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**Edition**

International Labour Office (ILO)  
International Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour (IPEC)  
Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)

**General Coordination and Supervision**

Angela Martins Oliveira  
International Labour Office (ILO)  
International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)  
Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)

**National Technical Coordination**

Paulette Zúñiga  
*Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (Honduran National Statistics Institute)

**Report prepared by:** María del Carmen Ayes Cerna

**Technical Assistance and Review**

Germán Leitzelar Vidaurreta, *Secretario de Estado de Trabajo y Seguridad Social*  
Ángel Antonio Escobar Escalante, *Sub-Secretario de Trabajo y Seguridad Social*  
Rosibel Garay Flores, *Directora General de Previsión Social*  
Angela Martins Oliveira, Senior Statistician, ILO/IPEC-SIMPOC  
Astrid Marschatz, Data Analysis Expert, ILO/IPEC-SIMPOC  
Paulino Isidoro, National Coordinator, ILO/IPEC, Honduras  
Mayella Abudoj, ILO/IPEC-Honduras

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**REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS**  
Central America

# **IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF CHILD LABOUR AND POVERTY IN HONDURAS**

**Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., September 2003**

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This report was prepared by Licentiate María del Carmen Ayes Cerna within the framework of a contract for professional services with the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Honduras* (National Statistics Institute of Honduras).

## FOREWORD

With the International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour, the International Labour Office (ILO) has converted a progressive process for the prevention and elimination of child labour into a universal cause.

Child labour is a globally widespread complex and many-faceted phenomenon. Furthermore, a lack of reliable information and quantitative analysis makes it even more difficult to find effective ways of confronting the problem. For many years, the lack of information on its causes, magnitude, nature and consequences has been a considerable obstacle to the implementation of effective actions to confront, halt and eliminate this phenomenon that affects millions of boys, girls and adolescents throughout the world.

Since 1988, the International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour has administered the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), in order to assist the participating countries to generate cross-country comparable data on child labour. SIMPOC's global objective is to use Household Surveys to generate quantitative data on school activities, and on the children's economic and non-economic activities outside school, in addition to collecting qualitative data and establishing databases containing information on child labour. These data were the basis for different studies prepared in the participating countries.

The collection of reliable data and their analysis provides support for development of effective interventions against childhood labour. With the data gathered in the different countries and the studies drafted based on these data, we hope to facilitate development, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes to counter this phenomenon, as well as promoting social attitudes in favour of sustainable prevention and progressive eradication of child labour.

I am certain that the information presented in this study on child labour in Panama will contribute to improve understanding and increase sensitivity towards the situation of working boys, girls and adolescents and will allow better strategies to be drafted to combat this phenomenon.

For each one of the participating countries, the availability of a panorama of ever-greater clarity regarding this phenomenon will undoubtedly lead to a more effective process and a shortened path to achieving a world without child labour.

Guillermo Dema  
Sub-Regional Coordinator  
ILO/IPEC Programme for Central America,  
Panama, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Honduras is a democratic and independent republic. The territory is divided politically and administratively into 18 departments. Each of the country's 298 municipalities enjoys autonomy to draft and implement its own development programmes as provided by the local government.

Total population for 2002 was estimated at 6,624,326 inhabitants, of whom 49% were males and 51% were females. A majority of the population resides in rural areas (54.1%). The population is characterised by its youthfulness (41.9% less than 15 years of age), which when linked with the population aged 65 or more years (4.3%), points to a high dependency ratio.

Notwithstanding the efforts to promote education, improve health levels and reduce inequalities while expanding opportunities for a better quality of life for the population, Honduras occupies position 116<sup>1</sup> among 173 countries, with a Human Development Index of 0.638. The most significant recent advances have been related to health and education, and less with the income of the populace.

The low growth in GDP has a bearing on the population's per capita income, which reached 16,284 lempiras (US\$980.4) in 2002. Furthermore, high levels of inflation affect individual and institutional purchasing power. In addition to insufficient income, the unequal distribution of the national income plays a determining role in poverty.

The economically active population (EAP) increased from 1,728,599 in 1992 to 2,497,860 in 2002. The great majority of the EAP is male; nevertheless, female labour market participation has shown continuous growth. Three-quarters of the EAP consist of individuals between the ages of 10 and 59 years, but participation by the population between 10 and 18 years of age is significant. The labour force has a low educational level. Of every 100 persons in the labour force, 58 have achieved a maximum of primary education. Males without education have a higher labour force participation rate.

Contingent on the low educational levels, 3 of every 10 persons in the EAP face problems of underemployment, with a worse situation in rural areas. Growth in the labour market has been marked by a burgeoning informal sector. Between 1990 and 2002, the salaried EAP declined from 49.5% to 45.4% of the total EAP. Furthermore, wage levels earned by employed workers are extremely low, 51.8% receive an income below the minimum wage. In addition to their low wages, the working class has been affected by the declining value and purchasing power of the lempira, which further limits the possibility of being able to satisfy a family's needs.

Data from the 2002 Child Labour Survey indicate that 125,879 girls and boys between 5 and 13 years of age are working, contrary to the legislation on minimum age for admission to employment. Considering those between 14 and 17 years as well, the number of girls, boys and adolescents forming a part of the employed EAP between

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP: Human Development Report, Honduras 2002.

the ages of 5 and 17 years climbs to 356,421, for a child work rate of 15.4%. Of the total children working between the ages of 5 and 17 years, 69.2% (246,628) were living in rural areas and 30.8% (109,613) were urban dwellers.

In 2002, 22.3% of the males between 5 and 17 years of age were working. In the case of the females, that proportion dropped to 8.2%. In the rural areas, the sex ratio of the working population between 5 and 17 years of age was 8 males to 2 females; in urban areas it was 6 to 4. Among children 5 to 9 years of age, the work participation rate was 2.0%; in the 10 to 14 year-old group, this climbed to 16.9%; and among those 15 to 17 years of age, it increased to 40.5%. In all age groups, males had greater participation.

The occupational structure is quite diverse, related as it is to area of residence, sex and age. In rural areas, agricultural occupations constitute the main activity. In urban areas, the occupational structure is more diversified. Trade and services concentrate the largest proportion of working children.

Children's work is categorised primordially as "un-paid labour", since 6 of every 10 persons between 5 and 17 years of age working do so in that category, with greater predominance among girls and boys less than 14 years of age. Of those children working in urban areas, 47.3% are in this category, while in rural areas they represent 67.3% of all working children. Furthermore, the proportion of females working without pay is higher than that of males.

Children's work takes place within a context of structural poverty. In 2002, 63.9% of households were below the poverty line, which affected 4,743,320 inhabitants. Of these, 3,512,897 were living in a situation of extreme poverty. Similarly, 3,014,071 persons were living with a dollar a day or less. Results from the Child Labour Module show a close relationship between working children and poverty: 78.9% of the girls, boys and adolescents between 5 and 17 years of age, who were employed at the time of the survey, came from poor households, while only 21.1% were part of non-poor households. In urban and rural areas the situation is similar, a majority of working children and adolescents came from poor or indigent households.

Regardless of their sex or age, a very large proportion of working boys and girls comes from poor households. Among males, 80.9% and among females, 73.2% of working minors between 5 and 17 years of age are from poor households, and 68.1% of the males and 56.5% of the females are from households in extreme poverty. In the different age groups, this situation is repeated. Of every 10 girls and boys between the ages of 5 and 9 years, 9 are from poor households, and 77.5% form part of households in extreme poverty. Among those 10 to 14 years of age, 84.0% of the girls and boys working in gainful employment are part of poor households and 71.5% are in extreme poverty. In the 15 to 17 year-old group, 73.5% belong to poor households and 58.4% are from households in extreme poverty.

In both urban and rural areas, the largest proportion of working girls and boys form part of poor and extremely poor households, nevertheless, the proportion of working children that belong to extremely poor households is considerably larger in rural areas than urban areas, which confirms the severity of rural poverty.

Independent of whether they come from poor or non-poor households, the duration of the working shift for the girls and boys is long and on occasion is equivalent to or longer than that of adults. Among working children 5 to 17 years of age belonging to non-poor households, 74.5% work 42 or more hours per week. Among those that form part of poor households, this percentage is 70.2%, and 69.7% among those in extreme poverty. This proportion is higher among residents in rural areas. However, among younger girls and boys, the proportion of those working 42 or more hours is greater for poor households than non-poor ones.

The children's income is always meagre and is a function of their age, hours worked, sex and area of residence.

As an indication of the exclusive character of work and education, 6 of every 10 working boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age do not attend school. In urban areas, 5 of every 10 children between 5 and 17 years of age who work do not attend school. In rural areas, the proportion of girls and boys that work and do not attend school is higher (64.7%). School non-attendance increases with age. Insertion into specific economic industries, the type of insertion and the duration of the working shift have a great influence on school attendance or non-attendance.

In general, the results from the Child Labour Module show that educational participation by children between 5 and 17 years of age increases as family income increases. In the first quintile, 10.9% of the minors that make up a part of those households "only work" and 24.5% "neither work nor study". Which is to say, one child of every 10 works but does not study, and 2 children of every 10 are not involved in any activity. In contrast, among the boys and girls in fifth quintile households, only 5.9% are solely dedicated to work and only 7.3% "neither work nor study".

The United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child states in Article 32: "States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." Achieving this objective demands a process where not only are specific policies aimed at economically active children required, but also activities aimed at disseminating current legislation; the creation of mechanisms to recover and improve family income; guarantee access by boys and girls to quality public services (education, health, culture, sports and recreation); and improve labour legislation and control measures.

An effective campaign against child labour must be associated with an ambitious effort to eradicate poverty over the long term, since both phenomena are linked in the same vicious circle. The Poverty Reduction Strategy offers an opportunity for including the fight against child labour within the plan for combating poverty at the rural and urban levels; furthermore, greater efforts must be made to prioritise protection for children against economic exploitation within that Strategy.

The struggle to improve living conditions for the poorest groups in the population must be oriented towards a search for a more just society, where adults have decent working conditions and all girls and boys can enjoy their rights under conditions that are favourable for citizenship building.

### INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the transitions occurring in the Honduran economy, labour insertion of children is a reality. On the one hand, the privation felt by families in a situation of poverty has worsened and the number of persons with an income insufficient to cover their basic needs has grown. On the other, in an unfavourable labour market situation, with underemployment, unemployment, and a reduction in earnings of the families' adult members, these same families are driven towards child labour.

Children's work, particularly that implying some monetary retribution, but also the one whose character is to aid in productive activities taking place at home or on the family farm plot, carrying out domestic chores, and caring for smaller siblings, all imply some type of coercive attitude on the part of the adults and supposes some degree of social abandonment of children.

Within the framework of current economic difficulties, unfavourable labour market developments and significant expansion in numbers of persons below the poverty line, the proportion of economically active girls and boys has shown some increase, at least within certain environments and circumstances.

Work by children carrying out marginal economic activities on the streets of the country's largest cities, such as hawking objects on the street, in means of transportation or in bars, watching parked cars, washing windshields or automobiles, as well as picking through refuse, alone or with another family member, constitutes a visible reality that we can observe on a daily basis. However, the substantive portion of the diverse set of child labour tends to have a limited social visibility. It so happens that a large proportion of working girls and boys do so in family homes, small workshops, businesses, jobs or agricultural plots. Furthermore, among the youngest ages, they frequently work in collaboration with adult members of the family, or within the framework of the family business or doing domestic chores so that the older family members may go out to work, especially their parents and older siblings.

Among the implications of child labour, in first place it is worth emphasising its impact on education and professional formation. Child labour may give rise to absolute or functional illiteracy, provoke dropping out of school, promote absenteeism from classes or tardiness in attending them and contribute to grade repetition and low learning quality. It is also an important source of hazards for the physical, psychic and social integrity and development of working girls and boys, frequently has a deleterious effect on their health and may even threaten their lives.

The boy or girl working as a salaried worker or self-employed, at the margin of legal provisions, enjoys no occupational safety and health protection whatsoever. Protection for girls or boys working as un-paid family workers in family businesses or enterprises depends essentially on their parents or other relatives. This latter situation may pose specific problems when these family members themselves enjoy reduced levels of social protection, a situation common within our country.

The data utilised in this report come primordially from the Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey (*Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples*, EPHPM) from May 2002, and in particular, from a special module applied during that survey. The data provided by the Child Labour Module are of supplementary interest, as a result of some of its methodological aspects, for example, some data were revealed through questionnaires applied directly to the parents and children 5 to 17 years of age. In addition, the design of the questions was such that a lower under-recording of child labour could be expected than that found in regular inquiries on economic activities of individuals.

The present analysis uses the concept of children's work that covers productive, transformational, commercial, distribution or sales activities for goods and services, whether for pay or not, carried out independently or in the service of another physical or corporate person, by individuals less than 18 years of age. In Honduras, there is another delimitation of children's work, which includes a part of the economically inactive population within the concept of working children, particularly the group of girls and boys doing household chores in their own home and who are not studying. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the group analysed consists only of those girls and boys working solely in gainful activities.

Analysis of the data allows us to focus on the phenomenon of child labour as an expression of social segmentation faced by the Honduran populace, where a small proportion has access to the best education and information and for that reason to better opportunities to obtain satisfactory and well-paid employment, while the other segment finds itself working from an early age without receiving a minimum of appropriate education.

Poverty, as a determinant of child labour, appears clearly in the National Action Plan for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour in Honduras<sup>2</sup>. Among the three main proposals for the fight against child labour, it includes access to formal education, education of girls and boys as to their rights, and the reduction of poverty among adults, which would have an adverse effect on the need to involve girls and boys in economic activities.

The present document is divided as follows: Chapter I describes the country's political, economic and social context, while Chapter II analyses general labour market conditions and the context within which children's work takes place. Chapter III presents a summary of the general situation of children's work in the country. It delves more deeply into the relationship between children's work and poverty and other conditioning factors in Chapters IV and V, to finalise with conclusions and recommendations in Chapter VI.

We hope that this report will become a substantive contribution so that Honduran society in general and the Government in particular can reach full awareness of the magnitude and transcendence of the problems caused by children's work, and

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<sup>2</sup> National Commission for the Gradual and progressive Eradication of Child Labour, ILO/IPEC, UNICEF and Save the Children, UK. December 2001.

participate actively in the search for solutions, as well as initiating and following-up on the actions necessary to gradually and progressively eradicate child labour.

## I. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

### I.1 Political context

Honduras is located in the centre of the Central American isthmus and was established as a democratic and independent republic. The territory is divided politically and administratively into departments (18), and in turn these are divided into municipalities (298). Each department is governed by a governor appointed by the President of the Republic. Municipal authority is held by a Municipal Corporation presided by a mayor, elected by popular vote.

Public administration is centralised, with a gradual transfer of functions to municipal governments. The bodies collaborating with the President in administration of the different sectors are the Departments of State (15), some of which are territorially decentralised into Regional Offices. The financial resources of the State are managed by the Department of Finance (*Secretaría de Finanzas*), which supervises revenue collection through its 9 regional offices.

Development planning and management is coordinated by the Minister of the Presidency, who is advised by the Economic and Social Cabinets made up of the Departments of State in different areas. The guidelines of the National Plan of Government delineate policies in the different sectors. Each municipality, as a local government, enjoys autonomy to draft and manage its own development programmes.

In general, the population's needs are satisfied with public services from the central and/or municipal government, autonomous public enterprises and non-profit or for profit private entities.

### I.2 Economic context

The most obvious trait of the Honduran economy has been its lethargic growth. Growth<sup>3</sup> accelerated during the 60s and 70s, but stagnated after that. During the 80s, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a mere 2.2%. During the period 1991-1997, GDP growth improved, reaching an average annual rate of 3.7%<sup>4</sup>.

Between 1998 and 2001, GDP growth once again declined to an annual average of 2.1%, which can be explained by a drop in production of some industries (agriculture, construction, mines and quarries). These sectors were severely affected by the negative impact of Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, as well as by the decline in prices for some export products on international markets, due to the drought that affected the country in mid-2001, and due to the effects of the economic recession in the United States of America after September 2000.

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<sup>3</sup> The growth rates presented are in real terms.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations: Honduras, UN Common Country Assessment. 1999

### I.2.a) Recent behaviour of productive sectors

The financial contribution by economic sector to real GDP has stood almost without change during recent years. The sectors that most contribute to generation of Gross Domestic Product are agriculture and manufacturing.

**Table 1.1**  
**Contribution by different economic industries to real GDP and rate of change of real GDP, years 1999 - 2002**

Economic industries	% of GDP				Variation (%)			
	1999	2000	2001	2002	1999	2000	2001	2002
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries	24.1	25.2	24.3	24.6	-8.5	11.7	-0.5	4.8
Mines and quarries	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	5.4	1.7	-0.8	5.0
Manufacturing industry	16.2	16.0	16.3	16.2	2.6	5.5	5.2	2.8
Construction	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.1	10.5	1.5	-5.2	-14.6
Electricity, gas and water	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.2	2.1	10.6	-1.8	5.6
Transportation, warehousing and communications	8.9	8.7	8.9	8.9	1.7	5.0	5.3	3.2
Trade, restaurants and hotels	11.1	10.7	10.7	10.6	0.7	3.7	3.0	2.8
Financial establishments, insurance, real estate and business services	10.7	10.3	10.3	10.2	-0.5	2.3	3.1	2.2
Ownership of dwellings	6.9	6.7	6.7	6.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	3.9
Public administration and defence	4.7	5.3	5.5	5.7	-4.3	19.8	8.7	7.2
Community, social and personal services	8.0	7.9	8.6	8.9	1.2	5.1	12.6	7.2
<b>Domestic product at factor cost</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>

Source: Central Bank of Honduras. *Indicadores económicos*.

**Agricultural sector:** Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries directly generate 24.6% of real GDP (2002), and represent the country's first line of employment. There are estimates that if one adds indirect contributions, the aggregate contribution would exceed 40% of GDP and 50% of employment. During the period 1999-2002, this sector's contribution to GDP has remained stable. In 1999, as a consequence of Hurricane Mitch, there was a drastic drop in real terms (8.5% with respect to 1998). After growing in 2000, the sector again presented a contraction of 0.5% in 2001, which can be explained by production declines in maize, rice, beans, bananas and cotton, caused by the drought that affected the country in mid-2001. This was a result of the scant use of irrigation and mechanisation on lands that are apt for cultivation.

**Industrial sector:** The food, beverage and tobacco industries represent one-half of total sectorial aggregate value. They are followed in importance by clothing articles (since the 90s), petroleum refining and non-metallic mineral production for the construction industry.

During the period 1999-2002, reactivation of the production of sugar, vegetable oils and lard, carbonated beverages, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cloth and cement contributed to the high participation of this sector in real GDP (16.2% in 2002). Drawback industry activity has generated considerable aggregated value at the same time that it has become an important source of jobs, particularly for young women.

**Construction sector:** This branch of economic activity declined in relative terms throughout the 1999-2002 period, due to reduced public investment, which affected a large number of persons who depended on this sector for jobs.

**Mining sector:** The decreased demand for materials produced by quarries, zinc production and the reduction in international silver prices led to a decline of 0.8% in 2001 with respect to 2000, but this trend reversed in 2002, when this sector showed a 5.0% growth in real terms.

**Service sectors:** In general, those sectors whose purpose is to provide services, showed a positive behaviour between 1999 and 2002.

Low GDP growth has a bearing on per capita income levels in the population. Although GDP per inhabitant showed a slight increase over this time, the impact of inflation, which held at more than 10% per year through year 2000, but declined slightly in 2001 and 2002, affected the purchasing power of individuals and institutions.

**Table 1.2**  
**Economic indicators, years 2001 and 2002**

Indicator	2001	2002
GDP at market prices (millions of current Lps.)	99,062	107,870
Nominal GDP growth (%)	10.8	8.9
Annual rate of inflation (%)	9.6	7.7
Population	6,340,009	6,624,326
Annual per capita GDP (current Lps.)	15,625	16,284
Average annual exchange rate with regard to US\$	15.65	16.61
Annual per capita GDP (US\$)	998.4	980.4

Source: Central Bank of Honduras. Indicadores económicos. EPHPM, May 2002.

### I.3 Demographic context

Total population for 2002 was estimated at 6,624,326 inhabitants, of whom 49% were males and 51% were females. The average annual rate of growth for the population has shown a decreasing trend, reaching 2.9% during the 1998-2001 period. The Crude Birth Rate and Total Fertility Rate also show a clear trend downwards, estimated at 31.0<sup>5</sup> per 1000 inhabitants and 3.9<sup>6</sup> children per woman, respectively for 2002.

<sup>5</sup> SECPLAN. Population projections based on the 1988 Census.

<sup>6</sup> Epidemiology and Family Health Survey (*Encuesta de Epidemiología y Salud familiar*, ENESF/2001). Honduras.

In 2002, a majority of the population was residing in rural areas (54.1%), distributed in 398 municipalities, 3,731 towns and 30,591 settlements located in hard-to-reach mountainous zones. Of the total urban population, 44% were in the Central District (Tegucigalpa) and San Pedro Sula. This concentration arose primordially from internal migration towards the country's most important poles of development. The groups migrating most are those between 15 and 44 years of age.

**Table 1.3**  
**Population, growth, density per Km<sup>2</sup> and dependent population,**  
**2001 and 2002**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Estimated population	6,340,009	6,624,326
Average annual growth rate (%)	2.3	4.4
Urban population (%)	46.6	45.9
Population density (per Km <sup>2</sup> )	56.4	58.9
Population under age 15 years (%)	41.3	41.9
Population age 65 or more years (%)	4.5	4.3

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

The Honduran population is characterised by being a young population (41.9% less than 15 years of age)<sup>7</sup>, which when added to the population over age 65 years (4.3%) provides a high dependency rate, representing a heavy burden on basic social services (education and health).

## **I.4 Social context**

### **I.4.a) Schooling**

Access to schooling continues to be a severe problem. One of every five inhabitants over the age of 15 years does not know how to read or write. Illiteracy affects one of every ten urban dwellers and three of every ten rural dwellers. Illiteracy is slightly higher among males (20.2%) than females (19.7%), indicating greater access to formal schooling for Honduran women.

Furthermore, average schooling among the population continues to be low, with higher levels in urban than rural areas. Females have an average schooling slightly above the national average in both rural and urban areas.

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<sup>7</sup> INE: Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey. May 2002.

**Table 1.4**  
**Illiteracy and average schooling by sex,**  
**according to area, 2002**

Area	Illiteracy (%)			Average schooling (years)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Urban	10.3	9.2	11.2	6.6	6.5	6.8
Rural	29.4	29.7	29.1	4.0	3.8	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Constitution of the Republic stipulates the obligation of the State to provide free quality education<sup>8</sup> to all of its inhabitants, illiteracy and the low levels of schooling are closely correlated with household income levels. The percentage of illiteracy is notably higher among those persons forming part of households in the first income quintile, with regard to those in the fifth quintile. Average schooling is more than double among those that form part of households in the fifth quintile.

**Table 1.5**  
**Illiteracy and average schooling by income quintile,**  
**according to sex, 2002**

Sex	Illiteracy (%)		Schooling (in years)	
	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Quintile 1	Quintile 5
Male	41.0	5.3	3.7	9.8
Female	48.8	9.7	4.0	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>9.7</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

As a product of past deficiencies, the highest illiteracy rates are found among persons over 35 years of age, among both males and female. There are no significant differences in average schooling among the population 15 to 34 years of age and that between 35 and 59 years of age, which shows us that educational progress in Honduras has been determined by improved access to primary education.

School attendance among girls and boys 5 to 18 years of age is 49.3%, with higher rates among urban dwellers than those living in rural areas. The highest rates of school attendance are found among girls and boys aged 7 to 10 years, which witnesses the efforts to enhance access at the primary level. After age 13 years, school attendance drops drastically, indicating difficulties for access at the secondary level, particularly among rural residents. The foregoing is a reflection of the scant possibilities for the Honduran population to increase its average rate of schooling.

<sup>8</sup> Reference is made here to primary education, so that the age group considered is from 7 to 13 years of age (Art. 150 of the Statutory Law on Education [*Ley Orgánica de Educación*]).

**Table 1.6**  
**Illiteracy and average schooling by sex, according to age groups, 2002**

Age groups (in years)	Illiteracy (%)			Average schooling (years)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
From 15 to 34	12.4	14.1	10.8	6.9	6.7	7.0
From 35 to 59	24.3	22.5	25.9	6.3	6.3	6.2
60 or more years of age	51.2	47.8	54.7	4.7	4.7	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

Regarding sex differentials, girls' school attendance is better than that of the boys by 1.7 percentage points, a difference marked by higher attendance of girls in rural areas in respect to boys. There are no large differences in school attendance by girls and boys between age 5 and 12 years in either urban or rural areas. However, after age 13 years, the percentage of females attending school is higher than that of males, indicating a higher permanence of the former in the nation's educational system.

**Table 1.7**  
**Percentage of school attendance by area,  
according to age group and sex, 2002**

Age group and sex	Area		
	National	Urban	Rural
From 5 to 6 years	31.3	40.2	25.5
Males	30.8	38.2	26.0
Females	31.8	42.2	25.0
From 7 to 12 years	87.7	89.6	86.4
Males	87.4	89.8	85.6
Females	88.0	89.3	87.2
From 13 to 15 years	31.3	49.3	17.4
Males	28.1	47.8	14.3
Females	34.4	50.7	20.6
From 16 to 18 years	15.3	26.1	5.4
Males	12.9	24.3	3.8
Females	17.8	27.8	7.2
<b>Total 5 to 18 years</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>56.5</b>	<b>45.0</b>
Males	48.4	56.9	43.6
Females	50.1	56.0	46.6

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

#### I.4.b) Health

Honduras has achieved important advances in improving its health indicators. Life expectancy at birth is rising, and reached 70.7 years for 2002, and is 5.1 years higher for females than males.

**Table 1.8**  
**Health indicators, 1993 and 2002**

Indicator	1993	2002
Life expectancy at birth (in years)*	67.2	70.7
Life expectancy at birth for males (in years)*	64.8	67.1
Life expectancy at birth for females (in years)*	69.6	72.2
Crude Death Rate (per 1000 inhabitants)*	6.4	4.9
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)**	182	108
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)**	50	42
Mortality among children less than 5 years (per 1,000 live born)**	65	45
Total Fertility Rate **	4.8	3.9
Crude Birth Rate (per 1000 inhabitants)*	35.8	31.0

Source: \* SECPLAN: Population projections based on the 1988 Census.

\*\*Department of Health: IMMER 1990, 1997; ENESF 1991/92, 1997

In recent years, mortality rates have shown a sustained downward trend, however, these continue to be high. General mortality declined from 6.4 in 1993 to 4.9 per 1000 inhabitants in 2002. Maternal mortality has dropped to 108 per 100,000 live births<sup>9</sup>.

The most recent data at department level point to Gracias a Dios with the highest rate. There are another 6 departments with maternal mortality rates above the national average. All of these departments contain significant groups of ethnic populations in extreme poverty (Table 1.9).

**Table 1.9**  
**Maternal mortality rates by department, 1997**

Department	Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 live births)
Atlántida	70
Colón	174
Comayagua	126
Copán	139
Cortés	105
Choluteca	90
El Paraíso	101
Francisco Morazán	104
Gracias a Dios	326
Intibuca	182
Islas de la Bahía	NA
La Paz	146
Lempira	140
Ocotepeque	120
Olancho	106
Santa Bárbara	65

<sup>9</sup> Research on Mortality Among Women in Reproductive Ages (*Investigación de Mortalidad en Mujeres en Edad Reproductiva*, IMMER/97).

Valle	102
Yoro	62
<b>Country Total</b>	<b>108</b>

Source: Department of Health: IMMER/ 1997; NA: Not available.

Honduras presents high rates of perinatal and infant mortality and mortality of children under-5 years of age<sup>10</sup>. Perinatal mortality is 29 per 1000 births. The highest rate (72.4% above the national average) is found in Health Region Number 1, which includes the departments of El Paraíso and Francisco Morazán. Differences between urban and rural areas confirm the exclusion of rural populations (Table 1.10).

With regards to infant mortality and that among children under age 5 years, the highest rates are found in regions 7, 5 and 1, which include the departments of Olancho, Copán, Ocotepeque, Lempira, El Paraíso and Francisco Morazán, where the population has fewer opportunities for access to health services and lives in considerable conditions of poverty. As was the case with perinatal mortality, rural areas have higher rates of infant and under-5 years mortality than urban areas (Table 1.10).

**Table 1.10**  
**Perinatal, infant and under-5 years mortality rates by health regions and urban and rural areas, 2001**

Health regions <sup>1</sup>	Mortality		
	Perinatal (per 1000 births)	Infant (per 1000 live born)	Under-5 years (per 1000 live born)
Metropolitan	29	34	37
1	50	46	58
2	20	31	46
3	23	24	35
4	23	38	45
5	31	41	59
6	39	33	37
7	33	52	66
<b>Country Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>
Urban	25	29	36
Rural	32	38	51

Source: Department of Health. ENESF/ 2001.

It is worth mentioning that 74% of the causes of maternal mortality, 78% of the causes of infant mortality and 44% of the causes of under-5 years mortality are preventable, so the country can continue to gain ground in this field<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Epidemiology and Family Health Survey (ENESF/ 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Health regions have been established as follows: Metropolitan (includes the Municipality of the Central District [Tegucigalpa]; Region 1 (departments of Francisco Morazán and El Paraíso); Region 2 (Comayagua, Intibuca and La Paz); Region 3 (Cortés, Santa Bárbara and Yoro); Region 4 (Choluteca and Valle); Region 5 (Ocotepeque, Copán and Lempira); Region 6 (Atlántida, Colón and Islas de la Bahía); Region 7 (Olancho); Region 8 (Gracias a Dios).

<sup>12</sup> ENESF/ 1997. INE: Vital Statistics. 2001.

### I.4.c) Human development and poverty

Indicators of expenditures in human development witness efforts carried out in Honduras to promote education, improve health levels and reduce inequality while expanding opportunities to achieve a better quality of life for the populace.

During the period between 1998 and 2001, total public expenditures and public social expenditures as a percentage of GDP show a sustained increase. Similarly, public social expenditures as a percentage of central government expenditures indicate a greater investment in social sectors, particularly in health and education, which together represent 75.4% of social expenditures. The social priority ratio indicates that the government destined more than one-half of social expenditures to priority social allocations, such as primary education, primary health care, potable water supplies, basic environmental health and social compensation programmes (Table 1.11).

**Table 1.11**  
**Indicators of expenditures in human development, 1998 - 2001**

Indicator	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total public expenditures/ GDP (%)	23.4	25.9	25.9	26.9
Public social expenditures/ GDP (%)	8.3	10.1	10.0	11.0
Public social exp. / central government exp. (%)	29.8	32.9	37.2	40.2
Social priority ratio (%)	49.7	56.0	46.4	51.0
Net fiscal deficit/ GDP (%)	1.1	3.6	5.0	6.0

Source: Secretariat of the Presidency. Study of Expenditures in Basic Social Services, 1999; Department of Finance, *Memoria* 2001.

Notwithstanding these efforts, in 2002, Honduras occupied a very low position in human development, number 116<sup>13</sup> among 173 countries, with a Human Development Index of 0.638. The country's greatest advances in this realm fall into the fields of health and education, since the country's distance from ideal levels (85 years life expectancy and 100% literacy) varies between 20% and 30%. On the other hand, with regards to the income variable, distance from ideal levels has grown in recent years and stands at 68%.

**Table 1.12**  
**Percentage of households by poverty level, according to area, 2002**

Area	Not poor	Below the poverty line	Poor, not extreme	In extreme poverty
Urban	43.8	56.2	29.0	27.1
Central District	51.0	49.0	31.5	17.5
San Pedro Sula	51.7	48.3	30.1	18.2
Rest urban	38.0	62.0	27.5	34.5
Rural	28.5	71.5	8.8	62.8
<b>National</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>63.9</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>45.2</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP: Human Development Report, Honduras 2002.

Although the percentage of households below the poverty line<sup>14</sup> declined from 67.5% in 1993 to 63.9% in 2002<sup>15</sup>, households in extreme poverty increased from 45.1% to 45.2% during the same years, which, when taken together with population growth, means a larger number of individuals in a situation of extreme poverty. Poverty is concentrated in rural areas and smaller cities (rest urban), where opportunities for access to basic services and paid employment are fewer. Poverty affects a total of 4,743,320 persons, of whom 3,512,897 (74.1%) live in a situation of extreme poverty. Among the persons in extreme poverty, 71.9% (2,524,347) are rural dwellers.

In addition to low income levels, the inequitable income distribution is a determinant factor for poverty. The Gini coefficient<sup>16</sup> for household income (considering this as labour income), has been reduced by a mere 12 percentage points between 1960 and 2001, with the corresponding values of 0.60 and 0.48 for the years mentioned<sup>17</sup>. This means that income distribution has not undergone notable improvement over the last 40 years. Inequitable distribution is more pronounced in rural areas (0.49), which is 9 percentage points above urban areas (0.40). The poorest 20% of the population receives a meagre 1.9% of the national income, while the wealthiest 20% receives 61.1%.

### 1.4.d) Poverty Reduction Strategy

In 2002, after approval by the Honduran government, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) directors and the World Bank (WB) directors, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) (*Estrategia de Reducción de Pobreza, ERP*) went into effect in Honduras. As its name indicates, the main objective of this Strategy is to reduce poverty throughout the country with specific goals through 2015<sup>18</sup>. This reduction in the percentage of poor in the country is to be achieved by means of accelerated, sustained and equitable economic growth, as well as by means of an increased development of the country's human capital, particularly in education and health, with an awareness of gender equality and sustainable development.

The PRS is to be financed partially from the benefits perceived by the country under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The core goal of the HIPC Initiative, of which Honduras is a member, is to reduce the country's external debt to sustainable levels, allowing social investments aimed at enhancing the efficiency of mid-size and

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<sup>14</sup> The poverty line is defined according to a family's capacity to cover the cost of a basic market basket of goods for all members of the household, so that two factors intervene in estimating the poverty level: average cost of the market basket and household income.

<sup>15</sup> INE Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey, Tegucigalpa, 2002

<sup>16</sup> This is a statistical measure used to measure the degree of inequality in income distribution (or that of any other resource) among individual receivers. It can vary from 0 to 1, and 0 corresponds to the hypothetical case of a totally equitable distribution. As it approaches 1, it shows greater inequality.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank 1995; INE Multiple Purpose Household Survey, Tegucigalpa, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> The goal of the Strategy over the period from 2001 to 2015 is to reduce poverty by 24 percentage points, with an intermediate goal for 2005.

small enterprise, generate employment and increase the volume, quality and coverage of social expenditures, with the final objective of achieving a significant reduction in poverty and a healthy economic development. The savings the country generates with interim debt relief from HIPC are assigned to the Poverty Reduction Fund, which supports implementation of different measures for combating the country's impoverishment.

The PRS identifies six programme areas for policy and social investment actions: 1. promotion of sustainable and equitable economic growth; 2. actions against rural poverty; 3. actions against urban poverty; 4. greater investment in the nation's human capital; 5. actions to strengthen social protection for specific vulnerable groups; and 6. actions to ensure sustainability of the Strategy.

Child labour is a topic under the Poverty Reduction Strategy, within the framework of protection of children as a specific vulnerable group, and this is one of six programme areas in the Strategy. The PRS document mentions child labour as a reflection "of the insufficiency of household income, since children are pushed into work by their older relatives"<sup>19</sup>.

The HIPC Initiative, by means of the PRS, represents for Honduras an opportunity to dedicate the effort and resources necessary in the struggle against poverty, which is linked to a lack of social protection and hazards for vulnerable groups such as children. Several programmes already underway through the Honduran Institute for Children and the Family (IHNFA) stand out in this field; they are aimed at strengthening the family, childcare and enhancing their rights, among others. Thus the PRS also represents opportunities for the struggle against child labour and emphasises the need to prioritise this topic at the national level.

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<sup>19</sup> Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), August 2001, Office of the President of the Republic.

## II. THE LABOUR MARKET

### II.1 General context

Rapid population growth has had a bearing on the accelerated increase of the economically active population (EAP), which grew from 1,728,599 in 1992 to 2,497,860 in 2002<sup>20</sup>, a 44.5% increase over 10 years. A majority of the EAP is made up of males, nevertheless, female participation in the labour market has been steadily increasing, rising from 31.1% in 1992 to 33.1% in 2002. Most of the female EAP is found in urban areas, emphasising the pressure on urban dwellers to obtain access to the labour market.

**Table 2.1**  
**Composition of the economically active population and participation rates by sex, according to area of residence, 2002**

Area	EAP		Sex (%)		Participation rate (%)		
	Total	(%)	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Urban	1,227,948	49.2	57.0	43.0	53.7	67.3	42.4
Rural	1,269,912	50.8	77.5	22.5	51.3	78.3	23.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,497,860</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>33.1</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

Three-quarters of the EAP are persons between 18 and 59 years of age, but participation by the population 10 to 17 years old is also important. Two of every 10 members of the Honduran EAP are boys and girls between 10 and 17 years of age. The highest participation rate for individuals of working age corresponds to males, which is further proof of their need to incorporate into the labour force at an early age.

**Table 2.2**  
**Economically active population and participation rates by sex, according to age groups, 2002**

Age group	EAP (%)			Participation rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
10 to 18	17.7	19.7	13.7	28.4	41.6	14.7
19 to 59	75.1	72.2	81.0	67.4	93.4	44.5
60 or more	7.2	8.1	5.3	42.9	67.4	19.9

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

### II.2 Level of schooling of the EAP

The labour force has a low level of schooling. Of every 100 members of the EAP, 58 have reached a maximum of some primary education. These are followed in descending rank by those with secondary education, no education and higher education.

<sup>20</sup> INE: Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey, Tegucigalpa, 1992 (DGEC) and 2002.

On analysing the participation rates by sex and level of schooling, males without education have the highest rate. In contrast, females with higher education have the highest participation rate among all the females. In general, the participation rate has higher values among the persons whose level of schooling is higher. However, these results show variations in the labour supply and not in demand for a labour force with higher levels of schooling, which can be verified by observing the unemployment rates.

**Table 2.3**  
**Economically active population and participation rates by sex,**  
**according to level of schooling, 2002**

Educational level	EAP (%)			Participation rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
No education	16.6	18.7	12.2	54.0	84.1	25.3
Primary	57.9	60.6	52.3	51.5	73.2	30.1
Secondary	19.3	15.6	26.9	50.0	62.4	40.5
Higher	6.1	4.9	8.6	69.8	77.4	62.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

### II.3 Unemployment and underemployment

During recent years, open unemployment rates have remained between 3.1 and 4.1% across the country. Urban unemployment rates are much higher (6.3%) than rural (1.9%), which reflects the higher demand for jobs in urban areas.

**Table 2.4**  
**Economically active population and open unemployment,**  
**according to area of residence, 2002**

Area of residence	Total EAP	Open unemployment (%)
Urban	1,227,948	6.3
Rural	1,269,912	1.9
<b>National</b>	<b>2,497,860</b>	<b>4.1</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

Given the greater number of gainfully employed individuals in the 19 to 59 year-old group, both the largest absolute number of unemployed and the highest unemployment rate are found in that age group.

**Table 2.5**  
**Unemployed and average schooling by age groups, 2002**

Age group	EAP	Unemployed		Average schooling (in years)
		Number	% of EAP	
From 10 to 18 years	442,366	17,039	3.9	4.1
From 19 to 59 years	1,875,710	82,110	4.4	7.5
Age 60 or more	179,784	2,077	1.2	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,497,860</b>	<b>101,226</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>7.3</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

In relative terms, the highest unemployment is found among females, but just as occurred in the foregoing case, the larger proportion of males in the labour force means that in absolute numbers, the quantity of unemployed men is larger. The highest level of schooling among the unemployed EAP corresponds to women, which highlights the difficulties faced by women seeking more qualified and better paid jobs.

**Table 2.6**  
**Unemployment and average schooling by sex, 2002**

Sex	EAP	Unemployed		Average schooling (in years)
		Number	%	
Male	1,684,685	58,837	3.5	6.8
Female	813,175	42,389	5.2	8.1

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

The unemployed population has an average level of schooling that is higher than those employed (7.3 versus 5.3 years), in both rural and urban areas, a situation that arises from the restricted supply of more qualified jobs. The largest percentage of unemployment is found among the EAP with higher education and an average schooling of 14.9 years; they are followed by the EAP with secondary education and an average of 10.1 years of schooling. The number of persons affected by unemployment in absolute terms is higher at this level.

**Table 2.7**  
**Unemployed and average schooling by educational level, 2002**

Educational level	EAP	Unemployed		Average schooling (in years)
		Number	%	
Without education	413,549	7,722	1.9	-
Primary	1,445,798	49,137	3.4	4.9
Secondary	481,643	33,295	6.9	10.1
Higher	152,795	10,863	7.1	14.9
Unknown	4,075	209	-	-

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

A particular problem faced by the EAP in Honduras is not basic unemployment, but rather underemployment, both visible and invisible. In general, 1 of every 4 members of the EAP has underemployment problems. This situation is more serious in rural areas of the country, where 4 of 10 persons face this problem.

**Table 2.8**  
**Economically active population, visible and invisible underemployment, according to area of residence, 2002**

Area of residence	Total EAP	Visible underemployment <sup>21</sup> (%)	Invisible underemployment <sup>22</sup> (%)
Urban	1,227,948	4.5	15.8
Rural	1,269,912	3.9	34.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,497,860</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>25.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Mayo 2002.

## II.4 Characteristics of the employed EAP

According to a general distribution of the population, 52% of the employed population are from rural areas. Average schooling of the employed labour force is 5.3 years. This may explain low EAP productivity and wage levels, and implies that the labour force is not capable of responding to the demands of a more dynamic pattern of economic development.

**Table 2.9**  
**Employed and unemployed economically active population and schooling, by area of residence, 2002**

Area of residence	Employed		Unemployed	
	(%)	Average schooling (years)	(%)	Average schooling (years)
Urban	93.7	7.2	6.3	7.9
Rural	98.1	3.5	1.9	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>7.3</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

The growth experience in the labour market has been marked by informal labour. From 1990 through 2002, the salaried EAP declined from 49.5% to 45.4%<sup>23</sup> of the total EAP. In 1990, the percentage of employed workers that did not sell their manpower directly (self-employed and un-paid family workers) was 51.1%, by 2002 this had increased to 54.6%.

<sup>21</sup> Working less than 36 hours per week.

<sup>22</sup> Workers that having worked 36 hours or more per week, had incomes below the average monthly minimum wage by economic industry and geographic area.

<sup>23</sup> DGEC: EPHPM September 1990; INE: EPHPM. May 2002

**Table 2.10**  
**Employed EAP by status in employment, according to area of residence, 2002**

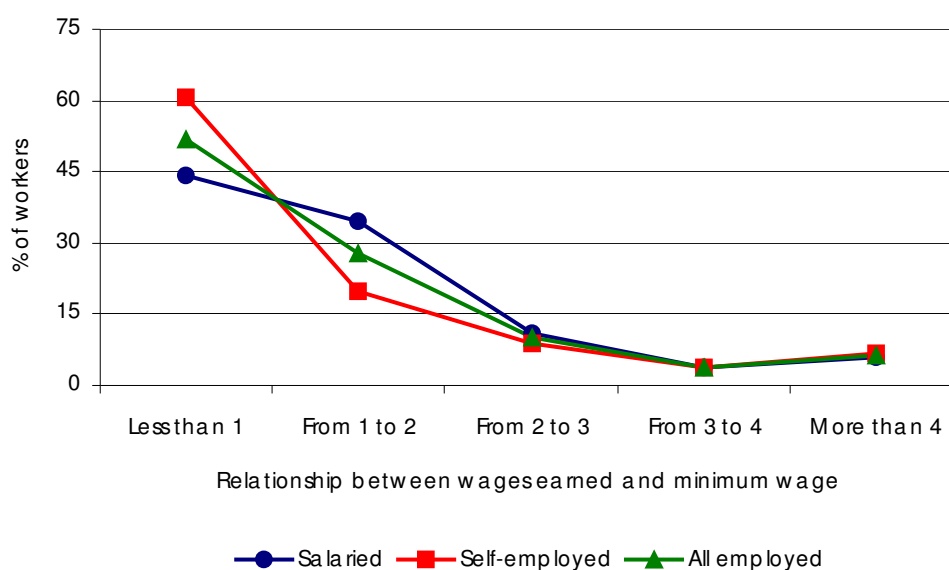
Area of residence	Employed EAP		Status in Employment		
	Number	%	Wage earners (%)	Self-employed (%)	Un-paid family worker (%)
Urban	1,151,091	48.0	58.9	33.4	7.7
Rural	1,245,543	52.0	32.9	46.3	20.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,396,634</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>45.4</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>14.5</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

## II.5 Income levels of the employed EAP

In Honduras, the level of wages earned by employed workers is extremely low, 51.8% earn wages below the minimum wage (see Figure 2.1). Wage earners and those working as self-employed earn equally low incomes. Among salaried workers, 44.3% and 60.8% of the self-employed earn less than the minimum wage. As wages and salaries increase with respect to the minimum wage (from 1 to 2 minimum wages, from 2 to 3 minimum wages, from 3 to 4 minimum wages, more than 4 minimum wages), the percentage of employed workers that are earning that level of income declines, whether they be wage earners or self-employed.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Percent of employed EAP by status in employment, according to ratio between wages earned and minimum wage<sup>24</sup>, 2002**



Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

<sup>24</sup> The average monthly minimum wage: Lps. 1,912.80 = US\$116.07

EPHPM results show that the possibility for increasing income is directly proportional to the average schooling of the individuals. This is valid both for wage earners and those who are self-employed.

**Table 2.11**  
**Average schooling of employed individuals by status in employment, according to income, 2002**

Ratio to minimum wage	Average schooling (in years)		
	Total	Wage earners	Self-employed
Less than 1 minimum wage	3.5	4.1	3.1
From 1 to 2 minimum wages	6.3	7.0	4.9
From 2 to 3 minimum wages	8.1	9.6	5.9
From 3 to 4 minimum wages	9.3	11.6	6.5
More than 4 minimum wages	11.2	13.7	8.5

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002

Since 80% of the income of employed persons comes from their labour activities, labour market characteristics and insertion are an important factor for a majority of households. When we observe the distribution of the EAP by income quintiles, we see that 42.2% fall into the lowest income quintiles (1 and 2). However, a majority of the female EAP is found in the quintiles with higher income (4 and 5), while the male EAP has a larger proportion in quintiles 1 and 2, which is related to the large proportion of females in more qualified jobs and their higher educational levels.

**Table 2.12**  
**Economically active population by sex, according to income quintile, 2002**

Income quintile	Total (%) <sup>25</sup>	Male (%)	Female (%)
1	21.7	25.4	14.0
2	20.5	22.2	16.8
3	18.8	18.6	19.3
4	20.0	18.1	24.0
5	18.5	15.1	25.6

Source: INE: EPHPM. May 2002.

Thus, the Honduran labour market is characterised by levels of unemployment that affect urban areas more than rural areas, and by high levels of underemployment. In addition to the low levels of income obtained for their work, the working class has been affected by a reduction in the value and purchasing power of its wages, limiting even further the possibility of satisfying a family's needs. Faced by this situation of necessity, more than one adult and/or some of the children must work for the family to be able to afford the basic market basket.

<sup>25</sup> 0.5% did not declare an income.

### III. CHILD LABOUR

#### III.1 Generalities

In recent years, national and international attention has been focused with ever-greater interest on child labour. Motives behind this growing interest are due in part to the “social clauses” contained in international trade agreements, to which must be added the pressures from citizens in Europe and North America for their countries to prohibit imports supposedly manufactured with child labour.

In a similar fashion, the topic of children’s rights has been gaining in political currency, although not necessarily greater commitment, as a result of several international events, among which should be mentioned the World Summit for Children and the General Assembly Special Session on Children (held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in 1990 and 2002, respectively). During these events, goals were agreed for the eradication of child labour and the reduction of poverty.

A regulatory document presented to the Administrative Council of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in November 1995 acknowledged three fundamental types of governmental action: (a) legislation on child labour and corresponding enforcement mechanisms; (b) national policies on child labour that establish public priorities and propose achieving active participation of all important players in society; and (c) a basic educational system financed with public funds that guarantees quality schooling that is physically and economically accessible for all girls and boys including those from the poorest of the poor families.

Efforts have been made in Honduras with regard to these commitments, among which the following stand out: creation of the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour<sup>26</sup>, ratification of ILO Convention N° 182 (1999) regarding the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Immediate Action for their Elimination<sup>27</sup>, drafting and approval of the National Plan of Action for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour<sup>28</sup>, approval of the Regulations on Child Labour<sup>29</sup>, strengthening of governmental and municipal agencies carrying out surveillance of working conditions of girls and boys, as well as awareness campaigns aimed at the population in general on the implications of child labour. Notwithstanding these efforts, child labour continues to be a reality favouring a continuation of the phenomena of poverty and social exclusion.

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<sup>26</sup> By Executive Decree 17-98, dated 7 September 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Ratified by the National Congress of the Republic on 24 May 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Approved by the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour in November 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Executive Resolution No. STSS-211-01, dated 10 October 2001.

## **III.2 Social, cultural and economic context within which child labour occurs**

### **III.2.a) Social context**

Starting in the 60s, families and households have undergone considerable changes with repercussions on child labour. In cities, the tempo of urban life has an impact on the prototypical family structure. Conflict between modern and traditional styles, and fragile conjugal unions have contributed to family instability. New types of economic and social relations have encouraged the dispersion of family members, due to labour migration, environmental devastation, etc. Similarly, informal sector employment increases with the consequence that family income disappears for heads of household, while public policies of relative increases in social expenditures on wages increase the cost of education and health for poor families. All of this has repercussions on children's enjoyment of their rights, the responsibilities they acquire and their premature labour insertion.

### **III.2.b) Cultural context**

In Honduras, as in other countries in the Latin American region, there is a prevailing value that children are additional manpower within the family labour force. This is especially true among rural families and those involved in agricultural activities. There is a feeling that girls and boys have a duty to contribute economically to the household and that there is a division of labour along sex lines based on traditional male and female roles. Work is seen as a way of avoiding idleness, which leads to delinquency. The belief is that it contributes to the virility of the boys and turns the girls into good future mothers, wives and housekeepers. Child labour is even perceived as a way to climb out of poverty.

Awareness of children's rights, gender issues, and the concepts of individual autonomy and identity is just starting. The occupations of fathers and mothers are the ones that the boys and girls often find themselves obligated to follow, since in many cases there are no other options.

### **III.2.c) Economic context**

Child labour occurs within a context of minimal economic growth and structural poverty, which show no signs of relief over time (see Table 3.1).

Although in relative terms there has been a reduction in the proportion of households affected by poverty, population growth has increased the absolute number of persons affected. During 2002, the proportion of households below the poverty line was 63.9%, affecting 4,743,320 persons, of whom 3,512,897 were living in extreme poverty. Poverty is concentrated in rural areas, and both there and in urban areas, it sets the stage that helps explain in part the incidence and magnitude of child labour.

**Table 3.1**  
**Percentage of households by level of poverty, 1992 through 2002**

Year	Non-poor	Poor		
		Total	Not in extreme poverty	In extreme poverty
1992	30.1	69.9	22.5	47.4
1993	32.5	67.5	22.4	45.1
1994	32.8	67.4	20.4	47.0
1995	32.2	67.8	20.4	47.4
1996	31.3	68.7	15.0	53.7
1997	34.2	65.8	17.4	48.4
1998	36.9	63.1	17.5	45.6
1999	34.1	65.9	17.3	48.6
2000	ND	ND	ND	ND
2001	35.5	64.5	17.0	47.4
2002	36.1	63.9	18.9	45.0

Source: INE: EPHPM, May 2002 (page 51).

### III.3 Extent of child labour in the population 5 to 17 years of age

According to the data provided by the Child Labour Module<sup>30</sup>, in Honduras there are 2,315,887 boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 years, representing 34.9% of the country's total population. Of these, 50.7% are males and 49.3% females. The largest proportion of this population 5 to 17 years of age comes from the 5 to 9 year-old group (41.3%), followed by those 10 to 14 years of age (38.5%) and those 15 to 17 years old (20.2%). The sex distribution shows no significant differences by age group.

**Table 3.2**  
**Population 5 to 17 years of age by sex, by age group, 2002**

Age group (years)	Population 5 to 17 years of age					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
5 to 9	956,406	41.3	485,054	41.3	471,352	41.3
10 to 14	902,123	39.0	462,040	39.4	440,083	38.5
15 to 17	457,357	19.7	227,160	19.3	230,197	20.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,315,886</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,174,254</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,141,632</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

In spite of the prohibition against work by children less than 14 years of age, and even using a calculation that tends to minimise in different senses the social burden of children's work, data indicate that 123,195 girls and boys 5 to 13 years of age are working. Taking also into consideration those 14 through 17 years of age, for whom a

<sup>30</sup> The Child Labour Module was a sub-sample of the 2002 EPHPM.

working permit and some special conditions are required<sup>31</sup>, the number of working boys and girls climbs to 356,241, i.e., 15.4% of all persons between 5 and 17 years of age.

Participation by girls and boys in the labour market increases by age. Around 2.0% of the girls and boys 5 to 9 years of age work; in the 10 to 14 year-old group, this percentage increases to 16.9, and in the 15 to 17 year-old group it expands to 40.5. A higher work rate is found among males than females in the three age groups.

**Table 3.3**  
**Working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by sex, according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Working children between 5 and 17 years of age					
	Total			Percentage of group		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
5 to 9	13,393	5,418	18,811	2.8	1.1	2.0
10 to 14	112,310	39,728	152,038	24.3	9.0	16.9
15 to 17	136,531	48,861	185,392	60.1	21.2	40.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>262,234</b>	<b>94,007</b>	<b>356,241</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>15.4</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

#### III.4 Rural-urban distribution of working boys and girls

Of all working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age, 30.8% are urban and 69.2% are rural dwellers. On analysing the population distribution by age group, a larger proportion of 15 to 17 year-olds stands out in urban areas, an aspect that may well be a result of rural-urban migration.

**Table 3.4**  
**Working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by area of residence, according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Working children between 5 and 17 years of age					
	Urban	%	Rural	%	Total	%
5 to 9	4,813	4.4	13,998	5.7	18,811	5.3
10 to 14	38,626	35.2	113,412	46.0	152,038	42.7
15 to 17	66,174	60.4	119,218	48.3	185,392	52.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,613</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>246,628</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>356,241</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

##### III.4.a) Rural area

Rural areas are home to 54.1% of the country's total population<sup>32</sup>, and 57.2% of the population between 5 and 17 years of age. There are no significant differences by age group or sex.

<sup>31</sup> The law establishes a series of regulations for employers and empowers the Department of Labour to supervise and issue necessary sanctions in the case of non-compliance.

**Table 3.5**  
**Rural population 5 to 17 years of age by sex,**  
**according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Population 5 to 17 years of age					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
5 to 9	283,808	41.7	281,104	43.6	564,912	42.6
10 to 14	269,612	39.6	251,201	39.0	520,813	39.3
15 to 17	127,410	18.7	112,497	17.4	239,907	18.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>680,830</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>644,802</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,325,632</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Children's work has a significant incidence in rural areas. Although the proportion of girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age living in rural areas is 57.2%, in the case of persons in those ages that work, the percentage in rural areas increases to 69.2%. In absolute numbers these proportions represent 246,628 working girls and boys. Of these, 80.6% are males and 19.4% are females.

The number of working children increases by age. Around 2.5% of rural dwellers 5 to 9 years of age are working. This proportion increases to 21.8% in the 10 to 14 year-old group and to 49.7% among those 15 to 17 years of age. Males demonstrate higher work rates in all age groups.

**Table 3.6**  
**Working girls and boys and work rate for the rural population**  
**5 to 17 years of age by sex, according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Rural working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age						Work rate (%)		
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%	Male	Female	Total
5 to 9	10,578	5.3	3,420	7.1	13,998	5.7	3.7	1.2	2.5
10 to 14	89,791	45.2	23,621	49.3	113,412	46.0	33.3	9.4	21.8
15 to 17	98,381	49.5	20,837	43.5	119,218	48.3	77.2	18.5	49.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>198,750</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>47,878</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>246,628</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>18.6</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

#### III.4.b) Urban area

Among the country's total population, 45.9% lived in cities or places of more than 2000 inhabitants in 2002. Among children 5 to 17 years of age, this proportion is 42.8%. The urban population 5 to 17 years of age shows no significant differences by age group or sex, except in the 15 to 17 year old group, where the proportion of females is 3.5 percentage points higher than that for males, an aspect that may be related to the rural-urban migration of adolescent women.

<sup>32</sup> INE: EPHPM. May del 2002

**Table 3.7**  
**Urban population 5 to 17 years of age by sex, according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Population 5 to 17 years of age					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
5 to 9	201,246	40.8	190,248	38.3	391,494	39.5
10 to 14	192,428	39.0	188,882	38.0	381,310	38.5
15 to 17	99,750	20.2	117,700	23.7	217,450	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>493,424</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>496,830</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>990,254</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

In Honduras, 30.8% of the boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age that work are urban residents. The foregoing represents 11.8% (109,613) of girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age in urban areas. The incidence of working children among urban dwellers, similarly to that in the rural areas, increases by age. The work rate for the 5 to 9 year-old group is a mere 1.2%, it climbs to 10.1% in the 10 to 14 year-old group, and to 30.4% among those 15 to 17 years of age. In general, a higher work rate corresponds to males in all age groups.

**Table 3.8**  
**Working girls and boys and work rate for the urban population 5 to 17 years of age by sex, according to age group, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Urban working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age						Work rate (%)		
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%	Male	Female	Total
5 to 9	2,815	4.4	1,998	4.3	4,813	4.4	1.4	1.1	1.2
10 to 14	22,519	35.5	16,107	34.9	38,626	35.2	11.7	8.5	10.1
15 to 17	38,151	60.1	28,023	60.8	66,174	60.4	38.2	23.8	30.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>63,485</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>46,128</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>109,613</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

### III.5 Extension of children's work by sex

Children's work incorporates a significant number of girls and boys, but is more widespread among the latter. In 2002, 22.3% of males 5 to 17 years of age were working, while this proportion was only 8.2% among the females. In rural areas, this sex ratio was 8 to 2 (80.6% males and 19.4% females), but in urban areas it was 6 to 4 (57.9% males and 42.1% females).

**Table 3.9**  
**Total and working boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age by area of residence, according to sex, 2002**

Sex	Total		Area of residence						
				Rural			Urban		
	Population	Working	%	Population	Working	%	Population	Working	%
Male	1,174,255	262,234	22.3	680,830	198,750	29.2	493,425	63,485	12.9
Female	1,141,632	94,007	8.2	644,802	47,878	7.4	496,830	46,128	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,315,887</b>	<b>356,241</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>1,325,632</b>	<b>246,628</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>990,255</b>	<b>109,613</b>	<b>11.1</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

### III.6 Jobs carried out by boys and girls

The jobs carried out by girls and boys have different meanings and can affect them in different ways, according to their ages, the specific tasks involved, the hazards they are exposed to while doing these jobs, the type of labour market insertion, working hours, the efforts and tensions imposed, their intensity, whether or not they conspire against their schooling and their full utilisation thereof or they inhibit their possibilities for play or tend to limit, degrade or impoverish their family and social ties.

In general, the largest proportion of working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age is found in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries, which coincides with the largest proportion of rural working children in this age group. These are followed in order of importance by wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing industries and construction. This distribution shows no significant differences by age groups.

**Table 3.10**  
**Percentage distribution of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by age group, according to economic industry, 2002**

Economic industry	Age Group (in years)			Total
	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries	54.3	59.8	53.5	56.2
Mines and quarries	-	-	0.3	0.1
Manufacturing industries	8.5	6.9	9.3	8.2
Electricity, gas and water	-	-	0.1	-
Construction	1.5	1.4	4.5	3.0
Wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants	35.5	27.3	21.0	24.4
Transportation, warehousing and communications	0.2	0.6	1.4	1.0
Financial establishments, insurance, real estate and services provided to companies	-	0.1	0.4	0.3
Community, social and personal services	-	3.9	9.5	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

In urban areas, the largest proportion of working girls and boys between age 5 and 17 years is found in the wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants category, followed by manufacturing industries, community, social and personal services, and finally, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries. In rural areas, as is expected, the largest proportion is found in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries, followed by wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and finally manufacturing industries.

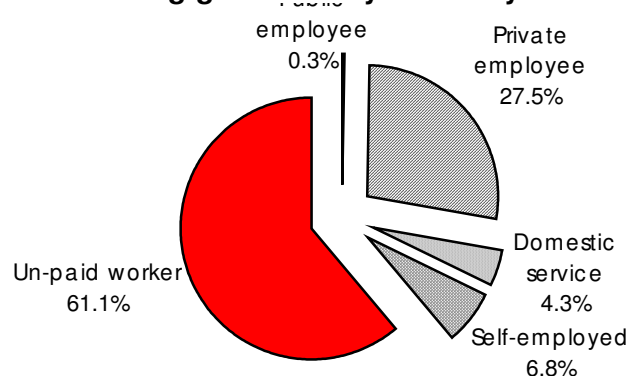
### III.7 Forms of labour insertion among boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age

In Honduras, 6 of every 10 working boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age do so as un-paid workers. Those that fall in this category in the urban world constitute 45.5% of

working boys and girls, while in rural areas this proportion climbs to 66.7%. The proportion of females that are un-paid workers is higher than that for males in both urban and rural areas.

The second most important type of labour insertion for girls and boys 5 to 17 years old is work as salaried employees (which includes those working as public and private employees and in domestic service). The percentage of wage earners is higher in urban areas (48.3%) than rural areas (26.3%), and is higher among females (36.3%) than males (32.5%). The foregoing is also the case in urban areas (females 49.3% versus males 47.6%), but inverts in rural areas (males 27.0% and females 23.5%).

**Figure 3.1**  
**Distribution of the working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by status in employment**



Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Nationwide, only 6.8% carry out activities categorised as “self-employed”. This proportion is slightly higher in rural areas (7.1%) than urban areas (6.0%) and is higher among males (7.6%) than females (4.3%). The foregoing is also true for both urban and rural areas (urban: 8.3% males, 2.9% females; rural: 7.4% males, 5.6% females).

**Table 3.11**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by area of residence and sex, according to status in employment, 2002**

Status in employment	Area of residence						Total		
	Urban			Rural			Male	Female	Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Public employee	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3
Private employee	44.8	23.6	35.8	26.1	14.5	23.9	30.6	19.0	27.5
Domestic service	0.6	23.6	10.3	0.2	7.4	1.6	0.3	15.3	4.3
Self-employed	8.3	2.9	6.0	7.4	5.6	7.1	7.6	4.3	6.8
Un-paid worker	45.7	49.6	47.3	66.2	72.0	67.3	61.2	61.0	61.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

### **III.8 Work and physical hazards**

Work by boys and girls heightens and emphasises their vulnerability and the illnesses suffered as a result of their living conditions. The most common work-related injuries or accidents among working girls and boys are contusions or superficial wounds, fractures, burns, and strains and sprains. The largest number of injuries or accidents, suffered by working children 5 to 17 years old, are found in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries.

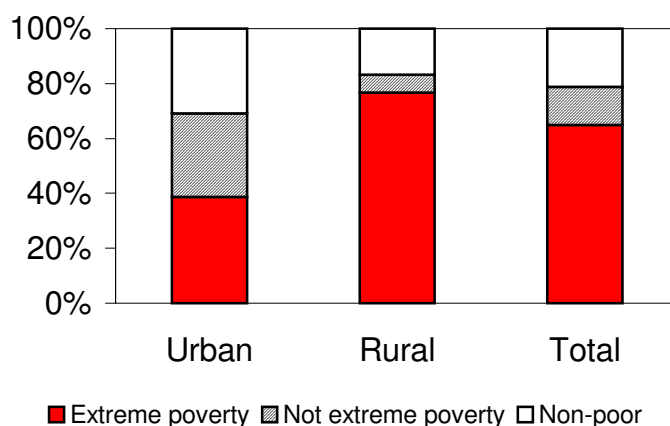
#### IV. A VICIOUS CIRCLE: CHILDREN'S WORK AND POVERTY

The EPHPM 2002 indicates that there were 3,014,071 individuals in Honduras living on a dollar or less a day. This type of poverty affects 45.5% of the country's population. The poverty indices reflect a tremendous inequity in income distribution, which in turn, shows how the country's development model has not followed a policy oriented to enhancing social equity. In this context, while among the more favoured groups in society work is conceived as a project for the future after completion of regular schooling, among the poorer sectors, work by girls and boys constitutes a means for attending to their immediate household needs.

##### IV.1 Poverty as a backdrop to children's work

There is no denying that participation in children's work decreases as household income increases. Among working boys and girls<sup>33</sup> between the ages of 5 and 17 years, 78.9% come from poor households, while only 21.2% are part of non-poor households. In both urban and rural areas, the situation is similar, the largest proportions of working children are from households that are poor or in extreme poverty<sup>34</sup>.

**Figure 4.1**  
**Distribution of the working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by household poverty situation and area of residence, 2002**



Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

<sup>33</sup> Only those children working at the time of the survey are considered.

<sup>34</sup> Poor: households whose income allows them to satisfy their food requirements, but not the full set of basic needs that allow for human development (education, health, housing, clothing, security, transportation, communications and recreation).

In extreme poverty: Households whose income is so low that although they destine all of it to acquiring foodstuffs, they are unable to meet the nutritional requirements of all of the members.

However, the proportion of working children in homes in extreme poverty is considerably higher in rural areas (76.7%) than in urban areas (38.8%), while the proportion of working girls and boys coming from poor households that are not in extreme poverty and non-poor households is higher in urban areas (30.4% and 30.8% respectively) than in rural areas (6.5% and 16.8% respectively). Thus, in rural areas, 83.2% of working children come from poor households (this includes both extreme and not extreme), while in the urban milieu, this percentage drops to 69.2. This indicates that the relationship between working children and poverty is stronger in the country's rural areas than in the urban zones, even though it is highly visible throughout the country.

**Table 4.1**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by household poverty situation, according to area of residence, 2002**

Area of residence	Household poverty situation			Total (%)
	Extremely poor (%)	Poor (%)	Non-poor (%)	
Urban	38.8	69.2	30.8	100.0
Rural	76.7	83.2	16.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Regardless of sex or age, a large proportion of working children and come from poor households. Of those employed at the time of the survey, 80.9% of the males and 73.2% of the females belonged to poor households. Similarly, 68.1% of working male and 56.5% of working female came from households in extreme poverty. Poverty and extreme poverty are, therefore, more common among male working children than female working children.

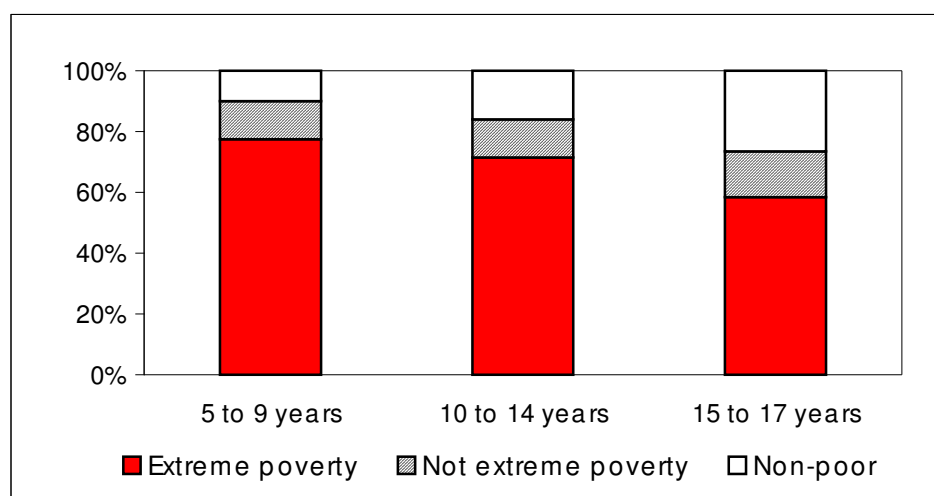
**Table 4.2**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by household poverty situation, according to age group and sex, 2002**

Age group and sex	Household poverty situation			Total (%)
	Extremely poor (%)	Poor (%)	Non-poor (%)	
From 5 to 9 years	77.5	90.0	10.0	100.0
Males	78.1	89.6	10.4	100.0
Females	76.2	90.9	9.1	100.0
From 10 to 14 years	71.5	84.0	16.0	100.0
Males	74.1	85.1	14.9	100.0
Females	64.2	80.8	19.2	100.0
From 15 to 17 years	58.4	73.5	26.5	100.0
Males	62.1	76.5	23.5	100.0
Females	48.1	65.0	35.0	100.0
<b>Total 5 to 17 years</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Males	68.1	80.9	19.1	100.0
Females	56.5	73.2	26.8	100.0

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Module results indicate a close relationship between the early incorporation of children in different age groups into the world of work and their household poverty situation. Of every 10 children 5 to 9 years old that said they were employed, 9 came from poor households and 77.5% were from households in extreme poverty. Among those 10 to 14 years of age, 84.0% of working children came from poor homes and 71.5% were from households in extreme poverty. In the 15 to 17 year-old group, this relationship dropped to 73.5% from poor homes and 58.4% from homes in extreme poverty. This shows a regressive pattern of greater extreme poverty and poverty in general in households with younger working children, which may well be an indication that poverty is a more important reason for the youngest children to work than it is among adolescents.

**Figure 4.2**  
**Distribution of households of working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by poverty situation and age group, 2002**

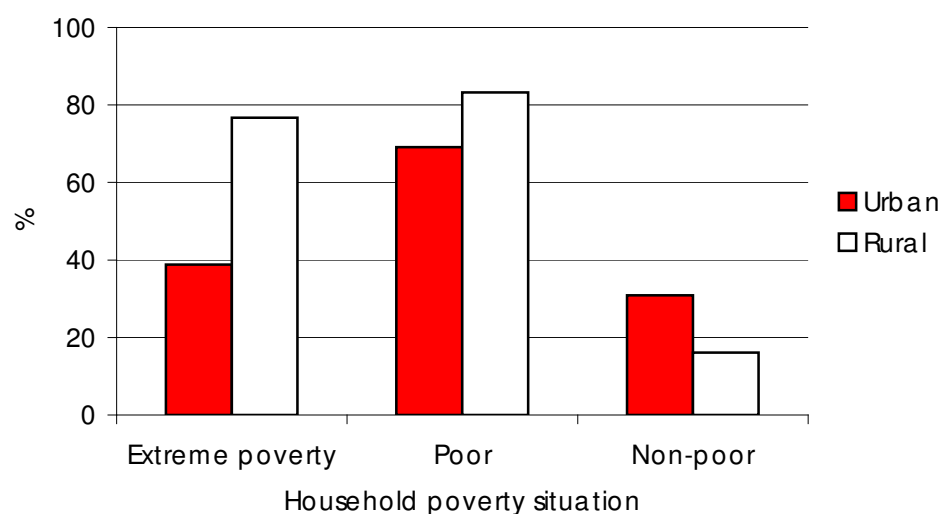


Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

The proportion of employed children less than 10 years old from poor households shows no significant difference by sex, an aspect that might be related to the labour force insertion of these children to “help the family”. After 10 years of age, the proportion of employed males coming from poor households is greater than that of females, indicating the need for the former to enter the labour market early and, to a certain extent, the invisibility of female children’s work.

In urban areas, the largest proportions of the working male and female children come from poor households, however, these proportions are approximately 10 and 14 percentage points (respectively) below the national and rural averages, possibly highlighting the need for children from non-poor urban households to enter the labour market due to the greater consumption requirements of the urban world

**Figure 4.3**  
**Distribution of households of working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by poverty situation and area of residence, 2002**



Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Figure 4.3 clearly shows the greater incidence of poverty and extreme poverty among working boys and girls in the rural areas.

**Table 4.3**  
**Working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by household poverty situation, according to age group and sex, urban areas, 2002**

Age group and sex	Household poverty situation			Total (%)
	Extremely poor (%)	Poor (%)	Non-poor (%)	
5 to 9 years	51.9	84.0	16.0	100.0
Male	49.5	85.8	14.2	100.0
Female	55.3	81.4	18.6	100.0
10 to 14 years	45.0	76.9	23.1	100.0
Male	48.9	78.7	21.3	100.0
Female	39.5	74.4	25.6	100.0
15 to 17 years	34.3	63.5	36.5	100.0
Male	34.0	66.9	33.1	100.0
Female	34.6	58.9	41.1	100.0
<b>5 to 17 years</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Male	40.0	71.9	28.1	100.0
Female	37.2	65.3	34.7	100.0

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

In rural areas, where poverty is more extended, larger proportions of working boys and girls come from poor and extremely poor households (83.2% and 76.7%), respectively). By age group and sex, the proportion of children working that belong to extremely poor households is significantly higher than that found in urban areas, confirming the severity of rural poverty and its consequences on children. In the 5 to 9 year-old group, the proportion of employed females from poor and extremely poor households is greater

than that of the males, highlighting the strong pressure on females from these households.

**Table 4.4**  
**Working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by household poverty situation, according to age group and sex, rural areas, 2002**

Age group and sex	Household poverty situation			Total (%)
	Extreme poor (%)	Poor (%)	Non-poor (%)	
5 to 9 years	86.4	92.0	8.0	100.0
Male	85.7	90.6	9.4	100.0
Female	88.4	96.5	3.5	100.0
10 to 14 years	80.5	86.4	13.6	100.0
Male	80.4	86.8	13.2	100.0
Female	81.0	85.2	14.8	100.0
15 to 17 years	71.8	79.0	21.0	100.0
Male	73.0	80.2	19.8	100.0
Female	66.2	73.3	26.7	100.0
<b>5 to 17 years</b>	<b>76.7</b>	<b>83.2</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Male	77.0	83.7	16.3	100.0
Female	75.1	80.8	19.2	100.0

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

## IV.2 Status in employment

As was seen in the preceding chapter, the population between 5 and 17 years of age enters the labour market primordially in the most backward sectors of the economy where job qualifications are minimal and there are more flexible criteria for their incorporation. This being the case, this population, a majority of which comes from the most economically and socially vulnerable sectors, continues to reproduce its poverty by being tied to low-qualified and poorly paid jobs in sectors that perpetuate their backwardness in terms of the types of productive processes employed. In addition, as will be seen below, in general these working children are not accumulating schooling that would allow them to pull themselves out of their poverty in the future, and thus they are merely consolidating an intra-generational reproduction of poverty.

Module results show that of the total of working boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age, those coming from poor and extremely poor households enter the labour market primordially as “un-paid” or “self-employed” workers. To the contrary, for those coming from non-poor households, the major types of labour insertion are as “public employee”, “private employee” and “domestic worker”. This gives evidence to the fact that income is more important for those coming from non-poor households, probably to satisfy higher levels of consumption, particularly among the adolescents.

**Table 4.5**  
**Working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by household poverty situation,**

**according to status in employment, 2002**

Status in employment	Household poverty situation		Total
	Poor (%)	Non-poor (%)	
Public employee	68.8	31.2	100.0
Private employee	70.7	29.3	100.0
Domestic worker	48.5	51.5	100.0
Self-employed	74.1	25.9	100.0
Un-paid worker	77.5	22.5	100.0

Note: Does not include "Unknown" cases.

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Furthermore, of the total of boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age working without pay, 77.5% are poor; of those self-employed, 74.1% come from poor households, and among the public and private employees, 7 of 10 are from poor households. This situation varies considerably in the case of those in domestic service, where more than one-half (51.5%) are from non-poor households.

### IV.3 Socio-familial conditions of working boys and girls

A large majority of working boys and girls 5 to 17 years old live with at least one of their parents. Of all working girls and boys who come from a female-headed household, a large majority comes from poor households.

Female-headed poor households have a higher percentage of working children than non-poor female-headed households. Working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age that belong to female-headed poor and non-poor households enter the labour market primordially as un-paid workers. This proportion is higher among those coming from poor households, while in non-poor households a higher proportion find insertion as wage-earners, and this aspect may be related to greater consumption patterns in non-poor households.

**Table 4.6**  
**Percent of working girls and boys between 5 and 17 years of age by sex of head of household and household poverty situation, according to status in employment 2002**

Status in employment	Female head (%)			Male head (%)		
	Poor	Non-poor	Total	Poor	Non-poor	Total
Salaried	30.0	44.9	33.2	27.4	39.6	30.6
Self-employed	6.8	8.3	7.1	5.5	5.7	5.5
Un-paid worker	63.3	46.8	59.7	67.1	54.7	63.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

A majority of working boys and girls coming from male-headed households are from poor households, which confirms that children from poor households have a greater

probability of entering the labour force at earlier ages, whether the household head is male or female.

There is a general tendency for boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age to join the labour force as un-paid workers, regardless of whether they are a part of poor or non-poor households. However, in non-poor households the proportion of wage-earners is higher than that found among those coming from poor households. The foregoing emphasises that direct monetary income is more important for those coming from non-poor households, regardless of whether the head of household is male or female. For poor households, unremunerated support is relatively more important.

#### IV.4 Working hours

Working shifts are long for children, regardless of whether they belong to poor or non-poor households, and it stands out as a serious impediment to their enjoyment of their rights and a flagrant violation of the country's labour laws.

Among working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age from non-poor households, 74.6% work 42 or more hours per week. Among those from poor households, this percentage is 70.2%, and 69.7% among those living in extreme poverty. However, these longer hours among girls and boys from non-poor households are due to the 15 to 17 year-old group, since among children 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 years old, there are higher proportions with shifts of 42 or more hours among the poor and extremely poor households. This means that the younger working children tend to have longer working hours if they are from poor households than non-poor households.

In general, Module results point to a larger proportion of rural residents working 42 or more hours per week as against urban residents, regardless of whether they are from non-poor, poor or extremely poor households.

**Table 4.7**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by household poverty situation and area of residence, according to average hours worked per week and age group, 2002**

Age group and hours worked	Household poverty situation								
	Non-poor			Poor			Extremely poor		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
5 to 9 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
00 – 19	40.4	31.6	46.4	38.6	30.7	41.0	40.8	39.3	41.1
20 – 34	24.5	34.2	17.9	22.8	32.4	19.8	22.1	27.3	21.1
35 – 41	10.6		17.9	10.0	9.2	10.2	7.2	8.7	6.9
42 or more	24.5	34.2	17.9	28.7	27.7	29.0	29.8	24.7	30.9
10 to 14 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
00 – 19	13.8	9.5	16.3	15.3	19.0	14.1	15.9	19.7	15.2
20 – 34	22.1	33.5	15.5	16.8	21.7	15.3	15.7	20.2	14.9
35 – 41	11.1	6.6	13.7	9.1	7.4	9.6	8.5	9.6	8.2
42 or more	53.0	50.4	54.5	58.9	51.8	61.0	60.0	50.5	61.8

## In-depth analysis of child labour and poverty in Honduras

15 to 17 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
00 – 19	4.9	6.3	3.5	4.0	6.9	2.7	4.2	9.0	3.0
20 – 34	5.9	7.4	4.5	5.7	6.9	5.2	6.0	8.8	5.2
35 – 41	1.9	3.1	0.8	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.6	5.0	4.5
42 or more	87.3	83.2	91.3	86.0	81.9	87.8	85.2	77.1	87.3
<b>5 to 17 years</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
00 – 19	8.7	7.7	9.4	11.2	12.9	10.6	12.2	15.3	11.5
20 – 34	11.6	14.9	8.9	11.8	14.1	10.9	11.4	14.5	10.8
35 – 41	5.1	3.9	6.0	6.8	5.8	7.2	6.7	7.1	6.5
42 or more	74.6	73.5	75.7	70.2	67.2	71.3	69.7	63.1	71.2

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

The number of hours worked per week increases with age. Among children 5 to 9 years of age from non-poor households, 24.5% work 42 or more hours. The proportion of urban dwellers 5 to 9 years of age from non-poor households working 42 or more hours is practically double that of their rural counterparts. In contrast, this situation is inverted among those from poor and extremely poor households, where the proportion of those working 42 or more hours is higher among the rural population.

In the 10 to 14 year-old group, the proportion working 42 or more hours per week increases to 53.0% among the non-poor, to 58.9% among those from poor households and to 60.0% among those in extreme poverty. Rural dwellers have higher percentages than urban dwellers among all three types of household (non-poor, poor and extremely poor).

Finally, among those 15 to 17 years old, the percentage of those working 42 or more hours increases to 87.3% among adolescents from non-poor households, 86.0% among the poor and 85.2% among those from extremely poor households. Similarly to the foregoing groups, rural residents have higher percentages than urban dwellers.

### IV.5 Income received by working boys and girls and their contribution to household income

As indicated above, many boys and girls work without remuneration to assist their families, but others work and obtain an income to aid the family with a direct monetary contribution. However, children earn low wages for their labour when they receive any remuneration at all. Among this group, 43.4% reported an income below one-half a minimum wage and 37.2% between one-half and one minimum wage. In all areas of residence and age groups, males receive higher average incomes for their work than females.

In general, levels of income earned increase by age. Among those 5 to 9 years of age, 86.0% reported incomes of less than one-half minimum wage. In the 10 to 14 year-old group this proportion was 60.8%. In the 15 to 17 year-old group this proportion dropped to 38.0%.

**Table 4.8**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age declaring income for labour by area of residence and sex, according to age group and income level, 2002**

Age group and minimum wage ratio	Total			Area of residence					
				Urban			Rural		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
5 to 9 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	-
Less than 1/2	86.0	90.3	74.8	74.5	74.2	74.8	100.0	100.0	-
From 1/2 to 1	14.0	9.7	25.2	25.5	25.8	25.2	-	-	-
From 1 to 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
More than 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10 to 14 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 1/2	60.8	59.6	63.8	50.2	45.0	56.3	66.5	64.8	74.7
From 1/2 to 1	31.0	31.4	30.1	37.2	37.7	36.6	27.7	29.2	20.7
From 1 to 2	7.2	8.1	4.8	11.6	17.3	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.6
More than 2	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.0	-	2.2	1.0	1.2	-
15 to 17 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 1/2	38.0	36.0	43.5	26.7	22.1	33.8	47.0	44.1	61.8
From 1/2 to 1	39.1	40.1	36.3	40.5	37.8	44.9	37.9	41.4	20.2
From 1 to 2	21.4	22.1	19.4	30.7	36.6	21.3	14.1	13.7	15.8
More than 2	1.5	1.8	0.8	2.1	3.5	-	1.0	0.8	2.2
<b>5 to 17 years</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Less than 1/2	43.4	41.6	48.5	31.3	26.2	38.9	52.2	49.6	65.4
From 1/2 to 1	37.2	38.0	34.8	39.9	37.8	43.0	35.2	38.2	20.3
From 1 to 2	18.0	18.8	15.8	26.9	33.2	17.6	11.6	11.4	12.7
More than 2	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.9	2.9	0.5	1.0	0.9	1.6

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

In urban areas, children receive better wages for their work than in rural areas. Only 31.3% reported income below one-half a minimum wage versus 52.2% in rural areas. In general, males from urban areas receive better incomes than females. Among males, 36.1% reported incomes of 1 to 2 minimum wages versus 18.1% among females. This was true in all age groups.

As mentioned above, income levels among working boys and girls in rural areas are lower than for those in urban areas. Children 5 to 9 years of age are the ones affected most. One hundred percent of rural working children in this age group reported earnings of less than one-half a minimum wage. As in urban areas, females receive an average income below that of the males. However, in the 15 to 17 year-old group in rural areas, the proportion of females receiving 1 to 2 minimum wages is higher than that of males (18.0% versus 14.5%).

It is extremely difficult to quantify the share of household income that working boys and girls help generate to resolve family necessities, and in spite of the large proportion of "no response" for this question, the results show that for households with higher income, the child's contribution diminishes. The largest proportional contributions are found in households with an income range between 2,001-5,000 lempiras (US\$120-301) per month, which highlights the importance of the contribution from job earnings made by these children to the household budget.

**Table 4.9**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by household contribution,**  
**according to household income ranges, 2002**

Household income range	Contribution by working child to household income					Total
	0 - 10%	10 - 20%	21 - 50%	51 - 100%	Unknown	
Lps. 0 - 1,000 (US\$0-60)	2.3	11.1	16.9	22.7	16.3	14.0
Lps. 1,001- 2,000 (US\$60-120)	13.3	11.0	31.4	11.5	21.4	19.9
Lps. 2,001- 5,000 (US\$120-301)	39.2	53.3	47.9	51.4	32.1	34.3
Lps. 5,001- 8,000 (US\$301-482)	21.8	20.2	0.0	2.0	15.1	15.8
Lps. 8,001- 10,000 (US\$482-602)	8.8	4.3	3.8	7.5	4.6	5.2
Lps.10,001 or more (US\$602 or more)	14.6	0.0	0.0	4.8	10.7	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

A good approximation for analysing the importance of children's labour earnings contributions for a household is the average number of members in the household, since large households need greater income to maintain all the members; this pushes them into incorporating more members into the labour market, even though they are minors. In general, the average number of members is larger in poor households and particularly in extremely poor households that provide a ready source of working children. This is notably higher among rural residents, which emphasises the need for these children to enter the labour market at early ages. Among poor and extremely poor households, the average number of members is seen to increase with the age of the working children, but this condition does not apply in the case of non-poor households.

**Table 4.10**  
**Average number of household members by household poverty situation and area of residence, according to age group of working girls and boys, 2002**

Age group (in years)	Household poverty situation								
	Poor			Extremely poor			Non-poor		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
From 5 to 9 years	6.5	5.7	6.7	6.5	5.6	6.7	6.0	5.6	6.3
From 10 to 14 years	6.9	6.2	7.1	7.0	6.3	7.2	6.1	5.9	6.2
From 15 to 17 years	7.1	6.4	7.4	7.3	6.4	7.5	5.8	5.3	6.2
<b>From 5 to 17 years</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

#### IV. 6 Working boys and girls and schooling

The effect of children's work on the probability of perpetuating intergenerational poverty can be perceived in its interference on the schooling of working children. Although a large proportion of children work and attend school, among those working, there is a greater propensity not to study. Six of every 10 working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age do not attend school. The proportion not attending increases with age. Among those 5 to 9 years old it is 13.0%. Among those 10 to 14 years old it is 45.0%; and among those 15 to 17 years of age it climbs drastically to 76.7%.

By sex, among all age groups the proportion working and not attending is larger among males. In addition, the gap in the male and female attendance rates increases by age of the children (Table 4.11).

**Table 4.11**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by sex, according to age group and school attendance, 2002**

Age group (in years)	School attendance	Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Number	%
		Number	%	Number	%		
5 – 9 years	Attends	11,302	84.4	5,060	93.4	16,362	87.0
	Non-attending	2,091	15.6	358	6.6	2,449	13.0
	Total*	13,393	100.0	5,418	100.0	18,811	100.0
10 – 14 years	Attends	56,739	50.6	26,851	67.6	83,590	55.0
	Non-attending	55,412	49.4	12,877	32.4	68,289	45.0
	Total*	112,151	100.0	39,728	100.0	151,879	100.0
15 - 17 years	Attends	24,254	17.8	18,927	38.7	43,181	23.3
	Non-attending	112,119	82.2	29,933	61.3	142,052	76.7
	Total*	136,373	100.0	48,860	100.0	185,233	100.0
Total 5 to 17	Attends	92,295	35.2	50,838	54.1	143,134	40.2
	Non-attending	169,622	64.8	43,168	45.9	212,790	59.8
	Total*	261,916	100.0	94,007	100.0	355,924	100.0

\* Does not include the category "No response".

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

In the urban areas, 5 of every 10 working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age do not attend school. As is true nationwide, the largest proportion of non-attendance corresponds to the group 15 to 17 years old. By sex, the largest proportion of non-attendance in all age groups corresponds to males.

In rural areas, the proportion of working boys and girls not studying (64.7%) is higher than the national and urban averages. In the 10 to 14 year-old group, 5 of every 10 do not attend school. This proportion increases to 84.0% among those 15 to 17 years old.

**Table 4.12**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by area of residence and sex, according to age group and school attendance, 2002**

Age group (in years)	School attendance	Area of Residence					
		Urban (%)			Rural (%)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
5 - 9 years	Attends	85.0	100.0	92.3	84.2	89.5	85.5
	Non-attending	15.0	0.0	8.7	15.8	10.5	14.5
	Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
10 - 14 years	Attends	68.3	77.1	72.0	46.1	61.1	49.3
	Non-attending	31.7	22.9	28.0	53.9	38.9	50.7
	Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
15 - 17 years	Attends	30.4	44.6	36.4	12.9	30.9	16.0
	Non-attending	69.6	55.4	63.6	87.1	69.1	84.0
	Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	99.9
Total 5 to 17	Attends	46.3	58.3	51.3	31.7	50.0	35.3
	Non-attending	53.7	41.7	48.7	68.3	50.0	64.7
	Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* Does not include the category "Unknown".

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Analysing the activities of girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age, we find that 10.9% and 10.3% of males and females that make up households falling in quintiles 1 and 2, respectively, are exclusively dedicated to work, and that 24.5% and 20.6%, respectively, "neither work nor study". Thus, one of every 10 works and 2 of every 10 are involved in no activity whatsoever. On the other hand, among those children from households in quintile 5, only 5.9% "only work" and 7.3% "neither work nor study". This scenario is repeated among the various age groups.

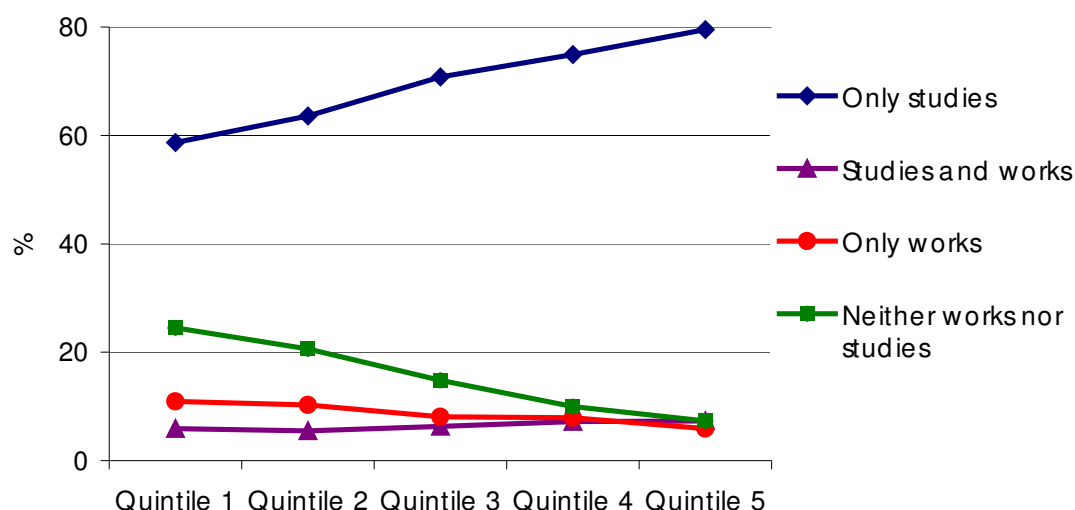
**Table 4.13**  
**Percent of the population 5 to 17 years of age by quintile of household income, according to type of activity carried out, 2002**

Age group and activity	Total	Quintile of household income				
		1	2	3	4	5
Only studies	67.0	58.7	63.6	70.8	74.9	79.5
Studies and works	6.2	5.9	5.5	6.3	7.2	7.3
Only works	9.2	10.9	10.3	8.1	7.9	5.9
Neither works nor studies	17.7	24.5	20.6	14.8	10.0	7.3
<b>Total 5 to 17 years</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

Figure 4.4 clearly shows the tendency of children to dedicate themselves exclusively to studies as household income increases, and the tendency to exclusively dedicate themselves to work or to neither work nor study, as household income decreases. The combination of studies and work does not follow a clear trend with regard to household income.

**Figure 4.4**  
**Activities of boys and girls between 5 and 17 years of age by household income quintile**



Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

The wage level received by working boys and girls has little influence on the fact of attending school or not. The results show a lower level of non-attendance for those falling in the 0–500 lempiras per month range, but after that the level non-attendance is similar among those earning low wages and those receiving higher earnings.

**Table 4.14**  
**Percent of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age with monetary wages by schooling situation, according to salary range in previous month, 2002**

Salary range (in lempiras)	Currently attending an educational establishment (%)		Total
	Yes	No	
Lps. 0-500 (US\$0-30)	28.1	71.9	100.0
Lps. 501-1000 (US\$30-60)	20.9	79.1	100.0
Lps. 1001-2000 (US\$60-120)	21.3	78.7	100.0
Lps. 2001-5000 (US\$120-301)	23.3	76.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

It would appear that education is not considered important once a child has entered the labour force. The proportion of boys and girls not attending school and contributing to household expenses is high at all levels of contribution, and to a lesser extent, even where they do not.

**Table 4.15**  
**Salaried working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by schooling situation, according to the proportion of income delivered to parents or guardians (according to children's answers), 2002**

Percent of income delivered to parents	Current attendance at an educational establishment (%)		
	Yes	No	Total
Does not contribute	45.1	54.9	100.0
Less than 10%	23.3	76.7	100.0
From 10 to 20%	22.5	77.5	100.0
From 21 to 50%	14.3	85.7	100.0
More than 50%	22.7	77.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>75.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Labour force insertion in specific economic industries seems to interfere differentially in participation by working boys and girls in the educational system. Wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants constitute the industry with the lowest proportion of non-attendance (36.0%). Other industries, such as transportation, storage and communications, construction, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries, and community, social and personal services, have high rates of school non-attendance by boys and girls.

**Table 4.16**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by schooling situation, according to economic industry, 2002**

Economic industry	Current attendance at an educational establishment (%)		
	Yes	No	Total
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries	30.2	69.8	100.0
Mines and quarries	34.2	65.8	100.0
Manufacturing industry	46.3	53.7	100.0
Electricity, gas and water	0.0	100.0	100.0
Construction	21.7	78.3	100.0
Wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels	64.0	36.0	100.0
Transportation, storage and communications	18.9	81.1	100.0
Financial establishments, insurance, real estate and business services	37.8	62.2	100.0
Community, social and personal services	32.2	67.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Module results show that the greater the number of hours dedicated to work, the lower school attendance will be. School dropouts begin to become apparent with greater intensity among boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age who are working 31 or more hours per week. The foregoing confirms that labour force insertion of children becomes a factor excluding them from education, and this loss maintains the low quality of the labour force and the low levels of remuneration for work, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

**Table 4.17**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by schooling situation, according to weekly hours worked (according to children's answers), 2002**

Weekly hours dedicated to work	Total	Works and studies	Only works
00 - 10 hours	100.0	93.9	6.1
11 - 20 hours	100.0	78.7	21.3
21 - 30 hours	100.0	80.7	19.3
31 - 41 hours	100.0	69.0	31.0
42 or more hours	100.0	23.0	77.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>62.5</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

This is reflected in the average schooling of working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age, which is a mere 4.9 years. In general, average schooling is low in different age groups and among rural and urban dwellers.

**Table 4.18**  
**Average years of study of working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by area of residence and sex, 2002**

	Total			Area of Residence					
	Total	Male	Female	Urban			Rural		
				Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Average years of study	4.9	4.8	5.4	5.6	5.5	5.7	4.7	4.6	5.1

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002

Work at early ages, which is driven to a great extent by economic needs in the households, becomes an obstacle for longer-term economic progress in these very same households, since it hinders the accumulation of the minimum levels of schooling that would allow these girls and boys to achieve well-paid jobs as adults. The immediate acquisition of direct or indirect economic assistance through the work of young members of the household, implies a sacrifice of the possibility of a future without poverty. Breaking this vicious circle of child labour and poverty requires efforts to increase the accessibility and quality of formal education, as well as reducing poverty nationwide.

## V. CONDITIONING FACTORS OF WORK AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS

### V.1 Poverty

Although poverty cannot be singled out as the sole factor responsible for premature involvement of children in the labour force, the results show that in Honduras's case, 53.6% of the responses to the question "What would happen to the household and its economy if the child ceased working?", are related to economic factors. The foregoing confirms that the contributions made by working girls and boys to their households are looked upon as being significant, especially for the poorest households, where this contribution may become fundamental for the household's survival.

**Table 5.1**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age by consequences to household if child were to cease working, 2002**

<b>Effect on household and its economy if child ceased working</b>	<b>%</b>
Household income and standard of living would fall	40.7
Household could not subsist	6.6
Mother or father would have to work	2.6
Could not keep studying	2.5
Family business would go bankrupt	1.1
Nothing	41.8
Other	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

There can be no doubt that the high levels of labour market insertion of boys and girls coming from poor households is related to the need to acquire resources, but resolving this immediate need keeps these households in a vicious circle, where poverty tends to reproduce itself on a similar or greater scale. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the mere incorporation of some "non-poor" children into the labour force, reveals the difficulty faced by adults in obtaining sufficient income to maintain their households. In fact, many of these come from households that have just barely climbed above the poverty line.

### V.2 Culture

Although it is evident that the economic aspect is one of the factors that has an impact on children's work, there is another factor, however, which also has a decisive relationship with children's work: culture. While for some individuals child labour should be eliminated, for others it is desirable. Moreover, the Honduran population does not have a unified conception of which activities among children are to be considered work and which not. For many, and the Module confirms it, childhood activities that for many would appear to be work, are merely "helping out" their parents in their own tasks.

Similarly, there is also a desire among boys and girls to be involved in the labour market. This situation obeys, on the one hand, their desperation and insecurity faced by a future in a society that offers them neither opportunities nor guarantees for survival and progress; and on the other, the pressure of a socio-economic system that promotes with particular emphasis among adolescents, an eagerness for access to affluent society.

In any event, the reasons expressed by the parents for justifying the incursion by children in the labour market, in addition to economic factors (25.0%), are participation in family activities (25.5%) and ways to avoid leisure time which leads to vices and delinquency (39.4%), that could really be referring to a need for affluence and its legitimacy. Among the reasons expressed by the boys and girls themselves, economic reasons have a higher weight than that given by the parents, but in general they follow the same trend.

**Table 5.2**

<b>Reasons for working expressed by parents and children 5 to 17 years of age, 2002</b>		
<b>Reasons for working</b>	<b>Parents (%)</b>	<b>Children (%)</b>
To help pay for studies	3.4	4.1
Must help out with household expenses	19.5	22.3
To help pay for a loan or debt	2.1	2.0
Must participate in family activities	25.5	26.0
Work builds character and makes honourable	22.5	19.6
Work keeps them away from the street and vices	16.9	14.9
No nearby school for studies	1.2	1.2
Everybody in household has worked since they were small	5.9	7.3
Other	3.1	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

### **V.3 Characteristics of the educational system**

In Honduras, in both rural and urban marginal sectors, there are several prevailing factors that make school access and success more difficult for many poor children. These are related primarily to a lack of infrastructure and teachers, inadequate material and teaching conditions, uniforms, school supplies and registration costs, long distances to the primary or secondary school from their place of residence, and in general, the low quality of the education provided, as well as its out-of-context nature. Furthermore, there are significant opportunity costs for poor families to send their children to grammar or secondary school: while s/he attends, his/her manpower is lost to the family.

Primary education is oriented to the 7 to 12 year-old population. Theoretically it is compulsory and free. The actual coverage of primary education of this age group is estimated at 83.2%. These data show that notwithstanding the efforts aimed at universalising this educational level, there are still problems for reaching the goal of

100% of children having achieved this level of schooling; the population left out of the system is principally in the rural areas, urban marginal zones, and in general the poorer population groups, particularly among those boys and girls incorporated into the labour market.

Secondary education automatically excludes around one-half of the corresponding school-age population, particularly the rural poor, urban marginal poor and most specifically working boys and girls. School attendance coverage for the 13 to 17 year-old group is estimated at 49.7%, which does not include lowered secondary level attendance due to repetition (over-age) at the primary level.

At both primary and secondary levels, in addition to coverage problems that leave out large numbers of boys and girls, especially adolescents, there are serious problems of repetition and desertion, which in turn point towards a problem with efficiency and quality. In Honduras, only 6 of every 10 children complete primary school in the foreseen six-year lapse. Primary registration is characterised by its broad base in the first three years and an evident reduction in the last three years. The policy of automatic promotion in the first three grades, which was proposed to improve efficiency, transfers to the higher grades the learning failures in instrumental areas such as reading and writing. This complicates matters since the system presupposes a continuity of the learning process between the home and the school, which is only possible in homes with higher educational levels, thus, those with greater resources. Furthermore, the educational system presents a severe inequality problem, which doubtlessly increases the gap between the rich and the poor. Several studies have shown that the distance between the official curriculum and the curriculum taught tends to be significant, and this gap increases in primary and secondary schools that serve poor girls, boys and adolescents.

According to data obtained from the Module, of a total of 2,315,887 boys and girls 5 to 17 years old, 564,337 did not attend school in 2002. In relative terms, this non-attendance represented 24.4% of the total. The main reason given for non-attendance was "does not wish to continue studying", which was the case for 21.9% of all non-attending children. It is possible that this result may be an indirect indicator of the quality of education available (contents, level of preparation of teaching personnel, teaching resources, infrastructure, etc.), in particular for the poorest sectors of the population.

The responses related to non-attendance due to the need for working in economic or non-economic activities ("works or had to begin working", "got married and has no time" and "does household chores"), represented 10.8% nationwide, and are no more than another way of saying that they lack economic resources. The lack of opportunities for access is also clear, "the educational centre is too far" and "there is no educational centre here". These answers sum 10.0% and are also aspects associated with the lack of economic resources within the household.

**Table 5.3**  
**Working girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age who are not attending school or dropped out of school by reason for non-attendance, 2002**

<b>Reason for not attending or dropping out</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Does not want to continue studies	21.9
Completed secondary studies	1.0
Works or had to begin working	5.6
Got married and has no time	2.0
Does household chores	3.2
Had an accident / illness	3.0
The educational centre is too far	6.2
There is no educational centre here	3.8
Other	53.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: INE: EPHPM. Child Labour Module, May 2002.

In general, Module results show that participation by boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age increases as family income increases, and that children from poor households, particularly those who work, have less opportunities to enjoy the right to an education and, thus, of achieving successful labour insertion as adults.

Although the data show a large number of children 5 to 17 years old that are only studying or who have managed to combine study with work, it also shows a large proportion of boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age coming from poor households who only work or neither work nor study.

#### **V.4 Access by poor families to social assistance programmes**

In Honduras, there are numerous institutions that offer programmes for social assistance aimed at poor families, among which the following stand out: the *Fondo Hondureño de Inversión Social* (FHIS, Honduran Social Investment Fund), the *Programa de Asignación Familiar* (PRAF, Family Allocation Programme), *Alimentos por Trabajo* (Food for Work) programmes, *Programas de Apoyo Nutricional* (Nutritional Support Programmes) and *Programas de Becas Escolares* (School Scholarship Programmes).

FHIS was created to generate temporary employment through the construction of basic social infrastructure. Financing comes from external sources in the form of loans and donations. There are estimates that it has produced more than 600 thousand man/months of temporary employment since it was founded.

In addition, FHIS develops support programmes for small and mid-sized enterprise (PAS) and credit and technical assistance programmes for rural micro-enterprise (PROCTMER). During the last two years, it has also acted as an intermediary to finance social products oriented to extremely vulnerable populations.

PRAF orients its activities to support schooling of children through School Bonds and School Fund Packages, to support maternal, child and senior citizen health care (Maternal and Child Bonds and Senior Citizen Bonds), and support for female heads of household in extreme poverty (Female Household Head Bond and Occupational Training Project). It is estimated that they have benefited more than 1.5 million persons, with economic support coming from external funds such as loans and donations.

The Food for Work and Nutritional Support programmes are aimed at the population in extreme poverty. They are carried out primarily by central government agencies and respond to specific opportunities. The School Scholarship programme is carried out principally by the Department of Education and is aimed at promoting academic excellence among students, particularly poor ones.

To date, articulation among the programmes has been elementary, which affects their impact. There is a need to establish mechanisms that would allow a greater articulation among the different activities carried out by these programmes in order to avoid duplication and maximise the support benefits for the poorest sectors of the population. Similarly, a need has arisen to link these programmes for social and economic assistance with programmes for the eradication of child labour. However, there are serious doubts about the sustainability of these programmes, primarily due to the high degree of dependence on external cooperation and the possibilities of the country to contract new commitments. Furthermore, the large amounts invested make a precise evaluation of their orientation and impacts indispensable.

### **V.5 Current opportunities for poor families and job opportunities for adults**

If poverty is, among other factors, one of the principal causes for the existence of child labour, a policy to eradicate child labour must be intimately linked to the ambitious effort to eradicate poverty over the long term. Development of the different programmes, policy measures and specific projects contemplated within the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), whose priorities are centred on aspects linked to accelerated, equitable and sustainable economic growth, the development of human capital, primarily in the areas of education and health, and assistance for rural and urban populations under conditions of great social risk, evidently present support for the fight against child labour.

The PRS prioritises interventions aimed at attacking the specific causes of poverty and to strengthen social protection networks in favour of those sectors with a greater degree of social vulnerability. It grants special attention to households with large numbers of children, female-headed households, households with a very young or aged head, and households with heads with low levels of schooling, which constitute the framework within which child labour occurs.

Without reducing the central government's specific responsibilities, PRS grants high value to programmes and projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the populace and creating opportunities for better income for adults. These can be carried out by municipalities, communities and NGOs, as well as by private industry.

Furthermore, the PRS indicates that an attempt will be made to strengthen the relationship between the programmes carried out by PRAF and the improvement in the conditions of supply and demand for basic educational services, as well as among those FHS programmes aimed at generating employment with the creation and improvement of economic and social infrastructure, which would facilitate economic activities and human capital formation, aspects which may maximise the interventions attacking the child labour problem.

The problems mentioned above regarding the Honduras economy and the constant growth of the working-age population, have had an impact on achieving the goals promoting full employment and preparing males and females to obtain secure and sustainable means for livelihood through work and freely chosen productive employment. Furthermore, one of the proposed measures for facing unemployment and underemployment is to provide training to workers and technicians. Nevertheless, the country invests insufficient amounts in technical and vocational education. The only activity in recent years that has generated employment in a massive manner for adults has been the clothing drawback industry. In this context, the opportunities for adult employment are limited.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY GUIDELINES

### VI.1 Conclusions

In Honduras, as in other Latin American countries, the problem of child labour is serious, not only because it is so common, but also because it harbours high levels of exploitation, clandestinity and hazardous conditions that have a negative effect on the present and future of a very large number of the country's children.

Paradoxically, legislation prohibiting work among boys and girls less than 14 years of age and protecting those over 14 years of age, favours child labour without rights or legal protection. In addition, the lack of oversight encourages exploitation. Indifference in the face of so many working children in Honduras under these conditions reflects a lack of political will among authorities in charge of resolving this problem, while the lack of popular indignation in the face of these facts reveals society's complicity.

The results from the Child Labour Module show that 356,241 girls and boys 5 to 17 years of age are working children, and of these, 123,195 were between 5 and 13 years of age, i.e., they were below the minimum age for admission to employment, and represent 34.6% of working children. A large majority of the working boys and girls does so to contribute to family subsistence by helping out without remuneration in jobs being done by parents or relatives, even though a considerable proportion has sought incorporation into the labour market directly as "wage-earners" or in equivalent involvement, as "self-employed", and receive an income for their labour.

It is undeniable that the child work rate declines as household income increases. Of the working boys and girls 5 to 17 years of age, 78.9% come from poor households, while only 21.2% are from non-poor households. In both urban and rural areas the situation is similar, the largest proportion of working children come from poor and extremely poor households. Nevertheless, the incidence of extreme poverty is higher among rural working children than urban child workers, and the incidence of the non-poor and not extremely poor is higher among urban working children than rural ones.

Sex is a variable that plays an important role in this topic. We can state that there are more males making up the employed population less than 18 years old, independent of their age or rural or urban location. However, it is important to point out that frequently female labour participation is severely under-recorded in the traditional conception of the working population, as long as participation in household chores is not considered labour. Carrying out household chores is more frequent among young females and in many cases these chores entail dropping out of school and long hours of work.

It is interesting that poverty is more related to working young males than it is with females. Similarly, poverty seems to gain in importance as a reason for children's work, the younger the girl or boy involved.

The group of children that "neither work nor study" also is of considerable size. To a large extent, this group is made up of adolescents that remain at home taking care of

the household while their parents are out working. This extenuating participation is also injurious to the basic rights of children, such as education and play.

With regards to spatial distribution, children's work appears concentrated in rural areas; in addition, the incidence of poverty is greater among working boys and girls in rural areas than urban areas.

The occupational structure is quite diverse and is related to geographic location, sex and age. In general, participation in the modern sector is minimal. Working girls and boys are linked to the most technologically backward strata, and thus with those offering the lowest income. The informal sector constitutes an economic circuit where child labour has found the space necessary for its expansion.

Finally, it is important to highlight that children's work is categorised primordially by "unpaid work", which is more common among those less than 15 years of age and more widespread in rural areas. Boys and girls begin to work with their parents and as they grow up, they move into work on a more independent basis. Thus, direct monetary contributions to the household occur basically through adolescents. In poverty, larger proportions of girls and boys are found working without pay or as self-employed. Only in the case of domestic employees is a larger percentage of non-poor than poor found in the households of the working girls and boys.

The income of these children is always meagre and is a function of their ages, hours worked, sex and area of residence. Adolescents 15 to 17 years old from urban areas are in a better situation. In respect to the length of children's working shifts, the data show that frequently they are equal to or greater than that of adults. Similarly, among the younger girls and boys, the working shift for those from poor households is longer than that for children from non-poor households. The main consequence of these long shifts is their negative effect on school attendance and performance.

The contribution from work performed by girls and boys to the household economy may be a direct monetary support for the family budget or an indirect collaboration when a child purchases with the product of his/her labour goods that the family or guardians would have to acquire some other way (school supplies, clothing, etc.). Economic reasons are among the most important for children's work, according to the opinions of the children themselves, as well as their parents or guardians. In many cases, both modes of contribution are combined. As age increases, monetary retribution for boys and girls' work begins to become more important than un-paid work. Thus, contributions by adolescents are more visible. This also relates to data on school non-attendance. Three of every 4 working boys and girls aged 15 to 17 years do not attend school. This situation is even more serious in the rural areas.

Although poverty is the main factor driving families to incorporate their children into the labour force from very early ages, frequently the very work done by these children potentialises and amplifies the vulnerability and poverty within which they live. In many cases, work contributes to conspire against their personal development, entering into conflict with their schooling and learning achievements. Survey results show that a large proportion of children who work do not attend school; this situation is of even greater

concern in rural areas and among adolescents. In addition, a considerable proportion of these working boys and girls are subject to illnesses, severe hazards and conditions that affect their health, which arise directly from the tasks they carry out. These negative effects of child labour isolate these children even further from the possibilities of achieving a better future.

Child labour reveals the segmentation of Honduran society, where a small part of the population has access to the best education and formation and thus to better opportunities for access to satisfactory and well-paid jobs, while the majority is hindered from receiving even a minimum of adequate instruction and to the contrary is obliged to work from early childhood.

### VI.2 Policy guidelines

The United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child proposes in Article 32: “States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”.

In compliance with this precept, the Honduran State has specified that the minimum age for work is 14 years, as well as regulations on work and the respective penalties. Similarly, it has proceeded to prepare and approve a “National Plan of Action for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour in Honduras”. To reach this goal will require a process demanding not only specific policies directed to working girls and boys, but also basic social policies are needed to reduce poverty levels and the inequitable distribution of income.

The National Plan of Action for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour in Honduras includes a series of proposals from minors for the short-, medium- and long-term, which are related to poverty reduction, in particular:

- Better wages for adults;
- Increased prices for agricultural products;
- Support for agricultural production, including land and inputs for cultivating the soil;
- Technical assistance for adults for their own business start-ups;
- Sources of employment for adults;
- Scholarships and other educational opportunities for children;
- Pay equivalent to that for adults or at least a minimum wage for working children meeting the legal constraints.

These and other policy proposals should be revised and reconsidered by the Honduran State in its struggle for the right of children not to be exploited economically.

### **VI.3 Proposals for policies over the short-term**

1. Since it is not possible to elude the reality that many children are currently working, it becomes necessary to develop special parallel policies to protect them over the short-term, as well as to optimise the working conditions of children who are legally authorised.
2. It is of primordial importance to immediately eradicate child labour that involves significant hazards. Children in Honduras work in agriculture, mines, refuse dumps, brick factories and in many activities that place their health and even their lives at risk. This can be achieved through social control, with the aid of teachers, officials, families and the community, as well as state control. The Department of Labour should see to it that labour inspections are carried out on adolescents, at least in the formal sector.
3. There is an indispensable need to improve general awareness of the problem of child labour, promoting participatory research aimed at action; informing, heightening awareness and mobilising the population through training and awareness campaigns on current legislation and the nature, causes and consequences of child labour in Honduras; as well as promoting the participation of children in the implementation of their rights.
4. Efforts must be made to guarantee access by children to quality public services, not only health and education, but also culture, sports and recreation, so that work is not seen as the only option in the face of idleness.

### **VI.4 Proposals for policies over the medium-term**

1. It is of fundamental importance to make a radical and qualitative transformation in school-based education. This means establishing schools even out in the most remote sites, with programmes and curricular contents in tune with local and regional needs, obtaining texts, equipping schools with libraries, spaces and adequate furnishings and with adequately paid and trained teaching staff. In particular the proposal for the gradual and progressive eradication of child labour must be articulated with the demand for a universal, efficient and useful primary education.
2. Similarly, the State must invest in technical and vocational education, to achieve training for workers and technicians and thus offer more educational options to adolescents and adjust to the country's economic reality.
3. The country already has several economic and social programmes. Given that child labour is not independent of socio-economic conditions of the households, but rather is one of their most severe consequences, it is extremely important to link these programmes with the different programmes for eradicating child labour.

4. The National Plan of Action for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labour in Honduras includes executing activities designed to prevent and eradicate child labour, particularly that which includes a high social risk or is prejudicial for the person carrying it out. These actions could have greater support and effectiveness, if they were established within the framework for a productive growth policy subsumed under the fight against poverty and favouring equal economic and social opportunities. Of particular interest is the creation of new sources of jobs, increased income from wages and salaries or of some other type, and improvement of working conditions and qualifications of adult labourers, which would be its cardinal points. These actions must include adequate measures for social compensation, favouring the lowest income sectors, granting special priority to support families whose under-aged members are working.

### **VI.5 Proposals for policies over the long-term**

1. Any effective policy for eradicating child labour must be linked to an ambitious poverty eradication effort over the long term, since both phenomena are linked in a vicious circle. The Poverty Reduction Strategy offers an opportunity to include the fight against child labour within the global plan to combat poverty throughout the country, and further efforts must be made to prioritise protection of children within that Strategy. PRS offers unique opportunities due to its integrated and sustainable approach.
2. Together with the linkages of girls and boys to work, there are underlying structural problems whose roots lie in the country's economic development model and social policy orientations, which are characterised by tremendous inequity. The fight against child labour becomes merely naïve and inoperative, when it is not carried out as part of a broader fight against poverty, social injustice and an inefficient educational system. For the programmes to relieve poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country to have greater effect, which will be necessary for a sustainable eradication of child labour, these must be focused by means of maps of unsatisfied basic needs.
3. In order to make the use of child labour unnecessary, Honduras needs to diminish the levels of unemployment and underemployment among adults. Poverty is the scenario for child labour. Most of the children currently working are the sons and daughters of poor households, which once again confirms the circuit of exclusion. There is evidence that not only has work increased among boys and girls, but also illegal labours such as commercial sexual exploitation, pornography and drug trafficking. Family poverty will not disappear until adult employment undergoes improvement. It is important to understand with this that the struggle for better living conditions for the poorest groups in the population must be oriented to the search for a more just society, where adults have decent working conditions and all children and adolescents can enjoy their rights under conditions favourable for their building their citizenship.

4. Finally, it becomes necessary to continue working towards the promotion of a culture based on the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention leaves no room for legitimising child labour adducing that it is necessary for family subsistence, and in the last instance, to compensate the inoperability of the State to improve the population's quality of life.

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