which makes comparisons across statistics of different countries difficult. Questions are different in content and formulation, and in particular are addressed to child workers belonging to different employment status<sup>8</sup> groups. For Colombia, information on violence refers to all child workers, with exclusion of no employment status; for El Salvador questions on violence are addressed to both children working and performing household chores, without a clear distinction between the two groups, for Cambodia questions are exclusively directed to children working as employees for someone else other than own family/parents or guardians for payment in-cash or in-kind, or without any payment while for Ecuador questions are directed exclusively to employees in the public sector, employees in the private sector, daily workers, paid agricultural workers and domestic workers. Harmonising groups for all countries may contribute greatly to consistent and significant cross country comparisons. However, the risk associated is of losing necessary information because of the relative exiguity of children replying to questions on violence. The following analysis on violence in the workplace will refer to all child workers for Colombia and only to wage workers for El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The expression "employment status" indicates the type of work; e.g., if a child is working for pay in cash or in kind or is involved in unpaid work, if a child is working for someone who is not a member of the household, if a child is involved in any type of family work (on the farm or in a business), if the child is in self employ, etc.

<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of cross country comparison results on violence in the workplace will attain to the following groups for each country:

- a. Colombia; information will concern child workers belonging to all employment status categories.
- b. El Salvador; the question on violence is addressed indistinctly to children working for someone and working for a household member. By cross checking with information on employment status and employer deriving from other survey questions, it was possible to identify wage workers and to separate them from children performing household chores. This report will refer only to child wage workers.
- c. Cambodia; cross checking with information on employment status it emerged that questions on violence mostly refer to wage workers.
- d. Ecuador; questions on violence on the workplace are directed only to employees in the public sector, employees in the private sector, daily workers, paid agricultural workers and domestic workers, which all are part of the broader category "wage workers".

"Bihari ustads (masters) punish too much. My second ustad once hug me by the hands and beat me so hard, the stick broke. Ager that he continued beating me with the shuttle. I left him and worked under a third ustad. This one insulted me and did not pay me regularly.

Boy in sari industry, 15, South Asia 2001

If I broke something or did something badly they would beat me with a shoe or a belt. I couldn't leave the house, they would lock the door when they left. When my mother came the last time to visit I told her I wouldn't stay at that house any more. I said, 'Either I go with you or I will run away or kill myself'."

Boy, 14, domestic labourer, North Africa, 2005

"At 4:00 a.m. I got up and did silk winding. I only went home once a week. I slept in the factory with two or three other children. We prepared the food there and slept in the space between the machines. If I made a mistake – if I cut the thread – he would beat me. Sometimes [the owner] used vulgar language. Then he would give me more work."

Child, 11, bonded at around age 7 for Rs. 1,700 (US \$35), South Asia, 2003

Source: United Nations (2006), World Report on Violence against Children, Geneva

23. As illustrated here above, information on abuses at work for Colombia refers to all child workers, with exclusion of no employment status. Preliminary evidence in Colombia shows that a relevant portion of working children is abused at work. 428,600 children, 27% percent of working children, declared that they encountered difficulties at work because:

- they are not well remunerated
- they feel sad or embarrassed because of work carried out;
- they have bad relationships with colleagues;
- they have too long working days;
- working days are with too few or too short rest breaks;
- they are exposed to abuses (insults, sexual harassment, threats, beaten);
- they are exposed to pressures or abuses by authorities;
- they are doing repetitive and monotonous tasks;
- others.

24. In the present study, the focus is on children declaring to be exposed to abuses (verbal and physical) and to pressures or abuses by authorities. Out of the total Colombian working children 2.9 percent attributed problems in the workplace to physical or psychological violence, and/or abuses/pressures by the authorities. As the table below points out, 2 percent of working children are mistreated at work and 1.2 percent is subject to pressures and abuses by authorities. Note that the question allowed for multiple answers, therefore the average of children subject to abuse is not

equal to the sum of children subject to physical/psychological abuse and children subject to pressures or abuses by authorities.

*Table 2. Colombia. Percentage of working children unsatisfied with their job by sex and reason of dissatisfaction*

Sex	Not well remunerated	Sad/embarassed because of work	Bad relationships with colleagues	Working days too long	Too few/short rest breaks	Physical /Psychological abuses	Pressures or abuses by authorities	Repetitive and monotonous tasks	Other	Total
Male	9.3	2.4	2	8	4.9	2.2	1.2	7.1	5.3	29.1
Female	7.9	2.7	1.4	5.3	2.1	1.4	1.2	4.5	3.3	23.3
Total	8.9	2.5	1.8	7.2	4.1	2	1.2	6.3	4.7	27.3

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001; El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001; Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001; Ecuador, SIMPOC 2001.

Note: questions allowed for multiple answers, therefore the total percentage of children unsatisfied with their job is not equal to the sum of the individual reasons for dissatisfaction.

25. In Colombia, Cambodia and Ecuador older child wage workers are more likely to be mistreated than younger; the opposite holds for El Salvador where children between 5 and 14 years old are mistreated in higher percentages. In Colombia and El Salvador a larger share of boys are mistreated with respect to girls, while in Cambodia and Ecuador mistreatments are directed more against girls. Information on residence is not available for all countries. Mistreatments in general are more common in urban areas than in rural; although this may be partly explained by wage workers being concentrated more in urban than in rural areas.

*Table 3. Percentage of wage workers mistreated at work, by country, age group and sex*

Age group	5-14			15-17			5-17		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Colombia</b>	2.7	2.1	2.5	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.0	2.6	2.9
<b>El Salvador</b>	7.0	3.6	6.0	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.8	3.1	3.6
<b>Cambodia</b>	0.4	0.2	0.3	3.4	4.6	4.0	2.1	3.0	2.5
<b>Ecuador</b>	1.4	4.5	2.3	3.3	4.0	3.5	2.6	4.1	3.1

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001; El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001; Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001; Ecuador, SIMPOC 2001.

*Table 4. Percentage of wage workers mistreated at work, by country, age group and residence*

Age group	5-14			15-17			5-17		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>Colombia</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>El Salvador</b>	8.2	4.0	6.0	3.7	2.8	3.1	4.5	3.0	3.6
<b>Cambodia</b>	2.1	0.0	0.3	5.2	3.6	4.0	4.4	2.0	2.5
<b>Ecuador</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001; El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001; Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001; Ecuador, SIMPOC 2001

26. If we look at the type of mistreatments perpetrated on child wage workers we see that in Ecuador 23.2 of mistreated child wage workers are

subject to physical mistreatment, while 78.4 to verbal or psychological mistreatment. In Cambodia and El Salvador verbal mistreatment is largely prevalent (97.9% in Cambodia and 95% in El Salvador); however for El Salvador it is possible to identify those child workers which are scolded with vulgar words which represent 17.6% of mistreated child wage workers. It is important to recall that the magnitude of violence is likely to be underestimated by statistics, because of the reluctance to report violence in interviews. Survey should always be detailed enough to distinguish between physical, psychological and verbal mistreatment. Verbal abuse, especially by a non household member, most likely will affect negatively children's psychological well being and self confidence, posing an additional disadvantage, besides work itself.

*Table 5. Ecuador. Mistreated child wage workers by type of mistreatment*

	%
Only verbal or psychological	76.8
Only physical	21.6
Both	1.6
Total	100

Source: UCW calculation based on Ecuador, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 6. Cambodia. Mistreated child wage workers by type of mistreatment*

	%
Physical abuse	2.0
Verbal abuse	95.9
Both	2.0
Total	100

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 7. El Salvador. Mistreated child wage workers by type of mistreatment*

	%
Scold using vulgar words	17.6
Scold not using vulgar words	77.4
Scold and beat	2.9
Pay lower wage	2.0
Total	100

Source: UCW calculation based on EL Salvador, SIMPOC 2001

27. In Colombia, for which information on violence is available for all child workers, we can distinguish children reporting violence by working modality (i.e. wage employed, self-employed, domestic servant, non-wage family workers, and others). The following table reports the distribution of



the 2.9 % mistreated working children across modality of employment. Children suffering violence are more likely to be working outside of the family. This is especially true for mistreated girls.

*Table 8. Colombia. Distribution of children mistreated by authorities and of children mistreated physically/psychologically at work, by sex and employment status*

Physical/ Psychological abuses				
Sex	Employed	Domestic servant	Family worker	Other
Male	36.7	0.19	27.44	35.67
Female	79.46	2.89	14.47	3.17
Total	43.94	0.64	25.25	30.17
Abuses by authorities				
Sex	Employed	Domestic servant	Family worker	Other
Male	15.63	-	33.82	50.55
Female	91.97	-	8.03	-
Total	44.16	-	24.18	31.66

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

28. However, again, these figures should be interpreted with caution. For example, the UN states that ‘the close nature of the household, the child’s isolation and the invisible nature of the employment puts a child at considerable risk<sup>10</sup>’, and an Human Rights Watch reports that workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace: ‘of those surveyed for the IPEC study who had held more than one position as a domestic worker, 15.5 percent reported that they left their previous position because of sexual harassment or sexual abuse, making such abuse the second leading cause for leaving a position<sup>11</sup>’.

29. When analyzing mistreated children by sector of employment in Colombia, abused children are found mainly in the agricultural sector: more than 14,500 children working in agriculture are mistreated, and 8,400 are subject to pressure or abuses by authorities. About 11,000 children in the retail trade are psychological or physical abused. Mistreated child wage workers are instead concentrated mainly in the manufacturing sector (31.6% in Ecuador and 39.9% in Cambodia). For boys the construction sector shows a high percentage of mistreated children, while work in private households absorbs a large proportion of mistreated girls.

<sup>10</sup>World Report on violence against children, UN, Geneva, 2006

<sup>11</sup> El Salvador – Abuses against child domestic workers in El Salvador, Human Rights Watch, 2004

### 4.3 Living conditions of mistreated child wage workers: evidence from Cambodia

30. Data for Cambodia allows us to investigate more in depth the living conditions of child wage workers mistreated at work. The findings suggest that children mistreated at work are disadvantaged also relatively to other aspects of their life, and overall their situation is particularly alarming. This exercise suggests that to identify vulnerable groups it is useful to consider simultaneously several aspects of children's living conditions.

31. Child wage workers mistreated appear to be working on average a significant larger number of hours than child wage workers not mistreated.

*Table 9. Cambodia. Average weekly working hours of child wage workers by sex and mistreatment*

	Mistreated at work	Not mistreated at work
<b>Male</b>	58.3	37.6
<b>Female</b>	59.3	44.0
<b>Total</b>	58.9	40.8

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

32. Child wage workers mistreated are much less likely to attend school than those not mistreated. When looking at the school status of children mistreated in the workplace, 73% declare to have attended school only in the past. This result, combined with the result on work intensity, suggests that it may be that they quitted school because of work. It is worth highlighting that uneducated children have also fewer means to defend themselves from abuses.

*Table 10. Cambodia. Percentage of wage workers attending school by sex and mistreatment*

	Mistreated at work	Not mistreated at work
<b>Male</b>	3.6	46.2
<b>Female</b>	14.6	26.2
<b>Total</b>	10.3	35.9

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 11. Cambodia. Distribution of wage workers by school status and mistreatment (percentage)*

	Mistreated at work	Not mistreated at work
<b>Never attended</b>	16.3	18.8
<b>Attending in the present</b>	10.3	35.9
<b>Attended in the past</b>	73.4	45.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

33. If compared to not mistreated child wage workers, mistreated children are more likely to be supervised by an employer/boss, rather than by a relative. Children working for a non household member appear to be more at risk of mistreatments.

*Table 12. Cambodia. Percentage of child wage workers by person supervising work and mistreatment*

	<b>Mistreated at work</b>	<b>Not mistreated at work</b>
<b>Parent/guardian</b>	17.8	49.0
<b>Brother/sister</b>	1.9	3.8
<b>Other relative</b>	-	3.9
<b>Employer/boss</b>	80.3	43.0

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

34. As stated previously, the majority of child wage workers mistreated at work are in the manufacturing sector, followed by agriculture and construction. If we look more in detail, 87.5% of children mistreated in the manufacturing sector are working in the manufacture of wearing apparel.

35. Child wage workers are asked if they have ever been hurt at work or have suffered from illnesses due to work: 68 % of wage workers mistreated at work reply that they were injured or ill due to work, against 51% of wage workers not mistreated at work. Among children hurt or ill due to work, mistreated children are more likely to report having been hurt or ill due to work “frequently” (as opposed to having been hurt or ill occasionally or rarely), than not mistreated children (16.3% against 7.2 %). Further, mistreated wage workers performed heavy work more often than children not mistreated in the workplace. A higher proportion of children mistreated has the perception that if they stopped working their household would not afford to live, than their not mistreated counterpart (20.4% against 11%).

*Table 13. Cambodia. Percentage of child wage workers reporting injuries or illness due to work, by mistreatment*

	<b>Mistreated at work</b>	<b>Not mistreated at work</b>
Often/frequently	16.3	7.2
Occasionally	72.2	71.9
Rarely	11.2	20.9

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 14. Cambodia. Percentage of child wage workers performing heavy work, by mistreatment*

Frequency of heavy work performance	Mistreated at work	Not mistreated at work
<b>Always/often</b>	30.7	14.1
<b>Sometimes</b>	46.2	41.6
<b>Never/Rarely</b>	23.1	44.4

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

36. Heads of households to which mistreated children belong appear to be less educated than those of households to which children not mistreated belong.

*Table 15. Cambodia. Wage child workers by household head education*

	Mistreated at work	Not mistreated at work
<b>None</b>	37.4	29.9
<b>Primary</b>	49.3	51.1
<b>Secondary</b>	13.3	15.9
<b>University</b>	-	3.1

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

#### 4.4 Children performing non-economic activities

37. Families, defined widely, hold the greatest potential for protecting children from all forms of violence. Nonetheless, families can be dangerous places for children, and in particular young children.

38. While all physical punishment is degrading, there are other cruel, degrading and potentially equally damaging non-physical forms of violence which children suffer within the family. These include enduring persistent threats, insults, name-calling, or other forms of verbal abuse, belittling, isolation or rejection.

39. As described in Table 1, in Colombia 76.5 % of boys and 85.7% of girls aged 5-17 are involved in household chores, while in El Salvador 57.3% of boys and 72.6 % of girls in the same age group. Both in Colombia and in El Salvador more than one third of children involved in domestic chores report being verbally or physically punished when they do not carry out household chores properly. For Colombia verbal mistreatment is defined as including insults, scolding, menaces (as opposed to explaining why the behaviour is wrong). Verbal mistreatment seems to be more common than physical punishment: nonetheless, as table 16 points out, in Colombia almost 10 percent of children performing household chores report being physically punished, while in El Salvador 18.5% of mistreated children reported being beaten .

Table 16. Colombia. Distribution of children involved in household chores reporting punishments

How are you usually treated if you don't carry out household chores properly ?	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Physical punishment	10.5	8.2	9.3
Locked up	0.7	0.5	0.6
Verbal mistreatment	24.2	24.7	24.4
Prohibiting something you like	3.8	3.5	3.6
Treating with indifference	0.3	0.3	0.3
Explaining why behavior is wrong	41.2	45.7	43.5
Other	3.1	2.7	2.9
Nothing	16.3	14.4	15.3
Total	100	100	100

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

Table 17. Colombia. Percentage of children involved in household chores reporting punishments by age group, sex, and type of mistreatment

Age group	Verbally and/or physically			Verbally			Physically		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
5-14	38.1	35.0	36.5	25.3	25.1	25.2	12.8	9.9	11.3
15-17	21.2	24.8	23.2	19.7	22.9	21.4	1.5	2.0	1.7
5-17	34.7	32.8	33.7	24.2	24.6	24.4	10.5	8.2	9.3

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

Table 18. El Salvador. Percentage of children involved in household chores reporting punishments inflicted by parent/responsible, by age group and sex

Age	Male	Female	Total
5-14	38.2	34.8	36.4
15-17	31.1	29.4	30.1
5-17	36.7	33.4	34.9

Source: UCW calculation based on El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001

Table 19 El Salvador. Percentage of children involved in household chores reporting punishments inflicted by parent/responsible of housework, by type of punishment

	Freq.	Percent
To scold with vulgar words	9,316	2.14
To scold without vulgar words	345,671	79.36
To beat	33,733	7.74
Both	46,828	10.75
Total	435,548	100

Source: UCW calculation based on El Salvador, SIMPOC 2001

40. For 10 percent of children in the relevant age group (5-17 years) both the household and the school are places of violence: they report having been punished

both during their housework and while attending school. Preliminary data in Colombia show that the situation is worse for younger children.

*Table 20 Colombia.*

Percentage of children attending school and performing domestic chores who are mistreated both at school and during housework, by age group and sex

Age group	Male	Female	Total
5-14	12.3	11.1	11.6
15-17	2.9	2.7	2.8
5-17	10.7	9.6	10.1

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

41. Evidence in Colombia points to the fact that most verbal and physical abuse is committed by mothers, especially when considering girls. This result is largely explained by the fact that children performing household chores are usually supervised by mothers; nonetheless it also reveals that some mothers in Colombia commonly resort to physical and verbal abuse in disciplining their children. Fathers appear more likely to punish physically than verbally.

*Table 21 Colombia.* Percentage of children involved in household chores reporting punishments by mistreater

Mistreater in the case of verbal abuse	Male	Female	Total
<b>Mother</b>	60.3	73.7	67.4
<b>Father</b>	26.5	14.5	20.2
<b>Grandparents</b>	7.9	7.8	7.9
<b>Other relatives</b>	4.4	3.5	4
<b>Non-relatives</b>	0.95	0.47	0.7
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

#### 4.5 Violence against children in school

42. Schools are uniquely placed to break the patterns of violence by giving children, their parents and communities the knowledge and skills to communicate, negotiate and resolve conflicts in more constructive ways. However, patterns of violence are often entrenched in school culture, and the reality for many millions of children is that schools expose them to violence and, in so doing, children are denied of their rights, including their right to education. Violence at school in developed countries has been thoroughly studied, and for developing countries, violence has been the

subject of previous research; for instance, a study in Jamaica found that 61% of students had witnessed acts of violence at school, 29% of such acts causing injuries, and that many did not feel safe in schools (Soyibo K & Lee MG, 2000).

"I have seen the harsh behavior of teachers in schools and colleges. Every day there are severe punishments by teachers, so we remain very afraid in class. The teacher often makes a student stand up in class, scolds him with ugly words and teases him for being naughty or for not learning the lessons. It is very shameful as well as painful."  
 Boy, 17, South and Central Asia, 2005

Source: United Nations (2006), World Report on Violence against Children, Geneva

43. In Colombia 1,633,600 children in the sample declared that they were punished at school: 12.8 percent of total children attending school were verbally punished and 4.6 percent were physically punished. For Colombia verbal mistreatment is defined as including insults, scolding, menaces (as opposed to explaining why the behaviour is wrong), resulting therefore in the unequivocally intimidation of children. 14.3 percent of children are suspended from school which represents an extreme measure causing most likely a negative reaction by parents and influencing children's school attendance

44. Boys, especially younger children, are more likely to be punished physically at school, while the percentage of children verbally punished is pretty much equal for boys and girls.

45. Children at school are more likely to be mistreated by teachers and schoolmates; the percentage of children mistreated by schoolmates let us to believe that bullying is a quite widespread phenomenon.

*Table 22 Colombia. Distribution of children attending school by treatment at school when misbehaving*

	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Recreation not allowed	9.6	6.5	8.0
<b>Verbal mistreatment</b>	13.0	12.6	12.8
<b>Physical punishment</b>	5.4	3.8	4.6
School suspension and parents informed	14.7	14.0	14.3
Explanation of why behaviour is wrong	43.9	48.4	46.2
Other	5.1	3.9	4.5
Nothing	8.3	10.8	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 23 Colombia.* Percentage of children mistreated at school by type of mistreatment, sex and age group

Age	Verbally mistreated		Physically punished	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
5-14	14.5	13.9	6.4	4.5
15-17	5.6	6.3	0.6	0.2
5-17	13.0	12.6	5.4	3.8

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 24. Colombia.* Percentage of children attending school by mistreater and sex

Sex	Mistreater			
	Teacher	School principal	School mates	Other
Male	18.4	1.8	18.8	1.2
Female	14.8	1.9	17.4	1.5
Total	16.6	1.9	18.1	1.4

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

46. The preceding analysis of violence against children in Colombia, El Salvador, Cambodia and Ecuador constitutes a starting point for a more detailed analysis on violence against children in developing countries.

47. Violence at work for children is particularly alarming: many children not only have to engage in work for many hours, instead of devoting time to school or to other activities more suited to their age, but they are also subject to violent acts which affect negatively their developing minds and bodies. The results of the analysis indicate that abuses in the workplace are common for children. Physical abuse by the employer is reported by child workers as frequent. When it comes to economic activities, it is important to identify those sectors and modalities of employment where child abuse is more common. Agriculture and manufacturing appear to be sectors where employers often commit abuses. An interesting result emerging from our preliminary analysis is that also self employed children are often exposed to abuses. This indicates that abuses are perpetrated not only by employers and parents, but also by people the children come in contact with during work, such as authorities. It also emerges that children mistreated at work are vulnerable also relatively to other aspects of their living conditions. They are less likely to attend school, they work longer hours, and implications of work for their health seem to be more serious. Policies therefore should target children in consideration of their overall living conditions.

48. Percentages of mistreated child workers on the total number of child workers are usually lower than the percentages of mistreated children



performing household chores on the total of children in housework. This reveals that parents or members of the households commonly use corporal or verbal punishment in raising their children. Further, although schools should represent a place of protection against abuses, violence is commonly present in school, and is committed by teachers and schoolmates, revealing that it is socially accepted and tolerated. A significant share of children experiences abuses both in the workplace and at school. It is also important to understand if certain groups of children are more vulnerable to abuses than others because of their sex, religion, or ethnicity.

49. To conclude, child abuse seems to be common in schools, work and within the household indicating little respect for childhood, and no consideration for the fact that the effects of neglected or violated childhoods are often devastating and may show only in adulthood.

50. Therefore, children need to be protected, not only from the more obvious violent acts, but also from those acts that result from a power relationship, as for example being put under pressure by authorities. It also confirms that violence against children may take place in those places usually considered safe, as schools and homes.

51. Furthermore, this preliminary study points out to the lack of empirical studies and suggests the need of specific tools to assess violence against children, as well as its consequences on child physical and psychological development. Such instruments should consider the inherent difficulties in measuring violence experienced by children, due to the reluctance of child respondents to answer honestly in the presence of their parents or exploiter. Specialized survey approaches beyond standard household survey questionnaires, are needed to shed light on child violence and questions addressing violence in surveys should be homogenous across countries to simplify the task of cross country comparison.

## APPENDIX I: QUESTIONS USED

## El Salvador: SIMPOC 2001

<p><b>1025a. ¿COMO ES EL TRATO QUE TE DAN TUS PADRES O RESPONSABLE EN LAS TAREAS DEL HOGAR O TU JEFE EN TU OCUPACION OFICIO? (PADRE/RESP.)</b></p>
<p>01. Te regaña utilizando palabras vulgares  02. Te regaña sin utilizar palabras vulgares  03. Te pega (Abuso físico)  04. Ambas (te regaña y te pega)  05. Te toca (Acoso sexual)  Te descuenta de tu salario  07. Te tratan bien  08. Solo tareas del hogar o actividades económicas  09. Otro _____</p>
<p><b>1025b. ¿COMO ES EL TRATO QUE TE DAN TUS PADRES O RESPONSABLE EN LAS TAREAS DEL HOGAR O TU JEFE EN TU OCUPACION OFICIO? (JEFE)</b></p>
<p>01. Te regaña utilizando palabras vulgares  02. Te regaña sin utilizar palabras vulgares  03. Te pega (Abuso físico)  04. Ambas (te regaña y te pega)  05. Te toca (Acoso sexual)  Te descuenta de tu salario  07. Te tratan bien  08. Solo tareas del hogar o actividades económicas  09. Otro _____</p>

## Colombia: SIMPOC 2001

<b>1. QUESTIONNAIRE ADULTS</b>
<b>21.¿Cuáles de los siguientes inconvenientes, encuentra...en su trabajo?</b>
<p>Es mal remunerado</p> <p>El trabajo que desempeña le da pena o vergüenza</p> <p>Hay malas relaciones con sus compañeros</p> <p>Jornadas de trabajo muy largas</p> <p>Jornadas con descansos insuficientes o muy cortos</p> <p>Tratos indebidos físicos o psicológicos(amenazas,insultos, acososexual,golpes,etc.)</p> <p>Presión o acoso por parte de autoridades</p> <p>Tareas monótonas y repetitivas</p> <p>Presencia de pandillas</p> <p>Otro, <i>¿cuál?</i></p>
<b>2. QUESTIONNAIRE CHILDREN</b>
<b>3.¿Cómo lo corrigen usualmente en el establecimiento educativo?</b>
<p>Dejándolo sin recreo o colocándole tareas adicionales para Realizar fuera de la jornada escolar</p> <p>Malos tratos verbales (gritos,insultos,regaños,cantaleta, amenazas,etc.)</p> <p>Castigos físicos (reglazos, pellizcos, tirón de orejas, palmadas, golpes, etc.)</p> <p>Con suspensión de clase socitación de padres o acudiente</p> <p>Hablándole y explicándole las razones por las cuales su comportamiento no fue correcto</p> <p>De otra forma, <i>¿cuál?</i></p> <p>No lo corrigen</p>
<b>4.¿De quiénes ha recibido malos tratos en elestablecimiento educativo?</b>
<p>De profesores o maestros</p> <p>Del rector, coordinador de disciplina o su equivalente</p> <p>De compañeros</p> <p>De otras personas</p> <p>No ha recibido malos tratos</p>
<b>4.Si no realizza de manera adecuada los oficios del hogar, ¿cómo lo corrigen usualmente?</b>
<p>Con castigos físicos (correazos, palmadas, pellizcos, tirón de orejas, golpes, etc.)</p> <p>Encerrándolo</p> <p>Restringiéndole la alimentación</p> <p>Dejándolo fuera de la casa</p> <p>Con malos tratos verbales (gritos,insultos,regaños, cantaleta,amenaza,etc.)</p> <p>Quitándole o prohibiéndole lo que le gusta</p> <p>Tratándolo con indiferencia (no hablándole)</p> <p>Hablándole y explicándole las razones por las cuales su comportamiento no fue correcto</p> <p>De otra forma, <i>¿cuál?</i></p> <p>No lo corrigen</p> <p>No aplica por ser hogar unipersonal</p>

**5. Usualmente, ¿quién lo corrige?**

Madre

Padre

Abuelo(a), tío(a)

Otros familiares

No familiares

## Cambodia: SIMPOC 2001

CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE
<b>Q 13.1</b> If ...__ is working for someone, how was their relationship with the employer?
1 =Good 2=Bad 3=Indifferent
<b>Q 13.2</b> Give main reasons.
1= Wants too much work done 2= Wants work done for long hours 3= Pays poorly 4= Does not pay on time 5= Abuses physically/mentally 6= Abuses verbally 7= Other, specify .....

## Ecuador ENEMDUR, 2001

CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE
Cómo es la relación de trabajo de (.....) con su empleador o patrono?
1 Mala 2 Buena 3 Indiferente
Porqué es mala la relación de (.....) con su patron
1 Existe maltrato verbal o psicológico 2 Existe maltrato físico 3 Existe maltrato verbal, psicológico y físico

## APPENDIX II: STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 25. Colombia.

Distribution of mistreated children by sex and industry sector

Sex	Agriculture		Mining		Manuf		Construction		Trade		Hotels, restaurants		Transports		Real estate		Other social activities		Private households	
	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities	Physical/ Psychological mistreatment	Abuses by authorities
Male	58.9	50.5	0.0	0.0	1.3	5.1	0.6	0.0	33.6	42.0	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	0	0.0	4.8	2.5	0.1	0.0
Female	6.8	30.9	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0	0.0	44.9	69.1	2.5	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0.0	40.3	0.0	1.8	0.0
Total	47.6	44.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	3.6	0.5	0.0	36.0	49.9	1.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	12.5	1.8	0.5	0.0

Source: UCW calculation based on Colombia, SIMPOC 2001

Table 26. Ecuador

Distribution of wage workers mistreated at work by sex and industry sector

Sex	Agriculture	Manuf	Construction	Trade	Hotels, restaurants	Finance	Education	Health and social	Private households	Total
Male	10.1	39.6	30.0	9.4	0.0	2.6	3.8	4.6	0.0	100.0
Female	7.3	20.7	0.0	14.3	19.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	38.5	100.0
Total	8.9	31.6	17.2	11.5	8.2	1.5	2.2	2.6	16.4	100.0

Source: UCW calculation based on Ecuador, SIMPOC 2001

*Table 27. Cambodia*

## Distribution of wage workers mistreated at work by sex and industry sector

Sex	Agriculture	Mining	Manuf	Construction	Trade	Hotels, restaurants	Transports	Community and social services	Private households
Male	46.7	0.4	12.9	34.5	1.9	0.0	1.9	1.7	0.0
Female	22.4	0.6	57.5	0.3	1.4	1.4	1.2	2.0	13.3
Total	32.0	0.5	39.9	13.8	1.6	0.8	1.5	1.9	8.1

Source: UCW calculation based on Cambodia, SIMPOC 2001

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