INVISIBLE GIRLS

Child Domestic Worker prevalence in Myanmar and Southeast Asia: Briefing note

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Child Domestic Worker prevalence in Myanmar and Southeast Asia

Globally there were an estimated 17.2 million Child Domestic Workers (CDW) in 2012, of whom two thirds are girls and an estimated 65% were aged 5-14. Over a fifth of CDWs (3.7 million) were estimated to be in hazardous work.[1] CDW prevalence may be determined by government collected census data, or periodic surveys including Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and Child Labour Surveys (CLS). They may also be captured in other nongovernment affiliated, nationally representative surveys, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), or other standalone surveys initiated by researchers or UN agencies. This briefing note describes available CDW prevalence estimates for selected Southeast Asian countries with a focus on Myanmar, defines the questions used to ascertain prevalence and highlights the limitations of current tools to obtain accurate prevalence figures for child domestic workers.

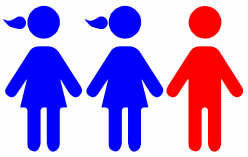
There are significant challenges with surveying and estimating prevalence of CDWs. CDWs may not be considered as household members by the household head responding to the survey. CDWs who are 'fostered' or a distant relative are often reported as household members doing unpaid household chores, when they are actually CDWs. CDWs' activity may not be considered employment, especially if no cash payment is involved, e.g. food and shelter or in-kind payments only. CDWs may be engaged in domestic work (DW) as a secondary job, which is usually not asked about in FLS/CLS. Trafficked CDWs may be deliberately concealed. Post-survey coding of occupation and branch of economic activity (see Box 1) is prone to errors. All of these factors lead to undercounting of CDWs.[2,3] Experience shows that specialist probing questions are needed to provide accurate estimates of CDW prevalence, which we discuss for Indonesia below.

Box 1. Statistical classification methods for CDWs in household surveys

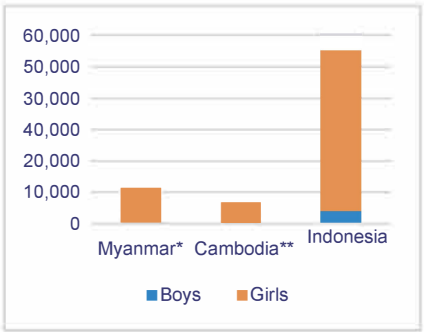
- **Task based approach:** or the occupational based approach, using International Standard Classification of Occupation (ICSO 2008) codes covering tasks typically conducted by an employed DW, including cooking, cleaning, laundering etc. Codes 5152 (housekeeper), 9111 (domestic cleaner/helper), 5311 (childcare workers), 5322 (home-based personal care workers). This approach requires collection of very detailed occupation data.
- **Household roster approach:** using relationship to household head recorded as live-in domestic worker, usually via a single question. This approach misses live-out DWs and may not capture DWs at all where household heads do not perceive them to be members of the household.
- **Industry based approach:** where DWs are identified in terms of their unit of economic activity in households, using International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC 4), section T codes for 'activities of households as employers of domestic personnel'. This approach is used for most CDW prevalence estimates, and some countries combine the Industry and Task based approaches to increase accuracy.

Source: 2017 ILO Practical Guide to Ending Child Labour and Protecting Young Workers in Domestic Work

17.2 million CDWs worldwide



CDW aged 10-17, selected countries*



*age 15-17 only, LF-CL-SWTS 2015
**age 12-17 only, LF-CLS 2012
Indonesia source: 2018 Suhaimi & Farid, ILO

CDWs in Myanmar

1. Labour Force, Child Labour & School to Work Transition Survey (LF-CL-SWTS), 2015:

The government undertook a joint LFS and CL survey based on ILO SIMPOC methodology.[4,5] Around 24,000 households were surveyed, finding 23,752 children aged 5-17, of whom 2,302 were working and 1,237 were in paid employment. Based on these surveyed children, there are an estimated 11,371 CDWs nationally, representing 0.9% of all working children aged 5-17 (N=1,278,909).[6] Given that estimates are only provided for CDW aged 15-17, we can infer that only older CDWs were captured in the actual survey, in marked contrast to working children in other sectors, indicating the difficulties of enumerating young CDWs in household surveys.

Boys	Girls	Total
1,156	10,215	11,371

Among girls working in urban areas, 7.6% were reported to be CDWs, compared with 24.8% in manufacturing and 36.4% in wholesale or retail trades. CDW is reported to be the fifth most common occupation for girls among 11 occupations (p.47). While data were not shown in the report, urban girls were the most represented among orphaned (7.2%) and foster children (2.0%) in Myanmar (9.2% of children overall), and the report observes that orphaned urban girls were 'additionally engaged in domestic work'.[6] CDW, along with wholesale/ retail trades and other sectors, had the lowest proportion of children in hazardous child labour, compared to 63% in construction, 56% in power supply industries and 55% in agriculture/ fisheries.[6]

	Hazardous CL	Other CL*	Not CL	Total
CDW	30%	52%	18%	100% (N=11,371)
All child workers	48%	40%	12%	100% (N=1,251,544)

*refers to children aged 5-11 not in hazardous work, and; children 12-14 not in hazardous work working 14 hours or more/week

Hazardous CL involved being exposed to any of the following: dust, fumes; fire, gas, flames; loud noise of vibration; extreme cold or heat; dangerous tools (e.g. knives); work underground; work at heights; work in water/ lake/sea/river; work in dark or confined space; insufficient ventilation; work with chemicals (e.g. pesticides, glues); work with explosives, or; 'other things' (e.g. lifting weights) (Q139).[7]

Hazardous conditions also included: being constantly shouted at; repeatedly insulted; beaten/physically hurt; touched or done things to you that you did not want (Q140). Furthermore, children working 43 hours or more/week, and children working in the designated hazardous industries of mining, quarrying or construction, were classified as working in hazardous CL.[6]

Limitations of CDW estimates in the LFS-CL-SWTS, 2015:

Undercounting of working children

The LFS-CL-SWTS sampling frame was based on the 2014 census enumerated areas counting a total of 50.2 million. There were an estimated 1.2 million persons who were not enumerated, but counted in a prior listing, from parts of northern Rakhine state, Kachin and Kayin states.[8] Therefore we can expect undercounting of working children including CDW. We can also assume that the LF-CL-SWTS underestimates the total number of working children by comparing current figures with 2014 census data. According to the 2014 census, 21% of children aged 10-17 were working,[9] which compares with 10.5% of children of a broader age range, aged 5-17, in the LF-CL-SWTS.

Omission of children outside of conventional households

Children from institutions (e.g. monastic schools, orphanages) were excluded, as only conventional households were sampled.[6]

Unclear calculations for young child domestic workers

For 'Other CL', it is unclear how this was calculated for CDWs. Because only 15-17 y/o CDW estimates are given, it is unclear how the stated definition of 'Other CL' applying to ages 5-14 would apply.

Insufficiently detailed classifications of hazardous child labour

For 'Hazardous CL', there is no legal framework yet available in Myanmar – the survey classification for hazardous CL is based on the ILO SIMPOC/Statistical Classification.[4,5] Myanmar's parliamentarians are currently developing the list of hazardous tasks and occupations in the amended Child Rights law, which sets the minimum age of employment at 14. The industries mining, quarrying and construction have been classified as hazardous for survey purposes, but other hazardous sectors are not included in the definition or estimates here.

Insufficient clarity for occupational characteristics used to define 'domestic service'

It is unclear how the 'domestic services' category was constructed. We can infer from Q63i. that the narrative answer 'domestic service' was used (see Box 2). International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) codes are applied to classify occupations and industries where possible, but it is unclear whether these contributed to 'domestic services'.

2. Myanmar 2014 Census data for child domestic workers:

In the 2014 census, CDWs are subsumed under aggregate categories for both industry and occupation-based approaches. The census collected information on occupation and industry using ISCO 2008 codes (3-digit level) and ISIC Rev 4 codes (2-digit level). Accordingly, there were N=10,409 boys and girls aged 10-14 working in 'activities of households as employers – undifferentiated goods and services'. These data relied on ISCO 2008 category: 'activities of households as employers of domestic personnel' (T codes 97-99, class 9700). Using the task-based (occupation) approach, a total of N=125,420 children aged 10-14 were found to be working in 'elementary occupations'.[10] However, the 'elementary occupations' category includes 'Domestic, hotel and office cleaners or helpers' (code 911), alongside labourers in construction, mining, garbage collectors and many other unskilled occupations. Unfortunately, the census questionnaire does not include a domestic worker (DW)/servant option in the 'Relationship to household head' question, only: '10. Other relative; 11. Adopted child; 12. Non-relative', and CDW may fall under any of these categories. Equally, if '9. Household work' is endorsed in the Labour Force section, the census instructs surveyors to skip the Occupation and Industry questions, under which CDWs could otherwise have potentially been captured.[11] It is unclear whether CDWs are captured in the above industry and occupation approaches, which is possible if the household head selected '2. Employee (private)' among other options in the relationship to household head question.

Box 2. Questions used to capture CDW – selected surveys

- **Myanmar LF-CL-SWTS, 2015**
  Q3. What is (NAME)'s relationship to head of the household? > 11. Domestic worker (live-in)
  Q61. What kind of work does (NAME) usually do in the main job/business that he/she had in the last 7 days?
  Q.62. What were (NAME)'s main tasks/duties in this job/business? > ISCO 4-digit code (unclear no. of digits coded)
  Q63i. What is the name and/or type of establishment/place where (NAME) works?
  ► for domestic workers in private household, write 'domestic service'
  Q63ii. What is the main activity carried out of main products or services produced at (NAME)'s workplace? > ISIC 4-digit code (unclear no. of digits coded)

- **Cambodia LF-CLS, 2012**
  QA.4. What is (NAME)'s relationship to head of the household? > 10. Servant (live-in)
  QD.1(c). Do any work as a domestic worker for a wage, salary or any payment in kind? > Y/N
  QE.1. What kind of work does (NAME) usually do in the main job/business that he/she had in the last 7 days?
  QE.2. What are (NAME)'s main tasks or duties in this work? > ISCO 4-digit code
  QE.3. What is the name of the place where (NAME) works?
  QE.4. What goods are produced, or what services are provided at (NAME)'s place of work? > ISIC 4-digit code

- **Laos MICS5, 2017**
  QA.4. What is (NAME)'s relationship to head of the household? > 14. Servant (live-in)
  CL1. Since last (day of the week), did (NAME) do any of the following activities, even for only one hour?
  CL1[A]. Did (NAME) do any work or help on (his/her) own or the household's plot, farm, food garden or looked after animals?
  CL1[B]. Did (NAME) help in a family business or a relative's business with or without pay, or run (his/her) own business?
  CL1[C]. Did (NAME) produce or sell articles, handicrafts, clothes, food or agricultural products?
  CL1[X]. Since last (day of the week), did (NAME) engage in any other activity in return for income in cash or in kind, even for only one hour?

Other potential sources of information on CDW aged 15-17 in Myanmar

3. DHS, 2015-16:

This nationally representative survey selected 13,260 households, interviewing 16,800 women age 15-49 who were usual residents of the selected households or who slept in the households the night before the survey. There is one question that could be used to ascertain CDWs aged 15 or over in Section 2 of the household questionnaire, *'2B) Are there any other people who may not be members of your family, such as domestic servants, lodgers, or friends who usually live here?'*. This category is not disaggregated by DWs, lodgers or friends, but occupational information is asked in the women's survey, *'Q811: What is your occupation, that is, what kind of work do you mainly do?* > 4-digit code'. It is unclear what coding was used to define occupations. Only four female participants aged 15-19 were classified as working in 'domestic service',[12] indicating that CDWs and DWs are probably being severely undercounted in the DHS sample. DHS surveys collect extensive information on health outcomes and domestic violence using validated and internationally comparable measures, but do not appear to be able to capture the health of women or girls in domestic work. Future DHS revisions should include better occupational questions capable of detecting CDWs and assessing their exposure to health risks, including abuses, and their health needs.

4. ILO internal migration survey, 2015:

There are 422 DWs in the total sample of participants (N=7,295, aged 15-60), but no agedisaggregated results are provided for domestic workers (DW). 13 This survey includes extensive information on patterns of labour exploitation in a national population-based snowball sample of internal migrants. Future survey instruments should be designed to disaggregate by age in order to examine, for example, recruitment patterns for CDW, their trajectories into other forms of work and experiences of exploitation.

Regional CDW estimates

Vietnam

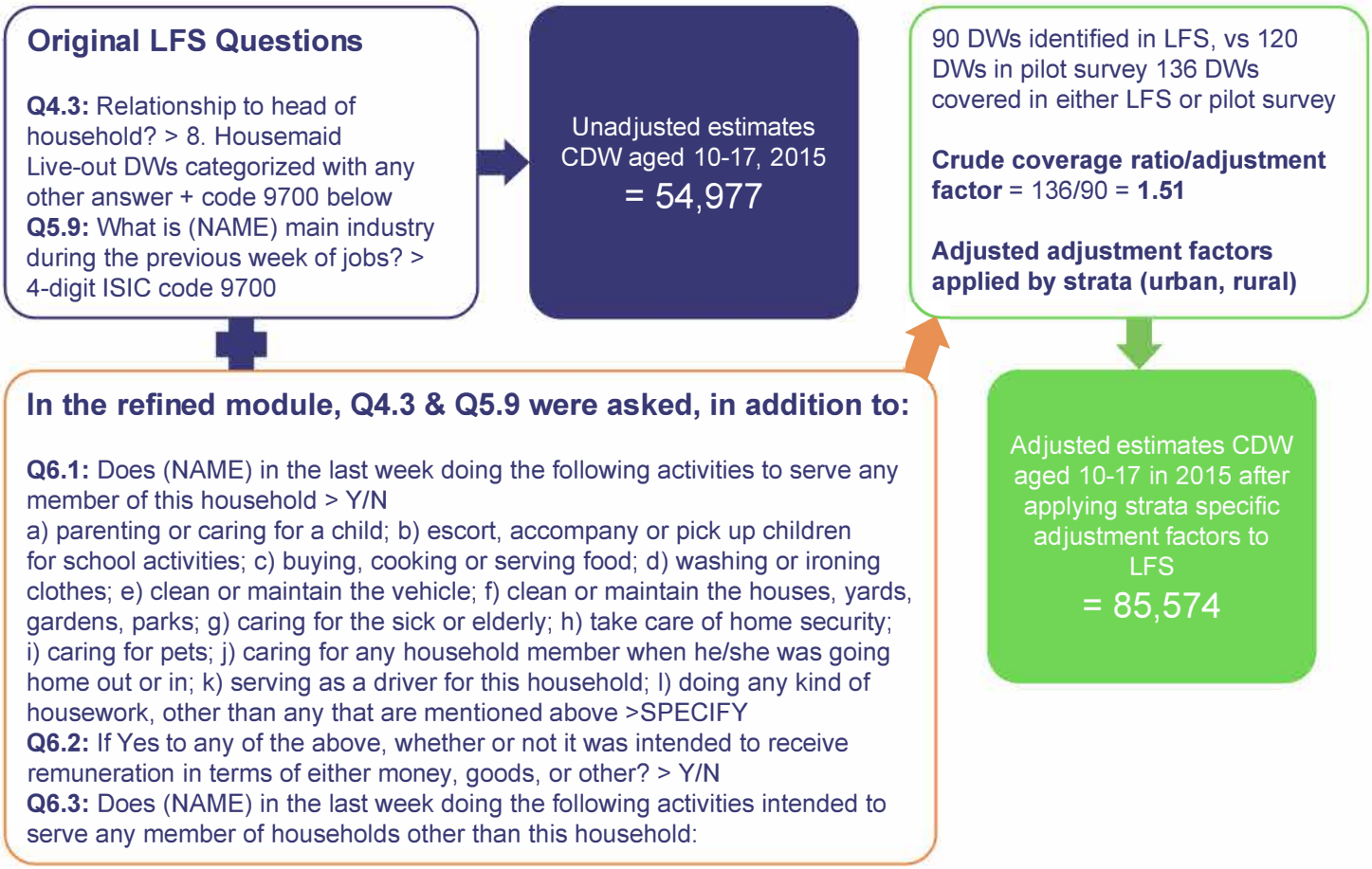
The 2012 Child Labour survey estimates there are 2.82 million working children of whom 1.75 million are child labourers. However, there is no disaggregated data for CDWs. Yet, data indicate that there are 32.6% of working children and 26.4% of child labourers are working in homes or client's residences,[14] suggesting CDWs may be present. Additionally, CDW may be included within the N=8,285 'other personal service activities not elsewhere classified' (code 963), representing 1.5% of 569,000 child labourers working excessive hours (>=42 hours/week).[14] Notably, this category only captured children aged 15-17, suggesting the challenges associated with sampling younger CDW (if they are included in this category). It is unclear how occupations have been classified (e.g. whether using ISCO8 or ISIC4).

Cambodia

The 2012 LF-CLS estimated there were 755,245 working children and an estimated 6,890 CDWs. This survey used either a task-based (ISCO codes 5152, 5311, 5322 or 9111), household roster or industry-based approach (section T codes). Most CDWs were captured using the task-based approach (N=5,315), followed by the industry-based approach (N=2,496).[15] Notably, no CDWs were captured using the household-roster approach, and no CDWs younger than 12 were captured in the survey. According to the survey, CDWs represent 0.9% of all working children. Of the total CDWs that were counted, 62.3% (N=4,291) were aged 15- 17 working excessive hours (> 48 hours/week), 25.7% (N=1,773) were 12-14 working more than 12 hours/week. The latter children, at least, are deemed fit into the category of Child Labour. Only female CDWs were captured in the 15-17 age-group, suggesting that either boys depart CDW when older, that is it hard to survey older male CDWs or that current tools are not capable of detecting young males in domestic work.

Improving CDW estimates via a special survey module: Indonesian example

Improved estimates of CDW prevalence have been achieved by adjusting labour force survey estimates according to dedicated modules designed to detect domestic workers. Specifically, in Tanzania and Zambia dedicated modules that probed the nature of the DW employee relationship and occupation were tested, resulting in estimates usually far surpassing those provided by standard LFS and CLS.[3] Similarly, the ILO in Indonesia undertook a pilot household survey that tested a refined, more probing version of the LFS module to capture DWs and compared these estimates to the original LFS estimates.[16] The pilot survey used a stratified four-stage sampling design of 1000 households based on census enumeration areas to ensure that the survey was nationally representative. Based on the pilot figures found in the survey, an adjustment factor of 1.51 was applied to existing LFS estimates to come up with adjusted DW and CDW prevalence estimates nationally, weighted according to the sample design. Prevalence questions in the LFS and the additional module in the pilot survey are shown in the figure below, with the resulting estimates from each method. An estimated 30,000 CDWs were ‘missing’ based on LFS estimates alone.



Recommendations for Myanmar to improve prevalence estimates for CDWs:

- Use a pilot survey similar to the example and method shown above for Indonesia, recognising the limitations in current LF-CLSTWS surveys and likelihood that CDWs are undercounted. This type of pilot survey would enable the calculation of strataspecific adjustment factors that could be applied to existing LF-CL-STWS data. As recommended in the Indonesia study,16 following an adjustment factor exercise, three recommendations to the Central Statistics Organization in Myanmar could be considered:
    a) The refined, probing module could be inserted in subsequent LFS, after testing the minimum questions needed to obtain accurate estimates;
    b) The refined, probing module could be inserted as a supplement in the LFS every 3-4 years;
    c) Periodic independent surveys, like the pilot survey, could be implemented, to calculate adjustment factors that can be applied to LFS data as currently collected.
- A pilot survey could be conducted near the time of the next full round of LFS surveys (in 2021) to ensure maximum relevance in terms of CDW characteristics.
- A refined CDW survey module could also be included in future rounds of the UNICEF MICS or DHS surveys, as potential useful sources of information focussed on risks faced by CDW's and their health needs.

Suggested citation:

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