



Regional Initiative
Latin America and the Caribbean
Free of Child Labour



International
Labour
Organization

Latin America and the Caribbean:
**Towards the
first generation
FREE OF CHILD LABOUR**

.....
An integrated and interdependent analysis of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
in relation to target 8.7



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PART 1

**CHILD LABOUR,
AN UPDATED
ANALYSIS FOR
LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

1.2

PROGRESS TOWARD ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

In the past 20 years, with support from International Cooperation, the Latin American and Caribbean countries have generated a series of significant transformations to achieve a child-labour free region. However, [the latest estimates of the International Labour Organization \(ILO, 2013\)](#)¹⁰ show a worrying stagnation in reducing child labour and demonstrate that, at the current rate, neither the world nor the Latin American and the Caribbean region will be able to achieve the goals of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016 and all forms of child labour by 2020.

The progress made by countries in the region is the result of a process of taking ownership: countries have ratified the ILO Fundamental Conventions on the [minimum age for admission to employment \(No. 138\)](#) and the [elimination of the worst forms of child labour \(No. 182\)](#); and adopted the [Roadmap to Achieve the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016](#). All this has resulted in the creation of national committees, the design and implementation of specific national plans and strategies and the inclusion of various social actors (employers, unions and indigenous organizations), amongst other actions.

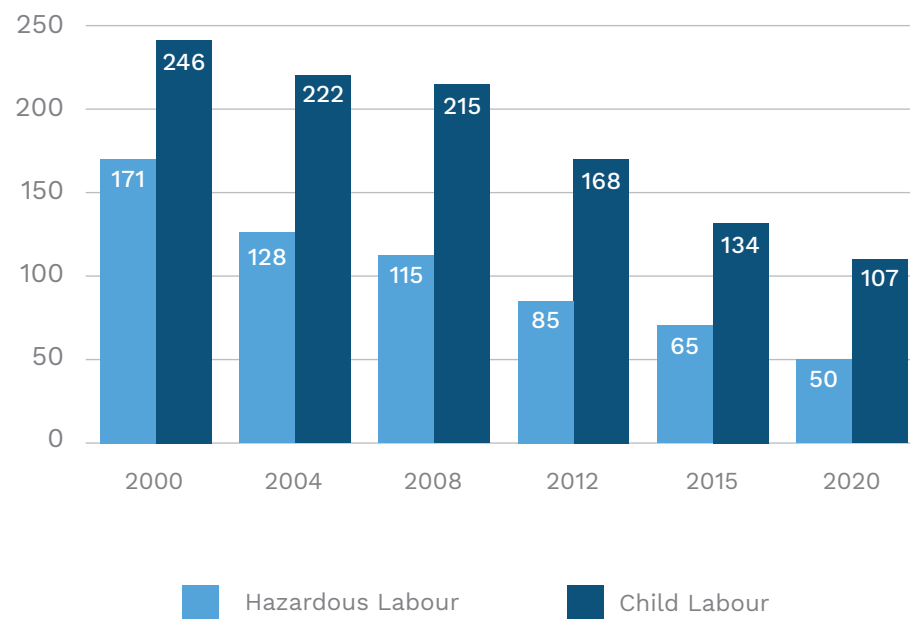
The joint working experiences developed by the countries within the framework of subregional integration systems are also significant such as: The Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as well as a long history of South-South cooperation.

¹⁰ ILO (2013).

The contribution of the ILO, through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), established in 1992, has been crucial. Over the last 20 years, countries of the region have relied on the technical and financial assistance of the Regional Project for Policy Development and the cooperation of Germany, Belgium, Canada, Spain, the United States, Ireland, Italy, Norway and the Netherlands, as well as the Inter-American Development Bank and, more recently, Brazil.

Between 2000 and 2012, child labour decreased by about one-third; meaning slightly more than 85 million children and adolescents have left hazardous work. However, more action is needed to address the problem if the world and the Latin America and Caribbean region are to reach the targets set.

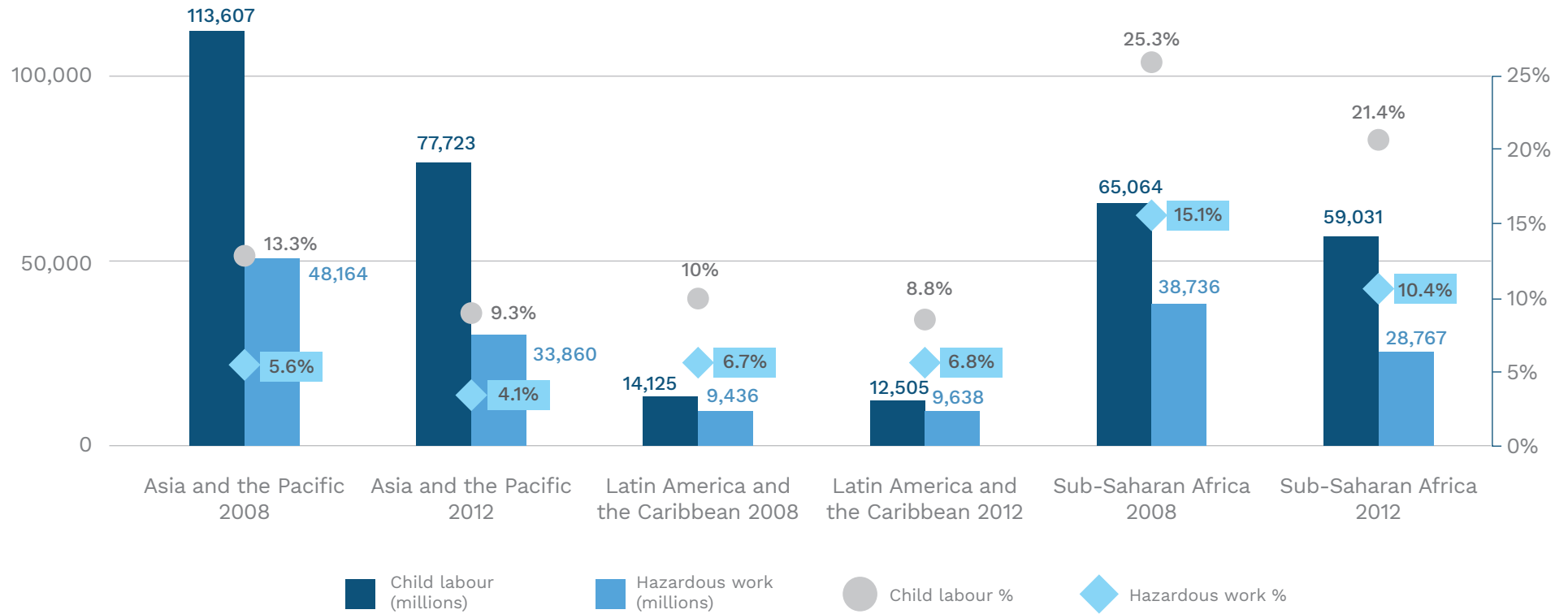
Figure 9
Number of children and adolescents aged 5 to 17
in child labour and hazardous work globally (in millions)
(current data for 2000-2012 and forecasts for 2016-2020,
based on the rate of progress during 2008-2012)



Source: ILO (2013).

Figure 10

Number of children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 in child labour and hazardous work by region (in millions) and as a percentage of the total child population (2008 and 2012)



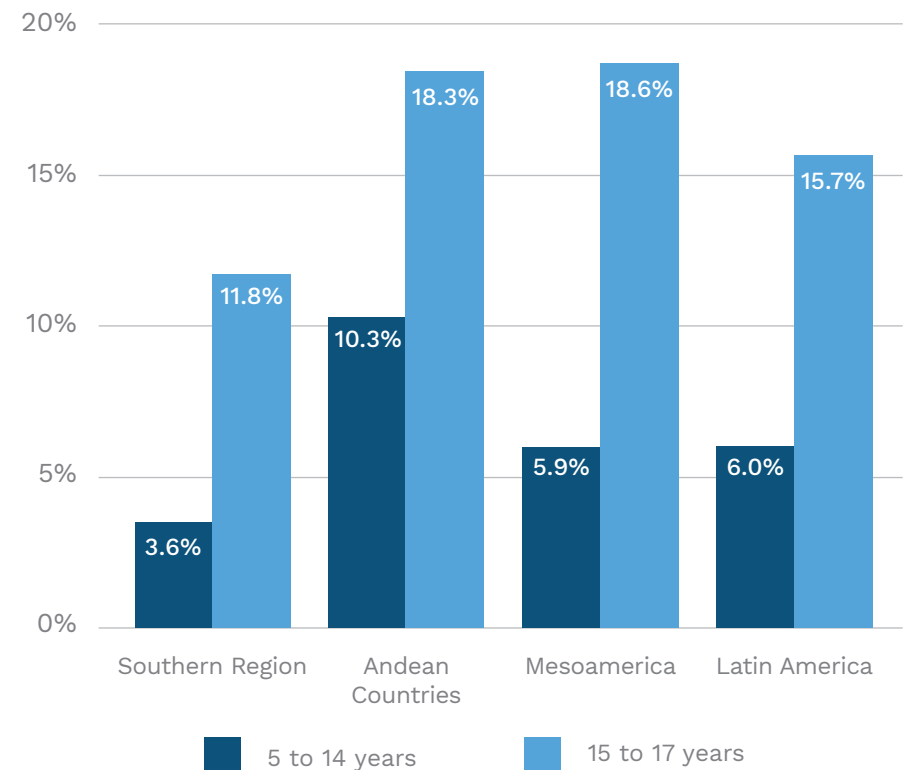
Source: Compiled by author based on ILO data (2013).

Within the region, there have been different progress rates regarding child labour reduction resulting in particular challenges. The Andean Subregion shows the highest rates, followed by Mesoamerica with similar incidences in the age group of 15-17 years and incidences close to the regional average in the age group of 5-14 years. The Southern Subregion shows the lowest incidences in the region for both age groups; however, given the international economic situation, possible setbacks should not be ruled out and efforts should be sustained in order to avoid a decline in the indicators.

In view of the above and the needed subregional, national and subnational variations, it is necessary to promote social and economic inclusion throughout the entire region, with emphasis on basic education quality, poverty reduction and social protection. At the same time the capacity of institutional players to design and implement public policies around these should be strengthened.

Figure 11

Children and adolescents in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean by subregions and age groups (as a percentage of the total child population in each subregion) (2008 and 2011)



Source: Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean free of child labour.

Although child labour occurs in different ways in each subregion and across countries, Latin America and the Caribbean has had a long tradition of coordinated regional work, based on social and economic integration, South-South cooperation and intra-regional policy dialogue processes. The countries decided to leverage this and created the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean free of child labour.

The Regional Initiative, developed within the framework of the [Third World Conference on Child Labour](#) reflects a commitment of the countries in the region to accelerate the pace of elimination of child labour. In turn, it represents an innovative tool for cooperation to consolidate and sustain the progress achieved so far, ensuring the full rights for all children and adolescents in the region.

Against a backdrop of recent economic growth and sustained poverty reduction, which contrasts with the continuation of child labour, the Regional Initiative proposes joint, innovative and urgent responses to the various critical ways in which child labour still exists in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is achieved through the active participation of the 27 member countries along with employers' and workers' organizations.

The Regional Initiative is based on the principles of ownership and alignment of evidence-based policies and aims to declare Latin America and the Caribbean as the first developing region in the world to be free of child labour. The Regional Initiative also aims to advance national efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda's target 8.7, which calls to end child labour in all its forms by 2025.¹¹

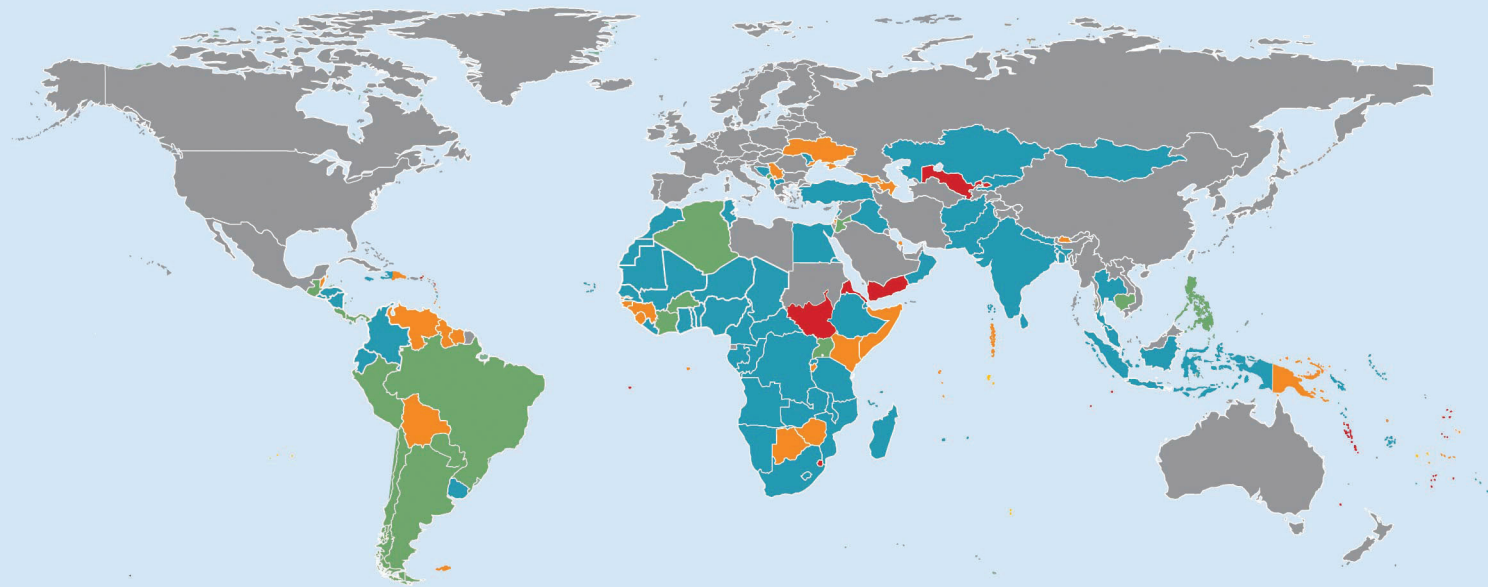
Latin America and the Caribbean is presently one of the developing regions with the best sustained results in child labour reduction in the world. The rate of progress and indicator levels attained in recent years show that the region is well poised to become the first child-labour free region in the developing world. However, beyond the commitment made, it is critically important to step up the scope, intensity, and effectiveness of the efforts in a strategic, systematic and sustained manner. All this has to be done during narrow fiscal times and in a difficult global economic environment.

This ongoing regional commitment has gained demonstrable effects and global recognition. The United States Department of Labor's [report 2015 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#), which classifies countries according to the extent to which they have advanced efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, included 8 countries from the Latin American and Caribbean region among the 16 worldwide countries that had made significant progress in this area.

¹¹ Both the 2030 Agenda and the target on the elimination of child labour will be discussed later.

Figure 12

Progress on elimination of the worst forms of child labour according to the Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2015



Significant advancement
 Moderate advancement
 Minimal advancement
 No advancement
 No assessment

Source: United States Department of Labor (2015).



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