

# Global Estimates of Child Labour



**ALLIANCE**



## **RESULTS AND TRENDS, 2012-2016**



International  
Labour  
Office



Global estimates of  
child labour:  
Results and trends,  
2012-2016

**GENEVA, 2017**

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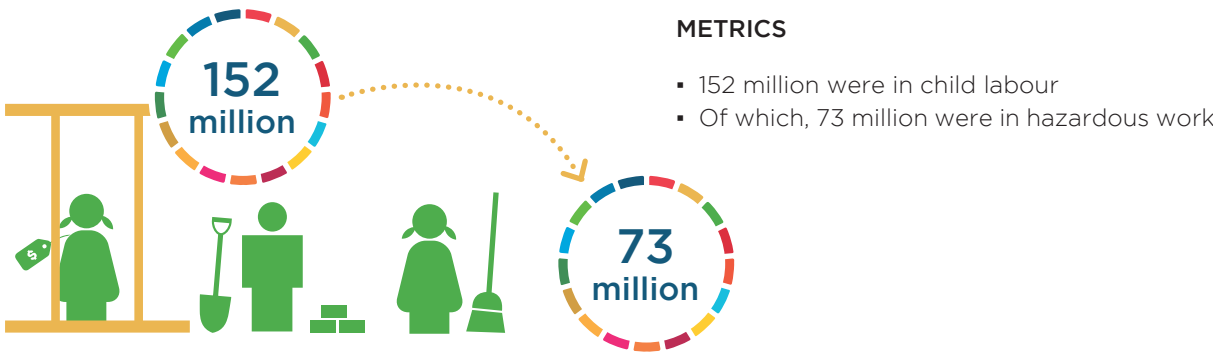
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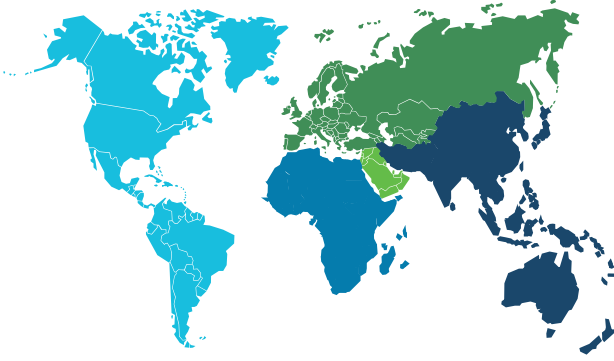
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# On any given day in 2016 children aged 5-17 years



## REGIONAL PREVALENCE OF CHILD LABOUR

Africa	19.6%
Americas	5.3%
Arab States	2.9%
Asia and the Pacific	7.4%
Europe and Central Asia	4.1%

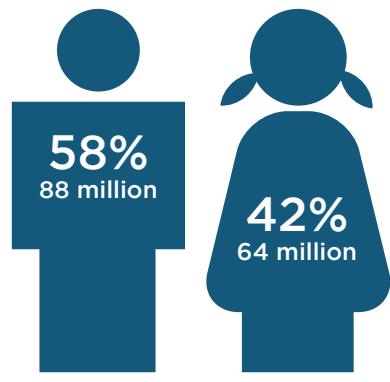


## OF THE 152 MILLION CHILDREN IN CHILD LABOUR

### AGE PROFILE



### GENDER



### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY





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Table 1

## Global estimates results at a glance

		Children in employment		Of which: Children in child labour		Of which: Children in hazardous work		
		2012	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016	
<b>World (5-17 years)</b>	Number (000s)	264 427	<b>218 019</b>	167 956	<b>151 622</b>	85 344	<b>72 525</b>	
	Prevalence (%)	16.7	<b>13.8</b>	10.6	<b>9.6</b>	5.4	<b>4.6</b>	
<b>Age range</b>	5-14 years	Number (000s)	144 066	<b>130 364</b>	120 453	<b>114 472</b>	37 841	<b>35 376</b>
		Prevalence (%)	11.8	<b>10.6</b>	9.9	<b>9.3</b>	3.1	<b>2.9</b>
	15-17 years	Number (000s)	120 362	<b>87 655</b>	47 503	<b>37 149</b>	47 503	<b>37 149</b>
		Prevalence (%)	33.0	<b>24.9</b>	13.0	<b>10.5</b>	13.0	<b>10.5</b>
<b>Sex (5-17 years)</b>	Male	Number (000s)	148 327	<b>123 190</b>	99 766	<b>87 521</b>	55 048	<b>44 774</b>
		Prevalence (%)	18.1	<b>15.0</b>	12.2	<b>10.7</b>	6.7	<b>5.5</b>
	Female	Number (000s)	116 100	<b>94 829</b>	68 190	<b>64 100</b>	30 296	<b>27 751</b>
		Prevalence (%)	15.2	<b>12.4</b>	8.9	<b>8.4</b>	4.0	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Region (5-17 years)</b>	Africa	Number (000s)	--	<b>99 417</b>	--	<b>72 113</b>	--	<b>31 538</b>
		Prevalence (%)	--	<b>27.1</b>	--	<b>19.6</b>	--	<b>8.6</b>
	Americas	Number (000s)	--	<b>17 725</b>	--	<b>10 735</b>	--	<b>6 553</b>
		Prevalence (%)	--	<b>8.8</b>	--	<b>5.3</b>	--	<b>3.2</b>
	Asia and the Pacific	Number (000s)	129 358	<b>90 236</b>	77 723	<b>62 077</b>	33 860	<b>28 469</b>
		Prevalence (%)	15.5	<b>10.7</b>	9.3	<b>7.4</b>	4.1	<b>3.4</b>
	Europe and Central Asia	Number (000s)	--	<b>8 773</b>	--	<b>5 534</b>	--	<b>5 349</b>
		Prevalence (%)	--	<b>6.5</b>	--	<b>4.1</b>	--	<b>4.0</b>
Arab States	Number (000s)	--	<b>1 868</b>	--	<b>1 162</b>	--	<b>616</b>	
	Prevalence (%)	--	<b>4.6</b>	--	<b>2.9</b>	--	<b>1.5</b>	



# Executive summary

The Sustainable Development Goals include a renewed global commitment to ending child labour. Specifically, target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on the global community to:

*Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.*

The current report, the fifth edition of the ILO's quadrennial report series on global estimates of child labour, charts how far we have come and how far we still have to go to honour this commitment to ending child labour. The report describes the scale and key characteristics of child labour in the world today, as well as changes in the global child labour situation over time. It also discusses key policy priorities in the campaign to reach the 2025 target. The report, and the global estimation exercise that underpins it, form part of a broader inter-agency effort under Alliance 8.7 to measure and monitor progress towards target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2016 estimates tell a story both of real progress and of a job unfinished. They show a dramatic decline in child labour over the 16 years since the ILO began monitoring child labour in 2000. But the estimates also indicate that the pace of decline has slowed considerably in the last four years, precisely at a time when substantial acceleration is needed to reach the ambitious 2025 target date

for ending child labour. The bottom line is that we remain far from the world we want: 152 million children are still engaged in child labour, almost half them in its worst forms.

## Global figures

**The challenge of ending child labour remains formidable.** A total of 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide. Nearly half of all those in child labour – 73 million children in absolute terms – are in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety, and moral development. Children in employment, a broader measure comprising both child labour and permitted forms of employment involving children of legal working age, number 218 million.

**The dynamic picture indicates that we are moving in the right direction.** Child labour declined during the period from 2012 to 2016, continuing a trend seen since the publication of the ILO's first global estimates of child labour in 2000. The 16-year period starting in 2000 saw a net reduction of 94 million in children in child labour. The number of children in hazardous work fell by more than half over the same period. There were almost 134 million fewer children in employment in 2016 than in 2000. Real advances have been made in the fight against child labour, providing an important foundation for efforts moving forward.

**But progress slowed during 2012 to 2016.** A narrower focus on the most recent four-year period indicates a significant slowing down of progress. The reduction in the number of children in child labour amounted to 16 million for the 2012 to 2016 period, just one third of the 47 million reduction recorded during 2008 to 2012. Expressed in relative terms, the share of children in child labour fell by only one percentage point during 2012 to 2016 compared to three percentage points in the previous four-year period. The decline in hazardous work slowed in a similar fashion.

**We must move much faster if we are to honour our commitment to ending child labour in all its forms by 2025.** A simple projection of future progress based on the pace of progress achieved during 2012 to 2016 – the business-as-usual scenario – would leave 121 million children still in child labour in 2025, of which 52 million would be in hazardous work. A similar calculation indicates that even maintaining the pace achieved during 2008 to 2012 – the fastest recorded to date – would not be nearly enough. We are moving in the right direction, but we will need to move much more quickly to reach zero by 2025.

## Regional figures

**The Africa region and the Asia and the Pacific region together host nine out of every ten children in child labour.** Africa ranks highest both in the percentage of children in child labour – one-fifth – and the absolute number of children in child labour – 72 million. Asia and the Pacific ranks second highest in both these measures – 7 per cent of all children, 62 million in absolute terms, are in child labour in this region. The remaining child labour population is divided among the Americas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million).

**A breakthrough in Africa will be critical to ending child labour worldwide.** The 2016 estimates suggest that *sub-Saharan* Africa, the regional grouping for which

we have comparable estimates for 2012, witnessed a rise in child labour during the 2012 to 2016 period, in contrast to the other major regions where child labour continued to decline, and despite the number of targeted policies implemented by African governments to combat child labour. It is likely that the retrogression was driven in important part by broader economic and demographic forces acting against governmental efforts, although this is a matter requiring further research.

**There is a strong correlation between child labour and situations of conflict and disaster.** The Africa region has also been among those most affected by situations of conflict and disaster, which in turn heighten the risk of child labour. The incidence of child labour in countries affected by armed conflict is 77 per cent higher than the global average, while the incidence of hazardous work is 50 per cent higher in countries affected by armed conflict than in the world as a whole. This situation underscores the importance of prioritizing child labour within humanitarian responses and during reconstruction and recovery; governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and humanitarian actors all have a critical role to play in this context.

## Characteristics of child labour

**The agricultural sector accounts for by far the largest share of child labour.** The sector accounts for 71 per cent of all those in child labour and for 108 million children in absolute terms. Child labour in agriculture relates primarily to subsistence and commercial farming and livestock herding. It is often hazardous in its nature and in the circumstances in which it is carried out. Children in child labour in the services and industry sectors number 26 million and 18 million, respectively, but these sectors are likely to become more relevant in some regions in the future in the face of forces such as climate change displacing families from their farms and into cities.

**Most child labour takes place within the family unit.** More than two-thirds of all children in child labour work as contributing family labourers, while paid employment and own-account workers make up 27 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, of those in child labour. These numbers underscore an important broader point concerning the nature of child labour in the world today. Most children in child labour are *not* in an employment relationship with a third-party employer, but rather work on family farms and in family enterprises; understanding and addressing family reliance on children's labour will therefore be critical to broader progress towards ending child labour.

**Forced labour of children requires special attention.** According to the 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery,<sup>1</sup> there were about 4.3 million children aged below 18 years in forced labour, representing 18 per cent of the 24.8 million total forced labour victims worldwide. This estimate includes 1.0 million children in commercial sexual exploitation, 3.0 million children in forced labour for other forms of labour exploitation, and 300,000 children in forced labour imposed by state authorities. This extreme form of child labour, in which the children suffer both the impact of the hazardous working conditions *and* the trauma of coercion, threats of penalty, and lack of freedom, require urgent action from governments and the international community.

## Other key results

### CHILD LABOUR AND NATIONAL INCOME

**Child labour is most prevalent in low-income countries but it is by no means only a low-income country problem.** The prevalence of child labour is highest in the low-income countries, at 19 per cent. By comparison, 9 per cent of children in lower-middle-income countries, 7 per cent of children in upper-middle-income countries, and 1 per cent of children in upper-income countries are in child labour. But expressed

in absolute terms, 84 million children in child labour, accounting for 56 per cent of all those in child labour, actually live in middle-income countries, and an additional 2 million live in high-income countries. These statistics make clear that while poorer countries will require special attention, the fight against child labour will not be won by focusing on poorer countries alone.

### AGE PROFILE OF CHILD LABOUR

**Children aged 5 to 11 years form the largest share of those in child labour and also form a substantial share of those in hazardous work.** Forty-eight per cent of all those in child labour are in the 5-11 years age bracket, 28 per cent are aged 12-14 years, and 25 per cent fall into the 15-17 years age range. Younger children constitute a smaller but still substantial share of total children in hazardous work. A quarter of all children in the hazardous work group - 19 million children in absolute terms - are aged 5-11 years. While there are no possible exceptions for hazardous work - *all* children must be protected from hazardous child labour - the group of very young children facing hazardous work conditions directly endangering their health, safety, and moral development is of special concern.

**There are still substantial numbers of children in child labour who are above the minimum working age.** Recent progress has been fastest among children aged 15-17 years, but there are almost 38 million children - 24 million boys and 14 million girls - in this age range in child labour. It should be recalled that 15-17 year-olds are above the minimum working age and therefore are *not* counted as child labourers because they are too young. Rather, they are in child labour because their work is or may be physically or psychologically injurious to their health and well-being. This basic fact is reinforced by country-level statistics indicating that 15-17 year-olds in child labour suffer higher levels of work-related illness and injury than other employed children in this age range. They are also more likely than other employed 15-17 year-olds to have dropped out of school prematurely.

## GENDER PROFILE OF CHILD LABOUR

**Boys appear to face a greater risk of child labour than girls.** There are 23 million more boys than girls in child labour and 17 million more boys than girls in hazardous work. The gender gap increases with age. The difference in child labour incidence is less than one percentage point for 5–11 year-olds, rising to three percentage points for 12–14 year-olds and to five percentage points for 15–17 year-olds. But it is possible that these figures understate girls' work relative to that of boys. As pointed out in previous global reports, girls may be more present in less visible and therefore under-reported forms of child labour such as domestic service in private households. It is also worth noting that the decline in child labour among girls was only half that among boys during the 2012 to 2016 period, meaning that the gender gap in child labour has narrowed.

**Girls are much more likely than boys to shoulder responsibility for household chores, a form of work not considered in the child labour estimates.** Estimates of children's involvement in household chores, produced for the first time for the 2016 Global Estimates, indicates girls are much more likely than boys to perform household chores in every weekly hour bracket. Girls account for two-thirds of the 54 million children aged 5–14 years who perform household chores for at least 21 hours per week, the threshold beyond which initial research suggests household chores begin to negatively impact on the ability of children to attend and benefit from school. Girls account for a similar share of the 29 million children aged 5–14 years performing chores beyond a threshold of 28 hours per week, and of the nearly 7 million performing chores for 43 or more hours each week. Girls are also more likely than boys to perform “double work duty”, meaning both work in employment and in household chores.

## CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION

**Child labour is frequently associated with educational marginalization.** The 2016 Global Estimates are also the first to

address the relationship between schooling and child labour, in turn one of the most important determinants of the impact of child labour on decent work and sustainable livelihood prospects later in the life cycle. The estimates indicate that a very large number of children in child labour are completely deprived of education – for the 5–14 years age group, there are 36 million children in child labour who are out of school, 32 per cent of all those in child labour in this age range. While the remaining 68 per cent are able to attend school, a growing body of research suggests that these children too are penalized educationally for their involvement in child labour. The time and energy required by work interfere with children's ability to derive educational benefit from their time in the classroom and to find time outside the classroom for independent study. As a result, children in child labour tend to perform relatively poorly in terms of learning achievement and to lag behind their non-working peers in terms of grade progression.

## Data sources and methodology

The 2016 estimates use data from a total of 105 national household surveys covering more than 70 per cent of the world population of children aged 5 to 17 years. All world regions are covered, and data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and China are included for the first time. The ILO gratefully acknowledges the contributions of numerous national statistical offices, and of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the demographic and health surveys programme of United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) in facilitating access to the data utilised. The United States Department of Labor provided important financial support to the ILO's statistical work on child labour. The 2016 estimates are based on the extrapolation of data from the surveys following a

similar methodology as that used for the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 estimates. The methodology and data used in producing the 2016 Global Estimates are summarized in Appendix 1 of this report and are discussed in greater detail in the companion technical paper: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*.

## Conclusions and way forward

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be by 2025? Thanks to a growing body of practical experience, research, and impact evaluations, we know a fair deal about the broad strategies and policies that are of most relevance in the fight against child labour.

**Policy responses to child labour need to be integrated into broader national development efforts and adapted to local circumstances.** We know that child labour is the product of an array of economic and social forces, and attempting to address it without consideration of these forces is therefore unlikely to be successful. This means, above all, mainstreaming child labour into broader social development policies, rather than treating it as an isolated issue. Ensuring that child labour concerns are reflected in broader policies in the areas of education, social protection, labour markets and labour standards is especially relevant to progress against child labour. We also know from experience that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing child labour. Rather, strategic responses need to be tailored to the variety of contexts in which child labour persists. This includes contexts of state fragility and armed conflict, where a large share of children in child labour live. It also includes contexts affected by forces such as climate change, economic informality, urbanization, and globalization, each of which presents special challenges in terms of protecting children from child labour.

**Policy responses should also address the age, gender and regional dimensions of child labour.** Just under half of all those in child labour are below 12 years of age and continued attention to these especially vulnerable children is therefore essential, particularly in light of the apparent stagnation in progress for this group over the last four years. Renewed attention must also be paid to 15–17 year-olds in child labour. This group is relevant to the fields of child labour, youth employment, and occupational safety and health, but has hitherto rarely been accorded priority in any of them. This must change. Differences between boys and girls in terms of the extent and nature of their involvement in child labour underscore the continuing relevance of policy measures that address the role of gender in determining whether children are sent to work and the risks they face once there. The results indicating that girls shoulder disproportionate responsibility for household chores also raise important gender concerns that merit consideration in child labour policies. In regional terms, Africa, where child labour is highest in both proportionate and absolute terms, and where progress has stalled, remains a particular priority.

**Continued investment in building the knowledge base on child labour is needed to inform policy responses.** There is an ongoing need for information about the *impact* of policies and interventions on child labour. With the exception of cash transfers, still too little is known about the effectiveness of interventions in policy areas of relevance to child labour, which, in turn, is impeding policy development. There is a general need for more knowledge of the implications for child labour of broader global challenges, including climate change, migration, inequality, urbanization, and changes in the world of work. We also need to know more about how child labour is linked to other violations of fundamental labour rights. The effective targeting of policies will require better information on children in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, building on the research and methodological work already undertaken by the ILO and other bodies.

**International cooperation and partnership will also be critical to progress.**

Alliance 8.7 has a key role to play in supporting governments in efforts towards ending child labour by the 2025 target date. The Alliance focuses on accelerating action, conducting research and sharing knowledge, driving innovation, and increasing and leveraging resources. It brings together all actors, including the critically important social partners – workers’ and employers’ organizations – as well as civil society organizations. In many countries, the cost of required action far exceeds available government resources, meaning that international resource mobilization will also be imperative to success against child labour, within the spirit of Article 8 of ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The returns on the investment in ending child labour are incalculable. Children who are free from the burden of child labour are able to fully realize their rights to education, leisure, and healthy development, in turn providing the essential foundation for broader social and economic development, poverty eradication, and human rights.







# Introduction

Some things are just wrong. Child labour is a brake on sustainable development and anathema to just societies, and its eradication must be pursued with utmost determination. The eradication of child labour is a matter of human rights, with an institutional umbrella provided by two fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), as well as by the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. These Conventions emphasize that freedom from child labour is a human right and that the elimination of child labour is a universal and fundamental value.

The 2016 Global Estimates present the scale, prevalence, and key characteristics of child labour in the world today. Child labour remains endemic and its elimination requires both economic and social reform as well as the active cooperation of all those active cooperation of governments, workers' and employers' organizations, enterprises, international organizations, and civil society at large.

In response to persistent and emerging development challenges, the global community adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This "2030 Agenda" is a comprehensive, far-reaching, and people-centred set of 17 interrelated goals and 169 associated targets to guide global development efforts over the coming 13 years. The Sustainable Development Goals include a renewed global commitment to ending child labour. Specifically, target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on the global community to:

*Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the*

*prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.*

The current report, the fifth edition of the ILO's quadrennial report series on global estimates of child labour, charts how far we have come and how far we still have to go to honour this commitment to ending child labour. The report describes the scale and key characteristics of child labour in the world today, as well as changes in the global child labour situation over time. It also discusses key policy priorities in the campaign to reach the 2025 target. The report, and the global estimation exercise that underpins it, forms part of a broader inter-agency effort under Alliance 8.7 (see next section) to measure and monitor progress towards target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As for those produced for 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012, the 2016 estimates are based on the extrapolation of data from national household surveys. The new estimates use data from a total of 105 surveys covering more than 70 per cent of the world population of children aged 5 to 17 years. All world regions are covered, and data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and China are included for the first time. The ILO gratefully acknowledges the contributions of numerous national statistical offices, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) programme of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) in facilitating access to the data used to produce the global estimates. The US Department of Labor provided important financial support to the ILO's statistical work on child labour.

Thanks to more and richer data from national household surveys and ongoing refinements in estimation methods, the child labour profile emerging from the 2016 estimates is the most detailed to date. In addition to expanded geographical coverage, these latest estimates break new ground in providing the first global estimates of children's involvement in household chores and of the relationship between child labour and schooling. The methodology and data used in producing the global estimates are summarized in Annex 1 of this report and are discussed in greater detail in the companion technical paper: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*.<sup>2</sup>

A mixed picture emerges from the latest global estimates. Child labour has continued to fall but the pace of decline has slowed considerably in the past four years. A simple projection based on the pace of past progress suggests we are moving much too slowly to end child labour by the 2025 target date. Progress has slowed most notably for younger children and girls in child labour, groups that are especially vulnerable. Progress has also failed to extend equally across regions; Africa in particular has fallen further behind. The bottom line is that

we remain far from the world we want: 152 million children are still engaged in child labour, almost half them in its worst forms.

It is hoped that the findings presented in the report, besides alerting all actors to the extent of child labour in the world today, will also help inform efforts towards ensuring that the obligations to our children enshrined in international and national law are met, and that children are fully able to realise and exercise their rights.

### THE REPORT IS STRUCTURED AS FOLLOWS:

Part 1 presents the main results of the global estimates on child labour and reviews trends. It reports levels and changes in child labour by region, age, sex, and national income levels. It also addresses the characteristics of child labour and the extent to which children in child labour are able to attend school. For the first time, the profile has been extended to include household chores and the amount of time children dedicate to them.

Part 2 discusses the road forward. It looks at key overall priorities in ending child labour and the main areas of policy focus for addressing them.

## Panel 1

### Statistical concepts and definitions used in this report

Three main international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ILO Convention Nos 138 and 182 – together set the legal boundaries for child labour and provide the legal grounds for national and international actions against it. Resolution II concerning statistics of child labour approved at the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)

in 2008 translates these legal standards into statistical terms for the purpose of child labour measurement.<sup>(a)</sup> The statistical concepts and definitions used in this report are consistent with this ICLS resolution.

- *Children in employment* are those working in any form of market production and certain types of non-market production (principally, the production of goods

such as agricultural produce for own use). This group includes children in forms of work in both the formal and informal economy; inside and outside family settings; for pay or profit (in cash or in kind, part-time or full-time); and domestic work outside the child's own household for an employer (paid or unpaid).

- *Children in child labour* is a narrower category than

children in employment. It *excludes* children in employment who are in permitted light work and those above the minimum age whose work is not classified as a worst form of child labour, or, in particular, as “hazardous work”.

- *Children in the worst forms of child labour* are those in the categories of child labour set out in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182. These categories comprise: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.
- *Children in hazardous work* are those involved in any activity or occupation that, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to

harm their health, safety, or morals. In general, hazardous work may include night work and long hours of work, exposure to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; and work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging their health. Hazardous work by children is often treated as a proxy category for the worst forms of child labour. This is for two reasons. First, reliable national data on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, such as children in bonded and forced labour or in commercial sexual exploitation, are still difficult to come by. Second, children in hazardous work account for the overwhelming majority of those in the worst forms of child labour.

- *Children in light work.* According to Article 7 of ILO Convention No. 138, national laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons from 13 years of age (or 12 years in countries that have specified the general minimum

working age as 14 years) in light work which is: (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received. For the purpose of statistical measurement, in this report light work includes children 12 to 14 years old in employment who work in non-hazardous work for less than 14 hours a week.

- *Children performing household chores* refer to those performing domestic and personal services for consumption within their own households. Household chores include caring for household members; cleaning and minor household repairs; cooking and serving meals; washing and ironing clothes; and transporting or accompanying family members to and from work and school. In more technical terms, these tasks constitute a “non-economic” form of production and are excluded from consideration in the UN System of National Accounts (UNSNA), the internationally agreed standard set of guidelines for measuring national economic activity, as well from the 2016 Global Estimates.

**Note:** (a) See Resolution II concerning statistics of child labour in: ILO: *Report of the Conference, 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians*, Geneva, 24 November–5 December 2008. ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL (ILO, Geneva, 2009). ISBN: 978-92-2-121730-5 (print).



# Part 1.

## Global estimates and trends

### 1.1 Main results of the global estimates

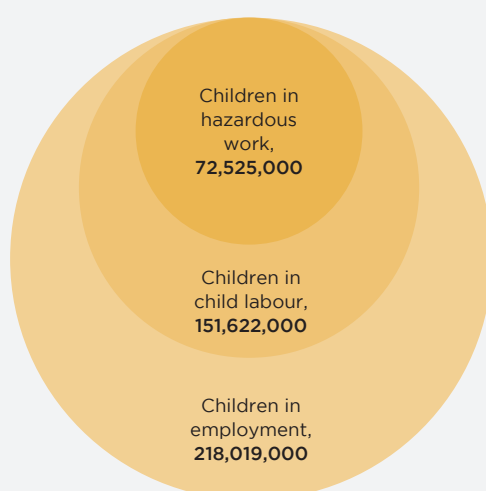
#### THE CHALLENGE OF ENDING CHILD LABOUR REMAINS FORMIDABLE

The latest ILO estimates indicate that 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide. Seventy-one per

cent of children in child labour work in the agricultural sector and 69 per cent work within their own family unit. Nearly half of all those in child labour – 73 million children in absolute terms – are in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety, and moral development. Children in employment, a broader measure comprising both child labour and permitted forms of employment, involving children of legal working age, number 218 million.

Figure 1

#### 2016 Global Estimates of children in hazardous work, in child labour, and in employment



These headline figures make clear that the challenge of ending child labour remains formidable. Even one child in child labour is too many and the fact that there are still 152 million children engaged in child labour worldwide is inexcusable. A hypothetical country made up only of these children would rank as the world's ninth largest. We know from more than two decades of research and programming experience what works in the fight against child labour. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community committed to ending child labour. We now must turn this knowledge and commitment into accelerated action.

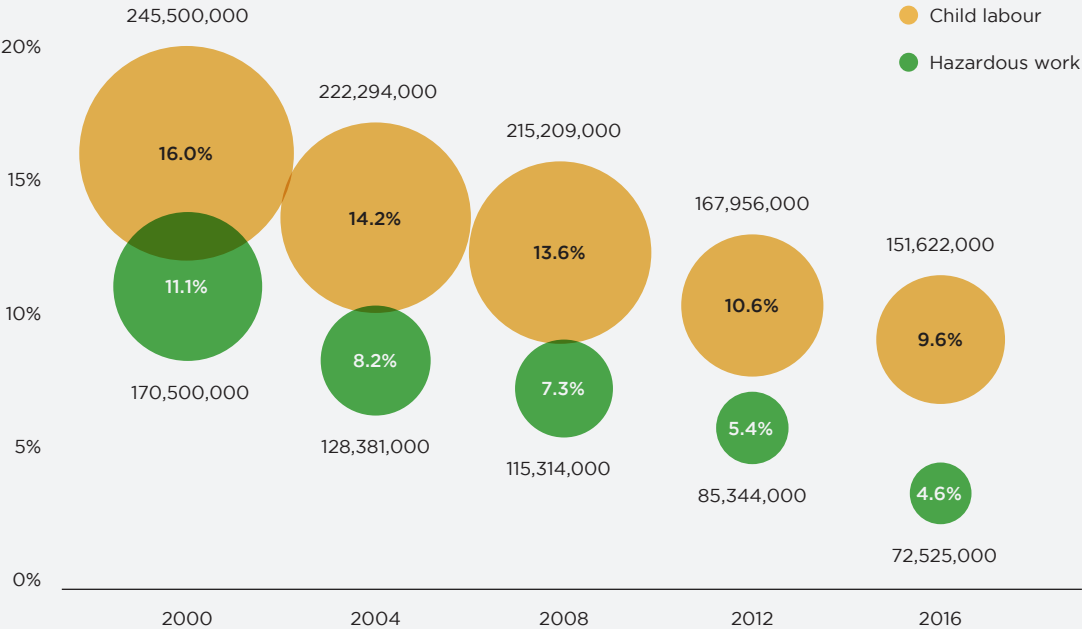
**THE DYNAMIC PICTURE INDICATES THAT WE ARE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

While the challenge is still great, we are clearly moving in the right direction. The 2016 results show that child labour has again declined worldwide, continuing a trend seen since the publication of the Global Estimates of Child Labour in 2000 (see Figure 2). The 16-year period starting in 2000 saw a net reduction of 94 million in children in child labour. The number of children in hazardous work fell by more than half over the same period. There were almost 134 million fewer children in employment in 2016 than in 2000. Real advances have been made in the fight against child labour, providing an important foundation for efforts moving forward.

Figure 2

**Children’s involvement in child labour and hazardous work, 2000–16**

Percentage and absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work, 5–17 years age range, 2000 to 2016<sup>(b)</sup>



**Note:** (b) Bubbles are proportionate to the absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work.



### **PROGRESS SLOWED DURING 2012 TO 2016, AND WE HAVE FALLEN WELL SHORT OF OUR GOAL OF ELIMINATING THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR BY 2016**

But a narrower focus on the most recent four-year period indicates a significant slowing down of progress. The reduction in the number of children in child labour amounted to 16 million for the 2012 to 2016 period, just one-third of the 47 million reduction recorded during 2008 to 2012. Expressed in relative terms, the share of children in child labour fell by only one percentage point during 2012 to 2016 compared to three percentage points in the previous four-year period. The decline in hazardous work slowed in a similar fashion. The rapid pace of progress recorded from 2008 to 2012 had given rise to hopes of a gathering momentum in the fight against child labour, in turn bringing us closer to the target set by the ILO constituency of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. We now know that has not occurred and that we have fallen well short of the 2016 target.

### **OTHER WARNING SIGNS ALSO EMERGE FROM THE LATEST RESULTS**

Beyond this general slowdown in progress, the 2016 results highlight a number of specific areas of concern. Child labour increased in Africa, despite the fact that many African countries have taken strong action to combat child labour. A closer look at the progress made during 2012 to 2016 also indicates that it was limited primarily to adolescents aged 15-17 years. Numbers of adolescents in child labour fell by more than one-fifth, while progress among those in the 5-11 years age range stalled. Gender differences in recent progress are another concern – the decline in child labour among girls was only half that of boys during 2012 to 2016. Recent progress is also likely in part to be attributable to

broader labour market conditions, and therefore may be fragile. The ongoing worldwide youth employment crisis has made it difficult in many countries for children above the minimum working age to secure jobs, and this low labour market demand may also have helped to reduce their involvement in hazardous jobs constituting child labour.

The latest estimate on the forced labour of children shows little change in the number of children in forced labour, in the private labour economy, and in commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>3</sup> The few studies undertaken of child victims of forced labour all mention the difficulty of identifying and targeting these hard-to-reach children, despite their situations of extreme abuse.

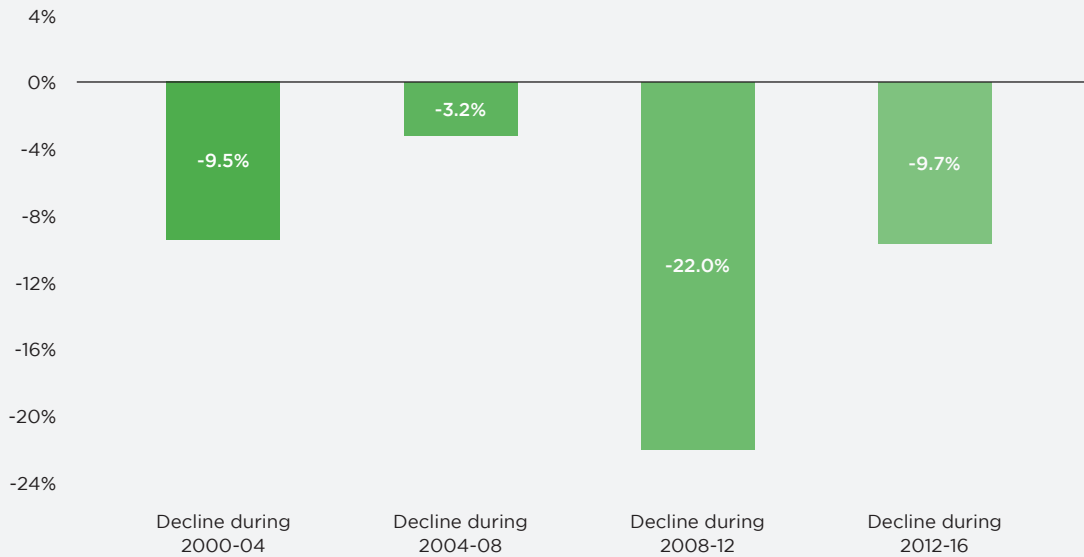
### **THE SLOWING OF PROGRESS DURING 2012 TO 2016 IS PART OF A BROADER PATTERN OF UNEVEN PROGRESS**

A simple charting of rates of decline over the four separate four-year intervals starting in 2000 highlights the uneven nature of global progress against child labour (see Figure 3). The first four-year interval, 2000 to 2004, saw substantial strides forward, leading to the optimistic conclusion that the end of child labour was “within reach”.<sup>4</sup> But this optimism was tempered considerably by the results of the next, 2004 to 2008, interval, which pointed to a marked slowing of progress, and provided an early warning sign that attaining the 2016 target would be difficult. The penultimate four-year interval, 2008 to 2012, brought much better news. The results for this period showed the largest decline up to that point in numbers in child labour, even though the period coincided with a deep global economic recession. Unfortunately, as noted above, progress once more slowed during 2012 to 2016, pushing the timeline for ending child labour further into the future.

Figure 3

### Changes in rates of progress against child labour since 2000

Percentage decline in the number of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, four-year intervals, 2000 to 2016



Thus, the experience over the 16-year period has not been one of quickening, or even steady, progress. We have yet to generate real momentum towards ending child labour. This momentum will be urgently needed if we are to succeed in moving forward. We must use success as an impetus for achieving further success and in this way quicken the pace towards ending child labour. We must also guard against complacency when our goals are in sight.

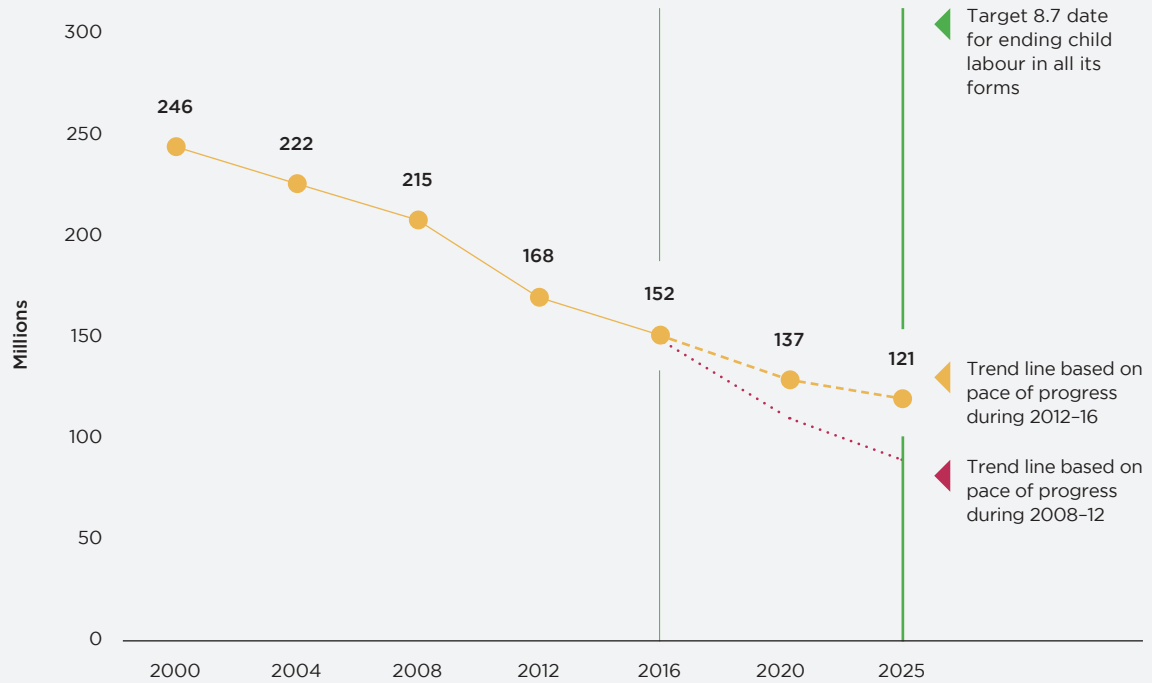
#### WE MUST MOVE MUCH FASTER IF WE ARE TO HONOUR OUR COMMITMENT TO ENDING CHILD LABOUR IN ALL ITS FORMS BY 2025

How much faster do we need to go in order to realize target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, calling for the end of child labour in all its forms by 2025? A simple projection of future progress based on the pace of progress achieved during 2012 to 2016 provides a loud wake-up call in this regard. As reported in Figure 4, maintaining the current rate of progress – the business-as-usual scenario – would leave 121 million children still in child labour in 2025, of which 52 million would be in hazardous work. A similar calculation, also shown in Figure 4, indicates that, even maintaining the pace achieved during 2008 to 2012 – the fastest recorded to date – would not be nearly enough. We are moving in the right direction, but we will need to move much more quickly to reach zero by 2025.

Figure 4

### Assessing the pace of progress towards target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals

Number of children involved in child labour, 5-17 years age range, actual and projected trends lines



Authors' calculation based on ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*, Geneva, 2017.

## 1.2 The regional picture

Table 2

### Regional profile of child labour and hazardous work

Number and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by region, 2016

	Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work		
	Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%	
<b>World (5-17 years)</b>	151 622	9.6	72 525	4.6	
<b>Region</b>	Africa	72 113	19.6	31 538	8.6
	Arab States	1 162	2.9	616	1.5
	Asia and the Pacific	62 077	7.4	28 469	3.4
	Americas	10 735	5.3	6 553	3.2
	Europe and Central Asia	5 534	4.1	5 349	4.0

**Note:** This report makes use of the new regional classification system developed by ILO-STAT. In accordance with this system, the Africa region comprises both northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, while the Arab States region excludes northern Africa. The Americas region comprises both Latin American and the Caribbean and northern America. The regional estimates based on the new regional classifications are therefore not comparable with the regional estimates based on the previous regional classification system employed in the 2012 and 2008 global estimate reports. The listing of the countries in each region is provided in Annex 1, table A1, of the technical report *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE AFRICA AND ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONS ARE HOST TO NINE OUT OF EVERY TEN CHILDREN IN CHILD LABOUR

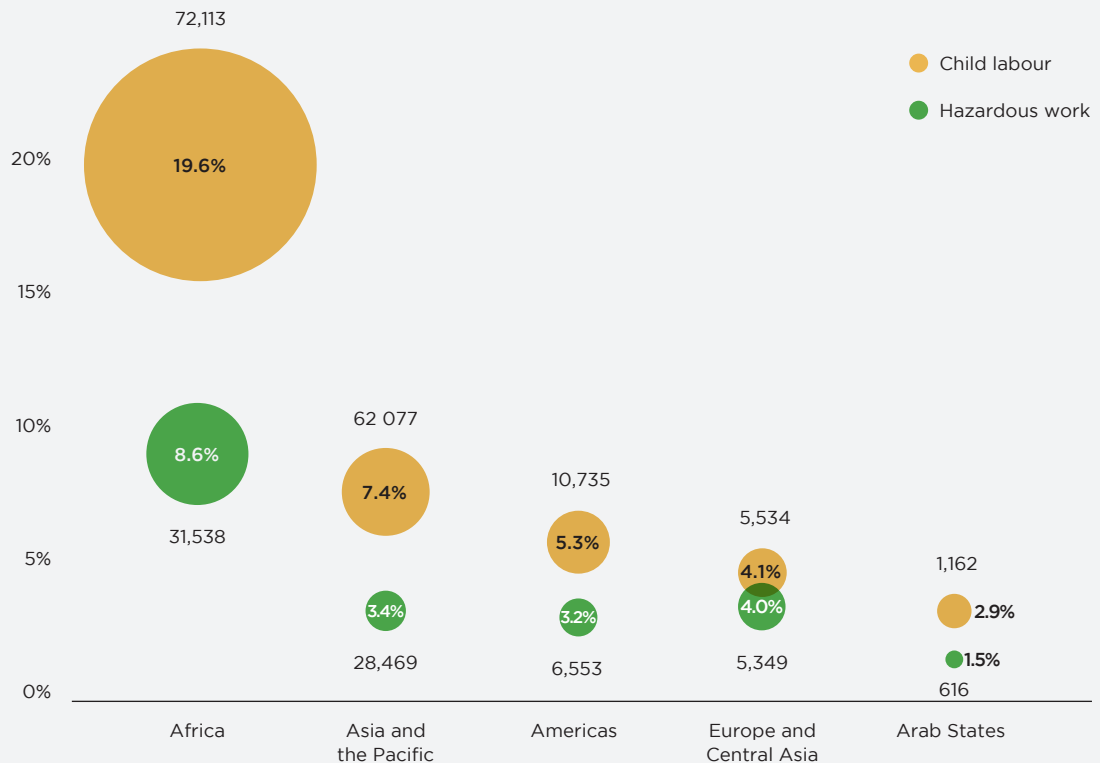
Africa ranks highest both in the percentage of children in child labour – one-fifth – and the absolute number of children in child labour – 72 million. Asia and the Pacific ranks second highest in both these measures – 7 per cent of all children, 62 million in absolute terms, are in child labour in this region. The Africa and the Asia and the Pacific regions together account for almost nine out of every ten children in child labour worldwide. The remaining child labour population is divided among the Ameri-

cas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million). In terms of incidence, 5 per cent of children are in child labour in the Americas, 4 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, and 3 per cent in the Arab States. The regional rankings for hazardous work are broadly similar.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 5

### Children's involvement in child labour and hazardous work by region

Percentage and number (in thousands) of children in child labour and hazardous work, 5–17 years age group, by region, 2016<sup>(c)</sup>



**Note:** (c) Bubble size is proportionate to absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work in each region.

#### A BREAKTHROUGH IN AFRICA WILL BE CRITICAL TO ENDING CHILD LABOUR WORLDWIDE

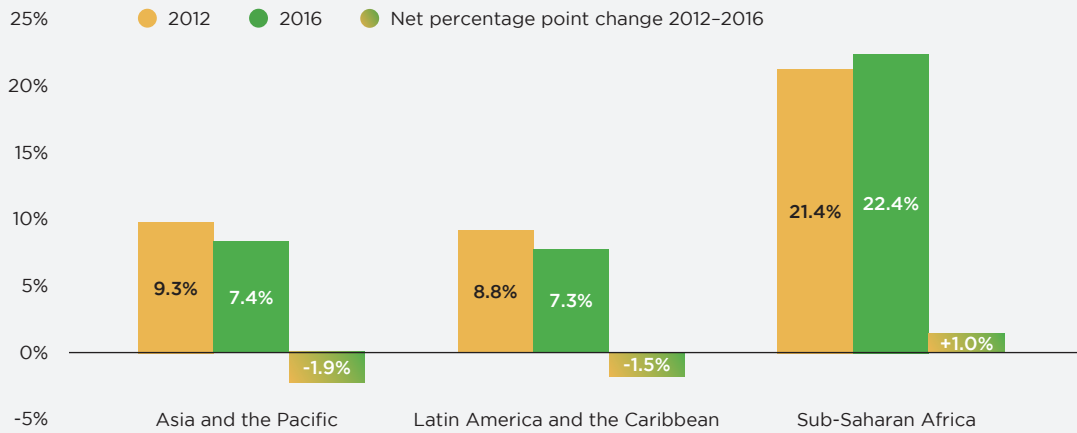
In previous global reports, we have stressed the need above all for a breakthrough in Africa, and the 2016 estimates make clear that this has not yet occurred. Indeed, the latest estimates suggest that *sub-Saharan* Africa, the regional grouping for which we have comparable estimates for 2012,<sup>7</sup> is falling further behind the rest of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a rise in child labour during the 2012 to 2016 pe-

riod, in contrast to the other major regions where child labour continued to decline (see Figure 6), and despite the number of targeted policies implemented by African governments to combat child labour. It is likely that the retrogression was driven in important part by broader economic and demographic forces acting against governmental efforts, although this is a matter requiring further research. The Africa region has also been among those most affected by situations of state fragility and crisis, which in turn heighten the risk of child labour (see Panel 2).

Figure 6

### Change in children’s involvement in child labour from 2012 to 2016, by region

Percentage of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, 2012 and 2016, by region



Panel 2

### Child labour in situations of fragility and crisis

According to UNICEF, an estimated 535 million children (almost one in four children) live in countries affected by conflict or disaster (<https://www.unicef.ch/sites/default/files/humanitarian-action-report-2017-en.pdf>). Children also comprise more than half of the 65 million people presently displaced by war. These fragile situations

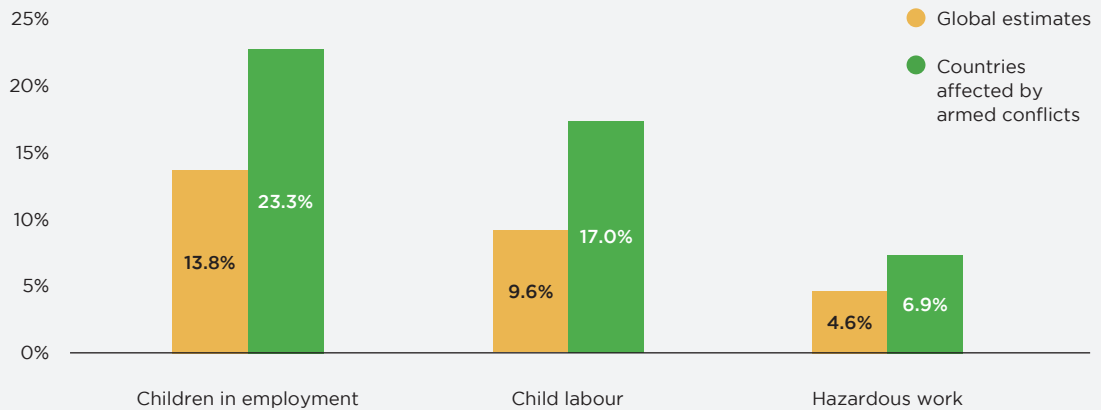
– characterized by income shocks, a breakdown in formal and family social support networks, displacement, and disruptions in basic services provision – create the conditions for further violations of fundamental labour rights, including an elevated risk of child labour. We know from a large body of research that households can use their

children’s labour as a coping mechanism in situations of heightened vulnerability.<sup>8</sup> We also know that children, once pulled out of the classroom to work, often do not go back, meaning that even short-term crises can have enduring adverse consequences for children.

Figure 7

### Child labour in countries affected by armed conflict

Percentage of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age range, globally and in countries affected by armed conflict, 2016



**Note:** Countries classified as “affected by armed conflict” are taken from the Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, submitted to the UN Security Council in 2015. The category “countries affected by armed conflict” includes Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Countries affected by armed conflict for which child labour data is not available in the current global estimates include: Libya, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

#### Panel 2 (continued)

In view of these facts, it is not surprising that there is a strong correlation between child labour and situations of conflict and disaster. The Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2015/409), submitted to the UN Security Council in 2015, indicates that the share of children in employment, child labour, and hazardous work is significantly higher in countries affected by armed conflict than global averages. As reported in Figure 7, the incidence of child labour in countries affected by armed conflict is 77 per cent higher than the global average, while the incidence of hazardous work is 50 per cent

higher in countries affected by armed conflict than in the world as a whole. Syria represents one of the most tragic contemporary examples of the link between armed conflict and child labour. A recent ILO study of Syrian refugees in Jordan shows poor Syrian children are much more exposed to child labour than their Jordanian peers.<sup>9</sup> Other studies also suggest that the Syria crisis is associated with an alarming rise in child labour.<sup>10</sup>

This situation calls for continued action on a number of levels. Child labour must be treated as a priority within humanitarian responses, and during reconstruction

and recovery; governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations and humanitarian actors all have a critical role to play in this context. Tools are needed to rapidly assess risks of child labour and other fundamental labour rights violations in fragile situations and to guide responses, building on those developed by the ILO and UNICEF for assessing the situation and estimating the number of children recruited and used by armed groups and armed forces. At the same time, new intervention models need to be developed and tested to address child labour in crisis or in fragile situations and to strengthen protection and

remedies for children and other affected groups. The new guidelines produced by the ILO and Plan International for humanitarian workers on protecting children from child labour represent an important resource in this regard.<sup>11</sup> Where possible, intervention models should include measures to provide refugees and other forcibly displaced persons with access to the labour market in order to ensure minimum livelihoods and reduce possible dependence child labour; this area is dealt with in the

*Guiding Principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market* adopted by the ILO Governing Body in 2016.

Economic and social reintegration to prevent child labour in post-conflict and post-emergency situations must not be neglected either. The ILO and its partners have extensive experience in this area (for example, in Burundi, Colombia, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, Ne-

pal, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka), from which lessons can be drawn. The complexity of crisis and fragile situations, and the many overlapping mandates for responding to them, means that ensuring close coordination around the issue of child labour is another important priority. Alliance 8.7 provides an important vehicle in this context. One of its six Action Groups deals specifically with the issue of child labour in situations of fragility.

## 1.3 Child labour and national income

Table 3

### Child labour and hazardous work by national income

Number and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by national income grouping, 2016

		Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work	
		Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%
<b>National income grouping</b>	Low-income	65 203	19.4	29 664	8.8
	Lower-middle-income	58 184	8.5	33 465	4.9
	Upper-middle-income	26 209	6.6	7 751	2.0
	High-income	2 025	1.2	1 645	1.0

**Note:** The countries are grouped into four categories according to their gross national income per capita in 2015. The income ranges for each are as follows: low-income (US\$1,045 or less), lower-middle-income (US\$1,046–\$4,125); upper-middle-income (US\$4,126–\$12,735) and high-income (US\$12,736 or more) countries.



**CHILD LABOUR IS MOST PREVALENT IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES BUT IT IS BY NO MEANS ONLY A LOW-INCOME COUNTRY PROBLEM**

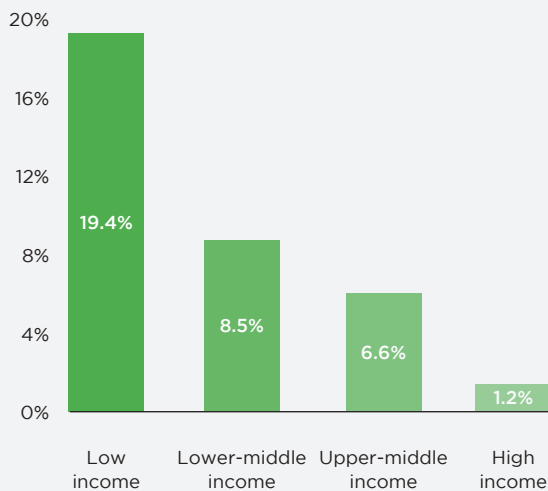
Dividing countries by national income levels offers additional insights into the design and targeting of efforts against child labour moving forward. As reported in Figure 8a, the incidence of child labour is highest in the low-income countries, at 19 per cent, but it is also far from negligible in countries belonging to other income groups. Nine per cent of all children in lower-middle-income countries,

and 7 per cent of all children in upper-middle-income countries, are in child labour. Statistics on the absolute number of children in child labour in each national income grouping, reported in Figure 8b, indicate that 84 million children in child labour, accounting for 56 per cent of all those in child labour, actually live in middle-income countries, and an additional 2 million live in high-income countries. These statistics make clear that while poorer countries will require special attention, the fight against child labour will not be won by focusing on poorer countries alone.

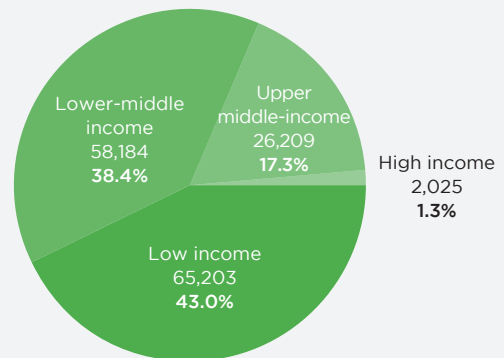
Figure 8

**Child labour and national income**

(a) Percentage of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group by national income level, 2016<sup>(a)</sup>



(b) Percentage distribution of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, by national income grouping, 2016<sup>(a)</sup>



**Note:** (a) Absolute numbers expressed in thousands.

The distribution of income within countries is an even more important consideration than national income levels. It is family and community poverty and social exclusion, which exist within countries across all national income groupings, that are a key driver of child labour. Child labour is much higher among children from poor households although child labour is not limited to poor households. In developing and transition countries, the employment of

children is a further reflection of the inability of working-age members of households to generate subsistence. Children's labour in many countries fills the income gap. Under the circumstances, policy contribution to mitigating child labour and improving income-earning outcomes have to be seen in the larger context of an enabling structural change, aided and abetted by appropriate public policies and supported by strong fiscal and monetary measures.

## 1.4 Child labour characteristics: economic sector and work status

Table 4

### Child labour by sector

Sectoral composition of child labour by region, sex and age range, 2016

	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Total	
	% share	% share	% share	% share	
<b>World</b>	70.9	11.9	17.2	100	
<b>Region</b>	Africa	85.1	3.7	11.2	100
	Arab States	60.3	12.4	27.4	100
	Americas	51.5	13.2	35.3	100
	Asia and the Pacific	57.5	21.4	21.1	100
	Europe and Central Asia	76.7	9.7	13.6	100
<b>Sex</b>	Male	71.5	12.4	16.1	100
	Female	70.3	11.1	18.6	100
<b>Age range</b>	5-14	78.0	7.4	14.5	100
	15-17	49.3	25.6	25.1	100

### THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ACCOUNTS FOR BY FAR THE LARGEST SHARE OF CHILD LABOUR

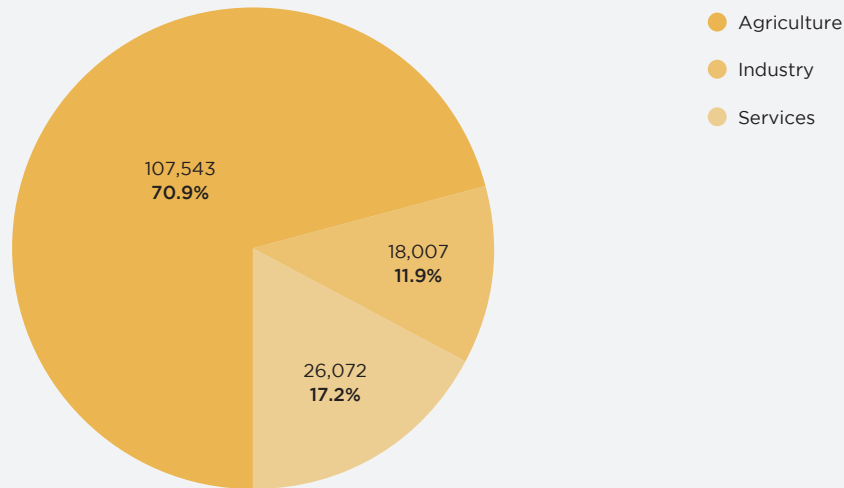
Agriculture is the most important sector for child labour by a considerable margin, accounting for 71 per cent of all those in child labour and for 108 million children in absolute terms. Child labour in agriculture relates primarily to subsistence and commercial farming and livestock herding, but the agricultural sector also extends to fishing, forestry, and aquaculture. Most of children's agricultural work is unpaid and takes place within the family unit. It is also often hazardous in its nature and in the circumstances in which it is carried out. The relative importance

of agriculture rose significantly from 2012, when the sector accounted for 59 per cent of all child labour, a change likely reflecting the shift in the regional distribution of the child labour population towards Africa, where agricultural child labour predominates (see below also).

Figure 9

### Sectoral composition of child labour

Percentage distribution of children in child labour by sector employment, 5-17 years age group, 2016<sup>(a)</sup>



**Note:** (a) Absolute numbers expressed in thousands.

Children in child labour in the services<sup>12</sup> and industry<sup>13</sup> sectors number 26 million and 18 million, respectively. While least important in numerical terms, the industry sector is where children face the greatest risk of encountering hazards – three-quarters of children working in this sector are in hazardous work. It is also worth noting that both services and industry in the informal urban economy are likely to become more relevant in some regions in the future in the face of forces such as climate change displacing families from their farms and into cities.

#### THE EMPLOYMENT SECTOR DIFFERS CONSIDERABLY ACROSS REGIONS

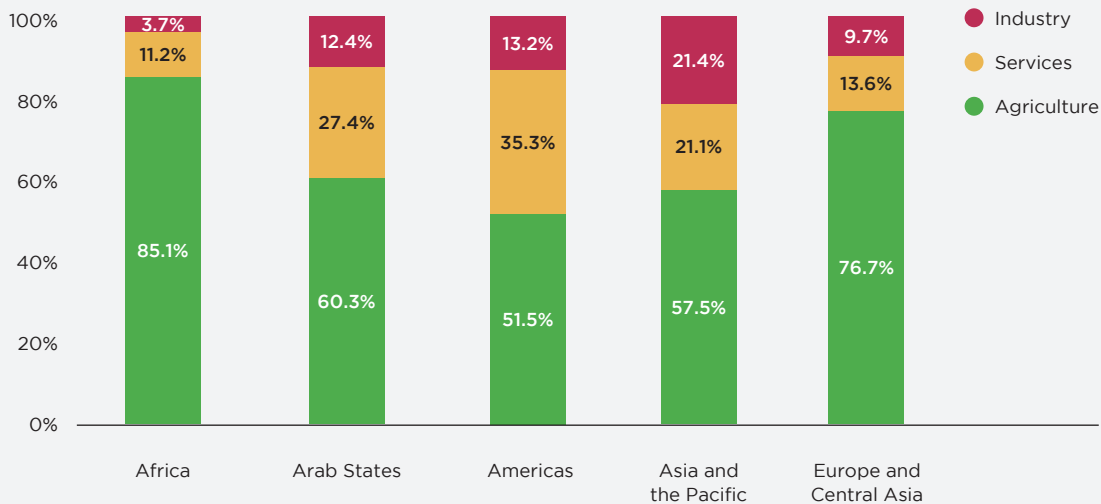
For the first time, the Global Estimates address the sectoral composition of child labour at the regional level. The results, reported in Figure 10, indicate that differences in the nature of child labour across regions are considerable. The relative importance of agriculture is highest in the Africa region and the Europe and Central Asia region, where the sector accounts for 85 per cent and 77 per cent, respec-

tively, of all child labour. Child labour is more varied in the other three major regions, although agriculture still makes up the largest share of the child labour population in all three. The services sector is especially prominent in the Americas, where it makes up more than one in three of all those in child labour. Asia and the Pacific is the region where those in child labour are most likely to end up in industry, which accounts for more than one-fifth of all those in child labour in the region.

Figure 10

### Sectoral composition of child labour by region

Percentage distribution of children in child labour by sector employment, 5-17 years age group, 2016, by region



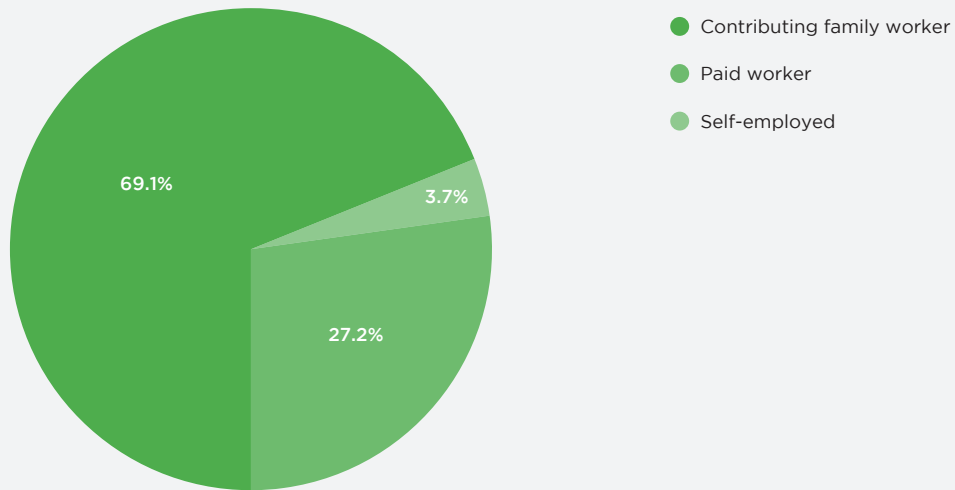
### MOST CHILD LABOUR TAKES PLACE WITHIN THE FAMILY UNIT

More than two-thirds of all children in child labour work as contributing family labourers. Paid employment and own-account workers make up 27 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, of those in child labour (see Figure 11). These numbers underscore an important broader point concerning the nature of child labour in the world today. Child labour is not exacted only by employers, and children do not have to be in an employment relationship with a third-party employer to be in child labour and to suffer its consequences. Indeed, we know from the latest estimates that children working for third-party employers are the exception rather than the rule; most children in child labour work on family farms and in family enterprises. Understanding and addressing family reliance on children's labour will therefore be critical to broader progress towards ending child labour, regardless of whether the work is performed as part of local, national, or global supply chains, or is only for family subsistence.

Figure 11

### Child labour by status in employment

Percentage distribution of children in child labour by status in employment, 5–17 years age range, 2016



### FORCED LABOUR OF CHILDREN REQUIRES SPECIAL ATTENTION

According to the Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage, there were about 4.3 million children aged below 18 years in forced labour,<sup>14</sup> representing 18 per cent of the 24.8 million total forced labour victims worldwide.<sup>15</sup> This estimate includes 1.0 million children in forced labour for sexual exploitation, 3.0 million children in forced labour for other forms of labour exploitation, and 300,000 children in forced labour imposed by state authorities.

The estimates of child victims of forced labour, however, should be interpreted with caution, as the unique circumstances in which forced labour is exacted, and its often hidden and illicit nature, makes it very difficult to measure. The elements of involuntariness and coercion in the context of children's work are particularly difficult to capture through household surveys, which are not specifically designed to investigate the phenomenon of forced labour among children.

Some means of coercion, like isolation or intimidation, take specific forms in the case of children. Employers may abuse the vulnerability of young children and threaten them in different ways to make sure that they will not escape. Other forms of child forced labour involve children working with or for their parents who are themselves in forced labour. A common example is child labour in the context of family-bonded agricultural work. The parents are in debt bondage with a landowner and the children have to work with them. Brick kilns are another context in which such family-bonded work involving children occurs.

Another variant of child forced labour, also linked to the situation of the parents, involves a child being sent to work as a domestic worker, or in a shop or factory, for the family of the creditor to whom the parents are indebted. The situation of the child will be counted as child labour because of the nature of their work, but becomes in addition a situation of forced labour of children because of the nature of the employment relationship. This overlap between child labour and forced labour of children or trafficking of chil-

dren for labour exploitation exists but is not measured in the current estimates.

These extreme forms of child labour, in which the children suffer both the impact of the hazardous working conditions *and* the trauma of coercion, threats of penalty, and lack of freedom, require urgent

action from governments and the international community. The development of specific survey tools to better understand the scope and nature of forced labour among children will be critical to guiding this action.

## 1.5 Age profile

Table 5

### Age profile of child labour and hazardous work

Number and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by age group, 2016

	Age range	Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work	
		Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%
	5-11 years	72 585	8.3	19 020	2.2
	12-14 years	41 887	11.7	16 355	4.6
	15-17 years	37 149	10.5	37 149	10.5
	5-17 years	151 622	9.6	72 525	4.6

#### CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 11 YEARS FORM THE LARGEST SHARE OF THOSE IN CHILD LABOUR AND ALSO FORM A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE OF THOSE IN HAZARDOUS WORK

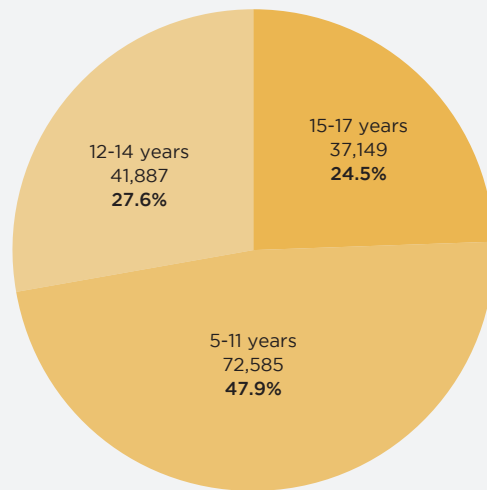
The age breakdown of children in child labour, reported in Figure 12a, indicates that 48 per cent of all those in child labour are in the 5-11 years age bracket, 28 per cent are aged 12-14 years, and 25 per cent fall into the 15-17 years age range. Younger children constitute a smaller but still substantial share of total children in hazardous work. A quarter of all children in hazardous work group - 19 million children in absolute terms - are aged 5-11 years. While there are no possible excep-

tions for hazardous work - all children must be protected from hazardous child labour - the group of very young children facing hazardous work conditions directly endangering their health, safety, and moral development is of special concern.

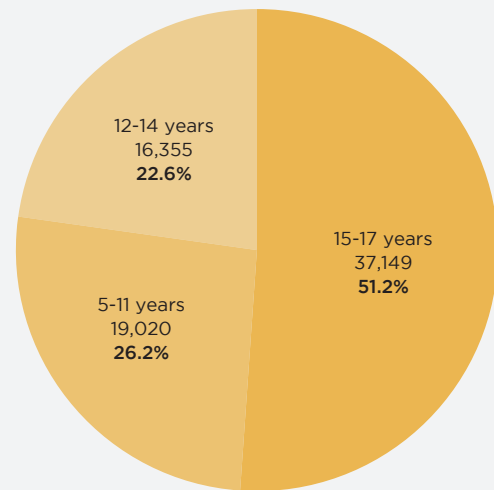
Figure 12

### Child labour and hazardous work by age range

(a) Percentage distribution of children in child labour by age group, 2016<sup>(a)</sup>



(b) Percentage distribution of children in hazardous work by age group, 2016<sup>(a)</sup>



**Note:** (a) Absolute numbers expressed in thousands.

### RECENT PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOWER FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Another concern emerging from the latest global estimates was the very limited progress registered among younger children during the period from 2012 to 2016. As reported in Figure 13a, the number of 5-11 year-olds in child labour fell by less than half a million, or by less than 1 per cent, during 2012 to 2016. Progress was greater for 12-14 year-olds, who registered a net decline of 6 million, and greater still for adolescents aged 15-17 years, whose numbers in child labour fell by 10 million. This age pattern was even more pronounced for hazardous work. Indeed, no progress was made over the latest four-year period in reducing the number of 5-11 year-olds in hazardous work.

Figure 13

### Age-specific progress in reducing child labour

Number of children involved in child labour, by age range, 2012 and 2016



#### THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR DIMINISHES IN IMPORTANCE AS CHILDREN GROW OLDER

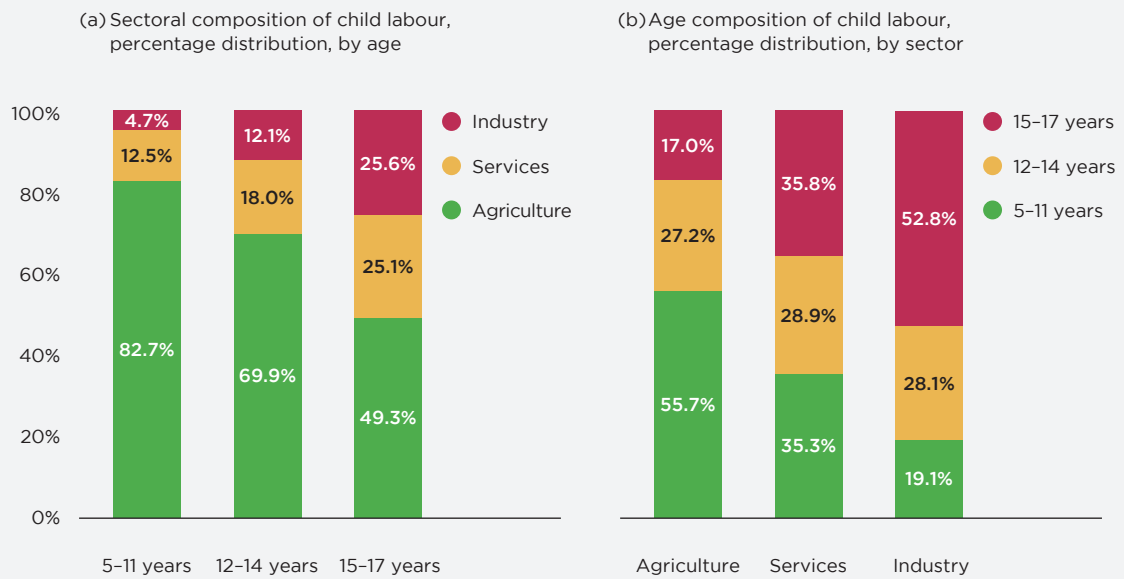
Agriculture constitutes the main entry point into child labour for the youngest group of children in child labour, those aged 5-11 years, of whom 83 per cent work in this sector. The relative importance of agriculture diminishes considerably as children grow older, while child labour in the services and industry sectors both gain in relative importance. By the 15-17 years age range, the share in agriculture falls to less than one-half, and the remainder are divided equally across the services and industry sectors (see Figure 14a). The age make-up of child labour *within each*

*sector* is also very different. Stated simply, as reported in Figure 14b, child labour in agriculture relates particularly to younger children, child labour in industry especially concerns older children, while child labour in services concerns children from all three age ranges about equally.



Figure 14

### Child labour sector and child age



#### THERE ARE STILL SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CHILD LABOUR WHO ARE ABOVE THE MINIMUM WORKING AGE

While recent progress has been fastest among children aged 15-17 years, there are almost 38 million children – 24 million boys and 14 million girls – in this age range in child labour. Those in hazardous work account for 42 per cent of all employed 15-17 year-olds. As noted above, the work performed by these children is more varied than for other age groups – one-half work in agriculture and the remainder are divided equally between services and industry. It should be recalled that 15-17 year-olds are above the minimum working age and therefore are counted as child labourers *not* because they are too young. Rather, they are counted because their work is or may be physically or psychologically injurious to their

health and well-being (see Panel 1 also). This basic fact is reinforced by country-level statistics indicating that 15-17 year-olds in child labour suffer higher levels of work-related illness and injury than other employed children in this age range. They are also more likely than other employed 15-17 year-olds to have dropped out of school prematurely, in turn affecting their prospects for upward mobility and for securing decent work in the future.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.6 Gender profile

Table 6

### Gender profile of child labour and hazardous work

Number and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by sex and age group, 2016

		Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work	
		Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%
Male	5-11 years	39 402	8.7	11 029	2.4
	12-14 years	24 582	13.3	10 208	5.5
	15-17 years	23 537	12.9	23 537	12.9
	5-17 years	87 521	10.7	44 774	5.5
Female	5-11 years	33 183	7.8	7 992	1.9
	12-14 years	17 035	10.0	6 147	3.6
	15-17 years	13 612	8.0	13 612	8.0
	5-17 years	64 100	8.4	27 751	3.6

#### BOYS APPEAR TO FACE A GREATER RISK OF CHILD LABOUR THAN GIRLS, BUT THIS MAY BE IN PART A REFLECTION OF AN UNDER-REPORTING OF WORK PERFORMED BY GIRLS

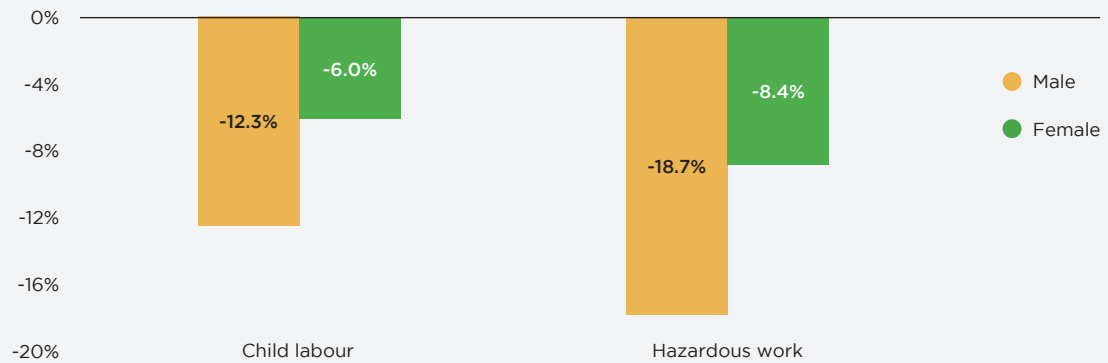
There are 23 million more boys than girls in child labour and 17 million more boys than girls in hazardous work. Seen from a different perspective, boys account for 58 per cent of all children in child labour and 62 per cent of all children in hazardous work. The gender gap increases with age. The difference in child labour incidence is less than one percentage point for 5-11 year-olds, rising to three percentage points for 12-14 year-olds and to five percentage points for 15-17 year-olds. But it is possible that these figures understate girls' work relative to that of boys. As pointed out in previous global reports, girls may be more present in less visible and therefore under-reported forms of child labour such as domestic service in private households. In addition, as demonstrated in the next section, girls

are much more likely to perform household chores in their own homes, a form of work that is not included in the child labour estimates. It is also worth noting that the decline in child labour among girls was only half that among boys during the 2012 to 2016 period (see Figure 15), meaning that the gender gap in child labour has narrowed. A similar pattern prevailed for hazardous work.

Figure 15

### Differences between male and female children in terms of progress against child labour and hazardous work

Percentage decline in the number of children in child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age range, by sex, 2012-16



#### THERE ARE NOT LARGE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS IN TERMS OF THE SECTORAL COMPOSITION OF CHILD LABOUR

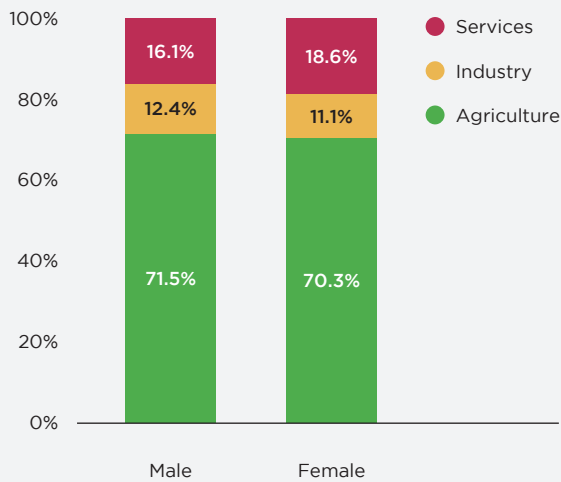
Boys in child labour are very slightly more likely to work in agriculture and industry, while girls in child labour are slightly more likely to work in services (see Figure 16a). It is likely, however, that the apparent similarities between boys' and girls' child labour is at least in part the product of the fact that we are only able to look at broad macro sectors. Indeed, we know from more detailed country-level information that greater gender-related differences emerge when work is divided further into subsectors – for example, girls in many contexts are more involved than boys in domestic work, part of the services sector. Girls and boys can also be assigned to very different tasks even when working in the same workplace, thereby exposing them to unique risks and hazards. On the family farm, for example, boys often bear greater responsibility for operating ma-

chinery, using sharp tools, and spraying chemicals, leaving them at greater risk of amputations, cuts and burns, pesticide poisoning, and other adverse health impacts. Girls, on the other hand, often play a role in hauling water and in fetching and carrying wood, heightening their risk of musculoskeletal injuries, fatigue, and sexual abuse.<sup>17</sup>

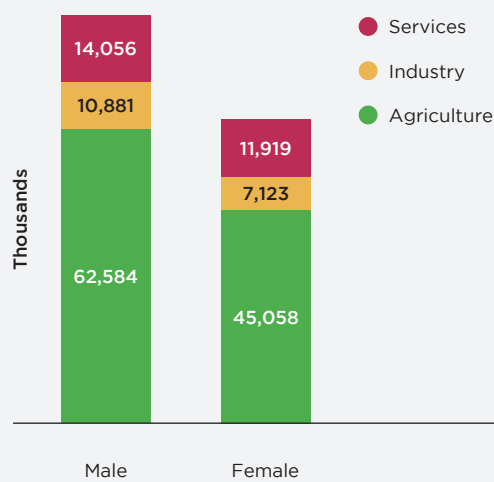
Figure 16

### Differences between boys and girls in the sectoral composition of child labour

(a) Sectoral composition of child labour, percentage distribution, 5-17 years age range, by sex



(b) Sectoral composition of child labour, absolute numbers, 5-17 years age range, by sex



## 1.7 Involvement in household chores

Table 7

### Involvement in household chores

Number of children performing household chores, by sex, age range, and weekly working hour bracket, 2016

Weekly hours	Male (age group)				Female (age group)				Total (age group)
	5-11	12-14	15-17	5-17	5-11	12-14	15-17	5-17	5-17
Less than 14 hours	145 133	82 392	79 400	306 925	154 519	81 543	67 439	303 501	610 427
14-20 hours	14 214	12 126	12 487	38 827	19 455	19 814	23 107	62 377	101 204
21-27 hours	4 744	4 376	4 768	13 888	7 408	8 350	10 556	26 313	40 201
27-42 hours	4 366	3 788	3 691	11 844	6 459	7 397	10 829	24 686	36 530
More than 43 hours	1 310	1 123	970	3 403	1 752	2 510	3 787	8 049	11 451

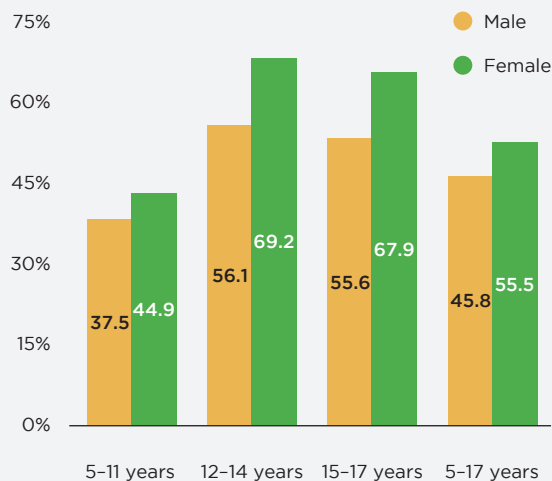
Household chores refer to activities that are performed for and within one's own household such as caring for siblings or sick, infirm, disabled, or elderly household members; cleaning and carrying out minor household repairs; cooking and serving meals; washing and ironing clothes; and transporting or accompanying family members to and from work and school.<sup>18</sup> In more technical terms,

household chores are defined as the production of domestic and personal services by a household member for consumption within their own household. They are a "non-economic" form of production and are excluded from consideration in the UN System of National Accounts, the internationally agreed standard set of guidelines for measuring national economic activity.<sup>19</sup>

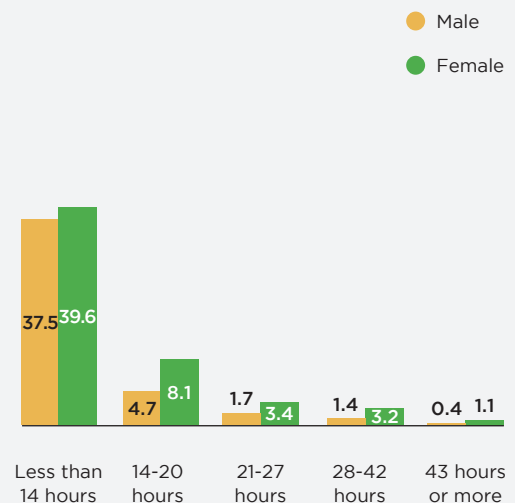
Figure 17

### Involvement in household chores

(a) Percentage of children performing household chores for at least one hour per week, by age range and sex



(b) Percentage of children performing household chores, by weekly hour bracket and sex



#### GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN BOYS TO PERFORM HOUSEHOLD CHORES WITHOUT PAY IN THEIR OWN HOMES

Estimates of children's involvement in household chores, produced for the first time for the 2016 global estimates of child labour exercise, indicate that responsibility for chores is very common: 800 million children aged 5-17 years spend at least some time each week performing chores for their households. Girls are much more likely than boys to perform household chores at every age range (see Figure 17a) and in every weekly hour bracket (see Figure 17b), confirming

the common assumption that girls must shoulder a greater responsibility for this form of work in most societies.

#### GIRLS ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO PERFORM CHORES FOR EXCESSIVE HOURS

An argument can be made that household chores that do not pose health or safety risks and that are performed only for reasonable amounts of time can be a normal part of childhood and even beneficial to children's socialization. It is of more interest from a child labour perspective, then, to look at children's

involvement in household chores for *excessive amounts of time* each week. What constitutes “excessive”, however, is the subject of ongoing debate; there are not yet any agreed legal or statistical norms governing how much time spent performing chores is too much. The effect on a child’s education is paramount to the definition of what constitutes long hours of household chores.

There are 54 million children aged 5-14 years who perform household chores for at least 21 hours per week, the thresh-

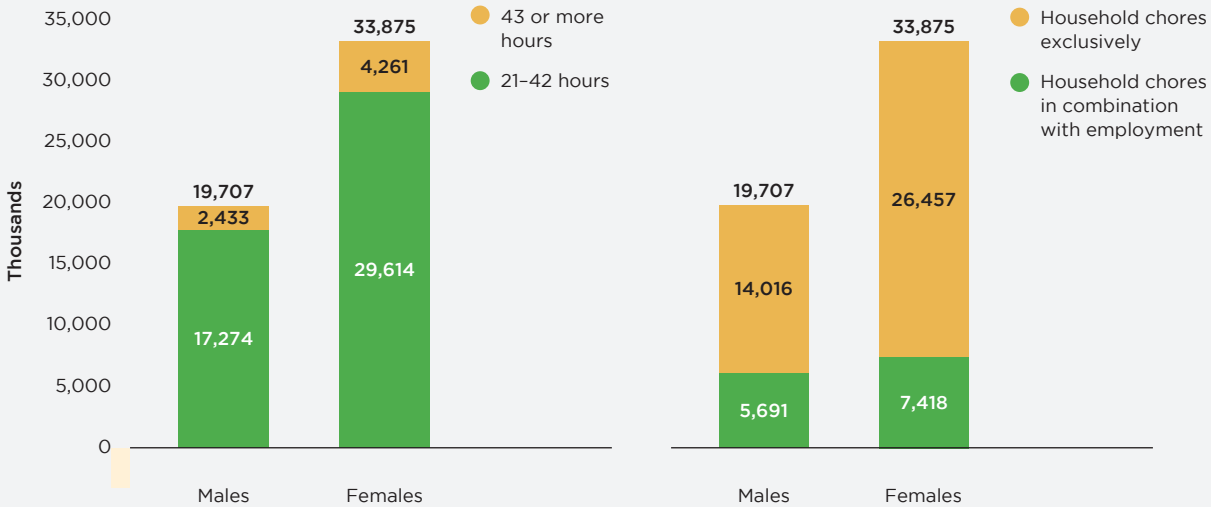
old beyond which initial research suggests household chores begin to negatively impact on the ability of children to attend and benefit from school (see Figure 18a).<sup>20</sup> Girls account for 34 million of this group, or about two-thirds of the total. There are 29 million children aged 5-14 years – 11 million boys and 18 million girls – performing chores beyond a higher threshold of 28 hours per week. Nearly 7 million of those performing household chores in this age range do so for extremely long hours – 43 or greater – each week; again, two-thirds of these are girls.

Figure 18

**Children’s involvement in household chores**

(a) Number of children performing household chores, 5-14 years age range, by hour range and sex, 2016

(b) Number of children performing household chores in excess of 21 hours per week, 5-14 year age range, by involvement in employment and sex, 2016



**A LARGE SHARE OF THOSE PERFORMING HOUSEHOLD CHORES ALSO WORK IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

Household chores and economic activity are not, of course, necessarily mutually exclusive activities. Many children undertake both forms of work as part of their daily lives. The new estimates indicate that this holds true even among children logging substantial numbers of

hours – at least 21 – each week in household chores. One-fourth of these children – 13 million children in absolute terms – also work in economic activity, adding to the total time they must allocate to work each week, and consequently making it even more difficult for them to find time for their studies (see Figure 18b). Again, a larger number of girls than boys must shoulder this form of double-duty.

## 1.8 Child labour and education

### CHILD LABOUR IS FREQUENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATIONAL MARGINALIZATION

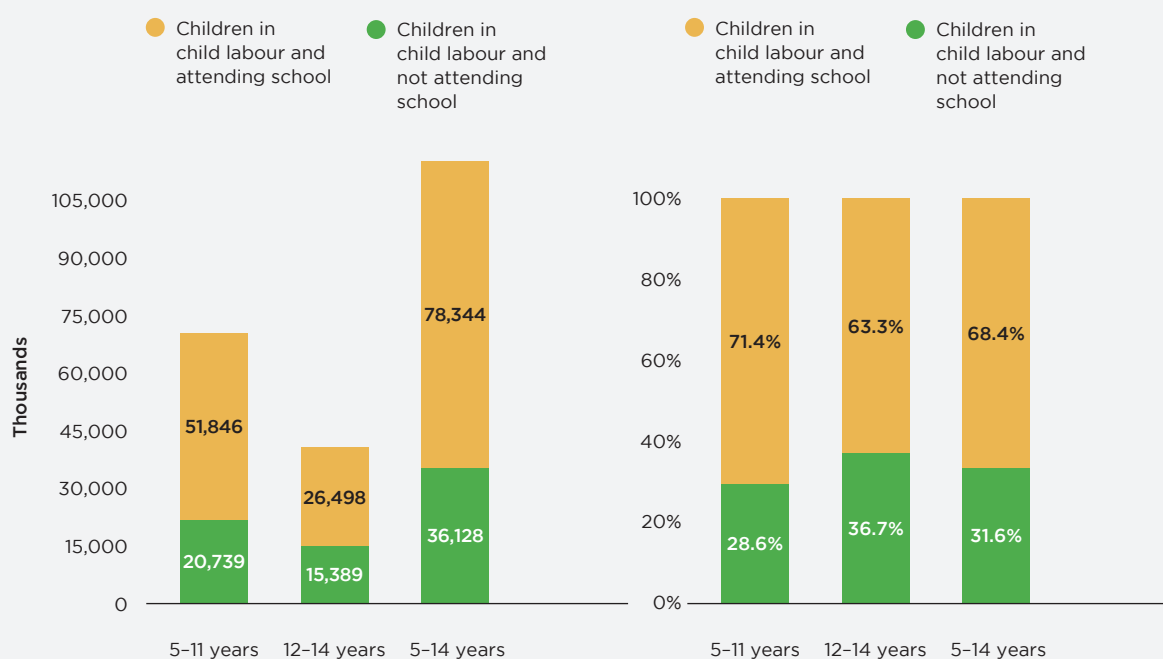
The latest global estimates are also the first to address the relationship between schooling and child labour, in turn one of the most important determinants of the impact of child labour on decent work and sustainable livelihood prospects later in the life cycle. The estimates, reported in Figure 19, indicate that a very large number of children in child labour are completely deprived of education. For the 5-14 years age group, there are 36 million children in child labour who are out of school, 32 per cent of all those in child labour in this age range.

Figure 19

#### Child labour and school attendance

(a) Number of children in child labour, 5-14 years age range, by school attendance status, 2016

(b) Percentage distribution of children in child labour, 5-14 years age range, by school attendance status, 2016



### **CHILD LABOUR CAN INTERFERE WITH EDUCATION EVEN WHEN THE CHILDREN CONCERNED MANAGE TO ATTEND SCHOOL**

While children in child labour appear at special risk of being out of school, most – about 68 per cent of the total for the 5-14 years age group – do in fact attend school (see Figure 19b). This should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of compatibility between child labour and education, as a growing body of research suggests that these children who are able to attend school are also penalized educationally for their involvement in child labour. The time and energy required by work interfere with children's ability to derive educational benefit from their time in the classroom and to find time outside the classroom for independent study. As a result, children in child labour tend to perform relatively poorly in terms of learning achievement and to lag behind their non-working peers in terms of grade progression.<sup>21</sup> School attendance alone, it follows, is an inadequate indicator of the educational costs of child labour or of the compatibility between education and child labour.







# Part 2.

## Road forward to 2025

The ILO global estimates of child labour tell a story both of real progress and of a job unfinished. They show a dramatic decline in child labour over the 16 years since the ILO began monitoring child labour in 2000. There were almost 94 million fewer children in child labour in 2016 than in 2000. But the estimates also indicate that the pace of decline has slowed considerably in the last four years, precisely at a time when substantial acceleration is needed to reach the ambitious 2025 target date for ending child labour. The challenge remains immense – the latest estimates indicate that 152 million children are still engaged in child labour, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide.

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals represents a renewed pledge on the part of the international community towards accelerated action against child labour. For some time, governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and other actors have agreed on the need to eradicate all forms of child labour and have worked towards this objective. Target 8.7 sets a firm deadline for completing this work: to eradicate child labour by 2025.

In 2016, the Alliance 8.7 was launched – a global partnership to end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour, in accordance with target 8.7. Alliance 8.7 recognizes that no single actor can solve these challenges alone

and that eradication can be accelerated only through efforts that leverage expertise across a wide range of stakeholders.

The ILO has supported Alliance 8.7 since its inception and remains committed to working with like-minded partners to accelerate the eradication of child labour. It currently serves as the secretariat for Alliance 8.7 and in that capacity has supported a range of Alliance 8.7 meetings around the world. The ILO is working with Alliance 8.7 members across all four Alliance 8.7 goals: accelerating action towards compliance with the target; conducting research and sharing knowledge; driving innovation; and increasing and leveraging resources.

Social dialogue between the tripartite constituents – governments and workers' and employers' organizations – remains the key to developing appropriate and responsive national and sectoral public policies. Effective policies that meet the needs of affected people and their communities – policies concerning labour markets, enterprise development, social protection, public services including education, and the protection of all fundamental rights at work – make decent work possible for adults and young people of working age and pave the way for the eradication of all forms of child labour.

## 2.1 Building a policy response

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be by 2025? Thanks to a growing body of practical experience, research, and impact evaluations, we know a great deal about the broad strategies and policies that are of most relevance in the fight against child labour.<sup>22</sup>

The complexity of child labour means that there is no single or simple answer to it. We know that child labour is the product of an array of economic and social forces, and attempting to address it without consideration of these forces is therefore unlikely to be successful. This means, above all, mainstreaming child labour into broader social policies, rather than treating it as an isolated issue. We also know from experience that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing child labour. Rather, strategic responses need to be tailored to the variety of contexts in which child labour persists. This includes contexts of state fragility and armed conflict, where a large share of children in child labour live (see Panel 2). It also includes contexts of natural disaster related to climate change, contexts of widespread economic informality, contexts of rapid urbanization and contexts reliant on global supply chains, each of which presents special challenges in terms of protecting children from child labour.<sup>23</sup>

Past experience and research indicate that mainstreaming child labour concerns into broader policies in the areas of education, social protection, labour markets, and labour standards is especially relevant to progress against child labour. Education helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and provides a worthwhile alternative to child labour. Social protection helps prevent households from having to rely on child labour as a coping strategy in the face of shocks. Properly designed labour market policies can help in both curbing the demand for child labour and in ensuring that the investment in education translates into

improved prospects for decent work during adulthood.

International standards and national labour laws and regulations articulate and formalize the State's duty to protect its children. They set out an unambiguous definition of child labour and the principles for national action against it. The ILO Conventions on Child Labour remain highly relevant and enjoy increasing numbers of ratification. The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), with 181 ratifications,<sup>24</sup> is the most rapidly ratified Convention in the history of the ILO. More than 99.9 per cent of the world's children aged 5 to 17 years are now covered by it. The ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), with 170 ratifications, now covers 80 per cent of the world's children.

**Expanding access to free, quality public education.** Free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for admission to employment is a key tool in ending child labour. It provides parents with the opportunity to invest in their children's education and makes it worthwhile for them to do so. Attendance at school removes children from child labour at least for part of their day and helps them acquire the skills and knowledge needed for decent work and, more broadly, for healthy and fulfilling lives. Education also has a critical intergenerational impact - a child who has benefited from education is more likely to invest in his or her own children's education.

But, despite significant progress, many obstacles remain to ensuring that all children are able to attend school at least until they reach the minimum age for work (which should be consistent with the end of compulsory education). There is an ongoing need for investment in what we know works in getting children out of work and into the classroom - and keeping them there. This includes abolishing school fees and avoiding additional costs incurred for books, school uniforms, and transport. It also includes providing cash transfers to poor families or universal non-means-tested benefits, linked, for example, to birth registration, to help

offset the indirect cost of children's time in school. But cost is not the only challenge. Quality education is needed to keep children in school and ensure successful educational outcomes. Priorities in this context include ensuring a professional and competent teaching force with decent working conditions and respect for their rights at work; ensuring that all girls and boys, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, have a safe and quality learning environment; providing older children who have so far missed out on formal schooling with opportunities for quality remedial education; and ensuring coherence and appropriate enforcement of laws on child labour and school attendance.

**Building and extending social protection systems, including floors.** Child labour is driven in important part by household vulnerabilities associated with poverty, risk, and shocks, and social security is critical to mitigating these vulnerabilities. Yet, the ILO estimates that more than 5 billion people – more than 70 per cent of the world's population – do not have access to adequate social protection. This points to the continued need to build social protection floors to prevent vulnerable families from having to resort to child labour as a coping mechanism. The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) provides a key framework for efforts in this regard. We talked about the promise of cash transfer schemes in addressing child labour in the 2006 global estimates report and the evidentiary case for them has grown since then.<sup>25</sup> However, social protection extends beyond cash transfers.<sup>26</sup> There are a number of other instruments identified in the ILO Recommendation that need to be implemented in a way that enhances their capacity to address child labour. Public employment programmes, health protection, unemployment protection, and income security in old age are all potentially relevant within a well-designed social security system. Social finance schemes, such as appropriate microcredit and microinsurance, can also play an important complementary role in making sure that vulnerable families have access

to the financial market and are able to hedge against part of the risks they face. Birth registration, itself a key human right, is an essential starting point for ensuring coverage in all of these areas.

#### **Labour market policies and regulations.**

The issues of child labour and youth employment are closely linked. Children whose education is denied or impeded by child labour enter adolescence lacking the skills base needed for gainful employment, leaving them much more vulnerable to joblessness or to low-paid, insecure work in hazardous conditions. Their vulnerability is frequently exacerbated by health problems stemming from their premature involvement in work. But causality can also work in the opposite direction – poor employment prospects in youth or adulthood could serve as a disincentive for investment in children's education. Parents, seeing little return for putting their children in school may involve them in work at an early age instead.

Experience indicates that there are a number of policies of relevance to tackling youth employment problems within a broader pro-employment and inclusive growth strategy. These include active labour market policies such as building systems for vocational and technical training, expanding apprenticeship opportunities, strengthening labour market institutions, providing job search training and support, and encouraging youth entrepreneurship. Youth employment efforts should be framed within a broader emphasis on ensuring young persons' rights at work, in order that they receive equal treatment and are protected from abuse and exposure to hazards. They should also be situated within efforts addressing wider labour market challenges such as growing informality, safeguarding labour rights within global supply chains, and changes in the world of work driven by technology and other forces.<sup>27</sup>

Parents of child labourers are often workers or small producers who lack access to unions, organizations, and institutions that would give them an effective voice in the development, implementation, and evaluation of labour market and social

policies. Often trade unions have considerable difficulty in organizing and representing workers, particularly those in the informal economy, and it is increasingly recognized that innovative mechanisms are required to help unions enhance their collective bargaining position and provide workers and working communities with stronger representation as a means to preventing and eradicating child labour.

Ensuring a legal architecture that is consistent with international labour standards is also critical. With India's ratification of ILO Convention Nos 138 and 182 in June 2017, almost all children are covered by Convention No. 182 and coverage of Convention No. 138 rose to 80 per cent of the world's children. But ratification by any member State is, of course, only a first step; putting this commitment into action is a much greater challenge and where efforts must continue to focus in the future. It is also critical that the legal architecture extends to safeguarding other fundamental labour rights, including freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and freedom from discrimination, as we know that child labour and other fundamental labour rights violations are closely related.

## 2.2 Age, gender, and regional considerations

An effective response to child labour will require that its important age, gender, and regional dimensions are addressed across all the broad policies discussed above.

**Age.** Just under half of all those in child labour are below 12 years of age and continued attention to these especially vulnerable children is therefore essential, particularly in light of the apparent stagnation in progress for this group over the last four years. We saw that child labour and educational marginalization

are closely related, underscoring the continued importance of efforts to extend access to good-quality public education to all children below the minimum working age. And just as successful school-to-work transition matters, so does successful transition from early childhood to school. It is a first step on which the success of following steps depends. Renewed attention must also be paid to hazardous work performed by children above the minimum working age, not only in agriculture but also in industry and services. While 15–17 year-olds are of common interest in terms of child labour, youth employment, and occupational safety and health, this overlapping group has hitherto rarely been accorded priority attention in any of these fields. This must change. An integrated strategy is needed, aimed at removing youth from hazardous jobs or towards removing the hazardous conditions encountered by youth in the workplace. Such a strategy should include measures for providing youth withdrawn from hazardous child labour with adequate support services and second chances for securing decent work. The 2012 resolution on youth employment of the International Labour Conference,<sup>28</sup> alongside occupational safety and health standards and practices, can guide governments and the social partners in developing national policies to address the needs of adolescents in hazardous work.

**Gender.** We have seen that progress against child labour has been much slower for girls than for boys over the last four years and that the gender gap in child labour involvement has therefore narrowed. This underscores the continuing relevance of policy measures that address the role of gender in determining whether children are sent to work. Better information is needed on gender-based differences in the type of work children are expected to perform and the risks they encounter while doing so, which would enable more gender-sensitive policies addressing these issues to be formulated. The current report breaks new ground in providing, for the first time, estimates of children's involvement in household chores in their own homes.

The results, which show that girls shoulder disproportionate responsibility for household chores, also raise important gender concerns that merit consideration in child labour policies.

**Region.** The Africa region remains a particular priority. Progress has stalled in the region, meaning it has fallen even further behind the rest of the world in the fight against child labour. Child labour in Africa occurs in large part in family agriculture. Addressing the factors leading to a dependence of family farms on children's labour will therefore be critical to progress in the region. But a focus on Africa must not be at the expense of efforts elsewhere. Each of the world's regions presents unique priorities and challenges that must be addressed to ensure no child is left behind in child labour. The populous Asia and the Pacific region remains critical if only for the sheer numbers of children still in child labour. Progress in the Americas region has not been shared equally across or within countries; significant groups, including indigenous children, have been left behind. Europe and Central Asia stands out as a region where child labour is almost entirely hazardous work performed by adolescents. Many of the Arab States are characterized by fragility and crisis, leaving children especially vulnerable to extreme forms of exploitation and abuse.

## 2.3 Building the knowledge base

There is an ongoing need for information about the *impact* of policies and interventions on child labour. With the exception of cash transfers, still too little is known about the effectiveness of interventions in policy areas of relevance to child labour, which, in turn, is impeding policy development.<sup>29</sup> This knowledge gap also makes it difficult to demonstrate to the international community that money invested has been well spent and it hampers future resource allocation decisions.

There is a general need for more knowledge of the implications for child labour of broader global challenges, including climate change, migration, inequality, urbanization, and changes in the world of work. We also need to know more about how child labour is linked to other violations of fundamental labour rights, including discrimination in the workplace and restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The effective targeting of policies will also require better information on children in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work,<sup>30</sup> building on the research work already undertaken in the field of child forced labour and children affected by armed conflict and utilizing the tools developed by the ILO and other bodies for measuring the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work.<sup>31</sup>

Some gaps also remain in child labour data and statistics, despite the large strides that have already been made in these areas. Data on child labour is now available for much of the less-industrialized world, but there is still a need in many countries to ensure the regularity and consistency of data gathering for the purpose of monitoring progress. These data needs also extend beyond the less-industrialized world. Some middle-income countries have ceased to collect or publish data on work below the minimum working age, and many high-income countries have never collected data on child labour, despite the fact that we know that child labour persists in these countries.

## 2.4 International cooperation and partnership

Alliance 8.7 has a key role to play in supporting governments in efforts towards ending child labour by the 2025 target date, as part of a broader integrated strategy to promote fundamental freedoms, principles, and rights at work. In many countries, the cost of required action far exceeds available government resources, meaning that governments will not be able to achieve child labour targets if they are left to act alone. International cooperation, partnerships, and assistance is therefore imperative to success against child labour, within the spirit of Article 8 of ILO Convention No. 182. UN agencies, other multilateral and bilateral organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and a variety of other groups involved all have an important role to play in this regard. The returns on the investment in ending child labour are incalculable. Children who are free from the burden of child labour are able to fully realize their rights to education, leisure, and healthy development, in turn providing the essential foundation for broader social and economic development, poverty eradication, and human rights.







# Annex:

## Methodology

The starting point for measuring child labour for the purpose of the ILO global estimates of child labour is children aged 5 to 17 years in employment. Among children in employment, those in designated hazardous industries are first separated from those employed in other branches of economic activity. In the present context, designated hazardous industries are mining and quarrying (ISIC Rev. 4 codes 05-09) and construction (ISIC Rev. 4 codes 41-43).<sup>32</sup>

Among children engaged in other branches of economic activity, those engaged in designated hazardous occupations are identified next. Designated hazardous occupations are those defined for the purpose of the ILO global estimates of child labour in ISCO-88 codes 313, 322-323, 516, 614-615, 711-713, 721-724, 731-732, 811-816, 821-823, 825-829, 832-834, 911-912, 915-931, and 933.<sup>33</sup>

Next, among children not engaged in either hazardous industries or hazardous occupations, those who worked long hours during the reference week are identified. Long hours are defined for the purpose of the global estimates as 43 or more hours of work during the reference week. The 43-hour threshold was the same used in earlier ILO global estimates. It corresponds to approximately the midpoint of normal hours of work stipulated by national legislations, mostly in the range of 40 to 44 hours.

The next step identifies children who were exposed to other hazardous work conditions not captured by the designated hazardous industries or occupations, or with long hours of work. This step is implemented only in national surveys

where detailed data on hazardous work conditions are collected, such as night work and work in extreme temperatures.

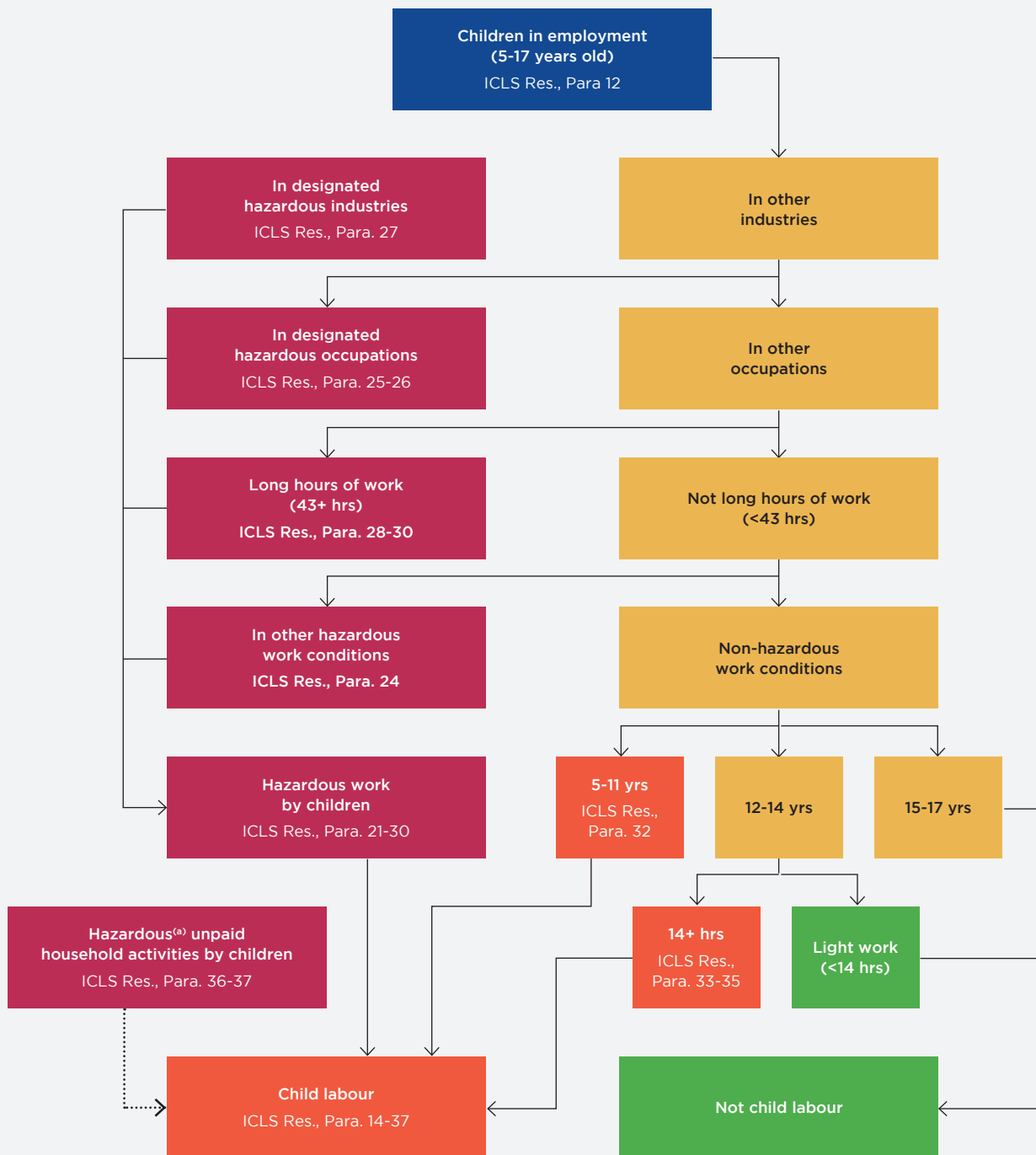
The total number of children in designated hazardous industries, children in hazardous occupations, children with long hours of work, and children working in other hazardous conditions constitutes in aggregate the overall number of children in hazardous work.

As shown in Figure 20, the final estimate of child labour is obtained by adding two more categories to the number of children in hazardous work, namely children aged 5-11 years engaged in any form of employment and children aged 12-14 years working 14 hours or more per week. The 14-hour threshold distinguishes between permissible light work and other work that cannot be considered as permissible light work. The same threshold was used in the earlier ILO global estimates. It corresponds to two hours of work per day over a calendar week, covering both school days or holidays.

No attempt has been made at this stage to define work-hour thresholds or other criteria for identifying children engaged in hazardous unpaid household services. The cross-classifications are meant to provide information on the number and characteristics of children engaged in unpaid household services in general, and to examine if necessary the impact of different criteria for identifying children in hazardous unpaid household services.

Figure 20

Conceptual framework of the 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour



**Source:** ILO-IPEC. Hagemann F., et al. *Global child labour trends 2000 to 2004*, ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva, ILO, 2006, with reference to the ILO resolution concerning statistics of child labour. Report of the Conference. 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Document ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL. Geneva, 24 November-5 December 2008.

**Note:** (a) This term “hazardous” in the context of unpaid household services (as found in the 18th ICLS resolution paragraphs 15 (c), 36 and 37) may in fact include the element of hindrance to education or other criteria wider than ‘hazardous’ economic activity (covered by the ICLS resolution paragraph 17 (d)) that requires the minimum age of 18 years under Convention No. 138 and to be included as a worst form of child labour prohibited by Convention No. 182.

In total, national data sets from 105 countries were used for the 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour. Data is derived from national household surveys. The majority of the data sets (81) refer to the target reference period 2012 to 2016. In some cases, data from earlier years was nevertheless used in order to provide better representation of the geographic diversity of child labour worldwide. The list of the national data sets is given in Annex 2 of the *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*.<sup>34</sup> It represents a significant increase from the 75 national data sets from 53 countries used for the 2012 estimates, and the 60 data sets from 50 countries used for the 2008 estimates.

The distribution of national data sets by type of source include: 24 national data sets derived from child labour surveys (CLS) implemented by the ILO in collaboration with national bureaus of statistics and with additional financial support from the United States Department of Labor; 17 national data sets from the multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS), implemented with the assistance of UNICEF; 17 data sets from demographic and health surveys (DHS), mostly implemented with funding from USAID; 17 data sets from national labour force surveys (LFS) or other national household surveys; and finally, 30 data sets limited to children aged 15-17 years derived from national LFS conducted under Eurostat regulations.

In terms of geographical coverage, the available data sets cover more than 1,100 million children aged 5-17 years, corresponding to about 70 per cent of the world population of children in that age group. The coverage rate is significantly higher than the rates in the previous two rounds of global estimates (44.4 per cent in 2008 and 53.1 per cent in 2012). All world regions are covered, and data from OECD countries and China are included for the first time.

The regional and global estimates of child labour are derived by extrapolation of national data sets. In general, regional and global estimates based on partial coverage of all countries and territories

may be achieved by imputing values for the missing countries and territories and aggregating the results to regional and global totals. Another approach is to treat the countries with available data sets as a sample of countries selected, with some probabilities from all countries and territories. Under this approach, the regional and global estimates are obtained by applying extrapolation weights to the available national data sets.

The idea of treating the available countries as a probability sample of all countries was introduced at the ILO's first attempt to produce global estimates of child labour. At that time, a limited number of countries with national data sets were available for global estimates, and it was considered inefficient and inappropriate to impute values for the missing countries, which formed the overall majority of countries.

In 2016, however, the number of countries with available data sets on child labour in one form or another greatly increased and missing countries are now a minority. The first approach, based on imputation of values for missing countries, could perhaps be justified. But, for the sake of comparability, it has been decided to maintain the second approach of extrapolation for the present round of global estimates, perhaps for the last time.

The estimation procedure consists of extrapolating the sample of harmonized national data sets to regional and global values by weighting each country according to its relative share of the total number of children in the region. The weighting factors are calculated for each sex and age group separately, and are calibrated to conform to the benchmark UN population estimates and projections for 2016.

The 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour are evaluated in terms of their standard errors and compared with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) data on school attendance and national trends in child labour in selected countries with data sets in different years. The method-

ology used for harmonizing age groups is also evaluated based on national data for two countries. All details on each of these methodological topics can be consulted in the *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour*.<sup>35</sup>

Last but not least, it is important to highlight that the latest estimates break new ground in providing the first-ever global estimates of children's involvement in household chores, of the relationship between child labour and schooling, and of the hours worked by children in child labour. Critical child labour indicators are also disaggregated by region and gender for the first time.







# End notes

1. ILO and Walk Free Foundation: *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
2. ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour*, (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
3. ILO and Walk Free Foundation: *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
4. ILO: *The end of child labour: Within reach, Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, Report of the Director-General, Report I (B), International Labour Conference, 95th Session, Geneva, 2006.
5. ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour*, (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
6. The exception is the Europe and Central Asia region, which ranks second highest in terms of the share of children in hazardous work but fourth highest in terms of the share of children in child labour. This is because almost all child labourers in the region are adolescents involved in hazardous work.
7. This report makes use of the new regional classification system developed by ILO-STAT. However, as we do not have historical estimates for the Africa region, we revert to the previous regional grouping – sub-Saharan Africa – for the purpose of assessing trends.
8. For a review of the literature in this area, see ILO: *World Report on Child Labour: Economic vulnerability, social protection and the fight against child labour* (Geneva, ILO, 2013).
9. Blanco F.; Guarcello L.; Rosati F.C.: “Child labour among Syrian refugees in Jordan” (*Mimeo*, 2017).
10. See, for example, UNICEF and Save the Children Foundation, *Small hands heavy burden: How the Syria conflict is driving more children into the workforce*, 2 July 2015 ([https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9161/pdf/sciunicefchildlabourreport\\_july2015.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9161/pdf/sciunicefchildlabourreport_july2015.pdf)); and the Terre des hommes International Federation, *Child Labour Report 2016, Because we struggle to survive: Child Labour among Refugees of the Syrian Conflict*, June 2016 ([https://terredeshommes.it/pdf/abstract\\_ITA\\_Rapporto\\_Bambini\\_Lavoratori\\_Siria\\_2016.pdf](https://terredeshommes.it/pdf/abstract_ITA_Rapporto_Bambini_Lavoratori_Siria_2016.pdf)).
11. *Inter-agency Guidance: Supporting the Protection Needs of Child Labourers in Emergencies*. ILO and Plan International, Child Labour Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016.
12. The services subsectors of most relevance for child labour include: hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail trade (commerce); maintenance and repair of motor vehicles; transport; other community, social and personal service activities; and domestic workers.
13. The industry subsectors of most relevance for child labour include construction, mining, and manufacturing.
14. ILO and Walk Free Foundation: *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
15. The concept “forced or compulsory labour” is any work or service that is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily. It can occur where work is forced upon people by state authorities, by private enterprises or by individuals. For more details on methodology and underlying data, see: ILO and Walk Free Foundation: *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017).
16. Guarcello L.; Lyon, S.; Rosati, F.C.; Valdivia C: *Adolescents in hazardous work: Child labour among children aged 15-17 years*, Understanding Children’s Work Programme, working paper series, Rome, 2016.
17. ILO: *Gender and child labour in agriculture* ([http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Agriculture/WCMS\\_172261/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Agriculture/WCMS_172261/lang--en/index.htm)).
18. ILO: *Unpaid household services and child labour*, 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ILO, Geneva, 2013).
19. See Resolution II concerning statistics of child labour in: ILO: *Report of the Conference, 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 24 November–5 December 2008*. ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL (ILO, Geneva, 2009).
20. See, for example, Dayioğlu, M.: *Impact of Unpaid Household Services on the Measurement of Child Labour*, MICS Methodological Papers, No. 2, Statistics and Monitoring Section, Division of Policy and Strategy, UNICEF, New York, 2013; and Lyon S.; Ranzani M.; Rosati F.C.: *Unpaid household services and child labour, Understanding Children’s Work Programme*, working paper series, Rome, 2013. It should be stressed, however, that there are no agreed legal or statistical norms governing work-hour thresholds in the measurement of household chores.
21. See, inter alia, Emerson, P.M., Ponczek V.; Portela Souza, A.: “Child Labor and Learning,” in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, University of Chicago Press, (2017, vol. 65(2), January), pp. 265–296, and the literature cited therein.
22. For a detailed review of evidence see: (1) ILO: *Joining forces against child labour – Inter-agency report for the Hague Global Child Labour Conference* (Geneva, 2010); (2) ILO: *World Report on Child Labour: Economic vulnerability, social protection and the fight against child labour* (Geneva, 2013); and (3) ILO: *World Report on Child Labour: Paving the way to decent work for young people* (Geneva, 2015).

23. The implications of these global challenges on policies in the child labour sphere are discussed in detail in the 2017 ILO World Report on Child Labour (forthcoming).
24. As of 7 August 2017.
25. See, for example, de Hoop, J.; Rosati, F.C.: *Cash transfers and child labor*, Understanding Children's Work Programme, working paper series, Rome, 2014.
26. ILO, 2013. World Report on Child Labour: Economic vulnerability, social protection and the fight against child labour. International Labour Office, Geneva. <http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=19565>.
- ILO, 2014. World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice. International Labour Office, Geneva. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_245201.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_245201.pdf) ; <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.action?themeld=3985>.
- ILO, forthcoming. World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. International Labour Office, Geneva.
27. The ILO Future of Work Initiative, launched in 2017, aimed at helping to promote improved understanding of, and policy responses to, the major changes occurring in the world of work.
28. ILO: *The youth employment crisis: A call for action*, resolution and conclusions of the 101<sup>st</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2012.
29. For further information on impact evaluations relating to child labour, see De Hoop, J.; Rosati, F.C.: *The Complex Effects of Public Policy on Child Labour*, Understanding Children's Work Programme, working paper series, Rome, 2013.
30. The worst forms of child labour other than hazardous refer to Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO Convention No. 182: “(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties”.
31. See, for example, ILO: *Hard to see, harder to count: Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children*, the ILO Special Action Programme to combat forced labour (SAP-FL) and the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), (Geneva, 2012); and ILO: *Sampling elusive populations: Applications to studies of child labour* (<http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=25535>), (Geneva, 2013).
32. UN International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC Rev. 4), <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regcst.asp?Cl=27>.
33. ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88), <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08>.
34. ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour*, (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)
35. ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour*, (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2017)





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