



AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILD LABOUR IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES



BRIEFING
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When addressing or wishing to address issues such as Child Labour to respond to this problem of global dimensions, it is important to consider several elements.

Child labour is a multi-causal phenomenon that is interrelated among issues and structural causes such as cultural aspects; traditions patterns; social beliefs and behaviours; poverty and social and economic exclusion that living of life conditions of families; aspects of the education system; violence gender and inequalities; all those strengthens the prevalence of child labour and makes more difficult to ended it. In recent years, other phenomena have emerged that aggravate conditions and put children and adolescents at greater risk, particularly when the dynamics and conditions of migration and forced displacement are inserted and when organised crime intervenes.

The latest global Study on Child labour¹ indicates that 160 million children are still engaged in **child labour**. That is almost one in ten children worldwide. Among the children 63 million were girls and 97 million were boys. Nearly the half **of working children 79 million were involved in hazardous work** that directly endangers their safety, development and health and access and enjoyment of rights.



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1 https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Informationresources/WCMS_797515/lang--en/index.htm

The sub-Saharan African region has the highest rate of child labour, with 24% of children employed as child labourers, a total of nearly 87million. Subsequently, Asia and the Pacific region has the second highest figure, where 48.7 million children still in child labour. The remaining child labour population is divided among the Americas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million)².

The global fight against child labour has stagnated since 2016 after a long period of decline. According to the Durban Call to Action (5th Global Conference on the elimination of Child Labour), there is concern about a visible increase between 2016 and 2020, highlighted that in that period, child labour increased by 8.9 million, entirely among children aged 5-11³, despite of the years before Covid of decreasing. The Durban call also stated that the recruitment of child soldiers continues.

One of three children are out of school. Likely 70% of children are working in the agriculture- 112 million children and adolescents are in agriculture including crop production, livestock, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture.⁴ Agriculture is also one of the most hazardous sectors for children and adolescents in terms of occupational diseases, non-fatal accidents, and work-related deaths.

There are agricultural sub-sectors:⁵



DEFINITIONS

When we talk about age definition of the child, it is important to bear in mind that a person under 18 years of age is defined as a minor and that, although the United Nations uses neutral language in the singular to define an important population, at the same time broad in quantity and diversity, using the term “child”.

From the regional, national and local levels and form the direct implementations, realities and contexts are considered and emphasis is placed on age and gender, diversity, indicating that under-age persons are girls, boys and adolescents or children and adolescents.

Responding to the ILO Convention 138 and its recommendation 146, the States established an admissible age for employment and differentiates child labour for persons under that age of 15 years old, and adolescent work allowed above that age, which is usually between 14 and 15 and minus 18 years old, but the minimum age varies according to the countries.

2 <https://www.simieducation.org/en/2024/06/12/lavoro-minorile-stime-e-tendenze-globali/>
 3 Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour (5th Global Conference).
 4 <https://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/child-labour/es/#c383844>
 5 <https://www.fao.org/rural-employment/agricultural-sub-sectors/en/>

Taken in consideration that adolescents are in an age of development of their capacities, it is usual to see in domestic legislation chapters of protection for adolescent workers who have the same labour rights as adults but requires a “special protection” because of their condition as a developing person and because they are underage persons who benefits from the comprehensive protection and social systems. This special protection regime defines which jobs are to be performed, what hours are to be worked and the conditions under which they are to be employed (hours, type, conditions and salary). What is clear, however, is that although an age for work is defined, the idea that adolescents should continue with their development process, their studies and have equal opportunities and accessible alternatives, services existing offers should continue to be promoted with no discrimination.

Other definitions are related to concepts, bearing in mind that we are talking about human rights and that in defining child labour we are talking about conditions that violate and infringe on human rights. In the same line of thought, the ILO defines child labour as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally hazardous and harmful to children; and that interferes with their schooling by: a) depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; b) forcing them to leave school prematurely; or, c) requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. In extreme forms, it can involve children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets at early age.

Child labour deprives children and adolescents of their childhood and adolescence, their potential and their dignity, is harmful for their physical and mental development. It does not allow access to, enjoyment of their human rights.

THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR

In the fisheries and aquaculture sector, children and adolescents are engaging in a wide variety of activities, both in capture fishing and aquaculture and in all associated down and upstream operations, for example, processing, marketing, net making and boatbuilding. Children also perform household chores in their fishing and fish-farming families and communities. Often these activities limit school attendance and cause damage to health.

There are fishing activities, particularly those linked to family subsistence work, small-scale fishing, or artisanal fishing, which are informal. It generally takes place in contexts of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. Being family work, it is very likely to be where the greatest participation of child and adolescent workers is concentrated. Globally, they represent more than 90% of the almost 55 million people in the primary sector of capture fisheries and aquaculture.⁶ Most of those involved operate on a small scale.⁷

6 Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, Sector characteristics and role in securing livelihoods, pag. 15, FAO and ILO 2013.

7 www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/en

The techniques used vary and depend on where the activities take place and the scale. Activities range from the production and sale of inputs (fishing gear, bait, aquaculture stocking material and feed), as well as capture fishing, fish farming and harvesting, fish processing, marketing, and distribution.⁸ Production takes place in and around inland marine waters, however, marketing and distribution can take place outside these areas of fish extraction.



Fishing communities are usually located in rural areas and have limited access to market information and infrastructure. It is often possible to note that there are large post-harvest losses of already reduced volumes because of inadequate handling and processing, lack of adequate storage facilities and distribution technologies⁹.

One of the main challenges is that fishing and aquaculture operations can be informal and small-scale but can also be highly organized and industrial in nature. Existing regulation does not reach or support the informality of the sector, leaving a large percentage of fishers and families without protection, control and support. Similarly, despite the efforts that have been developed and some successful experiences, the interventions that are carried out do not address all fronts to provide lasting responses and therefore fail to provide better living conditions for all individuals and families involved in this important sector.

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8 Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, Sector characteristics and role in securing livelihoods, pag. 15, FAO and ILO 2013.

9 <https://www.fao.org/rural-employment/agricultural-sub-sectors/fisheries-and-aquaculture/en/>

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