



# "The Effects of Cost of Living and Economic Inflation on Children and Youth in Africa"

October 2022



A study conducted by the children of the MAEJT accompanied by:  
ENDA JEUNESSE ACTION

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## ABSTRACT

The latest joint report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF shows that there are 79 million working children in sub-Saharan Africa, including an increase of 16.6 million between 2016 and 2020, with the possibility of more pronounced growth due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, 23.9% of these children aged between 7 and 17 years are forced into hazardous work. In this extremely fragile and unstable context, at the heart of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, occurs the war between Russia and Ukraine with a negative impact on the already weak African economies in addition to the socio-political crises already present on the continent. The skyrocketing prices of food and fuel are creating a new shock and threatening the economic prospects of this part of the world.

This context has a strong impact on the development of children and the child rights agenda on the continent, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized groups, including working children in large part. It should be noted that the global conference on child labour held in South Africa had just renewed the bases and prospects for the reduction or even the elimination of child labour in the years to come.

This new global environment makes it difficult to achieve this great "Dream" of success, especially for children who are obliged to work for living in the African continent. The AMWCY, in its contribution to this ideal, remains focused on improving the living and working conditions of these children who have no other choice than to live by the income from work and contribute to the development of their families. The economic inflation generated by various crises is very severe for this segment of the population. Between January 2021 and June 2022, 1,964 groups of working children have been identified within the framework of the Support Program for Working Children Groups (PAGE). It is within this same framework that the survey on the "Effects of the cost of living and economic inflation on children and youth in Africa" was conducted.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our gratitude and thanks to all those who gave their time to the implementation of this survey, in particular:

- The 335 volunteer working children who answered the questions;
- The various AMWCY bodies, in particular the EMG and the 22<sup>[1]</sup> national implementation teams that facilitated data collection in the 63 cities;
- The Enda Jeunesse Action support team, which was active in providing methodological advice, data collection and processing, writing, and design;
- The supporters who were self-mobilized during mass activities and awareness raising around children's rights;
- The young investigators who supported the administration of the tools developed for this survey;
- The authorities, financial and technical partners at different levels: community, national, regional and African, who contribute to the influence of children and youth organizations.

[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

## I. INTRODUCTION

The inflationary crisis that has hit the world in recent years has made several professional social groups react in an expressive manner. The legitimate expectations or claims of the populations towards the States have pushed them to take measures to mitigate the effects towards the social groups. This is the case with the increase in the salaries of civil servants, cash transfers for the benefit of craftsmen and traders, the example of support funds and credits for small and medium-sized enterprises. So this is the occasion to observe the absence of this same impulse of solidarity towards children in a direct way.

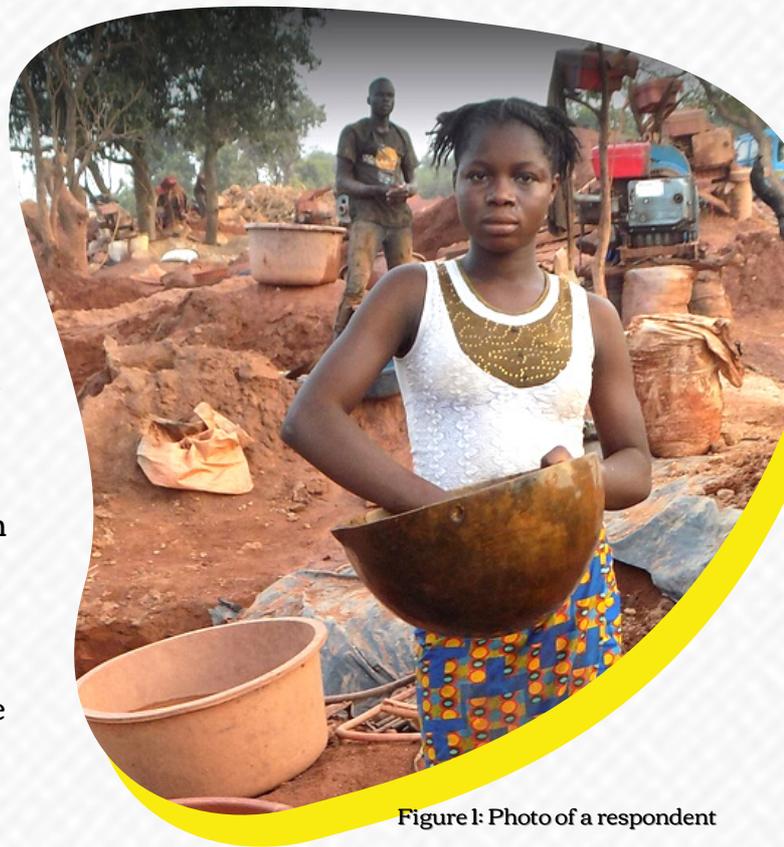


Figure 1: Photo of a respondent

The support measures or alternatives, in their regard, for facing this crisis are not perceptible. In this context of rising prices, where children have to face various difficulties to get to or stay in learning, training and education spaces without being excluded by starvation, there are huge challenges. As for the non-respect of their rights, it is marked by a high rate of violence, especially for the most vulnerable segments of the population in work situations.

Regarding this situation, the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) deemed it useful to conduct a study among children on the theme: "**Effects of the cost of living and economic inflation on children and youth in Africa**". The purpose of the study is to gather the opinions of children on the impact of economic inflation on them.

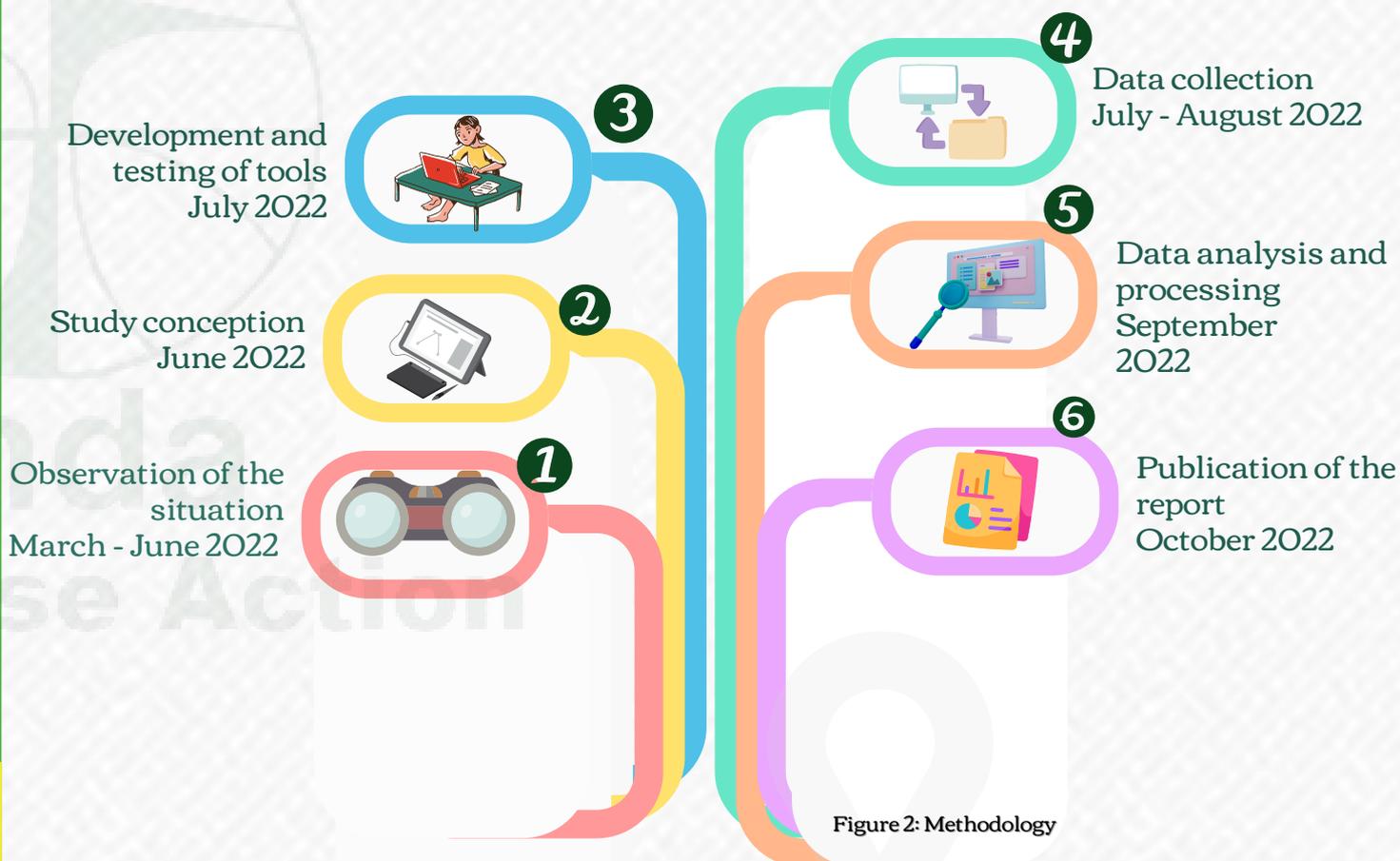
This publication, which is based on the results of the study carried out by the AMWCY with the technical assistance of its support structure, Enda Jeunesse Action, is intended for States, local decision-makers and civil society organizations. It consists in having knowledge from the current situations that children in work situations are experiencing, specifically in this context of high living costs and economic inflation in Africa.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- This survey is part of the Support Program for Vulnerable Children's Groups, particularly those in a working situation in the African member countries of the AMWCY. The present study in form of a survey took place in 22 of the 28 countries (members of the AMWCY) with 63 urban and rural localities that were reached. The main respondents were working children identified by associations of working children and youth.
- The objective of this study is to find out how children, especially working children, experience the increase in food prices, how it affects their daily routine and care, what changes have occurred in their family, and environment, how they assess their new working conditions and what they plan to do about it if the situation does not change. On the other hand, it is a means to alert the States, the decision-makers, and the civil society organizations so that they take concrete measures and alternatives to resolve the situation in due time.

### III. METHODOLOGY

- **The study was implemented in several phases:**



- **Survey tools used:**

This survey was based on various tools developed through a participatory process, including:

Tools	Numbers
Survey Questionnaire	335
Guidelines for semi-structured interviews	4
Kobocollect database (French and English)	2
Ms Excel	1
Sphinx software	1

Figure 3: Table of tools used

## Sampling technique

- Regarding the online nature of the data collection, the different environments of working children and their availability, the sampling strategy was based on an accidental mode. Nevertheless, parameters were incorporated to select a sample that reflected the distribution of age (children under 18 year old), gender, and pre-identified cities representing urban and rural areas and the nature of working children.
- The national coordination teams (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) supervised the collection exercise in each of their respective countries.

**In this exercise, the operational challenges were the most significant, including:**

- The challenge of owning an Android phone and connectivity for each respondent,
- Poor network coverage in some collection areas,
- Limited traveling supports for investigators who must travel to several children's work spaces.

All individuals assigned to or participating in the survey did it voluntarily with their collective consent linked to full participation in their association's activities. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, stored, processed, and analysed in accordance with the AMWCY safeguarding policies and in strict confidence.

## V. MAIN RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The study interviewed 335 working children, including 193 girls and 142 boys aged between 9 and 18 years, with an average age of 15 years, in 63 locations. The table below summarizes the localities surveyed

### Data Collection Areas

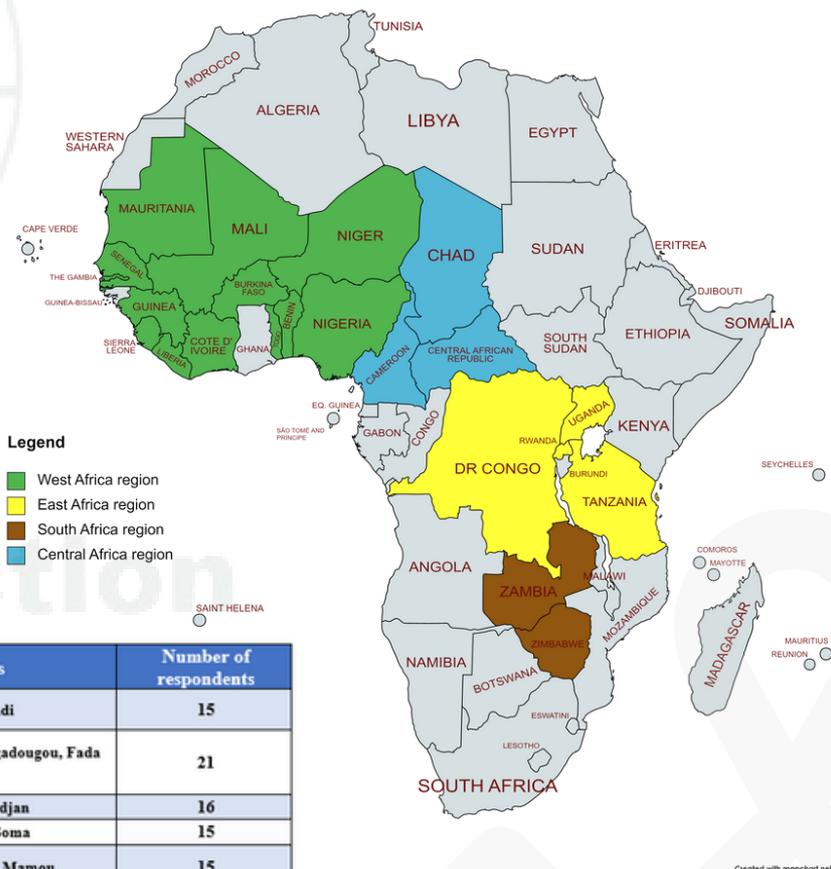


Figure 4: Countries covered by the study

Sub-region	Country	Cities	Number of respondents
West Africa region	Benin	Bassila, Cotonou, Kandi	15
	Burkina-Faso	Bobo-Dioulasso, Ouagadougou, Fada N'Gourma	21
	Ivory Coast	Korhogo, Adiaké, Abidjan	16
	Gambia	Farafenni, Brikama, Soma	15
	Guinea Conakry	Conakry, Forekariah, Mamou	15
	Liberia	Central Monrovia, Cestos City, Free Town	15
	Mali	Bamako, Kita, Mopti	16
	Mauritania	Bababé, Boghé, Nouakchott	15
	Niger	Dosso, Niamey, Kazaoué	11
	Nigeria	Makoko	14
	Senegal	Diourbel, Fatick, Guediawaye	18
	Sierra Leone	Western Rural, Kukuna, Kambia	15
	Togo	Lomé, Niamtougou, Tchamba	15
East Africa region	DRC	Goma, Kinshasa, Uvira	15
	Rwanda	Burera, Nyarugenge, Rusizi	17
	Tanzania	Arusha City, Pongwe, Tanga	14
	Uganda	Mbale, Tororo, Kampala	12
South Africa region	Zambia	Kabwe, Kapiri	14
	Zimbabwe	Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Harare	15
Central Africa region	Cameroon	Bertoua, Maroua, Yaounde	15
	CAR	Bangui, Bimbo, Bossangoa	15
	Chad	Benoye, Bongor, N'djamena,	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>355</b>

Figure 5: Table of data collection areas by country

## Typology of occupations of respondents

Activities of those who participated in the study	Nb. cit.	Freq.
Salesmen	121	36%
Seamstresses	34	10%
Others	30	9%
Wood/metal/aluminum millworkers	22	7%
Hairdressers	18	5%
Mechanics	16	5%
Waiters/Workers	16	5%
Apprentices	15	4%
Domestic workers	14	4%
Farmers	11	3%
Designers	8	2%
Mason's helpers	6	2%
Car washers	5	1%
Baggage handlers	4	1%
Shoeshine boys	4	1%
Secretaries/Computer technicians	4	1%
Electricians	4	1%
Photographers	2	1%
Shoemakers	1	0%
<b>Total OBS</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most important occupations here are children working in small businesses, hairdressing and sewing workshops, apprentices and domestic workers.

Figure 6: Typology of small businesses of the children surveyed

## What has changed for children in family settings?

The majority of the children interviewed said that they have seen the impact of the rising cost of living on their daily lives.

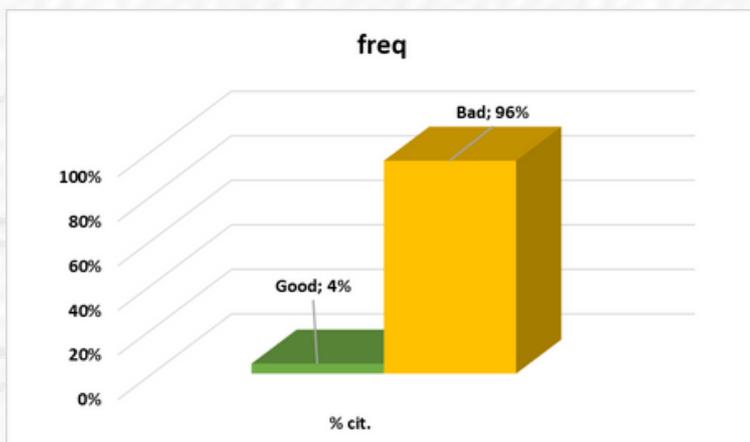


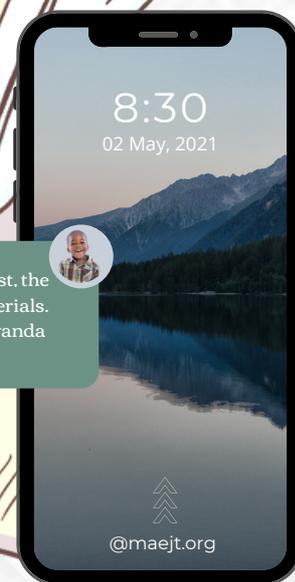
Figure 7: What has changed at the family settings

When asked whether the changes observed in the family are positive or negative, 96% of working children surveyed said that since the price increase, family habits have deteriorated significantly.

This deterioration can be explained by the fact that several needs are no longer met within the family.

### To provide evidence to these negatively changed habits, we can note that:

- 73% of the children surveyed stated that they had experienced a reduction in the quantity and quality of family meals. They note a disorder in the frequency of these meals.
  - Hard to get three meals per day - 15-year-old hairdresser in Forekariah, Guinea. 🇬🇳
- 18.5% of the children surveyed also reported that they had lost their right to health and hygiene care.
  - Things are getting very worst, the purchase of hygiene materials. 14 year old boy in Burera, Rwanda 🇷🇼
- 4% of the children surveyed say they are experiencing an increase in violence and tension between parents on the one hand and between parents and children on the other hand.
  - My parents fight every day girl from Lomé in Togo. 🇲🇪
- For 4% of them, the conditions remained as they were.



# What has changed for working children in their workplaces?

97% of those who expressed an opinion on the change in their working conditions mainly complained about the workload, longer working hours and lack of minimum care.

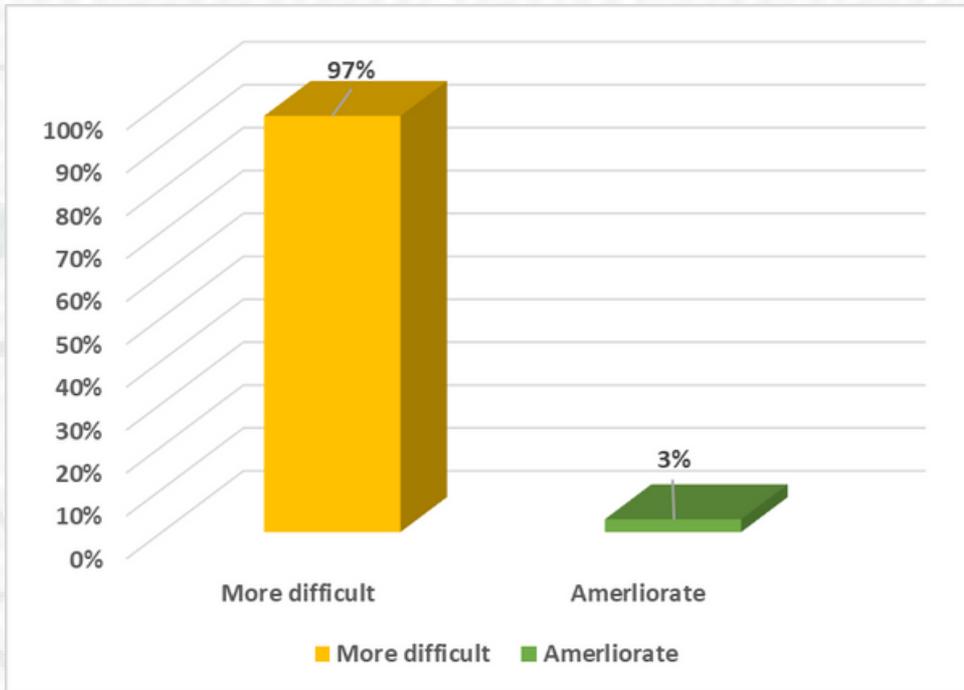


Figure 8: For working children in the workplace



-36% of children in work situations report an increase in workload

"In the past, peeling a bucket of potatoes was 2000 now you peel two buckets for 3000",  
12-year-old vendor in Pongwe, Tanzania.



-33% of children in working situations are no longer allowed to rest or eat in their work or learning space.

"We no longer eat lunch at the workplace because of the increase in food prices"  
17-year-old girl washerwoman in Free Town, Liberia



-28% of children in working situations experience an increase in work hours.

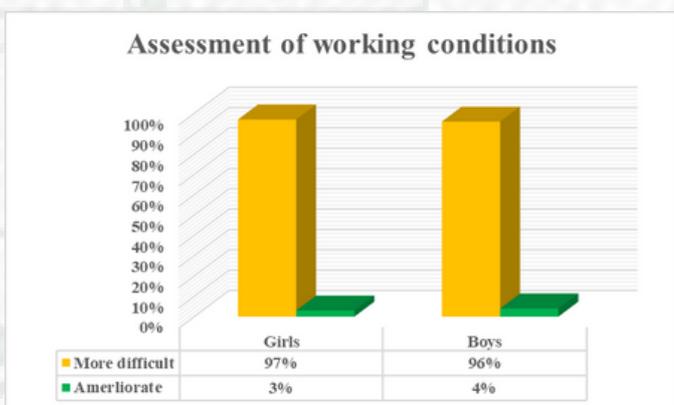
"The boss cut our wages and increased the hours of work"

15-year-old waitress girl in Benoye, Chad



On the other hand, 3% of the children interviewed said that their working conditions is becoming easier. In particular, the reduction of their working hours. Among the reasons mentioned were a considerable drop in the number of clients and the absence of production materials and tools in the shops or stores. The domestic work for which they were solicited is now done by those who employed them. **“I don't have much work anymore because he doesn't have many customers anymore” 10-year-old apprentice in Yaoundé, Cameroon.**

As illustrated in the quotation above, they are experiencing a financial decline as they are paid mostly based on revenue, clients, and other income-related terms.



The distribution of responses by gender on this question shows 97% of girls versus 96% of boys deploring the working conditions they now experience. Only 3% and 4% respectively of the respondents indicated that their working conditions have now improved, as shown in the diagram.

Figure 9: Assessment table of working conditions

## What is the status of working children's incomes in this expensive environment?

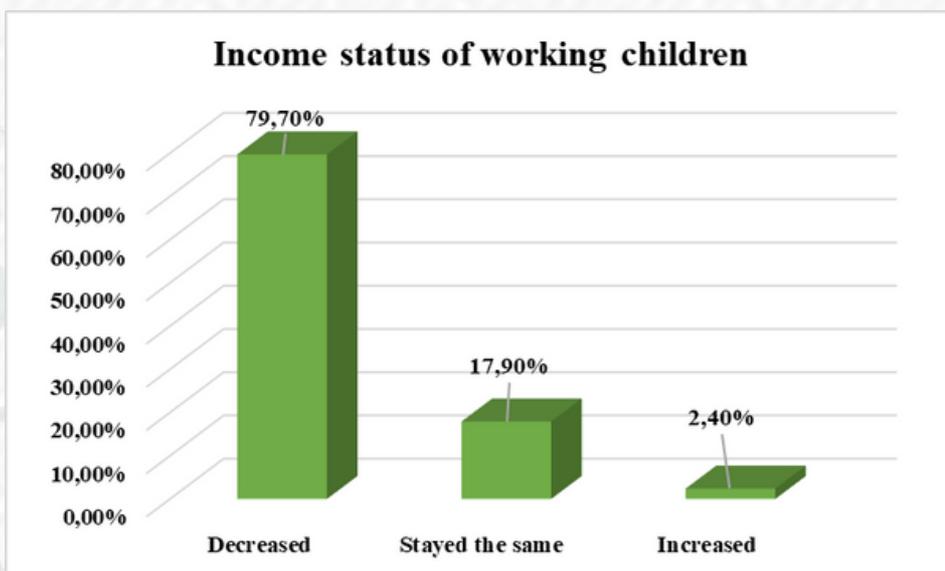


Figure 10: Table on the earnings status of working children

In this inflationary context, working children seem to have progressively less earnings commensurate with their efforts. Despite the increase in workload, the increase in working hours, the lack of rest and care, 79.7% report a decrease in their usual income, 17.9% feel that income has not changed and only 2.4% of the children surveyed report an increase in income.

"The cassava that we used to buy, the bag at 3500FCFA is sold at 5500FCFA which means that the bosses have reduced our pay" 16 year old salesman in Adiaké, Côte d'Ivoire



Among all the occupations surveyed, those experiencing a sharp decline in income are:

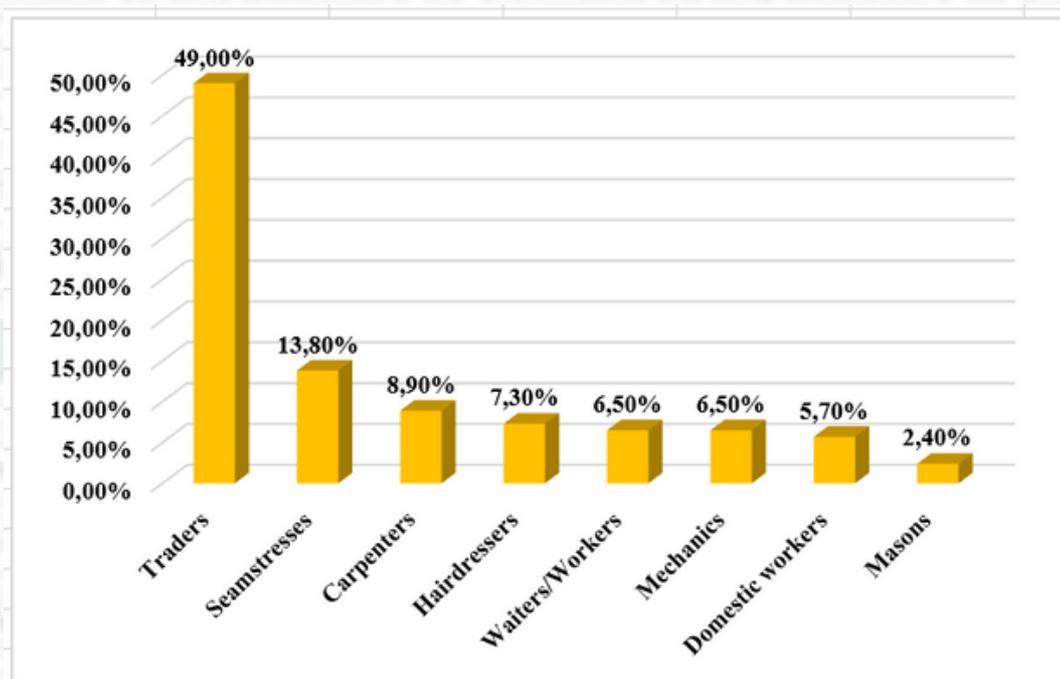


Figure II: The most affected occupations

It should be noted that this drop in income, for some, is done at the whim of the bosses without consulting the people concerned.

"My boss is looking for a motive to deduct money from my salary".  
A 17-year-old sales assistant in Makoko, Nigeria.

These working children under the authority of a boss experience sudden short payment, cuts down of remuneration less advantageous forms of payment for more workload and time. and for those who are self-employed, it is rather the sharp decline in the number of customers that negatively influences their income. They are often forced to travel long distances to find a few customers to use up their stock of goods.

"The items are not sold out in time"  
A 16-year-old saleswoman in Goma, DRC.

Many of them are experiencing the decay of their products due to the slow flow of their products. Note that a good number of them find themselves in the incapacity to continue their activities.

"Today my capital is not enough to continue buying all the goods" an 18 year old saleswoman in Bossangoa, CAR.



In a context where these children are forced to work to support themselves, this fragile group has to face multiple challenges: abuse and exploitation in anonymity without any possibility of claiming.

The effectiveness of the respect of rights by parents, partons and other employers was questioned during this survey.

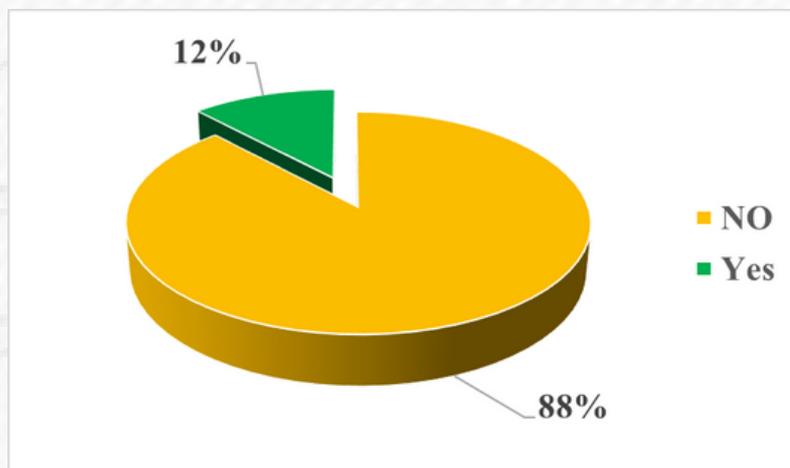


Figure II: Appreciation of respect for children's rights

To this question on the appreciation of the respect of their rights since the occurrence of this context of price increase, 88% of the children interviewed responded negatively and 12% positively.

A large proportion of them stated that they no longer had access to many of the services they had previously received: many of their rights were no longer taken into account, let alone respected.

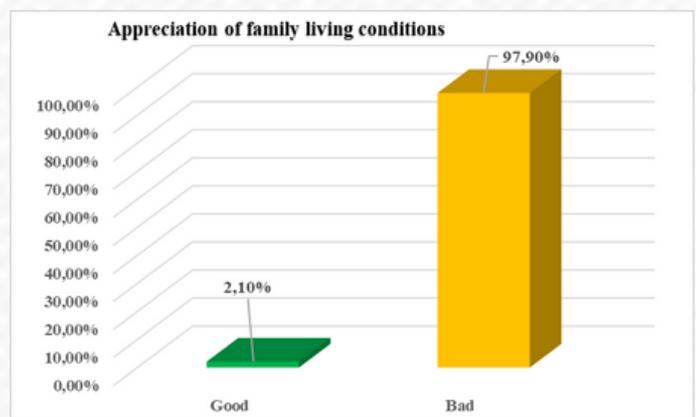
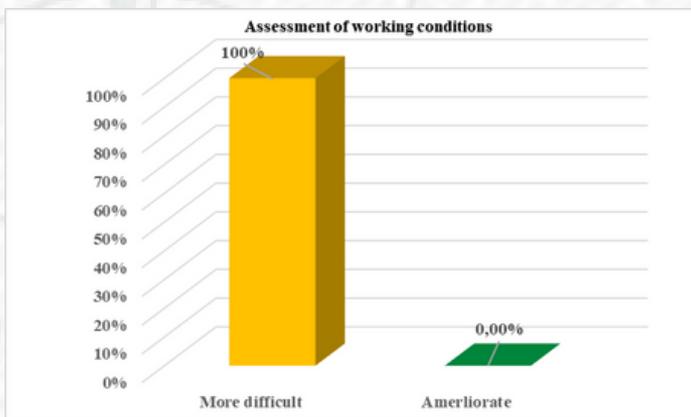
These are mainly the non-observance of commitments on payments, the non-observance of rest hours and lunch. Those who are under the authority of the bosses state that they are not consulted on decisions concerning the change of working hours and that they are subject to discounts on their salaries and have no possibility of making demands.

## **Focus on three countries in the Sub-Saharan region:**



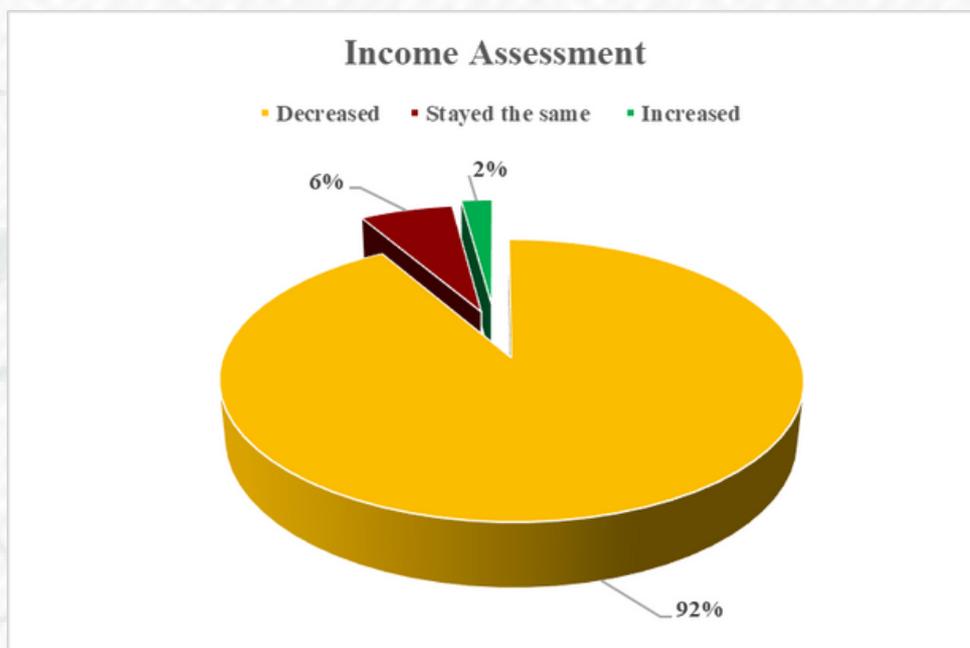
## Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

These three countries have in common a major security fragility in recent years. In addition to this situation, which deprives many children of their primary rights, economic inflation has added to the suffering of these children, who were already living in fairly precarious conditions. The trends in the diagrams tell us about the level of deterioration in the living conditions of working children in the family and in the workplace:



In analyzing the data collected, one of the findings that stands out is that: 97% of the children surveyed said that their family living conditions had changed negatively, and 100% said that their working conditions had become even more difficult. It has become evident that the primary rights of many children in this area are once again being severely impacted, as the two diagrams above demonstrate.

## The income situation of working children in these three countries



As working conditions are more difficult, working children in this region remain economically dependent and vulnerable. 92% of them declare that their income is decreasing in the current context, while their financial contribution plays an important role in their families, in terms of schooling, taking care of their basic needs and developing their life projects.

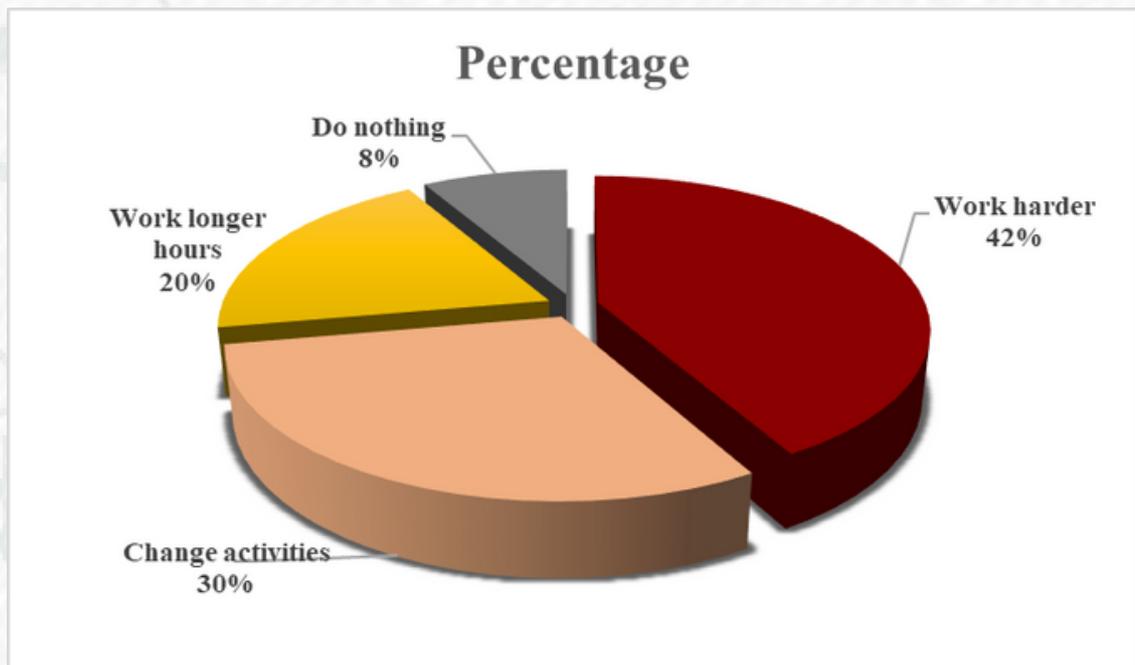
"I have no money left for my family and my personal needs.  
a 13-year-old sales-girl in Mopti, Mali



## What do these working children intend to do about these changes?

In light of all that has been observed with this economic inflation, do working children surveyed in all 22 countries consider other options to maintain their income and support themselves?

The following diagram shows the breakdown of their responses.

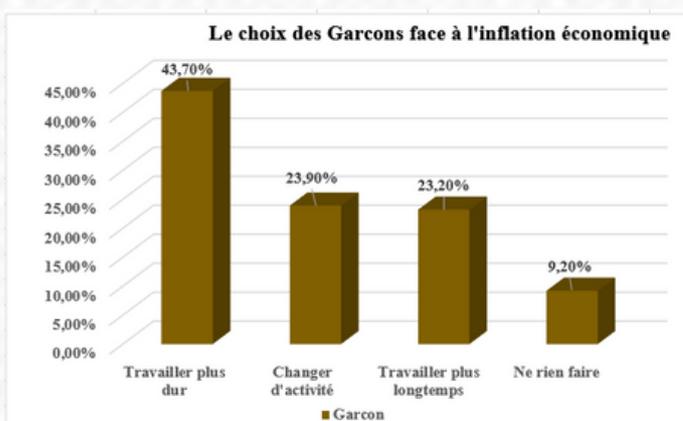
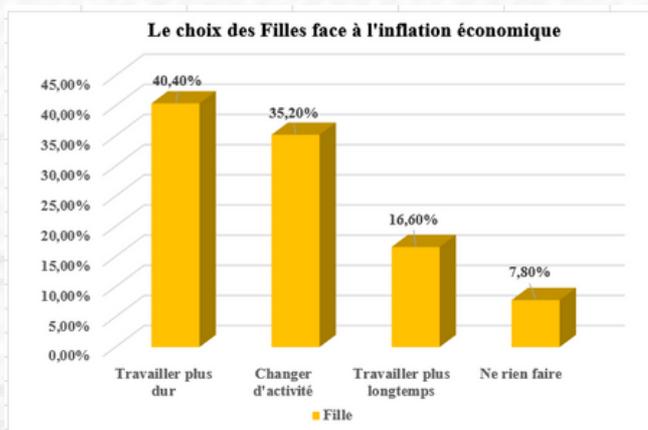


42% of the working children surveyed would be forced to increase their workload, 20% of them prefer the option of staying at work for longer periods of time in order to earn the necessary income.

For 30% of them, the option would be to find a new activity that gives more earnings and only 8% of them consider not doing anything more in response to the situation.

All of these options show how vulnerable working children are to exploitation and abuse in this situation of economic inflation. They will have to develop survival activities with harmful working conditions to continue to survive, to the detriment of their development and growth.

The following diagrams show the different choices or alternatives that working children intend to adopt in order to cope with this economic inflation



Among the alternatives, 35.2% of girls against 23.9% of boys in the working situation listened to would like to change their activity. The high percentage of girls may reflect their fragility in the context of the tough and difficult working conditions. It should be noted that this vulnerable and significant proportion would be exposed to harmful activities.

"Prostitution as a means of coping with daily expenses", a girl working in a house in Mashonaland East, Zimbabwe.



**The worst forms of work or marriage for their survival.**

"Many children will be given in marriage 17-year-old girl in Dosso, Niger.



On the other hand, 43.7% and 23.2% of boys surveyed would opt for working harder and spending more time at work, respectively. For these options of longer and heavier work, the percentage of boys is higher. This trend shows that a good proportion of children will be at risk of exploitation through work to the detriment of learning and development spaces.

These working children are willing to take potential risks to continue to survive.

## What can happen to the children in your neighborhood, market or village in the light of this situation?

If nothing is done urgently in the upcoming hours, days, and months, these unassisted vulnerable children will opt for risky and destructive trajectories at the expense of a better future.

In addition to experiencing severe hunger, lack of health care, and violence, the majority of working children surveyed spoke of potential challenges ahead. These included:

**-The rise of delinquency:** 26% of the children interviewed think that their friends might give up their jobs and engage in illegal activities to survive.

"Many will leave the business and others will give themselves away in disorder"  
a 17-year-old trader in Bongor, Chad



"They will join gangs of thieves"  
15-year-old boy a masonry helper in Mbale, Uganda



**-Abandonment of learning and schooling spaces:** 21% of the working children interviewed believe that they will no longer have access to learning and schooling spaces and therefore will not have the opportunity to learn and train.

"It is difficult for them to start learning".  
a 15-year-old shopkeeper in Kandi, Benin



"They will continue to drop out of school"  
A 14-year-old girl vendor in Kabwe, Zambia;



**-A massive presence on the streets:** 17% of the children surveyed said that their peers would be abandoned or sent to beg on the street to help their parents.

"Their rights will not be respected, they will be in the street without security"  
15-year-old mechanic in Nouakchott, Mauritania.



**-Early urban-rural migration of children:** 15% of working children surveyed thought that one option would be to move to the big cities in search of a new job.

"Going to work in Dakar"  
a 13-year-old girl in Fatick, Senegal



"Risk to stop selling and look to go to Bangui for work"



**Exploitation through work and abuse:** 14% of children believe that they will be exposed to exploitation by adults, as illustrated by the testimony of a 16-year-old mechanic interviewed in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire

"Children will be enslaved by some adults".



Others will abandon their current work for dangerous jobs that bring in more income. The example of a 16-year-old mason respondent in Fada Ngourma, Burkina Faso:

"I'm sure some of my classmates will join the others in the gold sites."



**Pressure on children to get married:** 7% think that the lack of economic income will reinforce parents' ideas of giving them in marriage.

"It strengthens our parents to give us in marriage"

The expression of a 17-year-old respondent in Dosso, Niger



"It can also lead to pregnancy in teenage girls."

A 15-year-old seamstress in Western Rural, Sierra Leone.



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Children, especially girls, are likely to become involved in prostitution. Children will then need to work to survive and will be used in human trafficking, become sex objects, others will start stealing, the crime rate will increase, as well as begging and illegal emigration.

### **Focus group response**

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## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained in this study show how in this context of economic inflation, children in work situations are seriously affected by the non-respect of their primary rights, abuse and violence both in their workplaces and in supposedly safer family environments. These findings alert us on how this situation will further contribute to increasing inequality and discrimination among children. This is illustrated in particular by the lack of access to learning and schooling spaces, health care and good and sufficient nutrition for a large majority. Although the data collected is not exhaustive, we can appreciate the potential risk trends of increased delinquency, massive presence on the streets, increased labor exploitation, unprepared migration, enrollment in armed groups, and especially early pregnancy and child marriage.

If nothing is done, very few of them will be able to bear this second economically onerous burden in their already difficult and complex daily lives over a long period of time. It is of utmost importance to find appropriate solutions to counteract the risks mentioned and induced by situations that are out of reach for these children.

We need to be very vigilant to ensure that marginalized groups in our communities continue to have access to health care, learning spaces, schooling and recreation, and above all, the opportunity to express themselves, organize and develop their future projects. Thus, the future of these vulnerable children will be the result of our awareness and our ability to act now, to offer them better options for protection and development. For the AMWCY and its support structure Enda Jeunesse Action, it is necessary to put in place concrete responses and alternatives addressing the real and precise objectives of children in this doubly difficult context, notably.

# Children's Call to Action



The children, members of the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY), initiators of the survey entitled: "Effects of cost of living and economic inflation on children and youth in Africa"

**Note** that the consequences of the high cost of living affect a large number of them. This directly impacts the lives of children and is a very devastating threat to children, their families and other vulnerable groups. If States and development aid organizations are not careful, the risks of exploitation, deviations and even transnational mobility of minors can increase and get out of hand;

**Observe** with concern that the measures taken by the States to alleviate the suffering of the populations and socio-professional strata have not directly taken into account the suffering of children;

**Recall** that children are the most vulnerable, even though they are the future of the continent. Children are the basis for building the future of the African continent. The leadership of children through their commitment and their strong participation in the multiple current issues of the different levels of development is inevitable.

**Announce** that nothing will be done for children without their full involvement and the consideration of their legitimate concerns. This will require the deployment of their potential on their responsibility and will give them the key to their own development.

## Call on:

- **The African Union (AU)** in collaboration with all the networks of associations for the defense of children's rights to have countries adopt mechanisms for the reduction of the prices of basic necessities;
- **The African States** to adopt and implement special measures to directly support the rights and specific needs of children and other vulnerable groups in the areas of education, health, training and social security::

- **Social action**, to organize follow-up visits to working children in economic and learning areas to ensure that:
  - They evolve in good conditions of security, health and education
  - They carry out their occupations in good conditions and are not exposed to exploitation through their work because of the high cost of living:
- **To the decentralized services of the State, to the territorial communities** to offer opportunities for rapid training accessible to children, especially those who are workers, on the development of their activities and to prevent unprepared mobility, but also recruitment by armed groups, prostitution and drug sales networks :
- **To the State health services** to make accessible the minimum package of adequate hygienic care, especially for girls at the time of their periods.
- **To the nutritional health services** to elaborate and disseminate to families' communications encouraging local nutritional alternatives that promote the good growth of infants;
- **The various partners of the AMWCY** to pool their efforts to support the program of accompaniment of marginalized groups of children, mapped in order to reduce inequalities and ensure equitable access to rights and services.
- **To Families, employers and communities** to adopt behaviours that facilitate the monitoring of children, especially those at risk of labour exploitation.



**Mouvement Africain des Enfants et  
Jeunes Travailleurs**

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