

Child Labour in Latin America and the Caribbean

SOME KEY DATA ON CHILD LABOUR IN THE REGION

The ILO has estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are working under hazardous conditions, belonging to the group of children working under the worst forms of child labour.

Among working children ages 5 to 14 around the world, 69% are employed in the agricultural sector, 9% are employed in the industrial sector and the remaining 22% are employed in the services sector.

Asia and the Pacific is the region of the world with the largest amount of working children with 122.3 million of child workers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 49.3 million, a group of heterogeneous regions consisting of developed countries, transition economies and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with 13.4 million, and lastly Latin America and the Caribbean with 5.7 million.

Even though Asia and the Pacific is the region of the world that concentrates the biggest quantity of working children ages 5 to 14. For the same age group, Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest working ratio of the world, with 26 working children out of every 100. The working ratio for LAC is approximately 5 children out of every 100.

In Brazil there are more than 2.2 million child workers ages 5 to 14 (approximately 6.8 per cent of total children). There are important gender differences when one contrasts the work of male children vs. female children. While boys are more likely to work in agriculture (63.6 per cent) girls tend to be concentrated in the services sector (43 per cent).

In several Latin American countries the performance of household chores consumes a vital share of the children's time, especially of female children. The intensive performance of household chores can interfere with school and recreational time of the children in the same manner than work does. In Nicaragua 92.9 per cent of total children (5-14 years old) are involved in household chores. Numbers are also available for other LAC like Honduras (79.8 per cent), Colombia (72.1 per cent), Belize (68.2 per cent), Panama (65.2 percent) and El Salvador (62.3 percent).

The majority of the Latin American working children ages 5 to 14 are concentrated in the Agricultural sector, followed by the Services sector. In Belize as much as 65 percent of total working children are working in agriculture and 27.8 per cent in services, while Nicaragua has 58.7 and 30.9, Brazil 58.7 and 33.5, El Salvador 53.2 and 30.7, Panama 66.1 and 31.2, Honduras 59.1 and 28.5, and Guatemala 62.6 and 23.4. Some of the agricultural working tasks can entail a

great deal of danger to the children, as they involve the manipulation of sharp tools and power machinery and the handling of biological and chemical components (fertilizers and pesticides). Part of the children involved in the services sector are indeed working in the informal sector of economy, usually for no payment - for their families or to have a place to sleep - and can't seek no protection in they are mistreated by their employers.

The majority of Latin American working children are working for their families and do not receive any payment. Girls are somehow the most affected by this situation as usually they face worse opportunities in the remunerated labour market than boys do. In Belize 75.5 percent of girls (5 to 14 years old) work as unpaid family workers, compared to 52.2 per cent of boys. Other examples of this trend can be found in countries like Nicaragua (75.5 per cent female vs. 71.9 per cent boys) and Colombia (55.9 per cent girls vs. 47.4 per cent boys).

STRATEGIES

The unconditional worst forms of child labour, such as commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking of girls and boys for labour or sexual exploitation, use of children in armed conflict and use of children in the drug trade pose a particular challenge since they involve criminal activities that are hidden and difficult to tackle. Some of these also pose particular risks to girls, who are often more vulnerable due to prevalent cultural and social patriarchal norms in Latin America. IPEC is working to develop intervention models to address these worst forms and ensure that adequate legal frameworks are in place and national capacities are strengthened to enforce them.

IPEC has a strong regional and subregional approach to its activities in the region. It promotes child labour eradication in the regional economic integration agenda, as well as in regional declarations and agreements. Mainstreaming of child labour concerns into government policies and programmes in Latin America, especially those concerned with poverty eradication and education such as conditional income transfers, has been and will continue to be a strong focus of IPEC's work.

IPEC's programme advanced ILO priorities for the Region in the 2004-05 biennium, among them are poverty reduction, education for all, gender equality, strengthened mechanisms for social cohesion, decent work and social protection for workers.

IPEC PROJECTS - 2004-05

TBP Support Projects - 5:	El Salvador, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Brazil
Country Programmes - 2:	Colombia and Panama
SIMPOC National Surveys - 9:	Completed: Brazil, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Chile Ongoing: Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador

Country sectoral or area-based projects: 10

- Bolivia: Sugar cane
- Chile: Commercial sexual exploitation of children
- Colombia: Mining
- El Salvador: Children working in the fireworks industry
- Guatemala: Children working in the fireworks industry
- Guatemala: Child labour in gravel production
- Guatemala: Children working in the fireworks industry
- Haiti: Child domestic labour
- Mexico: Commercial sexual exploitation of children
- Nicaragua: Child scavengers

Regional sectoral projects: 13

- Child domestic labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama)
- Child domestic labour in four countries of South America (Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru)
- Child scavengers (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras)
- Coffee (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua)
- Combating the worst forms of child labour in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean (Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago)
- Commercial agriculture (Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua)
- Commercial sexual exploitation of children and child domestic labour (Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru)
- Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Central America and the Dominican Republic (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama)
- Commercial sexual exploitation of children in the triple border area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay
- Mining (Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru)
- Plan for the eradication of child labour in MERCOSUR and Chile (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile)
- The elimination of child labour in Latin America (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay)
- Urban informal sector (Uruguay and Colombia)