



**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 3

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**DECENT WORK  
AND CHILD LABOUR  
PREVENTION AND  
ELIMINATION WITHIN  
THE FRAMEWORK OF  
THE 2030 AGENDA**

Given the many causes of child labour, multiple issues should be addressed in relation to its prevention and elimination. To achieve the target by 2025, it will be necessary, among other things, to reduce poverty, improve education, promote gender equity and implement social protection policies. Conversely, progress in reducing child labour will facilitate progress on each of these issues.

Given this relationship, this section analyzes target 8.7 (on ending child labour) within the broader framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, considering first its direct link with Goal 8 (on economic growth and the creation of decent work) of which it is part.

The section then goes on to analyze the links between the target to put an end to child labour and the other objectives through which direct links are identified from a thematic correlation analysis based on empirical evidence in each area. Each target identified as having a “direct effect” is considered to be an impact in the relationship between child labour and the goal that contains it, so that the total number of impacts on each target establishes an indicator of the degree of interdependence it has with child labour. The outcome of the analysis performed is illustrated in the following figure.

**Figure 17**

Interdependence of target 8.7 on ending child labour and other commitments adopted within the framework of the SDGs



By applying the described criteria, the analysis of the links between the target on ending child labour and the entire set of SDGs will focus on 8 goals and 35 specific targets, ordered by their degree of interdependence:

1. **SDG 4:** Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education
2. **SDG 5:** Achieve gender equality
3. **SDG 1:** End poverty
4. **SDG 10:** Reduce inequality
5. **SDG 2:** End hunger
6. **SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies
7. **SDG 3:** Ensure healthy lives
8. **SDG 13:** Combat climate change

Source: Author's elaboration.

## SDG 1: ENDING CHILD LABOUR IS A KEY PART OF REDUCING POVERTY

**SDG 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere

**Target 1.1** expresses the commitment to, “By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.”<sup>44</sup>

Lower-income countries have the highest rates of child labour, however child labour also reaches a very large number of children and adolescents in middle-income countries.



<sup>44</sup> At the beginning of October 2015, the global poverty baseline was updated by the World Bank and raised to US \$ 1.90 per day in Purchasing Power Parity terms. For more information on this change, see the World Bank report “[A global count of the extreme poor in 2012: data issues, methodology and initial results.](#)”

The relationship between child labour and poverty is one of interdependence: It is difficult for poor families to do without child labour to meet their basic subsistence needs. However, a group of authors challenges the theory that higher incomes account for less child labour, and propose that child labour is higher in poor families that have access to productive assets (such as land) than in poor families without such resources. They claim to have found that child labour seems to increase during periods of economic growth in households with access to productive assets.<sup>45</sup>

Naturally, while the first viewpoint may suggest that a change in household income that compensates for the resources accrued from child labour could support its elimination, the second viewpoint urges caution and calls for a more complex multifaceted approach.

Thus, the relationship between child labour and poverty is not obvious, although it is clear that there is a two-way relationship. Income poverty is an incentive to use child labour and perpetuates poverty, resulting in a vicious cycle that ties them together. By affecting the skill level of children and adolescents, when they enter the labour market as adults they will more likely accept poorly paid, unstable and unprotected work, condemning them to remain in poverty.<sup>46</sup>

There is also an understanding that both issues must be tackled together with a view to producing an effective and sustainable solution.

There are different ways of approaching what poverty entails. The United Nations has defined poverty as the “a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.”<sup>47</sup>

When poverty is understood as a multifaceted occurrence, this SDG has enormous importance and impact for children and adolescents, who account for 47 per cent of the world population living in extreme poverty.<sup>48</sup>

45 ILO (2015) (unpublished).

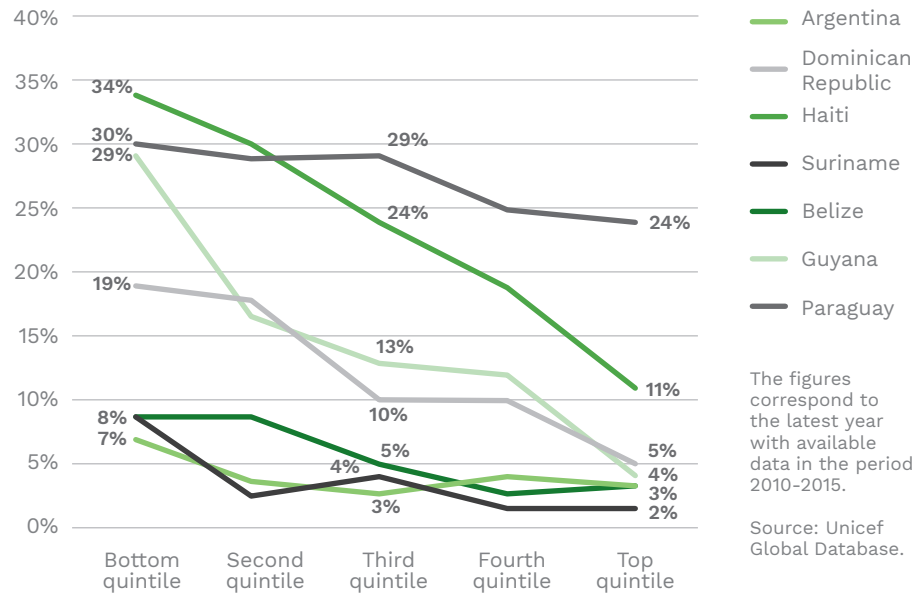
46 IPEC (2007), p. 13.

47 “Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”, joint statement adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/2001/10), 10 May 2001, § 8.

48 Unicef (2014).

**Figure 29**

Percentage of child labour by family income quintile for selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean



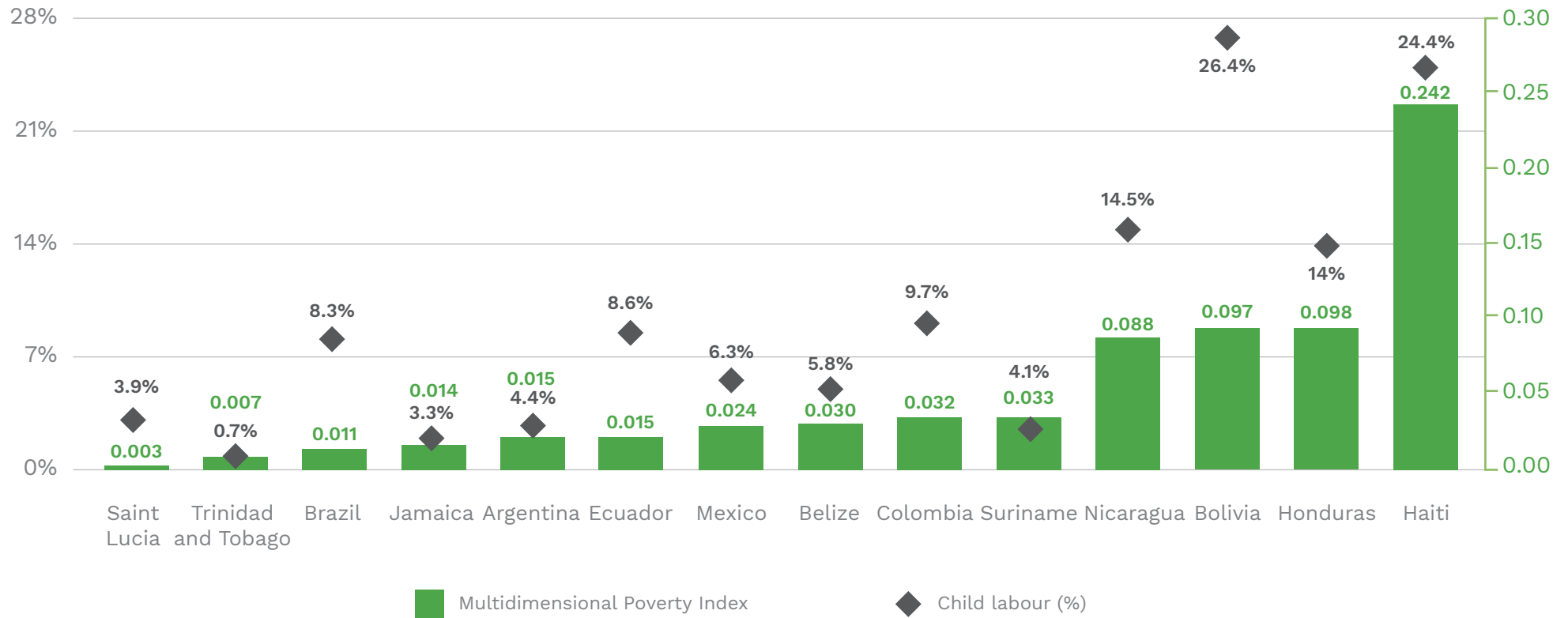
**Target 1.2** is even more demanding: “By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.”

Latin America and the Caribbean exhibit a strong correlation between the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) and national child labour rates. It should be noted that, except for the particular case of Brazil where social policies in the last decade have produced a reduction of the MPI, the countries with the lower correlation are the Andean countries, where there is a greater presence of indigenous peoples. In these countries the use of child labour within family settings has a particular cultural perception.<sup>49</sup>

49 García Hierro (2010).



**Figure 30**  
 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and percentage of children and adolescents  
 in child labour for selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Compiled by author using data from the Unicef Global Database and UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2014).

**Target 1.3** calls on all States to “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.”

Data and experience show that there are two particularly important pillars of policy in combating child labour: education and social protection.<sup>50</sup> Putting in place social protection systems is key to tackling child poverty and reducing incentives for child labour, especially its worst forms. Advancing child-sensitive social protection measures reduces the depth of poverty and increases the possibilities of this reduction being sustainable.<sup>51</sup> However, it is estimated that currently only 20 per cent of the working-age population has effective access to social protection systems<sup>52</sup>.

Social protection mitigates the vulnerabilities of households thus contributing to breaking the vicious cycle of child labour. For this reason, efforts towards eliminating child labour have little prospect of being sustainable in the absence of “a social protection floor that can preserve vulnerable households and enable them to seize opportunities and break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty.”<sup>53</sup>

Child labour must be considered as a particular variable during policy design, implementation and monitoring in order for social protection to achieve maximum impact on reducing it. These must be based on sufficient, available and empirically contrasted information together with a multidimensional approach to addressing the economic vulnerabilities that encourage child labour.

In Latin America and the Caribbean there has been significant progress in social policy, with a sustained effort to increase the coverage of social protection, which is associated with progress in reducing child labour in the region.

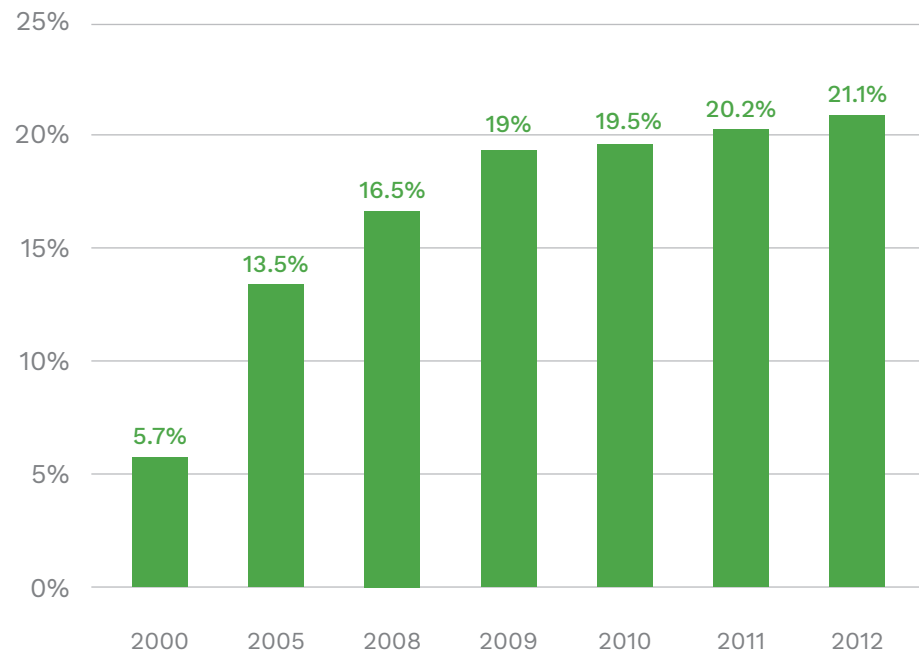
50 IPEC (2015), p. xxv.

51 Unicef (2012).

52 ILO (2013), p. 7.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

**Figure 31**  
Percentage of conditional cash transfer beneficiaries  
in Latin America and the Caribbean



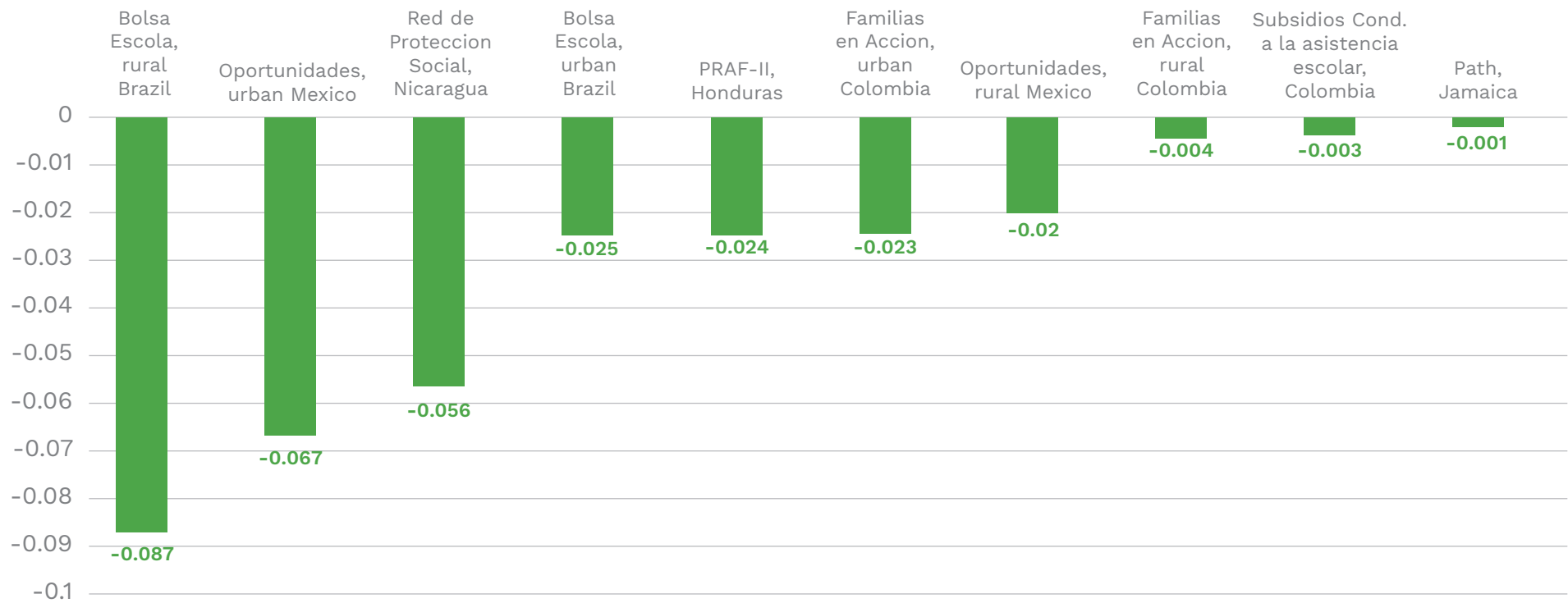
Source: Filgueira and Espíndola (2015).

Cash transfers are an increasingly important part of social protection floors in several Latin American and Caribbean countries and are already an important means of guaranteeing basic income security. Some cash transfer programmes operating in the region include the express purpose of reducing child labour, and “although the results vary across countries, impact assessments of those programmes show that they have succeeded in reducing both the prevalence of child labour among boys and girls, and the number of hours worked, in both paid and unpaid activities.”<sup>54</sup>

Conditional cash transfer programmes invest in human capacity-building in children and young people’s education, nutrition and health. The aim of the programmes is to prevent children dropping out of school and avoid children lagging behind thus preventing them from entering the labour market prematurely. Women hold an important role to ensure the effectiveness of these programmes. These programmes are only viable when there are proper educational and health services in place. (Serrano, 2005)

<sup>54</sup> ECLAC (2015), p. 136.

**Figure 32**  
 Conditional cash transfer programmes and reduction of child labour prevalence  
 (selected programmes in Latin American and Caribbean countries)



Source: De Hoop and Rosati (2014).

Social protection should be increased not as a substitute for, but as a complement to policies aimed at creating decent work for young people. This will bring cohesion to the efforts to achieving Goal 8 and the sustainability of development.<sup>55</sup>

**Targets 1.4** and **1.5** refer to equal rights of access to economic resources and basic services and to the reduction of the exposure of the poor and vulnerable to climatic, environmental, economic, social and economic shocks and disasters. Both gender discrimination and vulnerability to crises are factors that lead to the emergence of child labour.

<sup>55</sup> For a full analysis of the potential of social protection programmes in combating child labour, see also the [World Report on Child Labour \(2013\)](#), particularly chapters 4 and 5 dedicated to the analysis of economic vulnerability, social protection and child labour.



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