While the international community lines up behind a firm aim to fight child labor, developing countries like Peru show not only their lack of responsiveness but even their lack of clear vision on the matter. With little data available, weak institutions and poor political will, little or none impact can be expected to improve a dramatic context in which, at the least, half million children perform some kind of remunerated activity. As it is expected that the poorest the individuals, the most hazardous the job they would be willing to perform in a geographically and culturally diverse poor country like Peru, policymaking becomes an even harder task.

In this situation, as the State proves to be unable to deliver, private agencies and non-profits domain the field, each implementing programs inspired in their own philosophies on the matter; ranking from abolitionists to active promoters of child labor.

The signing of ILO’s Convention 182 –with the objective of eradicating the worst cases of child labor- in 1999, coincided with the international sponsorship of a series of programs to fight the problem, which included trade policies like labeling. This context must have encouraged the Peruvian State to left its passivity behind, but it did not.

Understanding that in a backward country, like Peru, to work is not the worst issue children may be exposed to, but also believing that no “invisible hand” will solve the problem and that clear vision on the matter is required, this paper aims to explore some of the complexities of policy-making on the worst cases of child labor, following the definition established by the Convention 182. It will address the importance of the State intervention, describe the nuances in the Peruvian situation and finally propose some policy guidelines.