

MOBILE GROUP OF COMBATING CHILD LABOUR: PARAMETERS THAT INDICATE THE NEED FOR CONSTANT AND ARTICULATED OPERATION IN THE DEFENSE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Emerson Victor Hugo Costa de Sá¹
Felipe Caetano da Cunha²
Valena Jacob Chaves³
Isabella Silva Matosinhos⁴

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the continuous and coordinated operation of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour. This initiative is part of the strengthening of strategies to combat child exploitation in the field of work and aligns with the United Nations' designation of the year 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. The Mobile Group emphasizes the importance of implementing Conventions 138 and 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and item 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which aim to eliminate child labour by 2025. This study uses bibliographic and documentary techniques to address the topic of child labour in Brazil, based on theory and data analysis. The paper examines the origin and performance of the Mobile Group, and its concrete experiences and perspectives on coordinated efforts with agencies within the network for the protection of children and youth. Finally, the paper presents the results of inspections related to the fight against modern slavery in comparison with those aimed at ending child labour. From January to April 2021, there were 245 actions, 345 children and adolescents were reached, 170 infraction reports, and identification of child labour in the worst forms (38.4%). Most victims were between fourteen and seventeen years old (87.8%), male (76.8%), and worked in the food sector (32.5%) and retail trade (22.3%). To conclude, this paper criticizes the current state of affairs related to child exploitation and proposes changes, though the resumption of the Mobile Group, to safeguard the rights of children and adolescents in child labour conditions.

KEYWORDS

child labour; child and adolescent; labour inspection; mobile group.

¹ Federal University of Pará (UFPA), [ORCID](#)

² Federal University of Pará (UFPA), [ORCID](#)

³ Federal University of Pará (UFPA), [ORCID](#)

⁴Translator. Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), [ORCID](#).
isabellasmatosinhos@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the proposal for the performance and functioning of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour (MGCCL)⁵ in a constant and coordinated manner with the goal of defending the interests of children and adolescents, as well as strengthening to tackle child labour.

The United Nations (UN) has designated 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour (UN, 2019) and stressed the significance of implementing Conventions no. 138 and no. 182, both originating from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the organization responsible for leading mobilization efforts by states. Furthermore, item 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda provides for the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030, while child labour in all forms must be eliminated by 2025. The overcoming of the worst forms of child labour must be addressed immediately. In Brazil, Decree 6,481 (Brasil, 2008) is the legal norm that stipulates the worst forms of child labour.

The Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988) assigns to the Union the responsibility to organize, maintain and conduct inspections related to working conditions (art. 21, XXIV). Therefore, Labour Inspection⁶ is an institution that plays a critical role in protecting the rights of children and adolescents, particularly in the context of exploitation, such as child labour. Indeed, the fundamental right not to work before the appropriate age is derived from the understanding of Article 7, XXXIII, of the Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988), Article 60 of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (Brasil, 1990) and Article 403 of the Consolidation of Labour Laws (Brazil, 1943). Given the complexity of the problem, the State must act in collaboration with different spheres and civil society organizations.

In this study, we show the need for the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour to operate efficiently and constantly, as initially provided for by Normative Instruction no. 112 of the Secretariat of Labour Inspection (SLI)⁷ (Brasil, 2014), a document later replaced by Ordinance no. 547 (Brazil, 2021). The applicable regulation is outlined in Article 34, item IV, and Articles 44 to 47 of the said

⁵ Translator Note (TN): Free translation based on the original term, in Portuguese, *Grupo Móvel de Fiscalização de Combate ao Trabalho Infantil (GMTI)*.

⁶ TN: The original name of the institution, in Portuguese, is *Auditoria Fiscal do Trabalho*.

⁷ TN: The original name of the institution, in Portuguese, is *Secretaria de Inspeção do Trabalho*.

ordinance. Despite these regulations, the MGCCL had not carried out regular actions by the first half of 2022. Although only five operations have been executed so far, we believe that the continuous and coordinated action of the MGCCL with different public bodies and civil society organizations has the potential to generate significant impacts on the prevention and eradication of child labour, both in the administrative and judicial spheres.

The MGCCL's actions are still sporadic. However, we believe that, like the fight against modern slavery, the existence of a mobile group that conducts permanent actions to prevent and suppress child labour is an initiative that can yield positive outcomes. Thus, it is essential for the group to operate in an organized and continuous manner, along with the lines of the mobile group of combating slave labour, which currently has four permanent teams working concurrently and collaboratively with the regional teams.

We emphasize that the existence and operation of a group at the national level to combat child labour does not diminish the importance of having inspection conducted by regional inspection teams. Considering that inspection is a responsibility of each labour inspector, the decision to discontinue the Special Group to Combat Child Labour and Protect the Adolescent Worker⁸ deserves criticism. We understand that this decision did not take into consideration the successful initiatives of the existing groups in the Regional Labour Precincts (currently Regional Superintendencies of Labour), which were exclusively dedicated to combating child exploitation. Currently, activities and projects are organized. However, the limitation of the number of active auditors has resulted in a significant reduction in personnel and, consequently, the precariousness of activities and projects related to the phenomenon. The existence of the MGCCL does not hinder the ability of regional and local bodies to deal with child labour. In fact, due to its organized and national approach, the Group can even contribute to strengthening the capillarity of local/regional actions.

The inspection to combat child labour has different characteristics from the actions to combat modern slavery. In Brazil, child labour occurs in all regions and has a significant impact on the informal economy, making it impossible (or incredibly hard) to identify the direct employer. Given that inspection teams are

⁸ TN: Free translation based on the original name of the group, in Portuguese, *Grupo Especial de Combate ao Trabalho Infantil e Proteção ao Trabalhador Adolescente (GECTIPA)*.

reduced in many Brazilian states, the MGCCL could provide support and act more decisively in regions with the most precarious structure, as well as in those with the highest rates of children and adolescents in irregular work. The Group could also act differently in situations involving what are considered the worst forms of child labour and those that occur in a context of invisibility, such as child domestic labour.

Regarding the methodology, this study employed bibliographic and documentary techniques. The literature review for this paper was mainly conducted through searches on public databases, notably the Sucupira Platform and Scientific Electronic Library Online, using keywords related to child labour, labour inspection and mobile inspection groups. The documentary research technique involved collecting, consolidating and presenting information obtained from normative texts, technical reports and data maintained by the Division of Supervision of Child Labour and Equal Opportunities, as well as other institutions such as the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, the Portuguese initials for *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, in the original term). The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is justified by the nature of the study, which aims to provide both theoretical and empirical analysis. In this mixed approach, we present the structure, results, potential and possibilities of inspection in the face of the occurrence of child labour, considering, above all, the existing experience with the repression of contemporary slave labour.

This paper intends to be critical and propositional, rather than simply descriptive or expository, regarding the current state of affairs. Throughout the text it is possible to glimpse new possibilities for addressing the issue of child labour in Brazil. Notably, such possibilities involve social articulation, encouraging the networking between institutions and public bodies, such as the Labour Inspection, the Public Defender's Office, the Guardianship Council, ministerial portfolios, secretariats of states and municipalities, as well as different branches of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

The text is structured around a discussion of child labour in the country, drawing on both theoretical perspectives and public data. It then examines the origins and functioning of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour before exploring concrete experiences and the Group's potential for action in a coordinated and continuous manner with other organizations that are part of the child and adolescent protection network.

2. CHILD LABOUR IN BRAZIL: THEORY AND NUMBERS

Child labour is a social scourge that still exists in the Brazilian society. It has been present in Brazil since the Portuguese invasion in 1500, when child labour was carried out by pages on ships. Orphaned and Jewish children were responsible for cleaning ships and performing other inadequate services, were victims of violence and were subjected to jobs that were almost never paid (Santos, 2020). From a colonial perspective, it is possible to mention the enslavement of indigenous and black children as an attempt to domesticate boys and girls through forced labour. In this sense, “there was an importation of child labour from Europe to Brazil” (Santos, 2020, p. 30)⁹.

In the post-abolition period of slavery in Brazil, the spaces occupied by the black population were similar to those observed before 1888. This was because they were not paid for their work, unlike non-black workers, although the conditions in which they worked were precarious and unhealthy. Children and adolescents from sugarcane and coffee plantations occupied the centres and peripheral areas of cities, providing different types of work (Santos, 2020).

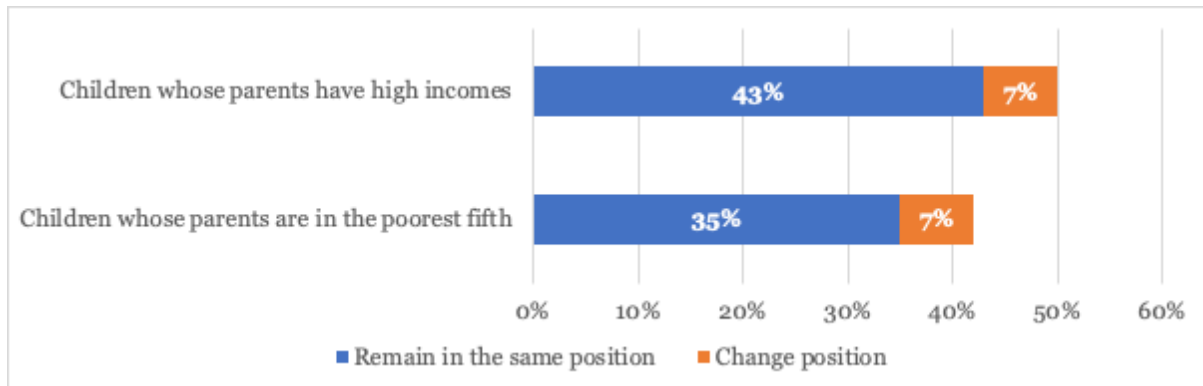
Currently, child labour is understood as a multiple violation of the human rights of children and adolescents. This type of labour exploitation violates the right to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. The practice prevents boys and girls from lower economic classes from later occupying better places in the labour market. Therefore, child labour works as a secular tool for imprisoning children and families in poverty and misery. It is a way of perpetuating the cycle of poverty and marginalization.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) points out that in Brazil, “35% of children whose parents are in the poorest fifth of the income distribution also end up in this position; only 7% of them reach the richest fifth” (OECD, 2018). In turn, “43% of children whose parents have high incomes grow up to also have high incomes and only 7% fall to the position of the lowest incomes” (OECD, 2018) (Figure 1). In other words, this means that overcoming social barriers and alternating wealth distribution are directly associated with the previous socioeconomic condition of children and adolescents.

⁹ TN: Free translation based on the Portuguese reference consulted in this work.

Figure 1

Situation of children in relation to their parents' economic position in income distribution



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from OECD (2018).

According to the International Labour Organization, child labour is the work performed by children and adolescents below the minimum age established in each country for admission to employment. In Brazil, it is any form of work performed below the minimum age allowed by law, corresponding to sixteen years, except for apprenticeships, which can start from the age of fourteen. Regardless, until the individual turns eighteen, there are limitations on the work performed by teenagers. Among them, prohibitions on night work and activities that are likely to be hazardous, painful, unhealthy or harmful to their physical, psychological, social and moral development. The restrictions apply to all economic and survival activities, with or without the intent of profit, and whether paid or not (Brasil, 2019).

Based on these guidelines, it is estimated that in Brazil around 772,000 adolescents between sixteen and seventeen years old are involved with child labour, violating national legislation (IBGE, 2020). Premature entry into the labour market primarily affects a specific target audience. The audience is defined by certain characteristics and this generates consequences for the complete development of children and adolescents, as we shall discuss in the following sections.

2.1 CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LABOUR IN BRAZIL

The perpetuation of the cycle of misery, a situation experienced by thousands of Brazilian families, proves that child labour is not a noble pursuit. On the contrary, it violates the fundamental rights and guarantees of children and adolescents. The persistence of precarious living and working conditions over time indicates that child labour is part of the logic of domination of capital, as “it is one of the forms of work considered indecent by the ILO, resulting from capitalist models of domination originated from ancient societies that used forced labour and slavery as a way of domination” (Santos, 2020, p. 89)¹⁰.

Working at an early age is a complex social phenomenon associated with different factors. In low-income families, poverty is one of these most relevant aspects. The scenario is worsened in situations of high vulnerability, where parents are unemployed and do not have access to social security benefits, or when they work in precarious activities and are underpaid, so that the income received is insufficient to support the family. Thus, the early entry of children/adolescents into the world perpetuates the cycle of poverty, in which children, without concrete perspectives, reproduce the condition experienced by their family members.

Among the factors linked to early entry into the workforce, the ones that stand out are the poor quality of education and school dropout (ILO, 2001), as well as the family's lack of perception of the harm caused by child labour and the role that education plays on social progress. In addition, there is the culture of early entry into the workforce and the propagation of misconceptions and myths on the subject, based on a rhetoric that considers starting work at a very young age to be a virtuous practice.

Another point that should be noted is that the demand for work performed by children and adolescents is, in practice, seen as a way of reducing costs. This is due to the low pay and social protection involved in the employment of children, compared to the adult workforce. In addition, as highlighted by the International Labour Office (2016), there is a desire on the part of children and adolescents to join the consumer society. This situation facilitates, for example, their sexual exploitation and recruitment into drug trafficking (Silva & Urani, 2002).

Research shows that drug trafficking is one of the main reasons for the confinement of adolescents who committed infractions. However, these studies often do not consider that this reality is linked to situations of child labour

¹⁰ TN: Free translation based on the Portuguese reference consulted in this work.

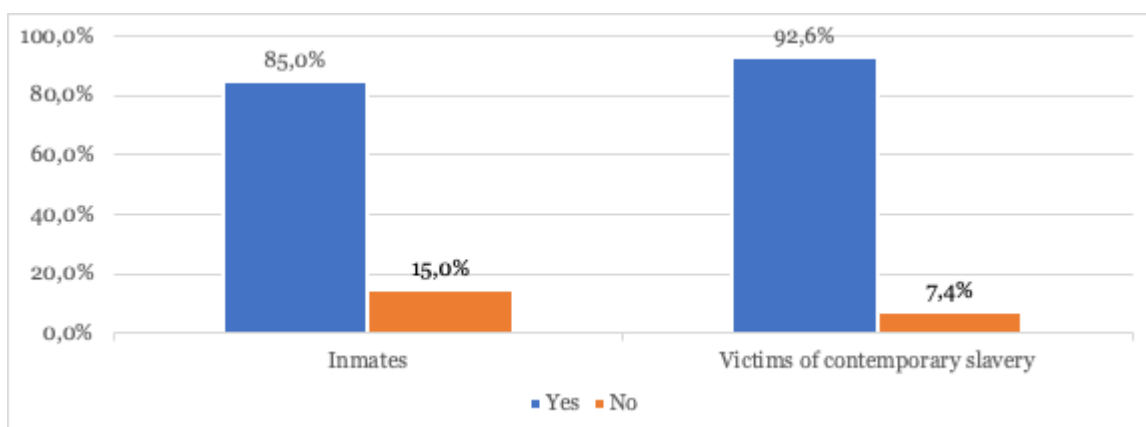
exploitation in its worst forms, with the adolescent appearing as a victim (Anunciação & Silva, 2019), as provided for in Decree 6,481 (Brasil, 2008), which lists the worst types of child labour.

The discourse about the so-called myths and legends about child labour is diverse, but none of them is stronger than the facts. Such myths and legends are commonly propagated in the social environment by those who aim to justify or encourage the continued exploitation of children and adolescents, contributing to a cycle of social exclusion that violates the right to start working only at the minimum working age.

First of all, the claim that work is a way of keeping people away from crime is not compatible with the fact that 85% of prisoners in Brazil started working during childhood (Fonseca, 1995). The statement that work ennobles mankind does not explain why young people from upper-class families are the minority in child labour. Nor does it explain why 92.6% of victims of contemporary slavery were previously subjected to child labour (ILO, 2011, p. 81). These indicators are important to understand the relationship between child labour exploitation and opportunities to build a decent future (Figure 2). We understand that early employment leads to a situation of precariousness. Thus, we consider it necessary to pay greater attention to the fight against child labour, as has been the case for some decades with regard to combating modern slavery.

Figure 2

Report of work during childhood between inmates and people living in modern slavery conditions

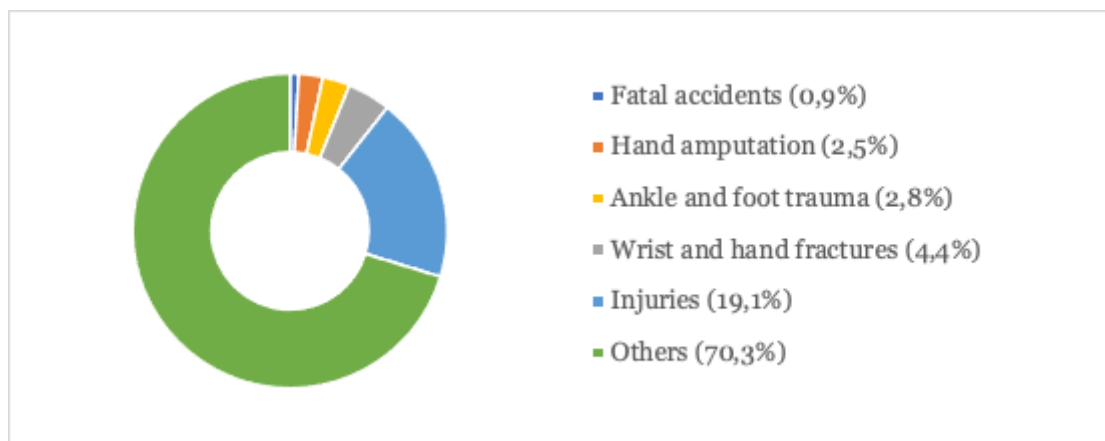


Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from Fonseca (1995) and ILO (2011).

The argument that there is no harm in child labour does not stand up to objective scrutiny, considering the record of 22,349 serious work accidents involving children and adolescents between five and seventeen years old from 2007 to 2016 (FNPETI, 2017). Among these cases, there were situations of hand amputation (552), injuries (4,264), wrist and hand fractures (994), ankle and foot trauma (631), as well as fatal accidents (200) (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Notifications of serious accidents involving children and adolescents (2007-2016)



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour¹¹ (2017).

Reports of adults who consider themselves successful after entering the workforce early are the exception to the rule and do not exclude possible consequences for their physical and mental development in the short, medium and long term. The statement that working is necessary to help the family reverses social roles and disregards that the duty to support the child is a shared responsibility of the family, government and society (ILO, 2001). Arguments that consider child labour as an opportunity to accumulate experience for future jobs also does not hold up. Such reasoning is incompatible with the fact that school dropout is one of the factors that hinder educational opportunities that could

¹¹ TN: The original term, in Portuguese, is *Fórum Nacional de Prevenção e Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (FNPETI)*.

enable a dignified job with suitable conditions and remuneration in adulthood. On the contrary, school dropout is related to precarious jobs.

As for the consequences related to psychological, moral and social development, early entry into the workforce introduces a person to a reality of rigid rules and hierarchies, in which the natural anxieties of childhood and adolescence are suppressed. Adapting working conditions to the characteristics of children and adolescents does not solve this problem, as the work experience itself can affect the construction of a healthy and productive human being (ILO, 2001). The exposure of immature neurological and psychological systems to factors such as fear, insecurity and exploitation can lead to psychological fatigue, depression and loss of self-esteem (SLI, 2000).

Working wears out the body, compromises dedication to studies and makes learning difficult or impossible. This has repercussions on access to education, professionalization and economic development of children and adolescents. Premature insertion into work reduces the importance given by families and children to formal education (Custódio & Veronese, 2007), which hinders the integral development of the individual (Goulart, 2005). This equation, which is based on child labour, results in lower future earnings and compromising opportunities for upward mobility and full development of the person.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD LABOUR

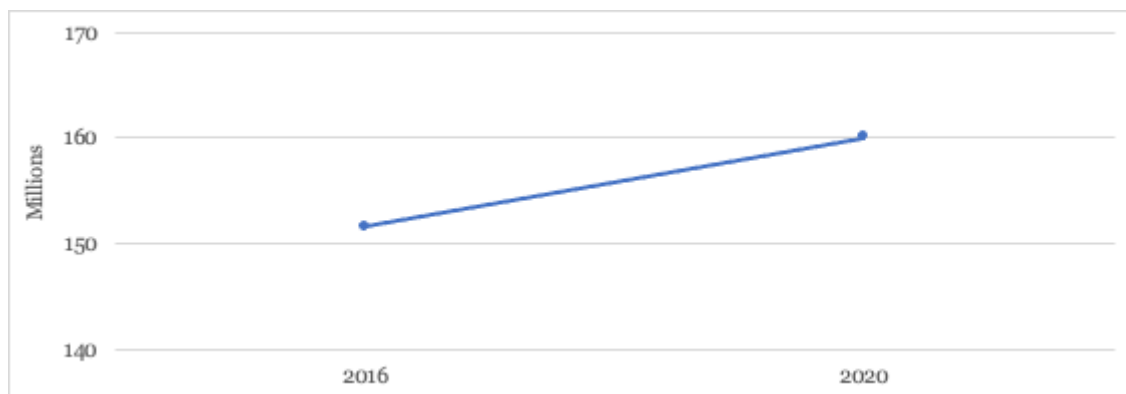
Over the past few decades, Brazil has witnessed a slow and gradual reduction in the number of children and adolescents engaged in child labour. In 1992, the count was 7.8 million, which decreased to 2.5 million in 2016, and further to 1.8 million in 2019 (Brasil, 2019; FNPETI, 2021). However, despite this substantial decline, a significant proportion of minors are still exposed to various forms of child labour, including crime, drug trafficking, sexual exploitation, modern slavery and several many other activities listed among the worst forms of child labour.

While the world has made progress in reducing the incidence of child labour by 38% in the last decade (ILO, 2021), Brazil is still lagging behind in its commitments made in ILO Conventions no. 138 and no. 182. More recently, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ILO have highlighted that there has been an increase of 8.4 million cases of irregular work carried out by children and adolescents worldwide between 2016 and 2020 (Figure 4), taking the total

number to 160 million cases globally (UNICEF, 2021). Such a steep increase has not been recorded for decades and it may impact the stagnation or growth of child labour estimates in Brazil.

Figure 4

Cases of child labour in the world, in millions (2016-2020)



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from ILO and UNICEF (2021).

According to data released by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the Brazilian National Household Sample Survey (PNAD, the initials for the Portuguese term *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*) and detailed by the the National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (2021), in 2021 there were 1.8 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 engaged in child labour in Brazil. This amount includes individuals who work solely in economic activities (1.2 million), those who work solely in activities for self-consumption (436 thousand) and those who work in both economic activities and those carried out for self-consumption (108 thousand) (IBGE, 2020).

Table 1

Profile of the child labour victim

Variable	%
<i>Age</i>	
14-17 age group	19,5
under 14	20,5
<i>Race / colour</i>	

Black people	65,6
Non-black people	34,4
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	65,8
Female	34,2
<i>Area</i>	
Urban	60,5
Rural	39,5
<i>Remuneration</i>	
Did not receive, or worked for self-consumption	47,2
Received	52,8
<i>Economic activity</i>	
Services	44,0
Agriculture	27,7
Other services	28,3
<i>Occupation</i>	
Clerk	6,1
Elementary agricultural work	4,9
Book-keepers	4,9
Caregivers of children	4,9
Skilled agricultural work	3,5
Other occupations	16,8
<i>Worst forms</i>	
Yes	38,4
No	61,6

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from IBGE (2020).

The table above presents a profile of child labour victim (Table 1), where 79.5% are between 14 and 17 years old; 65.6% are black; 65.% are male; and 60.5% are from urban areas. Almost half (47.2%) are performing unpaid activity or working in activities for private consumption, with 44.0% working in the services sector and 27.7% working in agriculture. Their job titles include clerks (6.1%), elementary agricultural workers (4.9%), bookkeepers (4.9%), child caregivers (3.8%) and skilled agricultural workers (3.5%). Of this group, a significant portion (38.4%) is still performing some of the worst forms of child labour. Although girls represent about one-third of the group, they comprise nearly all the child domestic workers, which is a prohibited activity for those under 18 and one of the worst forms of child labour.

It is worth noting that Brazil has already been internationally condemned by the Inter-American System of Human Rights for failing to prevent children and adolescents from entering the labour market too early. On July 15, 2020, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights deliberated on the judgment of the case of the Workers of the Fireworks Factory of Santo Antônio de Jesus and their families. The Court recognized the precarious working conditions of women and children that resulted in the explosion of the fireworks factory. As a consequence of the explosion, 60 people were killed and six survived, with injuries. Among the survivors were 23 children aged 11 or older. Another survivor was a baby girl who was born prematurely, in the fifth month of pregnancy, because the tragedy took her mother's life (Loureiro, Sá, & Silva, 2021).

When assessing the case, the Court identified a framework of structural and intersectional discrimination that perpetuates violations associated poverty, marginalization and child labour. This systematic pattern of inequality has held the country accountable for its omissive behavior in the face of child labour exploitation. According to Article 19 of the American Convention on Human Rights, to which Brazil is a signatory, the State must protect the rights of children. The exposed pattern demands specific remedial measures, as well as structural ones. Such measures are necessary given the historical and normative context, as well as the reality faced by city's inhabitants of affected communities across the country.

Therefore, the international accountability of the Brazilian State resulted from its failure to protect children and adolescents from economic exploitation and work before the proper age, which is a violation of human rights. The country's conviction included the payment of compensation proportional to the damages and the adoption of remedial measures that could impact the affected community. In short, a framework of structural discrimination allows the continuity of children and adolescents exploitation characterized by certain social, racial and economic conditions, in a cycle of reproduction of differentiated levels of citizenship (Holston, 2013).

As can be seen from the sentence issued by the Court, the dynamics of the socio-spatial distribution of work at the fireworks factory in the city of Santo Antônio de Jesus, in the state of Bahia, indicates a pattern of intersectional violence or discrimination of black women and children living in the peripheral region. These workers combine work at home and in improvised and unsafe facilities at

work. All this in exchange for low remuneration proportional to the production, motivated by the setting of very tough targets.

Structural violence arises from the historical and material conditions of people's experiences in socioeconomic forms of control. The position of marginality in which they find themselves means that social mobility is limited by barriers that have already been consolidated for a long time. Intersectionality, in turn, results from the convergence of the various forms of violence that shape their existence. Aspects of gender, age, social class, race, education and geographic location are markers that stigmatize and make up the system of oppression (Loureiro et al. al., 2020).

Therefore, in order to change these realities, effective implementation of public policies aimed at overcoming inequality and the historical exclusion of children, adolescents, young people and adults residing in peripheral locations is essential. In this sense, there must be investment in measures that promote education and professional qualification. Such measures have the potential to contribute to overcoming the constraints that permeate this context, with a view to breaking the vicious cycles of poverty, child labour and marginalization.

2.3. ALTERNATIVES FOR OVERCOMING CHILD LABOUR

Public policies are needed to combat child labour, including strengthening the inspections and implementing permanent actions by the MGCCL teams. In addition, expanding and strengthening apprenticeship programs (Law 10,097/2000), because this could provide significant benefits to adolescents and young people in socially vulnerable situations who reside on the outskirts of large cities or in remote parts of the country. This can be achieved by implementing the program in public institutions and promoting social projects that mediate the withdrawal of adolescents from early entry into the workforce and promote their qualitative insertion in the labour market. The issue should also involve the effective punishment of employers who fail to reserve special vacancies for these people.

The International Labour Organization (2013) identifies the age group 15 to 17 as the convergence point for combating child labour and improving working conditions, requiring specific alternatives. The age group with the highest concentration of child labour (14 to 17) and the highest unemployment rates (14 to

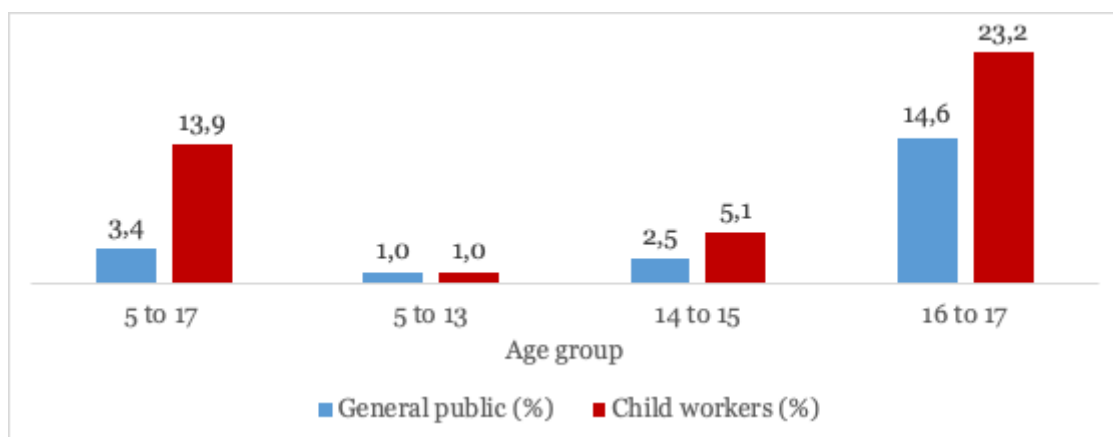
17 and 18 to 24) coincide with the apprenticeship public, in accordance with the terms of Law 10,097 /2000. This law plays an important role in making it possible for adolescents and young people to find their first job. Similarly, Article 53 of Decree 9,579/2018 reinforces the priority that must be given to adolescents in filling the vacancies reserved for this contractual modality.

The COVID-19 pandemic raises concerns about the social after-effects it generates, including the worsening of child labour in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Preliminary studies suggest an increase in poverty and misery. This scenario reaffirms the need for the effective functioning of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour as one of the strategies to curb this trend.

As for the educational sector, school dropout is a concerning issue (Figure 5). Among the total population of children and adolescents aged between 5 and 17, 3.4% are non-students, while among child workers, the estimate is 13.9%. The difference is most evident in the age group 16 to 17. In this range, 14.6% did not attend school. However, analyzing only adolescents in the context of child labour, this proportion rises to 23.2% (IBGE, 2020). The social cost of early work is high, but the damage it causes is not restricted to children and their families. It affects society as a whole, leading to a shortage of skilled labour and fewer people able to contribute to the country's growth.

Figure 5

Children and adolescents aged 5-17 who do not study – comparison between the general public and the group of child workers



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the IBGE.

All types of child labour are harmful to children, adolescents and society in general, although some modalities are more harmful than others, depending on the degree of exposure, the workplace or the circumstances in which they are performed. These are realities that are most harmful to the health, safety and morals of victims of early work and are defined as the worst forms of child labour. In this sense, Convention no. 138 (ILO, 1973) represents a great advance in establishing the minimum age for admission to employment.

After 25 years, Convention no. 182, which prohibits the worst forms of child labour, was created as a result of the 1998 International Labour Conference. This milestone was made possible in part by the efforts of civil society, led by the Indian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarth. Hundreds of children took part in the conference and demanded immediate action to eliminate the most serious forms of child labour around the world (Corrêa, 2020). At the end of the conference, Mr. Michel Hansenne, ILO Director General at the time, declared that the movement was encouraging and generated hope for a better world (ILO, 1998).

Convention no. 182 reinforces Convention no. 138, which calls for more effective international action to eliminate the most harmful forms of child labour. The preamble of Convention no. 182 stresses the need for immediate, global and comprehensive action, "taking into account the importance of free basic education and the need to remove the children concerned from all such work and to provide for the rehabilitation and social integration while addressing the needs of their families". Therefore, the worst forms of child labour demand urgent actions for its eradication. In Brazil, Convention no. 182 was incorporated into our legal system through Decree No. 6,481 (Brazil, 2008). This decree lists 93 activities considered to be the worst forms of work for children and adolescents, divided into activities harmful to the health, safety and morals of children.

Finally, it is increasingly necessary to promote ways to reduce and eradicate child labour. It is therefore essential to constantly monitor these activities that violate fundamental and human labour rights. In this sense, the following section discusses coping strategies, which involves the need for a national mobile group with constant, structured and articulated action, in order to firmly combat child labour that still exists in the Brazilian context.

3. ORIGIN AND OPERATION OF THE MOBILE GROUP OF COMBATING CHILD LABOUR

Labour inspection is performed by officials from the Labour Inspectorate, as stipulated in ILO Conventions no. 81 and no. 129. In Brazil, this function is carried out by the Labour Inspection career, which is part of the organizational structure of the Federal Executive Branch. Technically, inspectors are linked to the central authority of the Undersecretariat for Labour Inspection¹², a body that is part of the Secretariat of Labour Inspection. Their administrative linkage and corresponding assignment and exercise of the position occur in the regional units of the states or in the central body itself. However, the performance of inspection agents does not happen in isolation, especially in situations of serious violations, which require investigation and eventual judicialization of the case to compel the offender to comply with the norms of the legal system. Therefore, it is essential to have a comprehensive approach.

Addressing child labour requires adaptation to this complex reality. Each economic activity and region of the country has particularities that need to be considered in the search for a solution to the problem. Thus, preventive and repressive approaches must be combined through monitoring and intersectoral articulation. This coordinated action pursues different goals, including keeping children and adolescents away from early work, ensuring labour rights and adopting adequate and lasting solutions to eradicate child labour.

In cases where those responsible for exploitation are identified, administrative and, eventually, judicial penalties must be imposed on them. In addition, reports are prepared to be sent to the competent authorities, such as the Public Prosecutor's Office, at several levels. With regard to labour issues, the Labour Prosecutor in charge assesses the suitability of additional measures to make a commitment or file relevant judicial actions to protect the interests involved. Furthermore, activating the institutional social protection network makes it possible to foster the guarantee and promotion of the rights of children and adolescents through school support, inclusion in apprenticeship programs, the

¹² TN: The original name of the institution, in Portuguese, is *Subsecretaria de Inspeção do Trabalho*.

productive organization of families, changes in economic activities to eliminate jobs taken by children and adolescents, in addition to other strategic measures.

To contribute to changing the reality of labour exploitation of children and adolescents, the MGCCL was instituted through Normative Instruction no. 112 of the Secretariat of Labour Inspection (Brasil, 2014), replaced by Ordinance no. 547 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Brazil, 2021). This is a group made up of teams designed to act in the most complex situations of child labour or those involving risk. Through the combination of repressive and preventive action (intersectoral articulation and monitoring), the objective is to ensure the sustainability of the results of inspection actions and the satisfaction of the rights and guarantees of children and adolescents, so that there is no recurrence. Thus, it is relevant to know how this mobile group is structured and how it operates.

3.1 OPERATION OF THE MOBILE GROUP AND INSPECTION

The aforementioned document establishes the rules for the constitution, organization and operation of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour (MGCCL). In any case, its performance must observe, as far as compatible, the rules contained in Chapter VI (Articles 48 to 60) of Normative Instruction no. 2, of November 8, 2021, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, regarding the role of the labour inspection in combating child labour and protecting adolescents workers. Besides, the MGCCL's performance must follow certain guidelines. Among them: specialized action, by carrying out planned actions, aimed primarily at the worst forms of child labour; operation based on repressive action, combined with intersectoral articulation; and the sustainability of the promoted actions, so that the results achieved can last and be enhanced.

As for the organization, the MGCCL is composed of a national coordination, under the responsibility of the Head of the Division of Child Labour Inspection and Equal Opportunities¹³, which integrates the structure of the Undersecretariat for Labour Inspection; a coordinator; a sub-coordinator; and an operational team (Articles 19, items I to III, and Article 47, Ordinance no. 547/2021). Therefore, the mobile group is composed of labour inspectors and operates nationwide. Its

¹³ TN: The original name of the institution, in Portuguese, is *Divisão de Fiscalização de Trabalho Infantil e Igualdade de Oportunidades (DTIOP)*.

members can be effective or occasional, with the exception of the national coordinator. During the performance of the actions, the members are technically and administratively linked to the Secretariat of Labour Inspection, although they preserve their original assignment. It means that they are not only focused on working in the mobile group. The management of the administrative measures necessary for the actions is the responsibility of the operational coordination (Article 21 of Ordinance no. 547/2021).

With regard to the national coordination, its competence is provided for in Article 20 of Ordinance no. 547/2021 and covers the coordination and supervision of the activities of the mobile group. It also comprises the availability of resources, structure and technical support necessary to carry out inspection operations. In addition, it includes the designation of coordinators and effective members of the teams, as well as the definition of their respective attributions. Finally, it includes the possibility of requisitioning, as needed, vehicles from the regional units to enable mobile inspections, especially when they have been acquired for this purpose.

In the practical aspect of the MGCCCL operation, it is up to the national coordination to share with the team members the inspection reports carried out by the mobile group or the report on the preliminary survey of the location where the operation will take place. Also, it is the national coordination that monitors the progress of operations and the results achieved and consolidates them. Finally, the national coordination can propose and organize meetings with team members, communicate with different agencies and request information about the measures taken within their respective competencies. Among the main agencies to be considered are the various levels of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Secretariat for Social Assistance of the Special Secretariat for Social Development and the Executive Branch of the involved municipalities.

Regarding the operational team coordination, its activities are provided for in Article 21 of Ordinance no. 547 (Brazil, 2021), which deals with the planning and coordination function. This role includes, among others, coordinating and supervising the group's activities; programming inspection actions based on an annual plan, fiscal intelligence projects, complaints received, and demands from decentralized inspection units; maintaining an updated registry of occasional members of the operational group; taking the necessary administrative measures for inspection actions; monitoring the progress and results of inspection actions;

making entries in the inspection's systems and software; proposing and organizing meetings with the group's members; and engaging in dialogue with civil society and other institutional partners who work with MGCCL's related objectives.

Regarding the planning phase of MGCCL's actions, some priorities must be addressed. Among them, the economic activities classified as the worst forms of child labour under Decree no. 6,481 (Brazil, 2008); the focus of action defined based on official studies that support the identification of situations of child labour, such as data provided by IBGE; and complaints about child labour received by regional units that present indicators of greater risk or operational complexity should be considered. In addition, information provided by worker unions, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the child and adolescent protection network, which includes the Guardianship Council and Social Assistance, must be taken into account.

For MGCCL's action planning, information gathering should consider the priorities established for the mobile group's operation, as well as socioeconomic and geographical government data for the definition of productive activities, municipalities and regions with the highest incidence of child labour, especially in its worst forms. This includes census data, rural census data, and the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD, in th, for example. In the same vein, sectoral public policies related to child and adolescent protection, the relationship of existing social inclusion programs in the municipality, and the respective number of children and adolescents served should be mapped. Finally, data on apprenticeship must be evaluated, especially the potential for quotas for the hiring of apprentices in the region, available vacancies, existing training institutions and courses, as well as mapping of productive chains and workplaces to be inspected.

The programming of actions will be the responsibility of the national coordinator, or a person designated by him/her, as well as the definition of the location of the actions, the economic activities to be inspected, and the necessary human and material resources. The applicable procedures and measures to be taken will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 INSPECTION PROCEDURES AND FORWARDING

Inspection actions will be carried out according to the operational procedure developed within the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour. Such

actions are elaborated by its coordinator, in accordance with applicable norms. Intersectoral articulation actions are a differential of the mobile group, as repressive action, represented by inspection actions, are combined with collective action within the child and adolescent protection network. In particular, the local representative of the ministerial department dealing with labour issues, representatives of the Labour Public Prosecutor's Office, at a state level, the Guardianship Councils and the City Hall, through the Municipal Secretariat for Social Assistance or a similar agency, must be sought.

The primary focus of articulation actions is to prevent recurrence and seek to prevent prohibited child and adolescent labour in vulnerable situations. To this end, some strategies are useful. Among them, the inclusion of children and adolescents in social programs (Program for the Eradication of Child Labour, Service for Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds, Service for Specialized Protection and Care for Families and Individuals, Single Registry for Social Programs - CadÚnico, among other)¹⁴ and educational programs at the municipal, state or federal level. There is also the monitoring of the enrollment and attendance of these individuals in schools and daycare centers, and the offering of places in apprenticeship and other existing policies.

Therefore, after completing the inspection of workplaces and identifying children and adolescents, the team coordinator, or person designated by him/her, will be able to carry out intersectoral articulation actions. For example, meetings can be held with different agencies and entities. At this point, it is important to present what is the context of child labour found in the region. From this, it is possible to define immediate measures to address the issue. In addition, it is proposed the establishment of an inter-institutional group, committee, or commission involving the different actors responsible for articulating actions to prevent and eradicate child labour in the municipality. Finally, a meeting should be called with training entities to promote the inclusion of vulnerable adolescents and child and adolescents who came from child labour situations in professional apprenticeship.

¹⁴ TN: Free translation of the original name of the programs, in Portuguese. They are, respectively, *Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil – PETI*, *Serviço de Convivência e Fortalecimento de Vínculos – SCFV*, *Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Especializado a Famílias e Indivíduos – PAEFI*, *Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais – CadÚnico*.

After the MGCCL's inspection and articulation actions are completed, the team coordinator is responsible for preparing and sending a detailed report to the national coordinator, with a detailed description of the situation encountered and the measures taken. If the activity is part of the list of worst forms of child labour, the corresponding item of Decree No. 6,481 (Brazil, 2008) must be indicated.

The reports are not just a formality. On the contrary, they are useful in detailing the situations evidenced by the inspection body and they also support the subsequent actions of other institutions and bodies, such as administrative and judicial procedures led by the different levels of the Public Prosecutor's Office acting in the face of the issue. In addition, the generated report will be forwarded to the Regional Labour Superintendence, with recommendations for the adoption of measures related to the case investigated, which will be the responsibility of the regional inspection chief and the regional coordination of the activity to combat child labour, in accordance with Article 54 of Normative Instruction no. 2 (Brazil, 2021). It should be emphasized that data involving recordings of images of children and adolescents must be kept confidential. This is necessary to ensure the preservation of their image, privacy and dignity, in accordance with Article 247, § 1º, of Law no. 8,069 (Brazil, 1990), as well as Article 5, item X, of the Constitution of the Republic (Brazil, 1988).

The stage of forwardings, monitoring and subsequent actions greatly involves the child and adolescent protection network with jurisdiction in the area where the action is carried out. This network is responsible for sending documents and requesting actions from the Guardianship Council, the social assistance service of the city, as well as other relevant agencies and entities. Referrals may be made in an intersectoral articulation meeting with representatives from such agencies.

If there is any omission by the municipal or state public authorities regarding the provision of spaces for children and adolescents who have been removed from child labour in daycare centers and schools, this situation must be communicated to the competent authorities. From there, they will be able to take the necessary measures. After the inspection action, it is recommended that the regional coordinator monitors and evaluates the current situation of child labour and the confrontation actions carried out within the municipality, in partnership with the local protection network. In the next section, the inspection experiences of the MGCCL observed so far will be presented.

4. CONFRONTING CHILD LABOUR IN BRAZIL: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

In this topic, the inspection experiences carried out by the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour teams are presented. The goal is to demonstrate the potential effects of a possible resumption of operations in a continuous and articulated manner with the institutions of the local network for the protection of children and adolescents.

4.1 RESULTS OF THE FIRST ACTIONS OF THE MOBILE GROUP OF COMBATING CHILD LABOUR

Based on information kept by the national coordination and on media stories about the initiatives carried out, up until June 2021, the MGCCCL teams had conducted five actions. These involved removing a certain number of children and adolescents from situations of child labour in the cities identified in Table 2. In total, 345 children and adolescents were reached. The last inspection took place in 2019. It is noteworthy that since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been no more records.

Table 2

Inspections on child labour carried out by the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour (2014-2020)

Year	Period of time	State	City	Economic activities	Children and adolescents removed from work
2015	13/10 to 19/10	Pará	Parauapebas	Tire repair shops, car washes and open-air markets	81
2017	06/10 to 11/10	Roraima	Boa Vista	Open-air markets, garbage dump, fish markets, charcoal kilns and public streets	118

2018	05/10 to 10/06	Roraima	Boa Vista	Open-air markets, garbage dump and public roads	51
2018	03/10 to 07/12	Rondônia	Porto Velho	Tire repair shops, public roads and garbage dump	14
2019	22/10 to 01/11	Bahia and Sergipe	-	Flour mill and open- air markets	81
Total					345

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from Division of Child Labour Inspection and Equal Opportunities/Secretariat of Labour Inspection (2020).

The first inspection took place in Parauapebas, a city in the state of Pará. It involved the participation of eight labour auditors and agents from the Federal Police and the Guardianship Council. The proper procedures for verifying child labour occurrence were adopted, which in turn led to the penalization of the owners of the tire repair shops and car washes and of the City Hall, which is responsible for the open-air markets. The removal notice for the children and adolescents to be removed from the harmful and hazardous work environment was issued; protection agencies were activated, and; the payment of labour termination compensation to the children and adolescents working in the establishments in question was paid (FNPETI, 2015).

The second operation happened in the city of Boa Vista, in the state of Roraima, also in the northern region of the country. It involved six labour auditors and agents from the Federal Highway Police, the Child and Youth Court¹⁵, the Regional Labour Prosecution Office of the 11th Region, and the Roraima state section of the Brazilian Bar Association. In Boa Vista, what stood out was the relationship between child labour and the large migratory flow of Venezuelans to Brazil. The measures taken included the issuance of twenty infraction notices, the removal of children from work, and the closure of Boa Vista's garbage dump (open-air garbage disposal site, called *lixão* in Portuguese) due to the unprecedented

¹⁵ TN: Free translation based on the original term, in Portuguese, *Juizado da Infância e Juventude*.

reason of preventing harm to the health of children and adolescents. In the technical meeting with the protection network for children and adolescents, the results of the actions were presented, and proposals were made to improve the articulation among the local agencies that make up the network for the protection of children and adolescents. The goal: to eradicate child labour (Oliveira, 2017).

The third inspection, also in Boa Vista/RR, aimed to monitor the results of the previous operation. The action involved the participation of four auditors, employees of the Regional Labour Superintendence in Roraima, the Guardianship Council, the Federal Highway Police, the Roraima state section of the Brazilian Bar Association and the Civil Police. Infraction and removal notices were issued, as well as an order for the City Hall to maintain the closure of the municipal garbage dump. In meetings with the main child and adolescent protection agencies, issues related to Venezuelan children and adolescents, indigenous or non-indigenous working on public roads in Boa Vista were addressed. This context motivated the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to be invited to participate in the action (FNPETI, 2018).

The fourth operation was carried out in Porto Velho, the capital of the state of Rondônia, once again in the northern region of Brazil (2018). It involved five auditors, members of the Labour Public Prosecutor's Office and agents of the Federal Highway Police. Infraction notices, removal notices and garbage dump closure orders were issued (Bentes, 2018).

Finally, the fifth operation covered the northeastern states of Brazil, specifically Sergipe and Bahia (2019), and combined procedures from the GMTI and the Special Mobile Inspection Group of Combating Slave Labour (GEFM, the Portuguese initials for *Grupo Especial de Fiscalização Móvel de Combate ao Trabalho Escravo*). This was the first mixed experience of combating slave labour and child labour carried out by mobile groups. For this reason, the team was formed based on the experience of labour auditors from both areas.

This pilot project sought to combat hotspots of child labour, according to diagnoses from the last CENSUS carried out at the time (2010). The team consisted of nine auditors who inspected flour mills and open-air markets in the cities of Lagarto/SE, Campo do Brito/SE, Aracaju/SE, Crisópolis/BA, and Itapicuru/BA. In the end, infraction and removal notices were issued and machines were shut down. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Municipal Secretariat for Social Assistance of Lagarto/SE and the one from Itapicuru/SE (G1 BAHIA, 2019).

Quantitatively, there were only five inspections carried out by the MGCCL. However, the prospects for future action must be consistent with the size of the challenge of removing 1.8 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 from child labour by 2025. In this sense, it is necessary to establish regular teams that operate constantly, strategically, and in a coordinated manner to combat child labour in the country.

It is understood that the model for the establishment of teams and regular operation can be inspired by another front of inspection that is also organized in an articulated manner with other institutions. We are talking about the prevention and repression of contemporary slavery, which has as one of its main examples the constant and coordinated action promoted by the MGCCL teams, responsible for combating labour under conditions analogous to slavery, the crime of Article 149 of the Brazilian Penal Code (Brazil, 1940).

Fagundes (2020, p. 88) affirms that public policy to combat slavery in Brazil began in 1995, with the institution of the Special Mobile Inspection Group of Combating Slave Labour. Since then, its teams have been operating throughout the country, under the coordination of the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour¹⁶. The author clarifies that the operations involve the participation of Federal Police, Federal Highway Police, Public Defender's Office of the Union, Labour Public Prosecutor's Office and Federal Public Prosecutor's Office. Therefore, there is a joint action by different entities with the purpose of promoting the defense of the dignity of the working person. By mid-2022, more than 58,000 people had been rescued from contemporary slavery (SIT, 2021). Other results will be presented in the following topic.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL TO TACKLE CHILD LABOUR FROM A COMPARISON WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIAL MOBILE INSPECTION GROUP OF COMBATING SLAVE LABOUR

The results of inspections carried out by the Special Mobile Inspection Group of Combating Slave Labour serve as an indicator of the potential impact of the Mobile Group for the Inspection and Combating of Child Labour. However, it should

¹⁶ TN: Free translation based in the original name of the Division, in Portuguese, which is *Divisão para Erradicação do Trabalho Escravo (DETRAE)*.

be noted that since 2011 the number of labour inspectors has been reduced. The growth of the population has not been accompanied by the maintenance or increase in the number of active inspectors. This scenario has consequences, including a lack of inspection of the enforcement of labour laws in sensitive areas, such as combating contemporary slavery and tackling child labour (Sá, Fischer, & Mesquita, 2020). One area that needs improvement, therefore, is the physical and personnel structure, which must be consistent with the dimension of the challenges highlighted.

As for the results observed in the 2,771 operations carried out between 1995 and 2019, the amount of 54,725 workers were identified as being in conditions of modern slavery in 5,333 establishments inspected (Figure 6). In addition to the actions performed by the group dealing with slave labour, the maintenance of the standard of incidence of combating contemporary slavery is due to the activities of regional inspection teams, who are responsible for approximately half of the actions. Regarding the number of workers identified in situations of modern slavery, the increasing trend peaked in 2007, when 6,025 workers were identified in that condition. Since then, the trend has been decreasing until 2017, when 648 were identified.

The reduction in the average number of workers in conditions of modern slavery that were identified in inspections does not necessarily mean that exploitation has decreased at the same rate. Other elements should be considered in this analysis. Among them, the mechanization of agricultural activities, which lead to a shedding of jobs in the area, and the inspection of establishments engaged in economic activities with less labour force. In addition, there is the impact of the quantitative reduction of professionals responsible for inspection, which also impacts the reduction of operations carried out. This set of situations of different orders hinders the full fulfillment of demands (GIRARDI et al., 2014).

Figure 6

Number of inspected establishments and rescued workers (1995-2019)

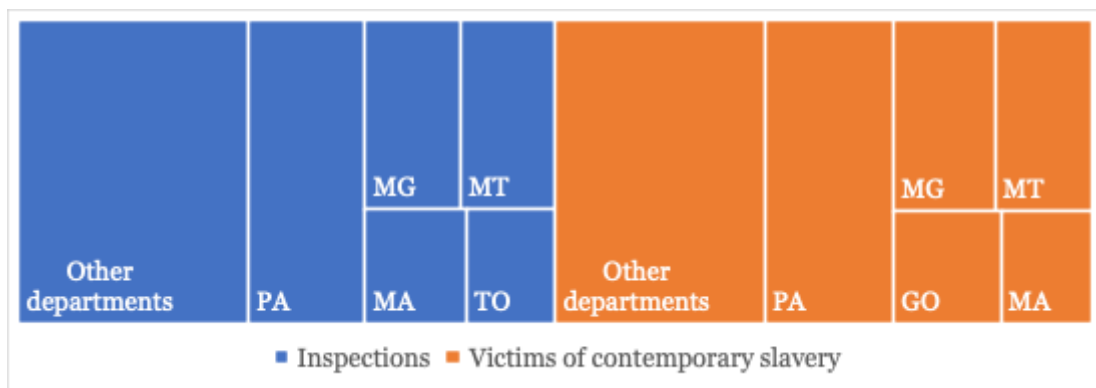


Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour/Secretariat of Labour Inspection.

Regarding the geographical distribution, the state of Pará, in the northern region of Brazil, leads with 21.7% of inspections. Next come the states of Minas Gerais (11.1%) (southeastern region), Mato Grosso (10.9%) (central-west region), Maranhão (7.2%) (northeastern region), and Tocantins (6.2%) (northern region). With regard to the number of workers identified in situations modern slavery, the states of Pará (24.1%), Minas Gerais (11.9%), Mato Grosso (11.3%), Goiás (7.4%) (central-west region), and Maranhão (6.3%) are the most representative. The graphical visualization shows that the five most representative states exceed the relative amounts observed in all others (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Most representative states in terms of inspections and workers identified in situations of modern slavery



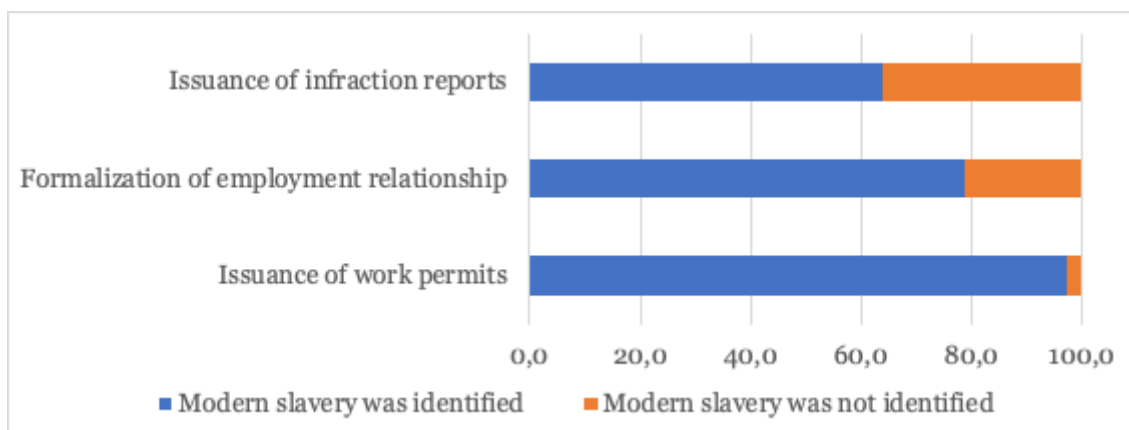
Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour/Secretariat of Labour Inspection.

In 45.4% of the inspections carried out during the analyzed period, conditions analogous to slavery were identified. Although this represents less than half of the inspections carried out, these inspections generated a significant amount of formal employment relationships (78.8%), infraction reports (63.8%), and work permits issued (97.3%) in relation to the total number of cases where these events occurred.

This scenario reveals a greater degree of labour precariousness in contemporary slavery. It also shows the association of this practice with informality, a high number of labour law violations, and a lack of documentation for recording employment relationships (Figure 8). Without taking into account monetary updates, compensation paid to workers in the first 25 years of inspections against contemporary slavery exceeded 106 million reais (21.2 million US dollars), and the right to special unemployment insurance reached over 36,000 rescued workers.

Figure 8

Results of inspections with identification of modern slavery in comparison to those that did not identify workers in this condition



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour/Secretariat of Labour Inspection.

The performance of institutional missions such as the fight against child labour and contemporary slavery demands a reversal of the downward trend in the number of labour inspectors observed since 2013. The small increases in the number of these professionals in 1996, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010, and 2011 were

due to public competitive examinations to fill vacant posts and hire new employees. Although there was an average of one competition every 2.5 years between 2003 and 2013, they have not taken place since then. Consequently, there has been no increase in the number of inspectors.

Both in the fight against modern slavery and in the fight against child labour, results can be optimized with a larger staff of labour inspectors. This is a demand not only of career members but also of institutions dedicated to the protection of labour rights, since the effects of this measure will not only be felt internally by the Labour Inspection sector. With a larger workforce, there will be more staff available to meet external demands, such as those from Ministries, as well as involvement in a greater number of joint actions and intersectoral articulations with members of the protection network.

4.3 NUMBERS ON CHILD LABOUR INSPECTION IN BRAZIL, IN 2021

In order to understand the need for a constant and comprehensive action of the Mobile Group for Inspection and Combating Child Labour teams, all that is needed is a sharp eye to observe the results of inspections to combat child labour from January to April 2021 throughout the country. There were 245 inspection actions, 345 children and adolescents reached, 170 infraction notices issued, identification of child labour in its worst forms (open-air markets, street vending on beaches, public roads, garbage dumps, cemeteries, mechanic shops, and car washes). These results do not include information from the North Region and from some states in other regions of the country (Figure 9), as there was no data released on such locations during the considered period of time. This can serve as an indication in defining the locations where the action of the GMTI teams and the protection network are necessary.

There were 245 tax actions; 345 children and adolescents reached; 170 infraction notices issued; identification of child labour in its worst forms (free markets, street vendors on beaches, public places, dumps, cemeteries, mechanic workshops and car washes). These results do not include information referring to the North Region and some states in other regions of the country (Figure 9), since there was no release of data on such locations in the period considered. This can be used to indicate the possible definition of the locations where the work of the GMTI teams and the protection network is necessary.

Figure 9

States that registered child labour inspection actions from January to April 2021

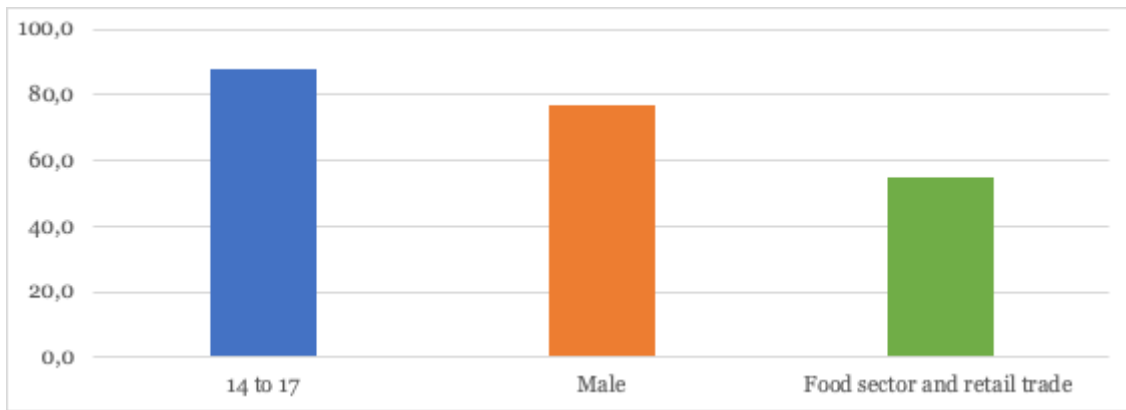


Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour/Secretariat of Labour Inspection..

The inspections that took place in the first four months of 2021 indicate the following profile of the audience in situations of child labour: age group 14 to 17 (87.8%); male (76.8%); performing economic activities in the food sector (32.5%) and retail trade (22.3%) (Figure 10). Inspections begin with the identification of the work situation. Next, they go through the removal of this condition and the assessment of the person identified as responsible for the specific situation, with the possibility of imposing an administrative fine. In addition to repression, sustainability of action is sought through intersectoral articulation for the promotion of rights and social protection (ENIT, 2021).

Figure 10

Profile of children and adolescents identified by inspections in situations of child labour from January to April 2021



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the Division for the Eradication of Slave Labour/Secretariat of Labour Inspection.

Inspections to combat slave labour carried out by regional teams and the mobile group do not focus solely on adult victims. Between 1995 and 2019, records indicated 826 people under eighteen years of age in a situation of enslavement, 60.0% of whom were between sixteen and seventeen years old. Subjection to contemporary slave labour corresponds to one of the worst forms of child labour, according to ILO Convention 182 and Decree 6.481 (Brazil, 2008). Especially because it involves children and adolescents, this problem deserves priority attention from the government and civil society, through specific actions and policies aimed at prevention and repression.

Finally, overcoming this scenario of structural discrimination and inequality depends on broad changes. They involve the existence of a structured labour inspection system capable of addressing the different challenges of labour regulation. This cannot be done without coordinated action with other agencies and institutions, without a joint effort to defend the non-disposable and unavailable social and individual interests of children and adolescents.

5. CONCLUSION

In Brazil, the need to prioritize the fight against the worst forms of child labour arises from the commitments assumed by the country on the international level. In addition to complying with the legislation, prioritizing this agenda also serves to reduce social inequality and to improve the qualification of professionals in the labour market. Therefore, the effective and constant operation of the Mobile Group of Combating Child Labour (MGCCL) is a strategy that will enable

continuous inspection of the worst forms of child labour in the country. The effectiveness of this policy boosts results in the administrative and judicial areas through integrated action with various agents.

Inspection is not the only step towards eradicating child labour, especially in its worst forms. Indeed, it is necessary to acknowledge the incompleteness of this approach, since the magnitude of the problem demands an entire system of strategies and policies for the success of the purpose of combating it. However, even in its incompleteness, inspection is a key element in this battle against child labour and in favor of the fundamental and human rights of children and adolescents. In this match, one does not win alone. Success in fulfilling the duty of protection against violation of rights depends on interaction with other agencies and institutions.

The fight against modern slave labour has resulted in the rescue of more than 58,000 people in 27 years of work by the regional teams and the Special Mobile Inspection Group of Combating Slave Labour. Given this experience, the question remains: what is the potential of child labour inspection, considering the estimated 1.8 million children and adolescents in this condition in the country? And what would be the possibilities for inspection of the most precarious labour relations, such as slave and child labour, if regular public competitive examinations were held to fill the vacant positions in the labour inspection career?

If historically enslaved workers are subjected to child labour, then it is evident that the eradication of contemporary slavery involves eliminating child labour. Childhood demands passage. Let us remove this serious form of violence and oppression from their path and guarantee a more dignified future for these rights holders and protagonists of today and tomorrow.

If historically enslaved workers submit to child labour, then it is evident that the eradication of contemporary slavery involves the elimination of child labour. Childhood asks for passage. Let us remove this serious form of violence and oppression from its path and let us guarantee a more dignified future for these legal subjects and protagonists of today and tomorrow.

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Emerson Víctor Hugo Costa de Sá: Labour Inspector. Professor of Labour Law and Labour Procedural Law at Faculdade Santa Teresa Manaus. Currently a PhD student in Law at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), he holds a Master's degree in Environmental Law from the State University of Amazonas (UEA) and a Bachelor's degree in Law from the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM). He participates in the CNPq Research Group "New forms of work, old slave practices" (in the original name, in Portuguese, *Novas formas de trabalho, velhas práticas escravistas*).

Felipe Caetano da Cunha: Law undergraduate student at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC). Consultant in children and adolescents' participation for the Instituto Bem Cuidar. Consultant in Public Policies for the Guarantee of Human and Social Rights. Representative of children and adolescents at the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Conanda) from 2017 to 2019. Youth counselor for UNICEF Brazil. Co-founder of the Committees of Adolescents for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour. Coordinator of the Study Group on Child Labour and Professional Apprenticeship (in the original name, in Portuguese, *Grupo de Estudos sobre Trabalho Infantil e Aprendizagem Profissional*) (UFC). Participant in the CNPq Research Group "New forms of work, old slave practices".

Valena Jacob Chaves: Adjunct Professor 4 of the Law undergraduate program, the Graduate Program in Law (PPGD), and the Graduate Program in Law and Development in the Amazon (PPGDDA), at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). General Director of the Institute of Legal Sciences (ICJ) at UFPA. Coordinator of the Specialization in Labour Law and Human Rights. Researcher at the Human Rights Clinic of the Amazon in PPGD/UFPA. Holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degree in Law, all from UFPA. Coordinator of the CNPq Research Group "New forms of work, old slave practices".

Isabella Silva Matosinhos: Responsible for the translation of this paper, originally published in Portuguese, into English. She is currently a Master's student in

Sociology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and an associated researcher at the Center for the Study of Crime and Public Security (CRISP/UFMG).
Contact email: isabellasmatosinhos@gmail.com

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