

Rural Migration News

Blog 271

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Child Labor and Agriculture

The ILO defines child labor as work that “deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.” The ILO notes that whether the work of children is “child labor” depends on the child’s age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which the work is performed. Hazardous child labor is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

The ILO estimated that 160 million children aged 5-17 were engaged in child labor in 2020, including 70 percent who were employed in agriculture. This means that almost 10 percent of the world’s 5-17 year olds were in child labor. Note that the ILO excludes from child labor under 18-year olds who baby sit, mow lawns, or engage in other casual work to earn pocket money.

Goods

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2005 requires the DOL’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) to maintain a list of goods that are produced with the help of child or forced labor in violation of international standards (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>)

Almost half of the goods produced with the help of child labor were agricultural commodities that ranged from coffee and sugarcane to cotton and tobacco. Some studies suggest that an expansion of export agriculture leads to more child labor in some developing countries.

The ILO reported that the Caribbean had the highest share of children who worked in Latin America, while the largest number of child workers were in South America. The Caribbean also stands out as the sub-region with a very high share of child workers who are 5 to 11 years old.

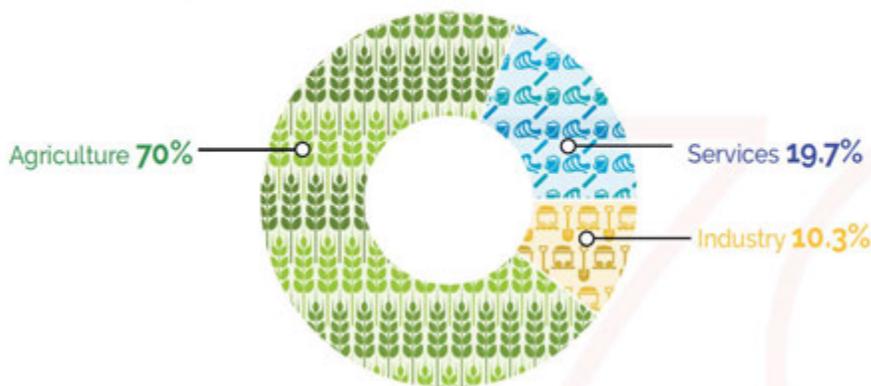
The 2020 list of goods produced with the help of child labor in Mexico includes several fresh vegetables. The ILAB report does not differentiate between fresh vegetables produced for the domestic and export markets.

Policies

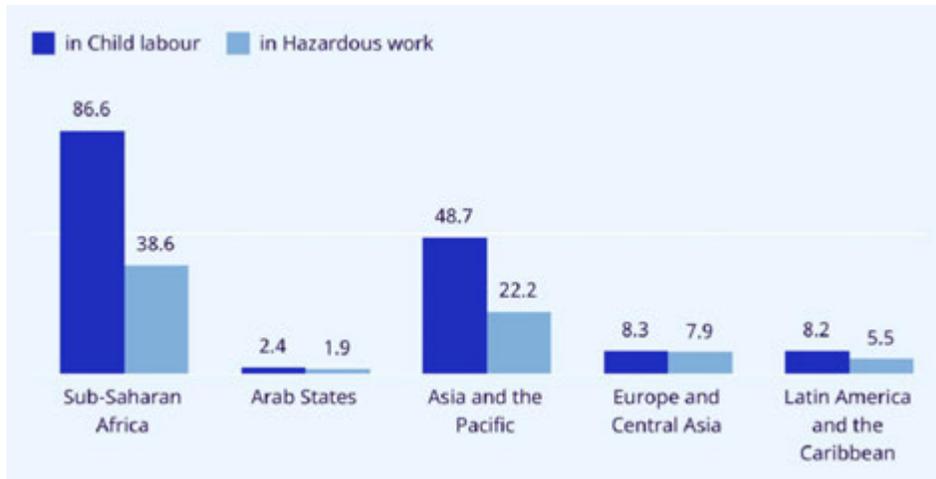
Reducing the employment of child labor involves the carrot of offering low-cost education and other services so that children do not have to work and the stick of enacting laws that prohibit child labor and enforcing them. Many national and international programs seek to reduce and eliminate child labor.

70% of the Estimated 160 Million 5–17 Year Old Child Workers were Employed in Agriculture in 2020

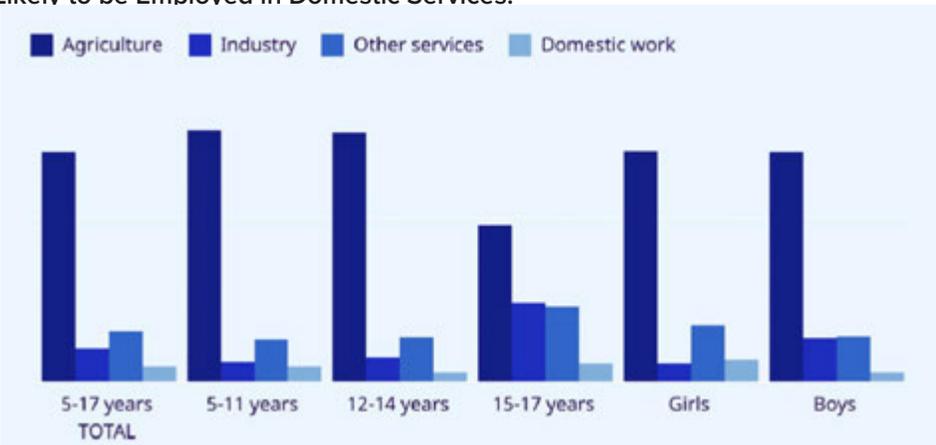
Where 160 million children work
Child Labor by Sector, 5-17 Years Old



Over Half of Child Workers were in Sub-Saharan Africa, Followed by a Third in Asia.



Boys are More Likely than Girls to be Employed in Agriculture, While Girls are More Likely to be Employed in Domestic Services.



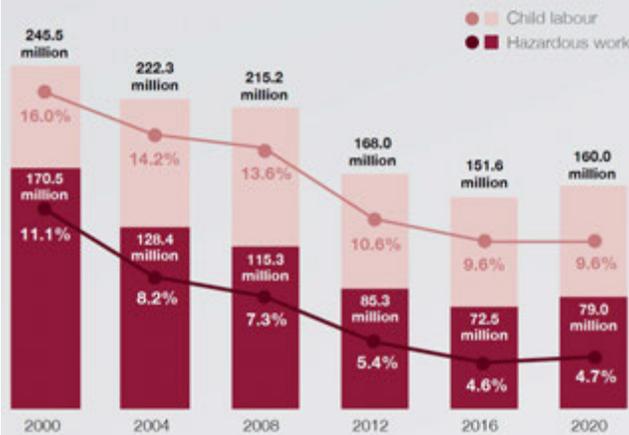
Cocoa is a Commodity Often Produced with the Help of Child Workers



Source: <https://globalmarch.org/accelerating-progress-in-ending-child-labour-in-africa/>

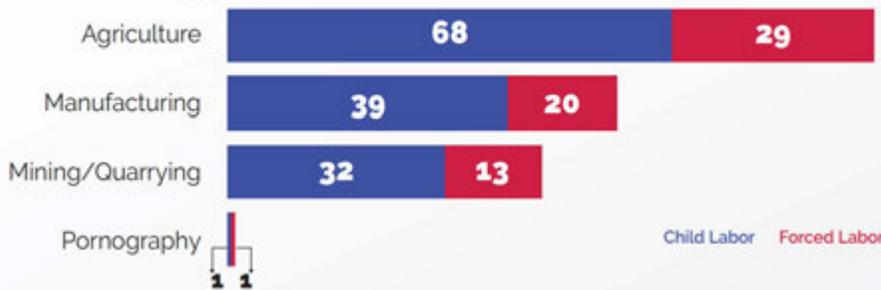
Between 2000 and 2016, the Number of Child Workers Declined, but Rose Between 2016 and 2020.

Percentage and number of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour and hazardous work



Agriculture had the Most Goods Produced with Child and Forced Labor in 2020

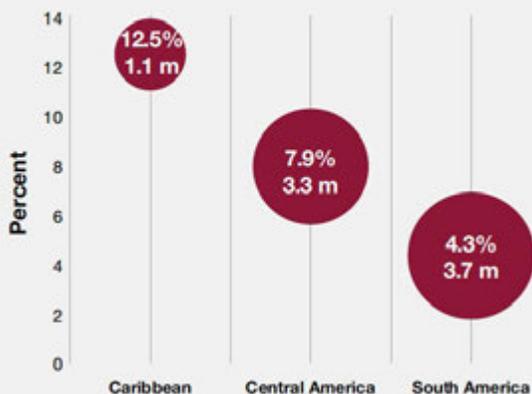
Number of Goods Produced Globally by Production Sector, Disaggregated by Child Labor and Forced Labor



Over 12% of Caribbean Children Work

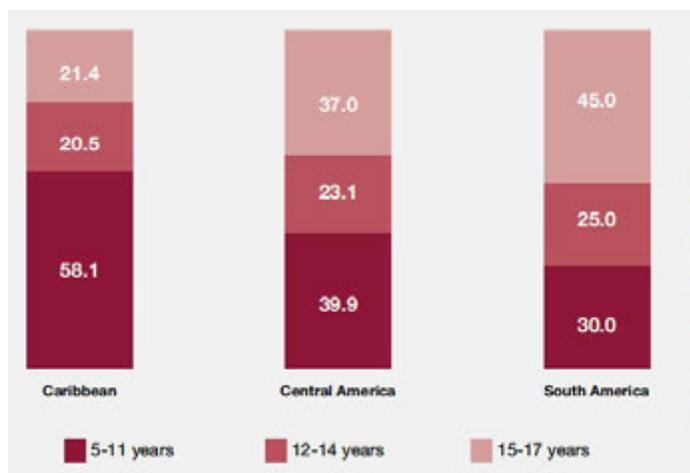
Intra-regional differences in child labour

Figure 5 (a) Percentage and number of children in child labour, by sub-region*



Note: (a) Circle size is proportional to number of children in child labour.

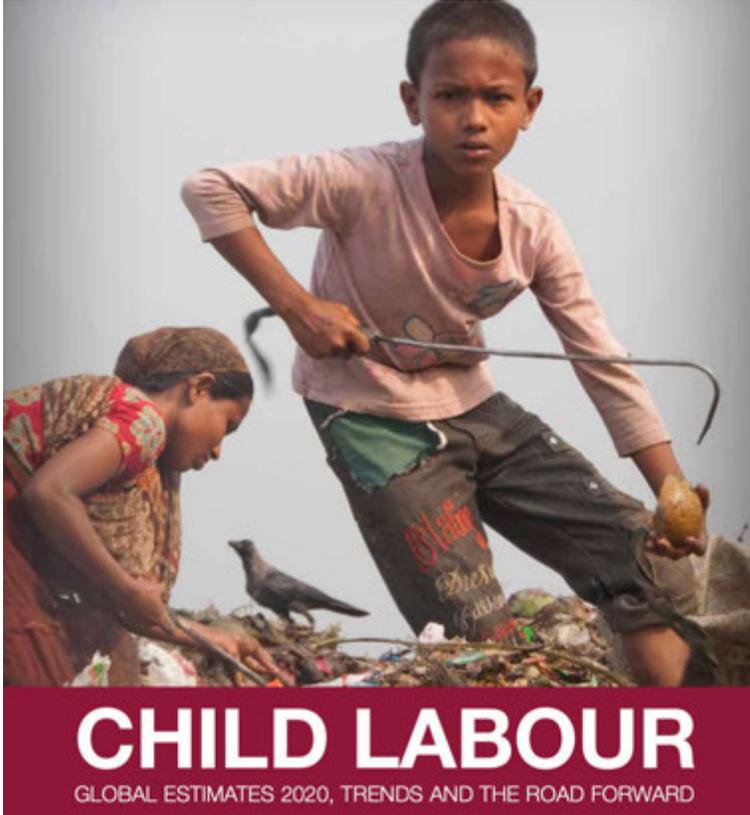
The Caribbean has the Highest Share of Very Young Child Workers



ILAB Identified Agricultural Commodities Produced with Child Labor in Mexico in 2020

COUNTRY/AREA	CHILD LABOR	FORCED LABOR	CHILD LABOR & FORCED LABOR
India	Bidis (hand-rolled cigarettes), Brassware, Cotton, Fireworks, Footwear, Gems, Glass Bangles, Incense (agarbatti), Leather Goods/Accessories, Locks, Matches, Mica, Silk Fabric, Silk Thread, Soccer Balls, Sugarcane, Thread/Yarn		Bricks, Carpets, Cottonseed (hybrid), Embellished Textiles, Garments, Rice, Sandstone, Stones
Indonesia	Footwear (sandals), Gold, Rubber, Tin, Tobacco		Fish, Oil (palm)
Iran	Bricks, Carpets		
Kazakhstan			Cotton
Kenya	Coffee, Fish, Gold, Khat/Miraa (stimulant plant), Rice, Sand, Sisal, Sugarcane, Tea, Tobacco		
Kyrgyz Republic	Cotton, Tobacco		
Lebanon	Potatoes, Tobacco		
Lesotho	Cattle		
Liberia	Diamonds, Rubber		
Madagascar	Mica, Sapphires, Stones, Vanilla		
Malawi	Tea		Tobacco
Malaysia		Electronics, Garments, Rubber Gloves	Oil (palm)
Mali	Cotton, Gold		Rice
Mauritania	Cattle, Goats		
Mexico	Beans (green beans), Cattle, Coffee, Cucumbers, Eggplants, Garments, Leather Goods, Melons, Onions, Poppies, Pornography, Sugarcane, Tobacco		Chile Peppers, Tomatoes

The ILO Plans its 5th Global Conference to Eliminate Child Labor in South Africa in May 2022



References

ILO. International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_797515.pdf

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